

# MY ADVENTURES WITH GOD

*The Making of a Missionary*



## **Dedication:**

I have written these memoirs for the sake of my family, with whom I have shared many adventures, Susan and Greg in the UK, Greg on a mission trip to Guyana, the memory which remains forever special! The adventures God has given to me with my husband and kids into the field of nature, as well as family trips we took across North America, are memories for another day. This focuses specifically on my adventures with God.

Supported by family love and prayers I felt free to travel as God led, knowing the cost might be to miss out on many of those precious traditions which draw families together. I want to thank my children and their spouses as well as my dearly loved grandchildren, Ben, Drew, Ryan, Tori and Jaden for their abiding love in spite of frequent absences. I remember the blessing of faithful support from my parents and my in-laws, while they lived.

Both my children have been gifts from God! I am so blessed to be living with Susan who is the soul of thoughtfulness and patience, a woman of prayer, with whom I can laugh and cry!! I know I can call upon Greg to pray for me. A mother could ask for no greater joy than that her children would walk with God.

One person stands out and deserves special mention. My beloved sister Ruthanne, known lovingly as Auntie Fan and more recently as "Rain", has inspired me as a woman of great understanding, courage and compassion. She is so wise! I love that our sharing is honest, often spirited, laced with wit and focused on all that is good. She encourages me with her faithful daily prayers, for me and my family.

It brings me such joy to recognize that among my family are also friends! Marie, is not just my sister-in-law, but has been my loyal friend throughout a life-time!

I have been so blessed to know brothers and sisters in the family of God, who have given me, over a life-time, wise and loving counsel. Pastors Timothy Starr, Bob Gunn, John Moore and their dear wives Hazel, Fran and Esther, have blessed me in a thousand ways. God is so good! To Him belong all glory and honour and praise.

## **Cover Page:**

Two nurses working together in Guyana, sisters in the Lord, and sharing the same name: "Marilyn Daniels" .....You in your small corner, and I in mine! For one this was her "Jerusalem", for the other - God had sent her "to the ends of the earth".

## My Adventures With God

1.

### The Making of a Missionary

*“At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burden of my heart rolled away...”*

Those words still touch my heart as I remember the congregation singing at my baptism 70 years before. My journey with Jesus started at my mother’s knee as a young child, but by the time I turned 10 I already knew the Lord wanted me to be a missionary. Specifically, I told my pastor, I was going to become a missionary nurse. If being a missionary meant going to a foreign land then I was in for a surprise. It took more than 40 years of preparation before that dream was realized. Much later on in life I got the message. A sign posted at the exit gate of Peoples Church parking lot explained: “You are now entering the mission field”. Yes, God brought folks into my life right in Toronto, from all corners of the globe.

There was the young Muslim man who often stood in the corridor outside my apartment to dialogue about his love for Jesus. He and my grandson Ben got into a conversation at the bus stop, which created a unique friendship. In the same building a new Christian, a lady from China became my dear friend. Another lady from Sri Lanka lavished me with gifts of friendship. What could I give in return? The certain hope that “Burdens are lifted at Calvary”! The author of that song walked with me through some very dark days, sharing the light and love of our living Lord, so as another song goes “It only takes a spark to get a fire going”. We can pass on lessons learned from our own experiences with pain and disappointment. ...and extend comfort we received from God, to others (2 Corinthians 1:2-4).

Experience taught me much about the ministry of encouragement, something which gives meaning and purpose to my senior years, when travel is no longer possible.

So - What is a missionary?

Merriam-Webster suggests a missionary is “a person who is sent to a foreign country to do religious work such as to convince people to join” a certain faith group.

Wikipedia broadens our modern understanding of the word. “A missionary is a member of a religious group sent into an area to promote their faith, or perform ministries of service, such as education, literacy, social justice, health care and economic development.”

Simply put, a missionary is someone with a message to share, by word and deed. The good news I caroled in church as a three-year-old, has never changed. And the truth of Jesus’ abiding love gave me goosebumps some 50 years later. “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so”. I thrilled to sing it on a bus, riding with a group of local Zambians. My how they could sing – rich 5-part harmony, acapella! God has granted me many adventures over the years, when opportunities arose to share this exciting truth, which I hope to share with you, in this little history!

An evangelist came to Fenelon Falls when I was 13. His wife had been an opera singer and had the voice of an angel. I can still recall her rendition of “His Eye Is On The Sparrow”. After hearing that song there was never any doubt..... “and I **know** He watches me”!

I was blessed to belong to a great youth group at Fenelon Falls Baptist Church, who debated all sorts of theological issues. As well we engaged in a variety of service projects. We performed concerts and told stories and shared about Jesus, even in the nursing home in Lindsay. This impacted my worldview, giving me a feel for those in need. Also my Sunday School teacher went as a missionary to Africa. Della became my heroine. Imagine my joy when I discovered she lived in a nearby town where, as 2 elderly, retired ladies, we resumed contact half a century later!

My parents encouraged my missionary vision. My father faithfully preached the gospel to prisoners in Lindsay jail. We often hosted visiting missionaries from church, and Mom encouraged me to read books by Agnes Scott Kent. It shocked me to discover how Jewish converts were treated by their families, rejected and persecuted. Her stories engraved on my heart the seriousness of my faith in Jesus Christ, Mashiah (Messiah). If there was any suggestion in my young mind that missions were pure adventure, the reality of the work involved struck home as I read other missionary biographies!

Fortunately the Lord ensured I was grounded in scripture. Sword drills and contests with memory verses were such an important part of “training a child in the way she should go” so that when she is old she won’t depart from it! (Proverbs 22:6). I read another book which seriously affected my walk with God. Sheldon wrote “In His Steps” imagining what it would be like if a congregation committed to doing what Jesus wanted, with every decision they made over a one-year period. It made such an impact on their imagined community that my vision was forever impressed by what God can do with a surrendered life....and a walk grounded in Holy Scripture.

God’s Word has always held an important place in my life. A life-time of study has not yet exhausted all of its truths. What joy to discover, day by day, fresh insights into God’s will and way. What a privilege it is, with more time on my hands as a senior, to be able to write and to share, things that the Holy Spirit is teaching me in quiet hours of worship! It has been a joy to teach people in other countries via email, about doctrines of the faith, etc.

My husband and his sister Marie, sang with me in a trio at their grandfather’s church (Victoria Baptist in Hamilton):

“Some day life’s journey will be o’er and I will reach that distant shore.

I’ll sing while entering heaven’s door – ***Jesus led me all the way***”.

At the far end of life’s journey I can say those words ring very true. The Lord has kept His hand on my life.

Entering nursing, I was glad to find an active NCF [Nurses Christian Fellowship]. To this day I belong to their prayer fellowship. It was under the supervision of one of our teachers, in 1959. Nursing years ago was very different from what it is today; we lived in residence. After paying \$150 for 3 years of training, all our meals and accommodation were provided, as well as laundry. Once we passed through the probationary period we were given \$8.00 per month for incidentals. Our second and third years that was increased to \$10, then \$12.00 per month. University students today couldn’t imagine such old-fashioned luxury.

In those days there were rules and regulations in keeping with traditional Christian values; we had a house mother who greeted all our visitors, and we were expected to be in by certain hours. As a young person (17) I needed those guidelines. It is quite possible I could have gone off the rails without the supports that God put in place. Temptation comes in subtle forms! “Thank you Lord!”

3.

Some of the new NCF-ers in my class went together to find a church home. Eventually we settled on the Church of The Open Bible, but not before we visited one church where they asked at the beginning of the service if anyone could play the piano. So I found myself playing for the service. I had some experience from my home church, as well as from playing for another church in Fenelon Falls, when the need arose. The Pastor's wife from our new church (COTOB) was one of the sponsors of NCF and we flourished in the warm fellowship of their home!

We were blessed in the 50's and 60's to be free to pray with our patients and families in crisis. I remember having long chats with a medical student who was hospitalized with a broken leg, sharing freely about faith in Jesus Christ and eventually welcoming him into my home church, once he recovered. On the surgical ward (in Wellesley Hospital) where I worked after graduation, our assistant head nurse was a strong believer. In those days Gideon Bibles were available to all patients. In that era Canada was still known as a Christian country. However, missionaries who worked in Roman Catholic Quebec were sometimes jailed for preaching the gospel openly, so all was not good! How often we prayed for the Heron brothers and their families. When I went to work in Toronto, in 1962, it was reputed to be "Toronto the Good".

Through years of nursing and early marriage I had not forgotten God's call to missions. My own parents exemplified what it meant to be a "missionary" to family and friends, neighbours and colleagues. My dear in-laws gave of their time and energy, my father-in-law driving miles each Sunday to pick up a niece and 2 nephews for Sunday School, one of whom gave his life in missionary service in Africa. (Marlene was my flower girl.) In music and ministry I was surrounded by family whose lives were dedicated to sharing the gospel. I wish my grandkids could know the sweetness of the rich heritage they have inherited!

As only God can do, He placed me as a VON [Victorian Order Nurse] in a largely Jewish neighbourhood. Forest Hill Village was an area where the rich and famous lived. Let me back up....as a student nurse, one area of nursing where I *never* wanted to work was VON – in the community. For me there was something romantic emanating from the very smells of the hospital. "Never say never" I learned. This lesson has been reinforced repeatedly throughout my life.

Mom's early mentoring regarding Jewish missions was actually God preparing me for this moment. Later in my tenure, it was exciting to be able to take Mom to a wedding in a synagogue – the grand-daughter of one of my patients, whom I had nursed back to health sufficient for him to also attend her wedding, invited me and a guest.

During this time, my heart was warmed by the loving concern of my Jewish mothers and grandmothers, because I didn't have any children, planned or unplanned. After 5 years God answered their prayers and blessed us with our son Greg. I learned that by sharing, what today folks call being transparent, doors opened up to talk with patients or their families about faith and prayer; sometimes asking for prayer causes folks to think seriously about God and how He might work in their own areas of need. Grasping opportunities to ask about kosher kitchens and other Biblical laws drew attention to scripture, sometimes, as I attempted to build bridges of friendship. Listening is such an important part of ministry! We need to understand where others are coming from if we are to talk in relevant terms about faith. Later I found that this was all essential training for "real" mission service.

# Acts 1:8

*“He [Jesus] said to them.....you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Within 2 years God gave us the perfect family. Susan became her big brother's best friend! Surely now, if I had any missionary aspirations, they began in earnest at home. How thankful I was that with a little sacrifice, I was able to be a stay-at-home Mom. What a joy it was to tell my kids about the Lord Jesus and together to learn simple memory verses and songs. "Marcy Sings" was one of our favourites!

I am reminded of a verse learned from the discipleship program "Share" which I studied with my precious friend Marilyn Duguid. It challenged us in Jesus' own words: "You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem [beginning at home] and in all Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Dedicated at home, since the emphasis in Baptist circles is on *believers'* baptism not infant dedication, I thank God 50+ years later for the faith of our fathers that has carried over into my children's lives, and into the next generation also. My great-grandparents, James Peter and Emma Dalby, held Bible studies in their own home, over a long 72-year marriage.

My "Jerusalem" held the parents of children my babies went to school with. It was a joy to look after Greg's friend after school until his parents were finished work, and to introduce that family to church. Susan had little friends living on our street who sometimes went with us to special events at church. Much later, when my kids were teens I cared for a little girl who became like my third child. EJ's parents often worked nights, so she practically lived at our place. I loved that precious little girl, so easy to train, so sweet and cuddly!

And then I met an unexpected challenge. A recently widowed neighbour looked after our property while we were on holiday. Knowing he liked to read I prepared to search for some book that would give him a gentle nudge towards things of faith. Right at the door of the Christian Bookstore was a rack of hot-off-the-press, "Born Again", by Nixon's henchman Chuck Colson. "Dear Lord" I prayed, "That is a bit too obvious!" I argued with God, but finally had to give in. Do you ever pray the Lord's prayer..."Thy will be done" and then reject it?

Am I glad I didn't ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Days later Richard asked Jesus into his life at my kitchen table! His life was forever changed. What a dear friend, brother in Christ, he became! But that is not the end of the story. He flew out west to share his new beginning with his son. Later it was his joy to witness his son's whole family being baptised together! Thankfully his son was prepared, because the Lord called him home early, with a sudden heart attack. Thank God I obeyed the promptings of the Holy Spirit to buy that book!

One short mention of the power of prayer and the importance of support for young families. We were so blessed to have parents whose example of Godly living blessed my heart. How often I thanked God for their prayers for me and my children, and for the whole extended family. Today I see answers to prayers that they never lived to see, but that is all glory to God for the things HE has done, and continues to do! We were also blessed to have a fun-loving group of young parents at church whose fellowship meant so much to me while our kids were young, as we shared parenting joys and struggles, and looked to God for answers. One, Cheryl is now my daughter's mother-in-law. PTL!

As I said, I was blessed to have Godly parents and in-laws. On her deathbed my precious mother-in-law, one of my dearest friends, reminded me she had always loved me! What a blessing! I was also blessed by the quiet strength of my father-in-law during our visits after she died. He always lived out what he believed.

My parents instilled a love for reading in both my sister and me. I was asked to share a book I had been enjoying entitled "The Bride of Christ", with ladies at our coffee hour. We, the Church, are the Bride of Christ! I discovered the teacher learns far more than do those she teaches. What a blessing this study was to my own heart.

Around this time I was asked to become superintendent of youth in our Sunday School department. Those were the days of the bus ministry at WBC [Willowdale Baptist Church]! We moved churches when we moved to Willowdale. It was hard to leave the church where we were married which Sid's parents still attended. However, it was a blessing! Our usual attendance in SS was around 300 kids who stayed for both SS and Junior Church. Surely this fulfilled the mission of any church to have such a significant outreach into the community! What a challenge to put together a program that would grow many teens spiritually from 2 different backgrounds - church families as well as unchurched families, and to bring a sense of mission to those who were more familiar with God's word.

Thankfully a new couple committed to running weekly programs for Boys Brigade and Pioneer Girls. Though these incorporated sports and crafts and the acquisition of badges, the primary thrust was for kids to enjoy their relationship with God, so Bible verses were memorized and service projects were entertained. I bless the Lord for the powerful impact these programs had on the spiritual development of my own children....as Jerusalem and Judea overlapped.

I felt I needed more insight so started studying Youth Ministry at OBC [Ontario Bible College]. My Mother had graduated from Toronto Bible College, changed later to OBC, so she was thrilled to see me following in her footsteps. We were given an assignment – to go out into malls and shopping centres, survey in hand, to meet with youth, to find out what they thought about religion, faith and God. What an eye-opener that was! I was happy those I met seemed interested in taking the survey, and through them I gained an understanding of their expectations of how the church could shape up.

With a diploma in counseling from OBC, I knew I was equipped minimally. A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing! I drew on the expertise of those better qualified than I, when I needed to refer. However, God called me into full-time ministry anyway.

I was getting used to doing things I felt inadequate to attempt. The first time was when I got into nursing from Grade 12, instead of going through grade 13. I was so eager to follow in Cherry Ames footsteps! That surely was a miracle from God, in my eyes. Later, it had been a very scary thing to be asked to be the organist at Mt Pleasant Baptist Church. My only organ instruction had come from a saint who was self-taught. Dear old Mary Neate, with fingers miserably gnarled by arthritis, encouraged me to play the organ in her home. Much of the pleasure I have today in playing hymns can be attributed to her enthusiasm. My Dad played the organ too, but not one with foot pedals – his experience was on an old "Pump organ".

Then, because I needed Sundays off, to play the organ, God gave me the job as a VON. Most qualified for that job with a degree in nursing, but I found myself instructing students from U of T, with only experience to rely upon.

Now I was invited by a lady from WBC who was on the Board at FEBC [Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches] to become a Chaplain at Pearson International Airport. I was commissioned by FEBC, since they do not ordain women for ministry. What did I know about Chaplaincy? I learned on the job! By then my kids were pretty much grown up, so God's timing was perfect.



Working at the airport moved me out of my comfort zone. Discipleship had always been my passion. I had walked others through "Share". It was with great joy that I watched as Liliana and Barb and others, grew in their faith! Now I was faced with the possibility of doing Evangelism, cold turkey. I read Dick Innes' book "I Hate Witnessing" and was comforted by his approach. He reminded me that in the end it is by the power of God alone, whether or not a person is converted. It is only my job to love people while sowing the seed. "Thy will be done" became a tune that haunted my consciousness and taught me to lean on the Lord for vision, wisdom and compassion. He gave me the courage to face the unexpected with understanding and quiet boldness.

Time and again I was reminded of what Jesus did with twelve uneducated men who became His representatives, used by God to challenge their world! "It's all about You, Jesus" became my theme song! The Lord gave me Isaiah 61:1-3 as my ministry verses.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning [for the spirit of heaviness KJV], and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair!"*

God gave me a passionate interest in people. I took courses at OBC to bolster my understanding of world religions. Various people groups populated my work place, 35,000 employees. Yes – chaplains were not just there for the flying public, but for the greater good of those employed at all levels, CEO's to floor cleaners. Chaplains were vetted by the RCMP and then given the privilege of a pass, enabling us to go anywhere through security. I was joined by women and young people I had taught, including Susan upon occasion, who worked as receptionists at the chapel, or assisted me in a multitude of other ways.

Generally I am a team player; I observed the esteem in which the Roman Catholic priest was held and opted for his method of circulating among the staff. My Baptist superior, Philip, had developed vibrant Bible studies in the Chapel as well as in the cargo area. I got to know more of the flight attendants by holding a seminar on fitness with Iris Pears, from Peoples Church. Ministering to practical needs provided a platform from which to build relationships in order to share the gospel, and I took prayer walks in many areas behind the scenes.

God gave me the privilege of listening to many stories – the young woman from India who dreaded her arranged marriage; the young man who had been sexually abused as a child, people fighting God, women who had been manipulated, hurting hearts, angry men and women, people for whom fear and depression coloured their relationships, the Sikh gentleman who had been a teacher, now reduced to menial work.

Emma Lazarus/Irving Berlin wrote the most moving lyrics, which often ran through my head:

*Give me your tired, your poor -  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free;  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,  
Send these the homeless tempest-tost to me.  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

7.

At the airport I saw “*masses yearning to be free*” every day! and praised God for the answer Jesus gave: “I am the Truth” and “The Truth will set you free” (John 14:6, 8:32), because the heart of God yearns to lavish His love (1 John 3:1) on all who receive Jesus. He is The Lamp – “The Light of the World”! (John 8:12), sent so that no one ever need walk in darkness and despair.

But – in the midst of it all there were outstanding bright spots! What a joy it was to discover that a Russian family landing at Pearson, hoping to make Canada their new home, were brothers and sisters in the Lord! It gave me great pleasure to make these dear folk as comfortable as possible, to sleep in the chapel with their 10 children, enroute to Edmonton. It had been an incredibly long journey. I will never forget how lovingly the older teens looked after their younger siblings, especially the little one with Downs Syndrome.

There were countless opportunities to help travellers. Years later I was so surprised when manning the MATE/FCC booth at Peoples Missions Conference, a stranger walked up to me, and with great joy shook my hand, thanking me. What had I done? Apparently I had prayed with her as she waited for a flight to take her home to her dying Mom. “Dear Lord! Thank you for keeping this lady in Your precious care”.

“Day by day and with each passing moment, strength I find to meet my trials here.

Trusting in my Father’s wise bestowment, I’ve no cause for worry or for fear”

...words my husband I had sung together in Grandpa Loney’s church in Hamilton became so meaningful, reminding me I did not work alone, because

“He whose heart is kind beyond all measure,  
Gives unto each day what He deems best”.

Emergencies arose at Pearson. I was called to bring a young bride through Customs. Three days into their honeymoon her husband was struck by lightning on the beach, and died instantly. Thankfully I was able to establish a well-known Toronto family in our lovely chapel, to await their grieving daughter. Thankfully their family was leaning on Jesus at such a moment!

Duties varied from day to day...only chapel services and Bible studies, announced over the PA system, were predictable. We worked together with the RCMP as well as the medical team, sending and receiving patients, people in crisis, those in trouble with the law, and even rarely someone who had died on flight. It was a questionable privilege to have to announce to waiting relatives that their loved one had died. Then there was a bag lady who visited us on her rounds through Toronto, and the CEO whose health failed, each in their own way needing love and reassurance.

Friends were always willing to help our ministry. One dear lady employed by the cleaning staff showed me her loosened teeth and agreed to go to my friend Dr Red Warren, who was willing to see her gratis, to remove said tooth; she had no dental insurance. How thankful I was for his tender compassion. Scott Reynolds devoted a day to create a photo journal of our work to be presented in the EFB publication. My son helped me to lay carpet in the new chapel in Terminal 1 – the original is no longer there, but it was from the parking lot of that old terminal that we used to take our kids to see planes landing and taking off while waiting for family to arrive. Security would not allow that now.

I mentioned the RC priest; I discovered if one treats others with respect you do reap what you sow. He was always very friendly to me, thank the Lord. Even between Christians conflicts may arise, but there are Godly ways of dealing with differences of opinion and methodology. At the beginning of each new year my superior, Philip, would announce how many folks he aimed to “win” to the Lord in the coming year. I was seized with apprehension at such a thought, and refused to predict what I felt must be left in the Lord’s hands.

Somehow I was contacted by an organization I had never heard of. IACAC [International Association of Civil Airport Chaplains] invited me to give the benediction at their up-coming conference in Atlanta. I had no idea what God was calling me to do, so was surprised to find myself sitting between 2 RC priests at the head table, at a banquet of about 500 people. Suddenly I was thrust into an ecumenical situation from which my very nature normally would shrink. Does God have a sense of humour, or just a sense of purpose? I was to learn that this association would become a stepping stone in my spiritual development. When dinner was over one stranger remarked I must be a Baptist - astute observation since I had taken my benediction straight from the Bible! Praise God – His words, not mine! (Jude 24-25)

There in Atlanta I made life-long friends. Originally an Anglican Vicar, Bob and his wife Fran hail from Luton England where it has been my privilege to visit, on the way home from Africa. As well they have stayed with me in my home in Toronto on a couple of occasions. He has been a tremendous support in one of the darker periods of my life and still sends me his devotionals to encourage my walk with God. I learned long ago that we must receive, in order to have anything to give! What a blessing their friendship has been. As well they have hearts for missions, working with YWAM both in the UK and in the Philippines. Precious memories!

Returning to Pearson - I welcomed a stranger into my office. Arlene was desperate to get right with God; she had been diagnosed with a terminal brain tumour and was about to go into hospital. This dear Jewish lady had never practised her religion, but the Holy Spirit sent her to a place where her loving heavenly Father would meet her specific need! Arlene embraced the forgiveness our Lord Jesus offers; she had led a very colourful life, but in the end she gave a very powerful witness to the healing mercies of God, spiritual healing, not physical.

Just prior to her death we were able to hold a communion service where she was cared for in her sister's home, led by my friend, Rev. Gordon Rumford. What joy arose from her hospital bed in that living room! What celebration!.... and a testimony to her sister's family too! But – that is not the end of the story. Arlene gave me a letter to personally deliver to the step-dad who had sexually abused her as a child, a letter of full forgiveness, as well as a testimony to what the grace of God had done in her life, through Jesus Christ her Lord!

Grieving the loss of my dear friend, God had a lovely surprise for me. IACAC was meeting at Christchurch in New Zealand. God sent me, as guest of Air Canada via Hawaii, where He had an assignment. Imagine my surprise to find myself sitting in first class! What sweet provision for a 29-hour trip! Waiting in the lounge in Honolulu, I met a couple of chaplains bound for the same conference. One confided in me some struggles she was having spiritually so we prayed together, overlooking a moonlit sea at midnight. How astonishing to find God at work, in such unusual circumstances!

Our group, gathered from around the world, was housed at the University of Christchurch; it was during the Christmas break – summertime in this southern country! Here God spoke to my heart during the ceremony of foot-washing. Scarcely anything has moved me as much as this did, leaving a last impression of awe and holiness. I felt so richly blessed as I remember the service Jesus rendered to His beloved disciples, just prior to His crucifixion!

Years later another holy moment came as I watched a pastor in Zambia breaking a loaf of bread so gently during communion, as though it really was the body of Christ that he was touching! Such reverence reminded me of a favourite hymn, my prayer:

*Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways.  
Reclothe us in our rightful minds,  
In purer lives Thy service find,  
In deeper reverence, praise!*

Back to New Zealand - I thank God for the privilege of worship too as a group of us toured the south island, when the conference was finished. While most of our group went into a café for tea, my friend Brita, from Stockholm, and I rushed to see the genius of God's handiwork – the flora and fauna so unique to NZ! We took a helicopter ride to the top of Fox Glacier where we landed to pitch snowballs at each other; the top of a river of ice descending past lush green rainforest, punctuated by deep blue crevasses, is a sight to be remembered forever! Overlooking the Tasman sea! What a sight!

Flying is one of my victories in Jesus, because from childhood I had a fear of heights that only God enabled me to overcome. He does not want us to live in a spirit of fear. Landing in a jet at Christchurch after 29 hours of flying, I was actually too tired to more than wonder which wing would hit the ground first. In this windy city near misses are not uncommon, so it was chosen as a good place for us to study the role of chaplains in an airport disaster.

Of course any landing could be tricky. On my very first plane flight in 1967, we touched down in Antigua. It seemed to me the plane was coming in way too fast for the length of a runway which ended in the sea. Then, the pilot makes such a difference! Flying from Athens to Cairo, I wondered if the pilot was practising dodging bullets as he came in with an s-curve approach; there were soldiers with rifles on the roof tops of airport buildings. In Hong Kong, on the other hand, the pilot had to be very straight in his approach to a runway that landed us between tall buildings; I understand there is a new airport in that city now, the approach being much less thrilling. However, even coming into Toronto from Scotland in 1986, our plane dropped so suddenly I wondered why the wings didn't fold, and Susan, who was with me, told me if I could take that I could do any ride at Wonderland. That happened to our plane, not once but *twice* on descent in the middle of a storm! Then they closed the airport!

Back to New Zealand: I felt quite out of my depth with this group of chaplains. Most were highly educated people and here was I, serving with a diploma as my only credential. Oh I had part of my BRE but what was that to so many Doctors of Divinity or Masters of Theology? God of course had it all figured out. Dr. Linda Cannell was a gal from our choir at Mt Pleasant, with whom Sid and I sang sometimes. She now lived in the USA where she was a professor at a Christian university. She was guest lecturer at Ontario Theological Seminary when we reconnected. Immediately she scoffed at my efforts, telling me to go for my MTS [Master of Theological Studies] as a mature student. "Dear Lord – is this Your will"? Inadequacy raised its ugly head again. After all I only had grade 12 from high school.

Voila! Suddenly I found myself taking Theology in a 2-week crash course, trying to absorb Prolegomena (foundational studies on the philosophy of religion) and Schleiermacher all in one gulp. Thankfully a gal in the front row asked all the questions we at the back needed answers for! The idea was that, if I passed I would be awarded a degree, but if I made a 4.0 average, I would earn it. It somehow boosted my flagging ego to discover I earned it, in the end. Thanks be to God for my parents' prayer support!

The joy of serving as Chaplain made me feel like I had found my place for life, but apparently God had other plans. Just as I had thought I would always enjoy nursing, which I loved, God was going to stretch me again. I continued working part time at the airport, but there wasn't the same satisfaction as when I was fully engaged. And a new area of ministry was required by the seminary to grow my theological experience. I had worked at Pearson too long (7 years).

### Transition

My heart had long been burdened for women struggling with abuse. Sadly Christian families are not immune. I had watched marriages disintegrate because there seemed to be no one to turn to. Pastors apparently felt inadequate, often treating these women with Biblical cliches. Sometimes pastors themselves can be abusive; the story of a very dear friend of mine is included in a book "Hidden Evil", recently published. Putting a good face on it, another woman endured verbal, financial, emotional, and sexual abuse from her husband, who was seen as a pillar in the church, and when she sought help from 3 different pastors each was unwilling to counsel her.

Years later, working as the Counsellor at WBC I heard stories of abuse from folks outside the church, that would have shocked any unknowing congregation. I also knew personally what it was like to be falsely accused. How does one pick up the pieces after experiencing such anguish and sorrow, suffering and fear?

God was showing me the importance of a ministry once again outside my comfort zone. My heart grieved for the impact abuse was having on children living in such families. One must never forget how "normal" a lifestyle of wife-beating might appear, and the subsequent behaviours which might play out in their adult years. My own mother had been a battered child, yet she eventually led her Mom to the Lord! With God, all things are possible! Many years later I learned that among some tribes wife-beating, even among Christians, is accepted as a required family discipline. Thankfully we were able to raise up the Biblical standard! I was glad for opportunities to teach Biblical parenting, hopefully to counteract misconceptions about God's will and purposes, and to correct inappropriate transgenerational patterns.

During 2 years of study at Seminary, several doors opened up. One of my mentors helped me to establish support groups in a couple of local churches, using this as an opportunity for outreach into the community. She had first-hand experience, sheltering a woman who needed time-out from her abusive husband. Later it became my responsibility to open up my one-bedroom apartment to women seeking refuge. My couch was well used! What joy it was to witness reconciliation and marriage, between a common-law couple, as they began bringing their children to church and Sunday School.

So – what do missions at home look like? The message of God's amazing love gives power to the weak and weary in every corner of the world! The basic need of everyone is to be significant, to feel secure and to belong. Through a course in "Evangelism Explosion" I was reminded that we do not deserve, nor can we earn God's unconditional love. "God so loved the world (me, Marilyn) that He gave His only begotten Son..." God sent Jesus to earth to free us all, including you and me, from guilt and shame, from bondage to sinful thoughts and ways. The good news is that I only need to believe and receive that great gift! In so doing I became a child of the King! How significant is that? What a glorious hope to share with anyone who will listen! (John 3:16, 1:12, 13).

Peoples Church introduced a new ministry enabling folks to become helpers in the counseling ministry. Because of my work in the field, I took the Stephen Ministry course under Dr Warwick Cooper. At this time I was involved in

the discipleship program with Hugh Rough, as well as working in the Singles department, under Dr Timothy and Hazel Starr. My own life experience had prepared my heart to be empathetic and compassionate with those who have suffered loss through divorce. The very word was painful to my ears; it took me nearly 5 years before I could talk about my own experience.

One dear sweet lady left a training session I was teaching in a Brethren Church when she found out I was divorced, so acceptance of divorcees in modern churches isn't universal. For a short while, by default, I became the leader of the Singles, when Timothy and Hazel retired. I now knew the purpose of that very painful year when I lost my home, my job, my Mom and my marriage. *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

Along with growing involvement with MATE [Mission for Advancing Theological Education], my plate was very full. Something had to go. Sadly I could not continue working with Stephen Ministers and eventually I gave up the Singles Ministry too.

However, one of my greatest joys at this time was in the area of discipleship. Jing was a student at York University. Apparently she had gone forward to receive Jesus. When she came to my home I asked her to describe when/how she became a Christian and she told me she was not, since she struggled to believe in Jesus. Her Mom at home in China, was a strong believer. We studied the Bible together for months and then I left her with more scripture to study, while I worked in Guyana. When I came home her face just glowed. At last the Holy Spirit had opened her eyes to see her Saviour! I was very sad when she returned home to her husband in China, but she came back once.

During that second visit to Canada, Jing asked to be baptised. She belonged to an underground church in China and couldn't celebrate that act of obedience there. How thankful I was that Dr. Arnold Doobay, Director of MATE/FCC, was able to arrange for her to be baptised at his church, on short notice. His church required the candidate to be interviewed carefully; Jing's joy overpowered the elders! Jing kept in touch until after her son was born, but then suddenly I heard nothing more from her. I know I will see her in heaven, but how I long to know she is safe, here on earth. What a story she must have to tell.

The ministry God called me to, with abused people (make no mistake, women can be as abusive as men) had far-reaching ramifications. I could not have possibly foreseen the direction my life would take. I was invited to teach at a conference in Guyana, South America, working under the umbrella of MATE. A young man in our church began the mission MATE after visiting Haiti. There Delvin and Hazel saw an appalling lack of resource tools for training pastors, and came home determined to collect books that would enhance the ministry there. Their vision exploded! And Delvin Alexis became the founder of the mission MATE. At first my involvement was very casual – packing boxes of books as a volunteer.

But! - Religious education, along with discipleship, has been my life-long passion. The possibility of sending folks to teach short-term put a new face on the ministry. Even MATE's first major *medical* mission was educational, in Trinidad and Tobago. But before that.....

Guyana

Evangelical pastors and lay-leaders came together in Georgetown annually, gathering from as far away as Charity. The subject of abuse was one of the topics for study, in 1995, when my friend and colleague Barbara and I were invited under the auspices of the mission MATE, to teach. Our shared conviction was that the church should be an institution of healing, so eventually we developed a 3-year plan for teaching about Godly relationships, and training in basic counselling skills. Happily Barb was able to use this experience as her field ed, at Bible College. Until today some of the ladies we met remain my dear friends. I have watched them employing what they learned, down through the years. Praise God!

We were blessed with excellent accommodation at Guyana Bible College, and were very kindly taken care of by area pastors, delivering a bewildering variety of fresh fruit every day, and ensuring our safety as we traveled from place to place. One paragraph can hardly contain my first impressions of this beautiful country. Abundant flowers belied the poverty of even the most humble abode, and tall palms of every description graced the streets; houses were built on stilts to avoid flooding. Cows mingled with chickens, dogs and traffic in downtown Georgetown [the capitol city]; one day I was horrified to see a taxi deliberately drive over the foot of a cow lying in the street. Traffic seemed archaic; I'm sure there were rules for the road but to avoid streets deeply rutted, we sometimes found ourselves traveling more off the roads than on. Market places were crowded and offered a bewildering variety of wares, where vendors offered fresh coconut water to passersby – delicious refreshment! I was shocked to see the way they casually, but skillfully whacked the tops off each nut held in their hands, and wondered how many fingers or hands were injured in practise. Flags announced the presence of Hindu homes and the domes of temples rose into the sky. It was our good fortune to have a tour of St George's [Anglican] Cathedral, the largest frame church in the world.

The Bible College was near the sea wall which had been built with sluice gates 300 years before by the Dutch, to protect the low-lying coast. Many years later the wall was breached – more about that later. It was such a delight to walk on that wall or just to sit there, to meditate by the seaside. Over the years, our missions frequently took place in the spring, so we witnessed their Easter tradition of kite-flying, practised for a week before the actual competition from the sea wall. Sadly, it occurred to me, this had nothing to do with the real reason for Easter, but then at home, neither do chocolate Easter eggs and bunnies! However, it seemed to me that folks had done well to live together in relative harmony, the three major religious groups being Muslim, Hindu and Christian. What scope for evangelism!

The second year our ministry expanded. What a privilege! We were invited to teach doctors and nurses Biblical counseling at Georgetown Public Hospital, during the first week. Imagine our surprise and joy, to find Hindu and Muslim nurses joining our studies, and earning a certificate. God be praised for this unexpected outreach!

As we toured the hospital our hearts were broken by the desperate need. Patients were expected to provide their own linens, or they went without. The wards were large – 10-12 beds. Family members often brought in food; HIV and AIDS patients were sometimes abandoned by family. Thankfully area churches helped to make up the deficit in the meal department. Some team members were moved to contribute funds over the years, to help feed these poorer patients.

Our second year, Barb and I stayed with a dear lady in her spacious home....Sheila's daughter came to visit from New York, bringing a 70 pound suitcase full of meat! Of course it had started off frozen so was quite all right when

it arrived. Barb and I shared a double bed under a mosquito net. At the Bible College we had slept the year before, *individually* enshrouded like a couple of princesses! In the night at Sheila's, we occasionally heard squeaking so when we found droppings we knew we had mice. NOT! Some days later we discovered bats were flying in through unscreened windows, to roost behind our mirror. At the Bible College I had crawled around on my hands and knees trying to catch large tropical cockroaches to take specimens home to my son, but apart from fine ants in our water glasses, that was pretty well all the wild life we encountered the first year. In Sheila's neighbourhood we were awakened in the very early morning by roosters crowing "time to get up", not exactly wild life! Sometimes the lady next door beat them to it with her very loud songs of praise and worship, any time from 4am, on!

We were privileged to speak at area churches in the evenings, where Barb excelled in using her dramatic flare to illustrate women of the Bible. However, we found it interesting that we might wait up to an hour after the service was to start, to be picked up from home. When we got there the folks continued singing...worship being such an integral part of every meeting! Much to learn about culture!!

The third year Barbara was unable to go. Years before I had met Dr. Maria Remy, CEO and paediatrician at Scarborough General Hospital, Tobago; she hosted our first fact-finding medical team in Trinidad and Tobago. By this time MATE's outreach had overlapped. I had become the co-ordinator of medical missions, later to be known as FCC [Friends committed to Caring], the new arm of MATE.

During the 17 years of my affiliation with MATE, I was responsible for raising support for each of my mission trips; as well God blessed me with regular support from churches and individuals for my work as office administrator. Medical mission trips took me to Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zambia. It was my privilege to do ministry in each of those countries as well as to spend considerable time in Kenya, teaching and training on several occasions. It was such a delight to include a little health feature when speaking to ladies, many of whom had minimal understanding of how their bodies functioned. It warmed my heart when we could laugh together over stories shared. Too many times we were called to weep together over situations impossible to remedy.

As I mentioned - Maria accompanied me; we made ourselves available to teach and train regarding counseling needs in Guyana. She brought with her vast experience, having worked with HCF [Hospital Christian Fellowship] as well as YFC [Youth For Christ]. I've never known anyone more totally in love with Jesus! Memories of working and praying with Maria continue to inspire me to this day.

All flights into Guyana stopped first in Trinidad. Here Maria met me, so we had some time between flights to prepare for a meeting that evening. We had been suddenly conscripted to be the key-note speakers, in Georgetown. It was a youth rally planned to discuss the topic of sexual purity. Whew!

God was teaching me to be prepared at all times to give a word, in season and out of season! (2 Timothy 4:2). Years later I remember in Kenya, being told on Saturday night at dinner that I would be preaching at two churches next day. By 2am God had given me a message on "Friendship with God" and I was able to sleep peacefully. By the way, I do not consider my gift to be preaching, but rather teaching. However, one does not turn down an opportunity to share from the Word of God.



Another time, at a Youth Rally in Zambia, Marlene O'Neill was performing in concert. Dr. Doobay, our Director was sick; for the only time I remember, Arnie missed a meeting. Since we were attending a concert I didn't take my Bible. Imagine my shock when they announced that the team leader would now speak. A borrowed Bible fell open at Romans 8. I cannot remember what I said, but I hope it was encouraging to those dear young people to know "*there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ*".

I cannot remember our words in Guyana, but that night 300 young people stood to commit themselves to sexual purity. I thrill to remember the moving of the Holy Spirit! What a hot topic! What a great God! It was exciting to find some of the girls requested follow-up. God had given us a whole house, a large and airy mansion where Maria and I could meet individually with those seeking further counsel. Indeed He goes before us making crooked places straight!

Because of her contacts with YFC (Youth For Christ), Maria arranged for us to visit area schools. This was her passion – sharing Jesus with children and youth. I was astonished at the freedom we had to do so! Not so in Canada. I observed a deep respect for teachers among children in Guyana, as well as later in Africa, with almost a reverence for education. Teachers in North America – eat your hearts out! Yet these dedicated men and women enjoyed none of the resources we have here at home. Enrichment? They were fortunate to have a blackboard, and sometimes workbooks had to be shared; and in Guyana many teachers had as many as 80 students in one classroom. Sadly my heart grieved that I couldn't do more to help!!

Maria and I also continued our counseling training of lay-leaders in the church. In subsequent years I had the opportunity to challenge some of these dear ladies to engage in community outreach by taking on a project into which they could pour what they had been learning. It was very slow to catch on, but eventually, years later, I saw some effort to reach beyond their comfort level. The danger is, as Christians we may become so content with soaking up Biblical truth that we forget the purpose of all God is giving us, is to share, to be squeezed, poured out into the lives of others who also need to know the joy of the Lord. We are, after all Ambassadors for Jesus.

Speaking of Ambassadors....It was the policy of MATE/FCC to announce the arrival of our teams to the Canadian rep in the host country. Therefore we found ourselves visiting more than one High Commissioner in Guyana, over a period of 16 years; they move frequently. One even welcomed us into his home for lunch! The Canadian Ambassador in Zambia entertained us royally for breakfast, very welcome after flying for more than 24 hours. However, we were followed to the Americana Hotel by agents from the airport; customs officials had passed us through without difficulty but the temptation was too much! We were followed, so I found myself helplessly facing 2 men who had the government stamp of approval for the meds they took from our supplies, while the rest of the team obliviously ate breakfast.

The High Commissioner in Trinidad entertained our team to a lovely luncheon, but another one in Guyana was not very supportive when the country was suffering from post-election riots. His word of advice was to run the other way if we saw the rioters coming...not terribly protective of his country's citizens. Homes and businesses at that time were being burned, and sadly some folks in Georgetown were even shot. Our hosts at YWAM mission cautioned us to stay away from the windows as the wild crowd passed the house. We were thankful our prayers were answered; God kept us safe to leave Georgetown next morning, to enjoy greater tranquility as we worked in the countryside.

Riots were not confined to election fallout. I have one outstanding memory of our first major medical mission. A team of 24, carrying 2 bags each of 70 pounds made quite a sight at Pearson Airport. One bag was personal luggage and the other carried literature we were going to give out at giant medical fairs all over both Trinidad and Tobago. With all the enthusiasm of a ground-breaking experience, our team generated a huge welcome from T&T MOH [Ministry of Health]. Little did we know that during the closing fair in Brian Lara Promenade, Port of Spain, a subversive movement by a group I prefer not to name, would threaten our safety. Thank the Lord only our leader knew the potential, as our team interacted with the general public and enjoyed the closing ceremonies. A choir of nurses from St. Anne's Hospital, clad in sparkling white uniforms, shoes, stockings, and caps, sang "Jesus is the answer for the world today". Dr Kenneth Ragoonath, head of HCF, closed the event in a very moving prayer and my heart soared with the joy of Jesus' name being lifted up in such a cosmopolitan place! Thankfully the officials were able to contain the threat, so we finished our first mission on a very high note.

Many years before, my husband and I visited Trinidad and Tobago, on a natural science expedition; I was astonished at the progress made during the intervening years! Highways were improved significantly and a new "state of the art" hospital was host to open heart surgery. However, we found that in outlying clinics there was still a severe shortage of meds. Some diabetic and hypertensive patients had to wait dangerously long for new shipments to arrive. On MATE/FCC's last mission to Trinidad things had substantially changed; more people there were using cell phones than at home! However, sadly there was an undercurrent of violence which affected native Trinidadians when visiting home; one friend from my home church in Toronto confided that he always slept with a pistol under his pillow. I was reminded of the song that says:

*People need the Lord! On they go in private pain, living fear to fear.  
Laughter hides the silent cries only Jesus hears. People need the Lord!*

We usually took our teams for a day of R & R when our work was finished. It is a challenge to endure climate changes of heat and humidity, long hours, and sometimes uncertain transportation, as well as unusual foods in the host country, so we attempted to treat them to much needed rest and relaxation immediately prior to going home. In Trinidad one favourite place was over the northern mountains – a beautiful drive to Maracas Beach, where often the sea was too rough for swimming. Nothing daunted, we moved on to Las Cuevas, a more sheltered cove. However, one gastronomical treat was always available at Maracas – my favourite shark and bake [a shark sandwich].

In the short period of 20 years it was my privilege to travel around our globe, visiting 26 countries. Of those I only engaged in formal ministry in about 10, but remember - we believers represent our Lord Jesus Christ wherever we go. It is an awesome responsibility to question what sort of rep was I? Someone rightly suggested "*Preach the gospel and, only when necessary, use words*". Others have noted that our words and deeds must match since "*what you do speaks so loudly I can't hear what you say*". These pithy sayings from my youth still stand me in good stead, as I attempt to live for Jesus.

Traveling to Kenya with a student on her first mission trip, I was occupied for hours while waiting at Heathrow for our flight, by watching a most engaging couple whom I assumed were husband and wife – obviously Muslims. What a handsome pair! I discovered later they were brother and sister returning home after graduating from university in England. As only God can do, my seat was required by someone else and the flight attendant asked me to change. I found myself sitting beside the young lady who had so attracted my attention. They were very friendly, asking where I was from and where I was going...and why? It was one of those “God moments”. I knew a forthright answer was required so I told them I was a Christian missionary. The possibility of introducing them to my Saviour filled me with the most exquisite anticipation!

Our conversation became quite intense. The young man was obviously seeking; he had been listening to Christian programs broadcasted in England and wanted to check his facts. How my heart yearned for them to know Jesus! Once her brother was satisfied he began reading, and the young woman became more confidential. She dreaded going home to an arranged marriage with a man she hardly knew. She would be living with his mother and this made her very anxious. Although it wasn't possible for me to hear from her again, she still remains in my heart. The seed had been sown, now it was up to God to produce fruit. I pray that she found grace in the eyes of the Lord so that one day we might meet again at Jesus' feet.

I often wondered if that was the only reason I went to Africa that year. The following mission was probably the least successful in human terms! We had multiple goals; we had the privilege of sharing Canadian culture and geography, as well as Bible stories, with children in schools and orphanages. Our primary goals were to encourage women to minister the love of God in their families as well as to one another, using illustrations from women of the Bible. As well, we were also privileged to train church leaders in discipleship, a necessary corollary to evangelism! My heart had been stirred by Bonhoeffer's testimony “The Cost of Discipleship”!

While I was chaplain, it had been my awesome responsibility to speak at Evangel Temple to a large group of pastors hosted by Terry Winter, from across Canada, on the subject of Discipleship. Terrified at the prospect I said “No” to the invitation twice, but the third time it was repeated I figured God was trying to tell me something. For too long evangelism had been the Church's focus; now we must take the Great Commission seriously by addressing Jesus' call to “Make disciples”!

Sarah and I were warmly welcomed by staff and students at St Matthews Secondary School, Kenya, where we shared the gospel in word and song with over 500 young people. Dr. Doobay followed through with a gospel message, and local believers were prepared to “follow up” in the real sense of the word. What a privilege!

We were welcomed in Eldoret with open arms, by a young woman who became my dear friend. She interpreted for us so capably, then welcomed us into her tiny home for tea. Now “tea” in Kenya consists of tea leaves boiled together with milk and sugar. Prepared with love, we found that was often all the hostess had to offer. It gave a sweet new meaning to the term hospitality! Tabitha's Mom joined Sarah and me, sharing as Tabitha interpreted, a terrible story of persecution. During an election year believers in her village were locked in a church, which was then set on fire. No one escaped. Thankfully she was visiting her daughter at the time. Tabitha was responsible for our itinerary and our accommodation. In Eldoret we purchased a number of sewing machines with donations from home, to boost the earning capacity of poorer women in the church. It was a thrill to dedicate these machines to the service of God, used by the church to also teach sewing to women as an outreach into the community.

Christine, a pastor's wife, joyfully welcomed us into her home. As is the custom, her walls were not painted, but rather the adobe was covered by spotless white curtains. This beautiful young woman offered us a boiled egg each, to go with our tea – such a gift is very costly. A career missionary friend of mine found that a boiled egg eaten 3 times a week, enhanced the learning capabilities of children in the orphanage she set up in Lusaka. Here in the rural areas of Kenya we were very touched by Christine's generosity!

But by highlighting the positive things, I may mislead you. The time Sarah and I spent in Kenya was fraught with problems. A week in Kisii was made memorable by the spirit of evil, as we ministered to a small group of women. We had prepared to speak to 300 ladies – there were not 30. Numbers of course are not important, but the time and money that went into preparing outlines for that large a group was not negligible. Furthermore this group of women was obviously practising a syncretic form of Christianity. What do I mean?

Sadly in many instances people blend Christianity with old religious beliefs and superstitions. Many men, assuming the role of pastor have not been properly trained and often taught only partial Biblical truth. In Kisii during one session, caught up in a trance, my charismatic interpreter became lost to reality. What to do? I was moved by God to walk about, placing my hands on each lady's head, praying for the power of God to break the evil spirits that very obviously engulfed them, at that moment in time. I regret to say I had to shake my interpreter to get her out of the spell which held her in its grip. I prayed for the impact this might have on my young assistant from Canada!

We seemed to frequently play the role of observer on that trip. Missionaries with whom we stayed took us to the best equipped orphanage I have ever seen. The children, sponsored by European believers, lacked for nothing! Toys, playground equipment, nutritious food, enriched classrooms, books – God had truly blessed those children!

Contrast the above-mentioned orphanage with our experience of teaching in Kibera slums, Nairobi! I weep as I remember ladies too hungry to care about much beyond their children. We arranged to take food enough for lunch for each lady, that week, only to find they saved it for hungry little ones at home! Our hearts broke with the reality of their poverty! We cast aside our prepared teaching and told Bible stories hoping to engage their interest in the love of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The response was pretty bleak, their minds blunted by starvation!

Our hearts ached for the poverty we witnessed. We taught in a school in Dandora where one of the world's largest dumps is found. Stats in 2019 reported 2,000 metric tonnes of waste are added to this mile-long dump, every day (Google). What a tragedy to see people vying with storks and rats for scraps of food! North Americans might consider what rights these kids have, when we complain about our rights. Children with little bare feet dangling over a dirt floor, and no electric light to cheer the rainy day, made a pretty dismal picture, yet we visitors at their miserable school created such a diversion that their little faces shone with joy! "Dear God –" we hardly knew how to pray for them...and my heart still breaks!

Sarah and I had one last Kenyan adventure. We were invited to speak at a church north of Eldoret. Our transport was in a little Tuk-Tuk, a vehicle which starts out like a 3-wheeled motorcycle enveloped in a canvas covering to protect 3 - 4 people squashed onto a seat overhanging the back 2 wheels.

Sarah and I were haunted by failure feelings. Plans fell apart and I regret not making a greater effort to salvage a mission plagued by poor planning. One teaching session was rained out – torrential rain on a tin roof made speaking to be heard, impossible. We spent many hours working as well as teaching about Canadian geography and culture, as well as health issues, in a small orphanage in Nairobi; they so appreciated the gifts we brought – crafts and clothing and memorabilia of Canada, donated by caring folks at home. We also played a very small part, sharing at a youth rally, admirably organized by the local church. Still I missed feeling “connected” with the people.

We toured a multi-storied building where we found whole families living in one room each, sharing a very poorly equipped kitchen and an unsanitary bathroom, with everyone on the same floor. No privacy, no opportunity, and no hope! People made in the image of God should not be living in such conditions!

Sarah and I spent many hours in the home of our hosts, feeling that surely God had brought us here for a greater good, but it was not safe for us to go out without a guide, so we were held hostage by local custom and lack of support. Bishop Wanjala and his wife, Margaret did everything possible to make us *feel* at home; every morning hot water was brought for us to bath in the unfinished bathroom of their large guest house. I’ve never seen a more hospitable couple. Ministry was not confined to their large church, but their home was open to all those in need, and they shared generously whatever God had blessed them with! They discussed with us some of the evils faced by the African church.... and we learned to pray for our brothers and sisters in more specific ways.

We see evil in different forms, here in North America. For example, prior to each meeting with one client at WBC, God led me to do a prayer walk, relying on Him for safety while ministering to one poor wandering soul. Evil spirits manifest themselves in variety of ways – people making erroneous assumptions, pain inflicted by suspicion, jealousy, prejudice and unforgiveness, and the list goes on.. The North American Church needs to stand guard against thinking that evil is something only experienced by pagans in far-off countries!

*“If any of you lacks wisdom he/she should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault!”* What a God we serve! (James 1:5). There were many times when I needed wisdom and patience. Working often on 6 hours sleep, my family will tell you is not enough for me, yet God was there, accomplishing His purposes through this weakest of vessels. My imperfections, faults and failings were glaring, at least to my Father in heaven, however well I may have concealed them from other people. My heart yearned to do so much more where I saw such great need! How often coming home, I had to fight a spirit of resentment when I saw luxuries taken for granted.

The following year, Bishop Eliud from Eldoret had an outreach team ministering among the Pokot tribe in neighbouring Uganda. My new team had the privilege of teaching ladies at his church. While in Eldoret we also spoke at the College for Nurses, Carol, a nutritionist on our team, shared her expertise, and I talking about the psychological aspect of nursing, as it is impacted by faith. When we were finished, Bishop Eliud invited us to join the group going to Uganda. There was nothing to mark the border other than a rock announcing Kenya to one side, Uganda to the other.

MATE/FCC had previously donated funds to build three huts, used for children’s education in one primitive Pokot village. Now there was a proper school being built, so it was a joy to participate in that arm of our ministry. We dug post holes with machetes – no sophisticated tools there. Sadly I wondered if the framework we erected would

withstand much wind, but there was communal excitement over this improvement; adobe walls would lend strength to the structure. We distributed vitamins to women and children but in the absence of a proper interpreter (the teacher was away), we couldn't communicate with any sense of clarity. We were pleased to see a well that was established in the community, providing water where of course goats took priority over people.

I remember another highlight while working that year with Carol and Michelle, who was a teacher on our ministry team. Through Bishop Wanjala we met a dear brother, Sammy. His heart was in children's education, so along with other Christians in Nairobi he rescued children from off the streets, giving them food and an opportunity to learn the 3 R's. We were shocked at the building facilities – an abandoned crumbling structure which safety regulations here would certainly have condemned. The children were drilled in PE [Physical Education], on the top of a 3-story building without any railings – dizzying to anyone (like me) who didn't like heights! However, it was our pleasure to meet the whole school as an assembly gathered (in drizzling rain) in the street.

Those precious children performed in song and dance for their foreign visitors. Many people from overseas had donated chalk, blackboards, paper, pencils and books, as well as money for meals. Sammy's vision mushroomed and Christian teachers dedicated themselves to making a great difference in the lives of those dear little children. Their faces lit up with pride as they showed us around. We shared a bit of geography with them as we talked about Canada. I always carried a large jaw and toothbrush with me to teach oral, as well as general hygiene. Also we enjoyed the freedom to talk about eternal hope in Jesus.

Sammy, along with some other pastors had a ministry to the Maasai. Our small team was introduced to this amazing people group, after traveling through the picturesque Rift Valley. We were invited to stay in the Chairman's home overnight, but because they weren't certain we would come they waited for our arrival before preparing a feast. I was the first white woman to stay there overnight, the premises vacated for our use; my other team ladies were Chinese and Trinidadian. Perhaps because I also was the eldest, I was given the distinctive honour of eating the goat's heart, a tribal delicacy. It wasn't as difficult to eat as some might anticipate. After all I had grown accustomed to eating such delicacies as Capybara and Iguana in Guyana. We were also made honorary members of the Maasai Tribe – what greater honour could they bestow?!!

The fiancé of the tribal chief's son welcomed us with real pleasure – although we didn't share a language, her love was evident. She took us to the bushes (as a WC) for the last time before we retired for the night, since lions were known to lurk there after dark. How I prayed my bladder would cooperate!

Getting ready for bed was impossible since people kept walking into the adobe hut to "see" the spectacle of strangers. We slept in our clothes, on 3 cots jammed together, in an alcove next to a half wall. Beyond the half wall calves were lowing most of the night. They are highly prized possessions and had to be kept safe from the lions. Other cattle were kept in a corral made of thorn branches. As unusual as it was, I wouldn't have missed this experience for anything. Our hostess slept on a bed on the other side of a small fire pit situated in the middle of the floor. How I longed to share the story of Jesus with this beautiful young woman. Sadly because of linguistic difficulties and because our time was tightly scheduled, that was not possible. After brief introductions to the chairman's 3 wives and some of his 50 (fifty) children, we were on our way.

## Jamaica

It is not my intention to go over every trip we took but rather to give an overview of how the Lord was at work in my heart and experience. Having said that, I must review the one mission trip our team took to **Jamaica**. With a large team of 24 we had multiple goals. Dr John Moore was doing evangelistic services in area churches near Montego Bay and Mandeville, where we also held medical clinics. Health teaching focused on rampant diabetic and hypertensive concerns. We had on board a couple of counsellors, as well as men ready to do carpentry work; renovations were needed at our accommodation in Mandeville.

Jamaicans generally have been churched. However, a very religious culture doesn't always mean folks experience a relationship with our Lord Jesus, so the response to preaching explaining that difference, was very rewarding. Some of the team were able to visit Jamaica Bible College. I regretted that my duties running the clinics prevented me from going.

I felt peculiarly close to a lady whose prayers continually inspired and supported me back home. Olga Beecher, originally from Jamaica, would pray for blessings and protection "from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet"! What a beautiful joy shone from her dear face! Though we had prayer warriors accompanying us from Canada, we knew others like Olga were with us in spirit!

Our day of R & R took us to climb Dunn's River Falls – possibly one of our riskier events. One regret about being in Jamaica is that I did not swim in the sea. Every morning the team walked along the shore for exercise before the heat of the day, but I didn't even put a pinky in the water.

One particular highlight has stayed with me. When we met Dr Maria at the airport, she told me that on her flight from Trinidad the Lord had spoken to her about being baptised. Imagine what joy it was to see our leader, Dr Doobay, baptise this charismatic Roman Catholic in a swimming pool at Montego Bay!

Another baptism stands out in my memory, although we witnessed several. A group of young people was baptised in the Berbice River in Guyana. We were running clinics in Wiruni where a Canadian missionary had started an evangelical church in the late 1800's. We met his great grand-daughter, the matriarch of the village.

## Wedding Memories

It was at Wiruni one year that we witnessed a lovely wedding. The whole village attended, as was their custom. The bride gowned all in white, gloves and all, floated down river in a boat exquisitely decorated with arches draped in tropical flowers. Their children were part of the wedding party; their lifestyle, living together, changed when once they came to know the Lord. Just as the ring - oops! The groom had to paddle furiously home to get the ring he forgot, so we sang hymns while we waited, and no feathers were ruffled. It all adds to the charm of the story. This was the first wedding performed by our friend Rev. Joe Barker. Aside – his wife Angie is a local nurse who often worked with our teams. Angie eventually was employed by the MOH, a wonderful advancement for a great nurse. She was always generous, giving each team member a little bit of local memorabilia. Such a sweet, thoughtful lady! It is hard to believe Angie is retired now.

On another occasion, it was a joy to be a part of a wedding held in large church in Lusaka. The couple had been married in a civil ceremony some years before, but wanted the blessing of the Church upon their lives together. Apparently it isn't uncommon to celebrate with the whole church family, in this case about 1,000 people, when

they could afford it. Their little son was part of the wedding party, which came down the aisle immediately following Sunday service. Our team was honoured to be guests.

The pastor and his wife both served this huge congregation with much love, and great enthusiasm for their “healing” ministry. Strange as it seemed, he asked me to address a small group of folks who kept coming back for healing – talk about feeling uncomfortable! The front of his church was decorated with trophies – crutches and wheelchairs. However, just as we had found in a church in Guyana, some people almost made a hobby of being “healed”. What did God want me to say? (Sadly this kind-hearted pastor, who was terribly obese, dropped dead of a heart attack some months after we met.)

While on the subject of weddings, a friend’s daughter was married in Eldoret, Kenya. We were guests at their home, while the bride prepared. As was the custom, the groom’s family came for the bride in a large, expensive car lavishly decorated with flowers. After the ceremony we were served at a lovely reception set up in tents, because of rain. It seemed strange to us that all the guests brought wedding gifts to the church, including gifts of furniture and large pieces of household equipment. This gave me some insight into how the rich and famous live in poorer countries!!

In Addis Ababa, I noted the contrast between rich and poor, as well, when touring Holy Trinity Cathedral. Sitting in the dirty street, opposite this opulent park, women in tattered clothing sat on the curb in drizzling rain, begging.

### Wiruni

Perhaps I should mention first, how we travelled to Wiruni, in eastern Guyana. Over the years we became familiar with this long day’s journey past giant termite pillars, through sand, where once one of our van drivers caught an armadillo to sweeten the pot for his family dinner. We often got stuck when taking regular vans, so when the opportunity arose for us to take an army vehicle, our leader jumped at the chance. The truck was so huge that once we climbed up into the open back we were not going to get down in a hurry. This definitely was not my transport of choice. A church pew was the only seating for 14 people. I still giggle recalling Rachel perched on the pew with dozens of eggs cradled in cartons between her legs – for to this remote spot we had to take all of our food. Picture the rest of the team scattered among our supply boxes. It seems someone prepared to shelter us from the blazing sun, because we found and erected a large blue tarp. However, it made the truck feel like an oven, punctuated by blasts from the diesel exhaust. It was a terrible journey!

When we arrived at the Berbice River we then climbed into 2 large canoes lashed together for all our people and supplies. Knowing the river was inhabited by piranha encouraged us to seriously pray we would make the last leg of the trip without incident, and praise God we did. The village turned out en masse to welcome us, as usual. However, our team, weary as we were, had to set up camp. These kind villagers brought their own beds from home, to accommodate us in the clinic. Thankfully we carried our own mosquito nets with us.

As I started to say – in Wiruni I was inspired by the charge an elder gave to the group of young people being baptised in the Berbice River. This man obviously knew his Bible and the principles



of Christian living! As in so many instances, my spirit bowed in worship, in awe at what the Holy Spirit taught humble folks whose lives were completely committed to our Saviour and Lord! On the subject of baptism – at one village in the Pomeroon, far far away from Wiruni, someone loaned our leader a pair of pants so he could baptise folks in the river, without getting his own wet for the boat ride home.

The folks at Wiruni were very teachable so one of our doctors, with education in botany, saw an opportunity to set up a garden with plants that would be more nutritious. We were happy, in subsequent years, to see the garden flourishing and expanded.

The life-expectancy of these folks was not very high (40-50) but we did see one patient, an old lady of 90 who paddled a long way to get to clinic, walking up the hill on her gnarled bare feet, smiling a lovely toothless smile. At the other end of the spectrum were sweet toothless babies, clinging to their mother's backs as they paddled about in the river. Teeth, I must mention, were often rotted by eating quantities of sugar cane - their favourite sweet. One dentist on our team extracted 99 teeth in one day, that were beyond saving, most from school children. We teased our illustrious leader he should have contributed one to make the total 100. Some children in outlying areas still brushed their teeth with frayed sticks, so teaching them the art of brushing would have been almost useless, but for the supplies of toothbrushes we usually carried with us.

The young people were very adept at canoeing and cavorted, diving in and out of the river without accident. We were told that their dark skin gave them some protection from the piranha – how true that is I do not know. I do know the story of one short-term missionary, who had to be airlifted to hospital when a great chunk was taken out of her white-skinned leg; therefore we only swam in fast-flowing streams. I've even gone swimming in my clothes, when unprepared with a bathing suit.

Rivers in Guyana served as highways, dishwashers, bathtubs and of course sources of refreshment and exercise. We did bathe in rain water, often, but after a bath the application of sunscreen and mosquito repellent immediately erased any cooling benefit we might have enjoyed.

### Lethem

At one stream in the mountains near Lethem we heard the Harpy Eagle – the largest bird of prey in Guyana. Also we saw a couple of sloths high up in the trees near a tributary of the Essequibo River. I will never forget the thrill of seeing a huge flock of scarlet ibis mingled with white birds, possibly egrets, flying low over the Pomeroon River. In another area, there was a figure standing beside a pond in the distance which I thought was possibly a person, but a closer look made me aware of a huge bird. The Jaburi, totally white, with a collar of red separating its white coat from a giant jet-black head, swollen throat and black bill is the tallest flying bird in South America. The adult Jabiru is 120–140 cm (47–55 in) long, 2.3–2.8 m (7.5–9.2 ft) across the wings, and can weigh 4.3–9 kg (9.5–19.8 lb). It was terribly tantalizing to be near so many new species of bird, yet unable to identify most of them as we sped by on water or on land. I was excited to see a tegu in the wild at Shanklands – we had had one as a pet at home. (It was here I saw my first outdoor chess game with life-size figures.)

We were very glad for an emergency helicopter service while working in the Rupununi. A child was brought into our clinic who had fallen from a mango tree, sustaining a compound fracture of her femur. Thankfully we were able to get her airlifted to Georgetown. We had two choices - one was to send patients to Boa Vista in Brazil just across the river from Lethem, or to send them to the capitol much farther away. It was a social tragedy for patients to have to leave family to go into hospital.

Guyana became like a second home...we travelled throughout the country visiting many of the most rural regions. Sadly resources are often squandered in big cities while people in the countryside go without. I loved the gentle shyness of the Amerindians we served. We grew quite fond of these people as we worked several years in a row at the Easter Conference in Lethem. I wish I could take you there with me! Folks biked, walked or paddled from 200-300 miles away to attend this conference – the highlight of their year. The singing was so moving! “Love in any language beautifully spoken here”.

Besides running clinics at the hospital in Lethem, we took part in the evening services. Also we mobilized workers to create an art contest among the children, using supplies donated in Toronto. Scripture memory was key in children’s ministry and one little girl inspired us all as she recited the books of the Old Testament forwards *and* back.

We grew accustomed to dogs and chickens wandering across the front during a church service, bats swooping through and occasional frogs jumping on the walls. In developing countries hydro is often unstable so torches are important to have on hand. One interesting thing I noted among the Amerindian people is that a child is the community’s responsibility. Particularly in church, if one misbehaved, the nearest adult would discipline him or her, so they knew they couldn’t get away with anything, just because their parents weren’t looking!

We witnessed life as they were used to it, hanging hammocks under a protective Benab (thatch). Just an aside – one team was housed for a night in a place where hammocks were the only beds available. That was a challenge for some, but I found it very comfortable. In Lethem soft laughter spilt the night air from time to time, and tender songs whispered little children to sleep. Women came together to bake mountains of fresh bread each morning in the huge outdoor oven. Team work at its finest! A steer was slaughtered and on one occasion the team purchased another; the crowd had grown beyond what one steer would feed, probably due to the clinics we were offering. Our team also presented the Conference with a keyboard, donated with love, from home.

As we travelled throughout Guyana, we were privileged to see many of the beauties of the country! Some people would pay thousands of dollars to experience our speedboat rides between the mangroves, on route to rural clinics. We were always anxious to get home before dark; in the tropics night falls very suddenly. What a shock on one occasion, to find our river passage was totally blocked by a floating island, moved only by our boatmen ramming into the earth until we could squeeze our boats through – then it closed again behind us. Thankfully we made it out before dark!

Meanwhile one team member discovered a large, fully satisfied boa resting on a thick branch above us. From its stretch marks one could tell it had eaten recently. Contrary to common opinion snakes are hard

to find. They do not hang from every tree. Being an amateur herpetologist, I know what it is like to hunt for reptiles in the jungles of Trinidad, without the success one suspects would be obvious. Altogether on mission trips in South America and Africa I saw a total of 3 live snakes in the wild, plus a couple of which were brought to us by children, delighted to make them their pets. Mind you we also saw folks in clinics suffering from the effects of poisonous snake bites, some with old injuries that left huge scars.

For days of R & R we sometimes took teams to Kaieteur Falls – one of the highest, a single drop at 741 feet on the Potaro River. What a thrill it was when Greg was on one of our teams, to visit that lovely spot together! The lush foliage harboured poison arrow frogs, but just landing on the tiny airstrip produced a thrill all its own. Our pilot, Malcolm, put me in the front seat beside him where I prayed all the way that nothing would happen to him, or how would we ever land the plane! Unrelenting fear!

A larger plane we frequently took to Lethem required each of us to be weighed prior to boarding. Our major luggage was sent on ahead by road because there was a limit as to what that plane could carry. There was no toilet on board for a 3-hour flight so if one had to...the trick was to squat behind the luggage and hope the flow flew out the crack under the large rear door through which we had boarded! Sadly that plane crashed, killing its occupants, so from then on we took the journey by road.

Driving through the lush jungle wasn't difficult, just tiring after 15 plus hours. Only one tiny way station serviced visitors on that whole long trek. At one point we saw a jaguar skin stretched to dry in the sun, caught by a man who offered it to us for a very cheap price. However, we knew we could never clear customs with it, since it was considered endangered.

While at Lethem we took a couple of teams across the Takutu River by boat to pay a brief visit to Brazil – no border boundaries to reckon with, so when the water is low, folks walked across. Sadly a lot of Guyanese people from the Rupununi area tried to find work in Brazil, and ran into difficulties with disease, robbery, prostitution etc. That region of Brazil appeared to have greater advantages than Lethem – better roads and more sophisticated medical facilities, to which we occasionally referred patients. It was closer than flying someone north to Georgetown.

We lost a newborn baby at the hospital in Lethem and wept because it would have been so preventable had the equipment needed not been locked away. Sadly we found that machinery donated was often useless, requiring instruction and supervision to operate and maintain. An x-ray machine sat unused for years in the hospital at Lethem, where doctors came and went on a rotating basis, and nurses only had a basic education. Also folks in developed countries sometimes gave gifts that could not survive in a different climate – i.e. a grand piano sent from England to Guyana was not a practical gift. MATE developed several projects – well-drilling as well as a sawmill, for Africa. Unfortunately there wasn't adequate instruction to make the well-drilling practical so it sat for 2 years before finally being used, and when the sawmill fell into disrepair it was nearly impossible to get parts. SIM workers told us they found machinery, such as tractors, was impractical and therefore resorted to using oxen for plowing.

Water:

I have already described Kaieteur Falls and the beautiful freshwater rivers of Guyana. The subject of clean water is often brought to our attention by groups attempting to help those in developing countries and believe me, the need in some places can be very real indeed!

It was nauseating to see greenish grey water flowing in trenches along the streets of great African cities, populated by the poor living in shacks in huge slums. How these dear people turn out in white clothing is a mystery to me, when here in the west we struggle with bleaches and other chemicals to make our whites radiant. I've watched women pounding their clothes on rocks in local streams, than drying them on bushes. Perhaps there is something to sun-bleached drying, versus electronic dryers! Of course such a lifestyle would be impossible in our changing climate, but the climate in Africa is not always hot, and they do have rainy seasons which preclude such ordinary activities. My friend Beverley, living in Lusaka, asked me to bring her long johns and a parka, when she discovered the winter chill there.

The question is: How do they survive without clean drinking water?...yet somehow they do. To illustrate their desperation for water, let me describe one arid rural area which we visited. The earth was fractured by deep crevasses which might actually swallow up a 10-year-old child. Folks in that particular region of Kenya sometimes dug into river beds, hoping some underground spring could still produce a trickle of water, or some walked for miles to carry huge buckets of water home on their heads, each day. As we, here at home, waste this precious resource, I sometimes wonder how long we will enjoy fresh flowing water from our taps, both hot and cold? How much we take it for granted!

Water – my young grandson wanted to know why kids paddled canoes to school – why did they not take their bikes? I was showing pictures of happy uniformed children arriving at school in Guyana, and had to explain there were no roads; rivers serve as such, and so dugout canoes replace our bikes and cars.

Yet, as I write this we have watched in horror as newscasts present horrific flooding around the globe, and I remember. Our teams were witness to *flooding* in Guyana one year. It was a learning experience! We found people commonly took off their shoes to walk through flooded areas, incurring wounds on their feet rather than risk destroying their precious shoes. Homes were protected when built on stilts, but other buildings at ground level were washed away, or contents destroyed. Even their rice fields were destroyed by the flooding. We often associate hunger with lack of water, but of course flooding creates the same problem. Sanitation and clean water become unavailable, and disease flourished as people and animals defecated in the flood waters. Our second team, 6 months later, was shocked to discover much of the medication sent to counteract leptospirosis, was held by beaurocracy in a bond, doing no good at all for the burgeoning needs.

Poverty! It goes without saying that poverty and hunger go hand in hand! In one clinic we met a young Mom who was struggling to keep her last child alive, others in the family had died from starvation. The intervention we offered – vitamins and food would only last so long and then what? Scenes like this gripped me with frustration when I saw the picky eaters some of our kids at home have become.

In Zambia one staple food eaten morning, noon and night – if they can get it that often, is Nshima. A corn-meal product, it can be cooked with a lot of water to make a thin gruel, sometimes used as a supplement in a baby's bottle. Meal portions are thicker and might be dipped in sauce, if there has been meat or other veg to give it flavour. We took some workers who had helped us throughout a tour of duty, to a restaurant in Lusaka for dinner, thinking we were giving them a rare treat! After dinner they disappeared. Later we found they had gone to get Nshima, since that was the highlight of every meal!

Poverty! ...When folks can't meet for church in the rainy season because the roof leaks or is partially missing..... When pastors have to share their well-worn Bibles with their family members and others in the church cherish a page or two of a Bible circulating among the members. I struggled with resentment when I came home to visit a new church building complete with tilting, padded seats such as are in movie theatres, knowing some worshipers sit on thin logs without any back, through hours of joyful service. Oh what I learned from the spirit of these brothers and sisters about worship from the heart!

Poverty? Not when one is rich in hospitality! As I mentioned - my dear friend Tabitha joyfully shared with us ladies her sweet Kenyan tea, boiled with milk and sugar – Ambrosia! Our knees nearly touched in her humble home but it was such a pleasure meeting her Mom! Love in any language? Yes! Tabitha – rich in love, was putting her siblings through school, working for Bishop Eliud, before she could go to Bible College herself; much later she became a pastor.

A Pastor's wife celebrated our visit with a lovely dinner under a mango tree because her tiny home on the edge of a large slum in Lusaka would not accommodate my colleague and I. How touching their generosity was to me! It was shared with unequaled joy – not done to impress, but gloriously free from all ostentation!

I began to understand that poverty is not in external circumstance, but really comes from the spirit with which we accept our circumstances. Some folks in developed countries, rich by the standards of this world, are desperately poor in spirit. Thank God we know our needs – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual may be met through His riches in Christ Jesus our Lord, just as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian church. The problem comes when we can't distinguish between needs and wants. Paul also remarked on that, saying "In whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (KJV). My Dad quoted that verse often and this attitude I have seen among the poorest of the poor, yet rich in joy and peace and love.

Lest I am misunderstood, I believe it is a glorious thing to have material wealth, because it enables us to do things for others! Our Lord, Himself, was the primary example of such selflessness, giving up everything (Philippians 2) in order to give us the assurance of a definite hope. Do we hold our possessions lightly, allowing them to be used by God?

The Lord knew how important a gracious spirit is in ministry. I often think this is why He gave us the Holy Spirit to grow us in kindness, gentleness and goodness. When interviewing applicants for mission teams I was looking for such attitudes, as much as qualifications...patience, caring, sensitivity and acceptance.

Teams:

Taking teams overseas may seem thrilling, and certainly there was an element of excitement as we reviewed each call for help. However, there was a tremendous amount of planning necessary; after the need was properly assessed, teams that would suit were sought. We needed folks who were gifted in different ways. Our support workers directed long lines of people waiting at clinics, helped set up the venue, took pictures, got people drinks of water, kept records, packed up when we were finished and ran a multitude of errands. One man even counted the miles of tape we used in one clinic setting.

As the Coordinator of Medical Missions with MATE/FCC my job was to interview candidates, train them and when possible, to do a group orientation. One group from the far north, Moosonee, was recruited by one of our Doctors who regularly taught in the hospital there, so we had to take them on spec, but as always God answered our prayers. It is rewarding that a couple of them still keep in touch! You must know how much we leaned on the Lord to bring these groups together. After all it would be by our Christian life style that the greatest impact would be made....through the spirit of cooperation, sensitivity to one another and genuine caring, folks would hopefully recognize the love of Jesus.

One has to give up comfort and control, to be other-focused and Spirit-led. However, in the interest of sharing the gospel with *anyone* in need, it became the policy of MATE/FCC to take team members with us who were amenable to our faith perspectives, even if they were not believers themselves. "It only takes a spark to get the fire going!...that's how it is with God's love, once you've experienced it". For example: I watched the hand of God at work in the life of one team member who declared he would always be a Hindu. This delightful, very caring individual dedicated himself in his retirement, to our ministry, urging us on when we were weary and celebrating what Jesus did, when we took in the film in a local church "The Passion of the Christ". Eventually he professed to know Jesus. God's hand is not shortened, that He cannot save!

Another Dr who always went to our evening services, and was respectful of our morning devotions at breakfast, said he was an atheist, but when there was a crucial health issue in his family he called to ask me, rather apologetically, but very earnestly, to pray. Thankfully God answered our prayers! Only God knows what goes on in a person's heart.

One Hindu doctor invited our team to join in the "right of passage" [Upanayana] when his nephew turned 12. We thought we were in a hotel, surprised to find such opulence in a family home! After holding clinics in the outback of Guyana, we felt privileged to be included; this exotic ceremony was a fascinating lesson in culture! Needless to say we were under-dressed! After feasting on Indian delicacies, our ladies were invited to join the ladies upstairs where they enjoyed dancing together.

This reminds me of another rite of passage - the ceremony of circumcision celebrated among the Maasai. A boy of 12 is brought into the centre of their compound to be publicly circumcised. It is the supreme test of manhood; therefore he must not flinch! The idea is that the boy must be ready to face any danger and to deal with pain, whether it is from the teeth of a leopard or the knife of circumcision. Then he is sent out into the bush to live for a number of months, finding food and surviving among wild animals. Upon return he is gifted with animals that enable him to establish his own herds and home.

I have digressed! Another of my responsibilities as coordinator of medical missions, was to collect supplies. It was our policy to take with us everything we needed. I couldn't believe the ignorance of teams from other places whom we occasionally ran across, who intended to buy meds from local pharmacies in the host country. In developing countries one cannot rely on their supplies, and furthermore, it isn't fair to rob them of what little they have. This was just another instance of how folks from the developed world think money can buy everything. We learned that "Before you call I will answer". God always provided much more than we needed!

We worked with HPIC [Health Partners In Canada], a Christian organization with links to pharmaceutical companies. They provided much of our meds at cost. Other Doctors donated from their samples, etc. I could write another book about the specific medications and supplies which were donated; God alone knew what would be required in a certain place, by specific patients! Just a couple of examples – one young Mom in her early 40's was found to have a rare heart condition, way out in the boonies of Guyana. She required specific treatment. Would you believe we had been given a year's supply of the very medication that she needed? We never carried that medication, either before or after. We could not always procure IV – but one year when we did, we had to perform emergency surgery. That was the year God gave us a dentist with tools which enabled our Doctors to remove a couple of digits from the toes of a young girl bitten by a piranha. We left her post-op in the capable hands of a Red Cross worker from the USA, who looked after her IV, and sent her home when she was ready.

One learns a lot about people, when working in missions. What motivates folks to help others in need? There are many answers to that question! Not everyone is a team player. Some folks approach a task with a "take-charge" attitude. Others are so eager to get their own way they will do almost anything, causing division and anxiety. Often the human side of Christians shows up under stress, or when long-held convictions are at cross-purposes. Sickness doesn't bring out the best in health care workers used to giving, rather than receiving care. We are, after all, still remarkably human.

One gal lost her passport as we were clearing customs in Addis Ababa. Frantically she started accusing the customs officials, but then was embarrassed when we found it in the depths of her overcrowded backpack. Thank You Lord for answered prayer! There were times when God performed miracles. In some airports we had to change terminals, with time constraints a very real consideration. Somehow I left my briefcase in the washroom in Terminal 1, so had to retrace my steps from Terminal 3, in Germany. It held all my important documents, including photocopies of each team member's passport. My legs turned to jelly as I approached the information desk. Thank God for honest people – someone had turned it in!...and I made it to my next flight in time!

On another occasion Dr Maria, flying in from Trinidad, met our team bound for Zambia, in Germany. For some reason which I forget, they wouldn't honour her passport until I crossed the airport to advocate for her. Then we won the warm blessing of an airport employee, who turned out to be a believer.

Another time we were on our way to Zambia on a Monday morning, traveling through the USA for the *first and only time*. One of our doctors phoned me the previous Saturday night to say her passport had been stolen. Thankfully I had a photocopy of her passport, but immigration wasn't open on Sunday, so

we prayed that God would overrule what looked like an inevitable cancellation of one of our doctors. With the help of the police she was able to get her passport renewed first thing on Monday. What a miracle when Dr Achol met the waiting team in New Jersey! God knows all about our anxieties, doesn't He? Miraculous!!

One word about this remarkable lady. Growing up in Sudan, she and her siblings had witnessed the brutal killing of her father by incendiaries and were refused permission to rescue his body from birds of prey. By God's grace she was able to go on to study medicine, her father's dream for her. Marrying a fellow-doctor, they eventually escaped political intrigue to live in Greece. While pregnant with her only child, she went through the windshield of a car, but both she and the baby survived. She brought the boy to Canada, paving the way for her husband to follow. On the day he received his immigration papers he died from a sudden heart attack. I shudder to think that one human being could endure so much tragedy, yet my dear Achol was one of the happiest Christians I have ever met. Eventually she returned to work among her countrymen, once her son was established in university. Since then we have lost touch. Like my friend Jing, I know one day we will meet in glory, if not reunited here on earth!

A word about our return trip, on that same mission. The team divided in 2, the medical arm returning home before our ministry team, which stayed for an additional period. In New Jersey they thought there were 2 Marilyn Daniels registered by mistake; another of our team was Marilyn Daniel-Awong, so my ticket to Toronto was cancelled. Later when we arrived in the USA, I was suffering from food poisoning. Shivering with unpleasant gastric symptoms, I was strip-searched before they would re-issue my ticket. I felt too sick to care but I was embarrassed that a colleague had to find some clean clothing in my carry-on immediately after I boarded the plane. I never want to feel that hopeless or helpless again! Yet God brought me home!

I've mentioned miracles – let me add another. The sun would soon be going down and we had our team in 3 vehicles waiting for a bridge to be reinforced, so we could cross a small river. In the wastelands of Guyana there were no street lights to guide us along a trail through endless savannah grasses. There was no town visible on the horizon, nor trail markings to give us direction. Our team was very weary after a day of rugged travel! What if we got lost and had to spend the night? Feeling responsible for their well being, I paced and prayed beside my van. Looking off towards distant mountains I saw it – a sign! Clearly there was no sign of rain, yet there it was - a rainbow! "Fear not" may have been as distinctly written in the sky! And my heart rested at peace.

On a couple of occasions personal effects went astray, so I found myself loaning my clothes to a couple of team ladies when we arrived in Zambia. To drive all the way back to Lusaka to pick up a suitcase would be a dreadful waste of time and petrol, so one team member opted to live out of my suitcase for her full 2 weeks.

The only time we had serious trouble with our medical supplies was in Jamaica where one team member said she didn't know what was in her second suitcase – the one I had packed with meds in the office. Naturally customs held back all of our luggage for 2 days to investigate, making for a very slow



start to our clinics in Montego Bay. Occasionally customs officials confiscated certain items. May God forgive me if I was wrong for suspecting they did it for personal gain.

It was our policy to work with local folks as much as possible; they became an integral part of our teams. Usually health care professionals were eager to work together, but at one clinic the nurses all left us to do the work, while they partied somewhere else. We were so thankful for help from a group of dedicated youth who provided excellent help in a multitude of ways, when we worked in the copper-belt region of Zambia. It was always beneficial when folks from area churches worked with us, eager to do follow-up to the evangelistic messages with which each of our clinics began. We could always count on a dedicated group of Christians under the leadership of Pastor Orpha, in Guyana. It was there where our teams became annual visitors on the TV station aired from Charity into the Pomeroon region; as well the host took questions from the general public.

Our doctors were happy to give short lectures to medical staff who often had little to no advantage for professional development; twice doctors went to Guyana prepared with slide presentations, and another doctor donated “Resuscitation Annie” to the hospital in Luampa, Zambia, after giving instructions in infant resuscitation. With a high maternal and infant mortality rate in developing countries we were very thankful for Dr Pancham OB/GYN whose expertise provided much needed training among local health care workers wherever we served. As well, his gentle sense of humour and spirit of good will left a lasting legacy for all who knew him! We tried to provide a roster of topics from team members who felt comfortable teaching health – hygiene, dental care, body mechanics, nutrition, communicable diseases, and anatomy and physiology were among things that captured the interest of folks waiting to be seen at the clinics. One day our illustrious leader got down on the floor to demonstrate back exercises I was teaching, to the amusement of all. Where people carry heavy burdens on their heads, they often suffer from neck and back pain. My own struggles with back issues gave me an empathetic attitude. At the time of my fall, while skating at Whitby Psychiatric Hospital in 1961, it never occurred to me that treatment for my back would end up being a blessing to others.

We usually took second hand eye glasses that had been calibrated at the Christian Blind Mission, to distribute....it fell to me to assess and deliver these to patients in need, or to train other nurses to help. Glasses made an excellent platform from which to talk about the One who made blind eyes see. However, we had an incident in Zambia at K\_\_\_\_\_ when Dr. Doobay was at a meeting, outside of the hospital compound. The population got wind of free glasses and stormed the gates – literally. I secured the team in a private room and closed the clinic, standing on a table to address the crowds outside. I found that only by the grace of God does anger sometimes become a catalyst for courage! Local hospital personnel manned the gates until Arnie’s return. “Fear not I am with you – O be not dismayed! For I am your God; I will still give you aid!”

There were times of discouragement, however. I can remember leaving one clinic to walk off pain and frustration, when a kindly doctor followed me with words of encouragement. I learned that leaders need to have broad enough shoulders to bear the blame without taking things personally. I also learned to be a peacemaker when spontaneity or change challenged our teams.....”leaving those things which are behind to press forward”, so my own spirit was not imprisoned by resentment or bitterness. It was

also my duty to salvage the reputation of others when they “lost it”. Unity is the high calling of the Church and *is* possible, under the power of the Holy Spirit. Hallelujah!

A brief illustration: During the application process one gal informed me that another applicant with whom she had worked, would not be suitable. The lady in question presented a very professional, yet caring attitude when I interviewed her, so we took a chance. She proved to be the most resilient member of the team, enduring an encounter with bed-bugs that would have tested anyone’s fortitude, and working with friendly, outgoing ease among the local people. The gal who warned me not to include her was one of the most problematic people I have had to deal with, on a team.

Our teams were usually very generous! However difficult it may have been for them to raise their own support, as I also did, they rose to meet unexpected needs. On one occasion we collected donations sufficient to purchase a bike of a pastor who covered miles on foot to reach folks with the gospel in outlying areas of Zambia. You will remember I mentioned food provided for the class of women in Kibera, and donations collected towards the needs of AIDS patients in Georgetown Public Hospital. One team member got off our bus in downtown Addis Ababa to give money to a beggar in the street. His plight was particularly heart-wrenching since obviously his legs were useless; he shuffled along on his hands and backside. No sooner did Matthew give him money than from out of nowhere a bunch of men, in similar condition, appeared. We learned later that there had been an epidemic of polio in the city, some years before.

Unseen team members - I was touched by the wonderful support I received from family and friends, both in prayer as well as financially. God blessed me with funds for every trip – I was never short. A miraculous gift came from Taiwan, from a woman I had only met once, but she endorsed my ministry with a large monetary gift, for which I truly thanked God. I do remember feeling terribly awkward when trying to raise support as a Chaplain. As I shared the work with ladies from a Church I will not name, one woman questioned why it was necessary for me to be paid, but then I remembered - sometimes in days gone by, some folks would question why a pastor should be paid for doing the Lord’s work. Obviously they forget the words of Jesus Himself recorded in Luke 10:7.

Solomon wrote “There is nothing new under the sun”. It is true. Human nature is just that, regardless of gender, race or custom. I believe only the Lord really understands what makes people tick. The disciples were not valued by a religious establishment which had a very competitive spirit. So it is with people everywhere.....judgement, criticism, suspicion and jealousy all colour our world, but as people of faith we need to learn how to handle these things to the glory of God!

Whack! Ouch! Bang! Dimly consciousness dawned. Wait a minute – it was dark. Was this a nightmare? No – it was 2 am and our team was bumping along the road from Chingola to Lusaka to catch our flight home. The previous evening I had done a little dance after discovering ants were literally in my pants. Strangely enough mine wasn’t the only shower room where ants swarmed that night. Was it the pull of the moon? Many of our team were afflicted by these biting black ants, making the drive south a lively experience!

On another occasion I was horrified to see a cockroach crawling up the side of the bus just under my arm, and then another and another....we often travelled in ancient buses and this was no exception. I'm not afraid of roaches – I just don't like them! By the time we stopped in Ndola there was an army of these beasties exuding from a crack in the interior wall. Our driver sprayed as soon as we alighted on the ground and we were shocked to watch a river of roaches flood the street! (not too shocked to see the funny side of it!) We were worried that they may have invaded our luggage, but thankfully there were no further signs of those horrid pests.

The Lord used experiences with my husband's natural science interests to prepare me for facing the fauna in host countries. Only a few remaining family and friends will remember the complex Sid built to house 200 snakes in our apartment. I could write another book about escapees – watching the floor move as I stepped over 300 white mice from U of T, meant to feed our menagerie; the yellow rat snake which a horrified neighbour reported so I would keep our tiny kids inside... she almost turned to a pillar of salt when I dashed out to rescue "Goldie" from a wintry death in the ditch; the 6-foot long indigo we set flour trails to find its hiding place where it huddled under our broom closet; the thread-like baby garter snakes that found their way into our apartment complex laundry room, easily squeezing under our door; the lizard that found its way into our new daughter-in-law's bed and so forth. On more than one occasion I thanked God for the demise of something that was housed in my home – the black widow spider with its full egg case! ....the diamond back rattle snake we caught in Florida; "Freight train" named for the frightful hiss of the huge boa from Trinidad which tried to attack anyone in its path, even friends!

And so, seasoned by experience I've rescued many a team member from the threat of spiders, leaving my shoe print on the wall, even tackling spiders the diameter of my hand. After all, flying home from Trinidad with a tarantula in the binocular case around my husband's neck, probably wasn't the safest secret I've ever kept. I actually detest spiders, but one does what one has to do. Even though frogs are cute, when encountered on the toilet paper roll in the dark of night, it isn't an endearing experience. I remember pulling my clothes around me as I climbed up on a desk in one of our clinics, as a large scorpion disturbed my morning devotions! But... the word of God reminds us of the children's song "The Lord God made them all". Large and small, Adam was given authority to rule over all things that moved and breathed.

Perhaps a happier remembrance from nature would be the impact God's starry host had upon me the first time I really saw a perfect night sky. To this day I thrill to remember the magnificence of millions of stars where no electric lights interfered – on the backside of Guyana! I have seen the southern constellations in all their glory, but the spectacle of that first encounter can never be repeated! It brought to mind God's promise to Abraham about the number of his descendants, with an even greater clarity! "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky"!

Africa Mulishani! Mukwai Eya mukwai (reply) or Jambo! Habari! Hello!

It wasn't until I served in Zambia that I realized the fulfillment of my childhood dream. For whatever reason – Africa was uppermost in my earliest thoughts, whenever I contemplated missions.

Our first team to Zambia was thrilled by the welcome we received at the airport! The MP for Livingstone was there, along with a choir joyously singing and dancing! We didn't expect to be welcomed as international stars! It surely made other welcomes pale by comparison!

Another surprise awaited us. After travelling for more than 24 hours (in future years, frequently we waited with a 12-hour lay over in London), we were so happy to be taken to a "Subway" where something like normal food could be found. This was the last North American food we might see until we returned home, although I did make a bread pudding once. Africans aren't into desserts so the ladies who usually cooked for us were eager to take a recipe I made up out of my head.

We were blessed to have a trio of ladies who dedicated themselves to cooking for our teams when we stayed in Chingola. They seemed to prefer cooking over an open fire, although there was an electric stove available. These humble women were born with gifts of service and encouragement. I loved to hear their soft laughter emanating from their room as they settled for the night. It reminded me of a flock of birds settling for the night in a tree outside my room, when once I was staying in Lusaka for a week. I learned to shop Zambian style with Violet, going to the butchers and the bakery, as well as a general store where nshima, produce and canned goods could be found. In Georgetown, Guyana, my dear Nariman was our expert shopping guide.

### R&R

Trembling in fear as a gigantic bull elephant herded his haram from the Zambezi River across our road, I gave thanks that he chose to charge in the other direction while our driver tried to turn our team's bus on a dime.

Near Livingstone, I blessed the park rangers who with great caution carried rifles, warning us to remain speechless within yards of a couple of rhinos contentedly grazing. On the Chobe River safari (Botswana) we faced down huge crocodiles (weighing anywhere up to 1000 kgs) as well as wild-eyed water buffalo, reputed to be the most vicious animal in Africa. Somehow our craft seemed way too small to take on anything that might charge, and we were surrounded by gigantic hippos too.

In Livingstone Safari Park we encountered a family of Cheetahs. They have to be one of the prettiest animals I've ever seen, but watching programs on TV, I learned that they aren't nearly as cute as they seem, and can do devastating damage to the body of other animals, humans included. Lions are kitty cats in comparison. Lying in the sun after a good meal they are almost cuddly looking, as they lazily stretch and smile! However, I have seen their other side too, when one lioness attacked a wildebeest before our very eyes, beginning to eat it while still alive. Indelibly imprinted on my mind are the winding trains of wildebeests mingling with zebras for as far as the eye can see! Authority to rule, dear God?

Perhaps one of my favourite parks is Nakuru in Kenya; known for its humungous flocks of birds – thousands of large tropical birds are magnificent! I took an ostrich egg home to Greg to immortalize my views of these amazing birds! Also breath-taking are the graceful giraffes blinking disdainfully at strangers invading their space, from beneath long lashes! We were told to beware of monkeys who can also endanger the unsuspecting tourist. Those that frequent Victoria Falls at Livingstone have been known to be quite cheeky, so visitors are warned to assiduously avoid them!

It was at the top of Victoria Falls that I saw my first wild elephant. A couple of years later our team was swimming on that very spot, when the season brought the Zambezi River to a mere trickle. Who would have supposed that would be possible, while watching thundering torrents drenching folks with spray, during the rainy season! And the rainbows – gorgeous! The many shades of one of God's incredible creations! It was here that the brave (or are they foolish?) practised bungee jumping!

Cruising the Zambezi at sunset is an unforgettable experience. We watched a couple of elephants swimming across, defecting from Zambia to Zimbabwe. There is tremendous peace and calm in those quiet twilight moments. My Mom, who loved that hour of the day, would have been thrilled!

I was interested to find Chinese food available in most major cities; The Golden Globe in Guyana had the most delicious fish and duck dishes, while in Lusaka, we were amazed at the variety they served clientele, significantly made up of ex-pats.

### Zambia

Food is expensive in Zambia; most of their fruit comes from South Africa. Common fillers here, like rice and potato are costly, so Nshima, as I mentioned, is eaten in various forms. I still envision ladies at the conference in **Filibaba**, stirring a caldron full, over an open fire, eyes sparkling with delighted anticipation! To me, without sugar or salt it is pretty tasteless, but when in Rome....do as the Romans do! We were touched by the selflessness with which these dear people strove to feed us the best that they had, sacrificing chickens and goats to provide the team with a thankyou feast!

I must describe that conference grounds, near which was a makeshift apiary. (A scrolled piece of tree bark is placed in the crotch of a tree to which bees swarm to make honey.) It must have taken days of work to make a tall fence of strong grasses to surround the square conference grounds. Inside this fence they fashioned cubicles where men could sleep, while the women and children were housed on the cold earth floor of the church. The same unique fencing enclosed a pit latrine, specifically for use by us ladies.

My dear friend Rhoida interpreted for me. We taught about Godly living, using women of the Bible to illustrate what Christian wives and mothers would look like when graced with salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord! These women didn't have either education or Bibles to study on their own, but the Holy Spirit enabled them to pick up principles very quickly. In a male-dominated society it was important for them to learn from each other how to work through the challenges that presented, as well as how to live a Christian life in community, and how to be Godly mothers.

Oddly enough it was the women who seemed to do most of the work – toiling in the fields, carrying water, washing, cooking and looking after the children. By contrast, in some communities a giant

termite nest might be flattened at the top so the men of the village could gather there to discuss the governance of the village.

As I was writing this I heard a beautiful rendition of “How Great Thou Art” which brought tears to my eyes. Zambians sing like no other Africans that I have heard....5-part harmony with a gentle “oompa” from the background bass singer, keeping a steady beat. The quality of their voices is incredibly rich! How often our hearts were uplifted in song as we traveled in our team bus with local Zambians reminding us that our God is still in charge. You see, we often had to go through checkpoints when driving on highways dotted with imperious soldiers. *Their* mission seemed to be to terrify unsuspecting folks, like white-faced strangers. Often they would take some things from our stockpile needed for clinics, with the promise it would be returned when we came back that way. Sometimes they were, sometimes they were not returned. We heard a tale of a bus load of passengers stripped of their clothing and left at the side of the road....scary to imagine! Thank the Lord that never happened to us!

Fear! I was only afraid on a few occasions. One significant moment was when we crossed the border into the Congo. A mistake had been made on our entry visas into Zambia. Since half our team was going home before the other half, (medical versus ministry), everyone was awarded the same length of visa. Those of us who stayed had to get our visas renewed. The Authorities at the Congo border insisted we surrender our passports until they got our visas done, so we walked about the town, furtively watched by soldiers who were there to protect political figures gathering for a big rally. Their guns were very obvious, as was a spirit of hostility. I was the only white person among thousands of pushing and pulling people. With my bra padded by team money, I felt particularly vulnerable! “Dear Lord! Is this how people of colour feel among angry mobs of white people?”

I remembered landing in Egypt watching soldiers on top of the airport buildings with guns at the ready – which reminded me of going into a bank in Guyana where guards with rifles manned the door. However, one doesn’t have to face guns to feel fear. I remember a couple of incidents in Trinidad when I was whisked away by locals who perceived a danger I could not possibly have recognized. In Guyana one particular young man who became my body guard when I was traveling alone. Basically he was protecting me from robbery, more than anything else. Thank God for caring friends!

All that to say that singing does lift the spirits – that must be why Paul and Silas sang in jail! It is so important to know our God is Sovereign and that He will accomplish His purposes in spite of the evils in our world! I remember the haunting sound of steel pans rising to the top of Fort George in Trinidad, and the commitment of one Trinidadian man who played the pan at many MATE meetings, which always brought that memory back again! Music – drums or flutes so often recorded in the Bible!

To lift your spirits let me share my peppermint story. We often took a projector and screen to show the “Passion of the Christ” as part of our ministry. In Zambia little children usually sat on the ground to watch, but the cutest little boy, possible 2 years old, caught my eye because he carried a 3-legged stool with him. I couldn’t resist giving him a peppermint. Generous in spirit the child sucked it briefly before sending it along a short line of friends, each tasting the treat before returning it to him. Oops! He dropped it. When standing up to hunt for it, he wet himself and I saw the peppermint lying on the

ground showered with you know what! Oh No! He found the white peppermint, in stark contrast to the reddish brown earth, so wiped it on his pants before popping it in his mouth again!

God gave a vision to the leadership of MATE/FCC of how the gospel might be carried by radio into rural areas; over a period of time we were able to set up a radio station in Solwezi, donated by caring Christians from home. Great was the pomp and ceremony as the town welcomed the Vice President of Zambia to the opening of the station there. Security checks were made for 24 hours prior to his motorcade appearing, and white doves were released in celebration when the entourage arrived! Our team was given a traditional thank you gift – a pregnant goat. I could just imagine taking it home by air! It was our pleasure to donate it to the needy in Solwezi. But that was only the beginning. Solwezi was a thriving copper mining centre in years gone by, but had declined in its production. Only God knew that it would re-establish, with thousands of people moving into the area who could be reached with the gospel through this little radio station! What an awesome God we serve!

Over the course of time we met another distinguished figure. We were introduced to the Queen of the Makololo tribe in Livingstone, Zambia. David Livingstone introduced the tribe to Christianity in the mid-1800's. We were interested to see a Bible on the table beside the throne, but it was disheartening to see there were also tribal fetishes which remained significant to their culture. However, it is not these important figures that remain uppermost in my mind when I think of people I met in Africa, but rather the sisters and brothers in Christ, as with song and dance their beautiful faces lit up with joy!

#### People:

It would be impossible to mention everyone who impacted my life in positive ways. I've had sisters in the Lord who had the courage to confront me when they feared I was going in the wrong direction. I've also had sisters, some whom I have already mentioned. whose ministry of encouragement gave me the courage I lacked to move forward with God into the unknown. I've always liked the quote King George 6 used in his Christmas message during WW2, prompted by his daughter, then Princess Elizabeth:

*"I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown. ' And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness, and **put your hand into the Hand of God.**'"*

Marsha was one whose hand was firmly gripped by the hand of God! Involved in ministry to her own Jewish community, her commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ exemplified a purity of heart and purpose that is rarely found. From Marsha I learned how to pray. Oh I had known that God hears and answers prayer since I was 6 years old and my baby sister lay very ill, without medical help available! But Marsha knew about conversational prayer! When Marsha died an early death I lost not only a friend, but a mentor in whose wisdom I could trust, and a sweet prayer partner whom I loved.

Beverley became my friend; just as my work in Africa began, so did hers! How I thank God for the wonder of watching Him work in her beautiful life! Saved in her middle years, Beverley gave the Lord everything she had – time, money, and future! God gave her a vision for little children in Zambia; in a few short years she became a mother to many! Beverley worked tirelessly to link churches at home with her ministry to street kids in Lusaka. Her memory leaves me in awe of what God can do with a life totally

committed to Him! Sadly she died of cancer after only a few years of working in Zambia, but not without leaving her mark on the world! Now she is with her precious Lord!

Mission memories are all about people! Humans are the climax of God's creative genius....each individual made uniquely in His image. Each of us has a story. Some have had very sad experiences, but what a joy it was for me to discover the amazing giftedness of some women with a natural sensitivity for the emotional and spiritual needs of others. God is always at work in the hearts and minds of those who love Him. I felt privileged to meet a dear old saint in Dandora, Kenya, who used her God-give wisdom with love and courage. Her Bible was worn and her smile infectious! It was deeply humbling for me to learn from her about healing hearts. You see, it was my ministry to share what I had learned at Bible College about Biblical counseling, yet here was a woman taught by the Holy Spirit Himself!

I discovered innate wisdom implanted by the Holy Spirit, gifting women both old and young with remarkable Biblical insights! Gifts of the Spirit are not only given to those with the advantage of higher education! It was such a joy to see how the Spirit of God was using women with compassion, faithfulness and dedication as they supported one another within the Body of Christ. Sometimes I felt like an auxiliary person as I watched in awe, what God was doing in the lives of women humbled by circumstance, yet elevated by the Lord! In bed at night I would laugh out loud at the idiocy of thinking that I had anything to give, just because I had a piece of paper with "credentials" on it! Surely our God has a sense of humour! I found beauty, generosity and genuine respect with love, engraved on the hearts of many dear ladies.

Another different sort of memory comes from Addis Ababa. Considering the few times I was there, I have a lot of memories of that city. Dr. and Mrs. McCarthy, part of the ministry team remaining behind after medical clinics were finished, and I were housed in a grand hotel, waiting for our next flight....this is where I got the food-poisoning that I referred to earlier. A delightful shop on the ground floor of the hotel, where I browsed, was owned by a very friendly brother and sister. In conversation I had the glorious opportunity of sharing Jesus with them, and they seemed very interested. After we talked, they commented that one of the hotel cleaning ladies had been listening. Apparently she understood the gist of what I was saying, but had not enough confidence in her English, to engage in our conversation. The young people with whom I was sharing, told me she was a Christian. I dashed after her to try to communicate my love for a sister in Christ – what other way than to give her a great big hug? It was moments like these that filled my spirit with great joy and wonder! What was her life like? Did our meeting lift her spirit, as it had mine? ...and I still pray that her testimony will impact lives around her.

I value my mission experiences for all that they taught me about people created in the image of God. Together we wept and prayed, sang and danced. Yes – this Baptist gal even danced in church, swept away by the enthusiasm of a beautiful black lady, sister in Christ even though a perfect stranger! The Apostle Paul told the Corinthian Church *"I have become all things to all men, so that by all possible means I might save some"*. Sometimes it is important to overcome things that do not matter (like dancing in church) so that we can major on what is important, such as joy!



Of course there was also pain. I held the hands of a sweet young woman as I explained what leukemia meant for her only child, a 5-year-old boy. I wept in the arms of a colleague after telling a young couple to take their baby girl home, blinded by hydrocephalus from birth. Knowing there was no hope for treatment in the distant capitol in Zambia, nor funding for on-going follow-up, I had to recommend they just love her for as long as the Lord kept her in their lives.

We had experience with another hydrocephalic baby, in Guyana.... After 48 hours in labour the Mom was taken by boat, then by car, then on another major boat ride across 22 miles at the mouth of the turbulent Essequibo River to another car ride into Georgetown, a journey of many hours. It is a wonder she survived. Fortunately a surgical team delivered her baby son, and shortly thereafter another team from the USA was able to put a shunt into his brain. However, one year later, when we saw him on the far side of the Pomeroon, the shunt was blocked. His head was too heavy to lift so he couldn't sit up but he was a happy little baby, lovingly entertained by his siblings. Sadly there was no help for him until another team came from the USA, and by then the little one had died.

Brave, raw courage...kept so many men and women going. Wounds which never healed over years of time though carefully tended. One lady came to clinic walking on her knees. We discovered the cause was spina bifida, a condition where the spinal cord bulges outside of the confines of the spinal column intended to protect it, effecting the nerves to her lower limbs.

Word pictures would seem revolting if I described some of the untreated cancers that we saw. We found that folks would rather die at home in the arms of their family, than to go away for treatment in larger centres. The reality was that often people from rural areas would have to wait indefinitely to be seen and then treated. Furthermore in developing countries complicated treatments were often not available and there usually were no funds to cover the cost. Death is a very real part of life and faced with more stoicism than in developed countries, where expectation for healing is much higher.

But then there were other wounds – injured spirits like the gifted young gal who excelled in primary school, but because she had to use the wheelchair our mission provided for her, was denied access to secondary school. For years Patsy's Mom would phone me at home to give me an update on her deteriorating condition. I felt angry when a strikingly handsome young teenager came to clinic in Charity. He was intelligent, but had never gone to school after surviving a stroke at the age of 5; no one was there to explain how his mind still functioned, or to counsel his recovery, so he became useless. These things broke my heart!

A young nurse confided her longing to have a baby but her ability to conceive couldn't be tested in the rural area in which she lived; once again limited finances prevented her from seeking medical assistance. Thankfully we could urge her to pray, believing God could hear and answer prayer. Another young woman had been longing for a baby for years in Kenya. What a thrill it was after we prayed together to learn she was pregnant, and the following year to be introduced to her baby boy!

There is no help from social services in developing countries! One tiny pastor in Guyana opened her home and actually expanded it to accommodate hurting young people, to teach and train them for

ministry, knowing the needs were great in her community. Hers was a message of hope! Only by the love of Jesus would they find their spiritual and emotional needs met.

A shrill ring pierced my subconscious! My colleague in Guyana was shaken to the core! Missionaries, beloved by the tribe for whom they were translating the Bible with Wycliffe, had been found brutally dismembered and burned, outside of their home in southern Guyana. I had met these dear folk at the Easter Conference in Lethem. Hebrews 12 describes such events. Surely these things didn't happen in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century! Yet there may be a cost to total commitment, even today.

Bonhoeffer said "When Christ calls a man/woman He bids him/her come and die". I have had occasion to question if my own commitment to the Lord would go that far. Thankfully no such sacrifice was required of any of our teams, but the last mission trip I took did cost.

It was 4 am in Guyana. We were getting an early start, traveling to the far western region. In the darkness, as we travelled a lonely highway, a horse ran headlong into our vehicle. It was instantly killed and the windshield shattered, throwing glass shards into shoes and hair, shaking us all awake. Some of the team sustained minor injuries, but the vehicle was finished, so we slowly regrouped back at headquarters to consider how to start again. Little did I know that the impact would revive old problems with my back which would eventually prevent me from further service overseas.

The Closing Chapter:

King David wrote: *"Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be"*.

None of us knows when those days will end, but there is work to be done. God keeps us here for a purpose. We must believe that! I can't believe how weak, unenergetic and frail one can feel, yet the passion of the Spirit of God lends tremendous impetus to each and every day. My worship is energized by the very solitude I might have longed for, when passionately pursuing service for my Lord! This blessing is not often bestowed on the young; it is saved for the golden years!

*Speak, Lord, in the stillness,  
While I wait on Thee;  
Hushed my heart to listen,  
In expectancy.*

Over the years it has been my privilege to share Biblical principles for relationships, knowing how hard it has been for people from the beginning of time to get along with each other! Thankfully, through Jesus Christ our Lord, we have been given the ability to love, in a spiritual dimension. This colours all of our relationships once we have begun our walk of faith, as sons and daughters of God. In Trinidad at St Augustine church, the lights went out just as I finished defining love as "that which is for the ultimate good of another". I figured God was telling me I had said enough. After all, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega is all about that selfless love. *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"* (1 John 3:1).

"The Love of God is greater far than tongue or pen could ever tell" How music uplifts the spirit! I have a friend who is particularly gifted at singing hymns beside the bed of sick folks. What a ministry Jane has! I have mentioned the ministry of song from gifted Zambians, which blessed me often. Music was one of the things that brought Sid and I together. We sang in the quartet, "The Pleasantaire", and much later in the octet "His Own". I'm sure God has a sense of humour; after all "a merry heart does good like medicine" (Proverbs 17:22). Its Ok to have fun while ministering to the Lord. Our practises at Fred and Helen Mark's home, with Grace Bowman, were something we looked forward to every Monday night. We even had the privilege of taking part in a contest at Massey Hall put on by the organizers of the "All Night Sing" which brought the Gaithers and the Blackwoods to town. I won't attempt to list my favourite hymns since this would never end, but music has been an integral part of my life.

Many years before I became directly involved in missions I was visiting my cousins Marg and Mark in Virginia. The preacher at their church mentioned a concept I had not heard before. From that time God gave me my "Life Verse", kept very close to my heart. *"I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the One who loved me and gave Himself for me"*. This, along with part of the Westminster catechism which states "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever", has been the motivation of my life.

Conclusion:

Prayer is the moment-by moment breathing of our spirits as we find ourselves blessed to be a blessing to our families and friends! We have so much to share with others! Praise God! I never felt I was a great prayer warrior; often I visualize myself kneeling at Jesus' feet clutching His ankles in wordless prayer. Now in my senior years a song often runs through my mind as I pray, which describes the absolute delight that prayer has become.

In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide  
 O how precious are the lessons that I learn at Jesus' side?  
 And when Satan comes to tempt me  
 Or when trials lay me low  
 To the secret place I go!  
 To the secret place I go!\*<sup>1</sup>

Opportunities change. I knew it was God's will for me to join Tweedsmuir Presbyterian Church. Through that association I joined the work of Grand-pals, with the Rotary Club. The teacher was delightful and gave me license to celebrate Christmas with the children by giving out candy canes with the story\*<sup>2</sup> behind the sweet treat, written on a card. Seed-sowing! As God has so often done, I discovered that the concept of older folks ministering to the young, can be passed on in other groups such as Sunday School.

I have been blessed by the video of the Gospel of John, which really made the life and ministry of our Lord come alive for me. When I was invited to teach a ladies' Bible Study at Tweedsmuir it seemed only natural to share this video with them through the Easter season. To keep it alive, God moved me to write what we learned together, putting the lessons into a little book... "The Heart of The Matter".

Missions don't end when you cannot go – God has given me the privilege of teaching via email. A group of Pastors in Kenya received a certificate from MATE/FCC for studies in "Doctrines of the Christian Faith". Many there assume leadership in the church, without the advantages of Bible School training. But God! "He knows my every need and hears me when I call". *He* is establishing His church in Kenya!

A elderly gentleman began to read my book "Feed My Sheep". He called me to ask "What does it mean to be born again?" What an opening! What joy to hear him acknowledge Jesus as Saviour! What joy to hear him talk about his prayer time as he set aside a corner of his living room for that specific purpose! What joy to read scripture to him, because his sight was failing, on a weekly basis! He introduced me to his sister. In her 90's she was eager to read the devotional booklet a friend made sure she got from Peoples Church each month. And on it goes, with God in control!

A little group of ladies wanted to grow in their faith. What a privilege to take them through a discipleship program, in my home week by week! Another group of nurses met in my home for prayer. There is always something to be done to encourage others on their journey through life! And then God moves us....sets us in another place for another purpose. What will that entail? Only the Lord knows.

Learning about our amazing Heavenly Father is never over. I watch humble testimonies shared softly by dear brothers and sisters on the program Tribal Trails, and marvel at God's pure and perfect love for an Indigenous people who have been so misled by those calling themselves "Christian". How gently He leads them to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!...to the place of freedom through forgiveness! So – for reconciliation I must pray! I wouldn't want anyone to live without the joy of the Lord who has been my strength throughout my life-time! Praising God!!

Steve Green wrote the following, which I copied into my Bible. It is my prayer.

*We're pilgrims on the journey  
Of the narrow road,  
And those who've gone before us  
Line the way.  
Cheering on the faithful,  
Encouraging the weary,  
Their lives a stirring testament  
To God's sustaining grace.*

*Surrounded by so great  
A cloud of witnesses,  
Let us run the race  
Not only for the prize,  
But as those who've gone before us  
Let us leave to those behind us  
The heritage of faithfulness  
Passed on through Godly lives.*

*After all our hopes and dreams  
Have come and gone,  
And our children sift thru all  
We've left behind,  
May the clues that they discover,  
And the mem'ries they uncover,  
Become the light that leads them,  
To the road we each must find.*

*Chorus: O may all who come behind us find us faithful  
May the fire of our devotion light their way!  
May the footprints that we leave lead them to believe  
And the lives we live inspire them to obey.  
Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful!*

## To the Secret Place I Go \*1

When my soul is faint and thirsty, 'neath the shadow of Your wings  
There is cool and pleasant shelter, and a fresh and crystal spring;  
And my Savior rests beside me, as we hold communion sweet:  
If I tried, I could not utter what He says when thus we meet,  
What He says when thus we meet.

Only this I know: I tell Him all my doubts, my griefs and fears;  
Oh, how patiently He listens and my sorrowed soul He cheers:  
Do you think He ne'er reproves me? What a false Friend He would be,  
If He never, never told me of the sin which He must see,  
Of the sin which He must see.

Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret of the Lord?  
Go and hide beneath His shadow: this shall then be your reward;  
And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting place,  
You will surely bear the image of the Master in your face,  
Of the Master in your face.

## The Story of the Candy Cane \*2

*Look at the Candy Cane – what do you see?  
Stripes that are red like His blood shed for me.  
White is for my Saviour who is sinless and pure  
J is for Jesus, my Lord, that's for sure!  
Turn it around and a staff you will see –  
Jesus the Shepherd born for you and me.*