

Finally, getting to teach in India



Dear friends,

January and February are always times of reflection and gathering reports of the past year from every country. But the first few months of this year have been even more so as our new mission president, David Goodman, has involved us all in a deep analysis of the state of the mission so that he can make his report to the board and set the mission on a new course of action. Several new changes are in the wind which I'm sure you'll hear more about in the weeks to come.

But it has been a great time as we have thought about who we are as a mission, what we have done and what we would still like to do. We have been challenging some old worn out ideas while recommitting ourselves to the things we most believe in.

I've had several tasks in the last two months:

1. For the last couple of years it has been my job to coach the country leaders through the process of writing their annual reports, and yes, sometimes nagging them to get them in. Though this involves a lot of communicating back and forth, it gives me a bird's eye view of what is happening in our mission and a chance to interact with our team leaders.
2. I chaired a committee to consider how we can do a better job of making policy decisions regarding our various curriculum and training programs. We have had difficulty in the past integrating the different training courses and strategies that take place in our mission across many countries.
3. As liaison to our African branch, I have interacted heavily with our African leaders as they have been forced to address some of the major issues which have hurt their growth and progress. In the process I have come to have an even greater respect for what our African brothers and sisters are attempting to do there. Still, the financial crisis that they are in is hard on the staff, some of whom have not had salaries for a month or two.

The Wonders of Skype

You may be aware of a free program, Skype, available for people connected to the internet. It allows you to talk for free to anyone in the world with a computer and microphone. It has really changed missions.

I am able to talk to our staff and contacts anywhere in the world. Just yesterday morning I talked to staff in Romania and Africa and Ohio. Sometimes I can even get a video feed to and from Mozambique.

Feel free to give me a call (name=culture hound).



4. I helped David collect his thoughts and put together his personal report for the board meetings which are coming up.

Combine all of that with a lot of grading of research papers for my doctoral students and I have just about had enough of my desk for awhile. I wonder if this hasn't been the source of some of my stomach problems recently.

But I am glad to report that the next couple of months will see me far away from my desk most weeks.

Trip planned for India in April

One of the new developments in our mission is that we have put together a team of 3 couples to work in India, with me as the team leader.

Three of us will be headed to India April 11-19 to begin a trial partnership with India Bible Literature (IBL). We will spend a week with them taking their leaders through our first course and discussing a pilot project we can try together. I'm assuming this would mean another trip to India in the fall.

One of the things that we are excited about is a connection we have made with J.N. Manokaran. He is someone I have known for a few years as president of TOPIC (Trainers of Pastors International Coalition) for India. Our own new mission president also knows Manokaran from his own TOPIC days. Mano (nickname) is one of the leading missiological researchers in India and publishes many books and reports about what is happening there. He has major contacts all over India and also happens to know IBL very well, being prayer partners with one of the IBL staff. We made contact with him recently and he is very interested in what we are doing and we are discussing how he might work closely with us. We could really use a man like him to be our champion on the ground in India. So this seems to be a real God-thing.

Trip to Africa in May

As part of my job as liaison to our African ministry, I will accompany David Goodman to visit our African headquarters in Mozambique in May. While we are there we will have the opportunity to visit some of our pastor training groups in both South Africa and Mozambique. But our main goal there is to develop closer ties to our African work and learn as much as we can about what they are doing there.

This trip would coincide with our annual Cameroon trip for which I'm still working out the details. At this point, however, it looks like I'll be in Africa the entire month of May.

Please pray

- for the above two trips,
- for our African staff and for the funding needed for the ministry,
- for our board meetings the end of March,
- for my stomach...just ever so slightly upset most days.

Thanks so much for all your care, prayers and support!

Alan