REFUGEES: BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

I CAN'T BELIEVE I SAID THAT
Hilarious language faux pas

A GOSPEL FOR THE RICH
Does the Church have a bias for the poor?

THE ADOPTION THAT NEARLY DIDN'T HAPPEN
An inspiring story seven years in the making

THE FREE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FROM BMS WORLD MISSION
MISSION STORIES / PRAYER / NEWS / OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE
WELCOME

I am pretty useless at football, but playing a friendly game with a bunch of Syrian refugees in Beirut last year was an incredible experience.

After the match (which my team won!), I learned some of the dramatic reasons that had led many of the players to end up in Lebanon. Hearing their stories was a real eye-opener.

The refugees I met were so likeable, and when I heard what they’d been through and what they are struggling with now, I couldn’t help but want life to turn around for them, for their stories to have a happy ending. The refugee crisis seems too huge to fix, but our main article (page 8) shows why we as Christians can and should give hope to these desperate people. Play your part by supporting the BMS Syrian Forgotten Families harvest appeal and give refugees hope now and for the future.
ACROSS THE WORLD
TRAINING LEADERS
WORLD
SPEAKING OUT AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

BMS workers are training churches in West Bengal, India, to speak out about violence against women.

Over 50 pastors in Kolkata have been trained about gender based violence thanks to a project started by BMS’ Brian and Mo Leitch. “Most of the pastors went back and spoke in their churches,” says Brian. “And in most cases, that’s the first time anyone in the church would have heard their pastor speaking out against violence against women.”

Now in the next phase of the project, Brian and Mo, alongside local partners, are working with churches in West Bengal to train congregations and to get them to practically engage with the issue.

The final project of a retiring BMS World Mission worker has resulted in church leaders being trained in over 25 countries.

In completing his task of setting up a project to train church leaders in the remotest parts of Brazil, former BMS World Mission worker Dr John Dyer has created an online resource that has been used by an estimated 5,000 people around the world.

The Timothy Project, launched in March 2011, is an online training course being used by Christians who have not had any access to theological education before. Now available in Portuguese, Spanish and English, it has been used and taught in 28 countries, including Brazil, Chile, Mozambique, Bangladesh and Japan.

“It has become a worldwide phenomenon,” says John. “It has grown beyond our wildest expectations.

“The reasons for this are an evident need for this kind of project and the quality of the material, which has been very widely praised, but also it is a project that is financially and geographically accessible for the churches it is intended to help. There are no limits to where the Timothy Project can go.”

Modules on the Timothy Project range from preaching biblical messages and planting churches to creation care. Most of the topics were chosen by a group of indigenous mission workers in north east Brazil that John consulted with to discover the most useful material to offer.

Now in its sixth year, the Timothy Project has received very positive feedback from those using it. One Baptist church in northern Brazil says: “The content is consistent, edifying and effective. God be glorified through the Timothy Project team!”
MUSLIM DOCTOR CONVERTS AND PLANTS 50 CHURCHES

Living in one of the most unreached places in the world, devout Muslim Sanjay’s whole life changed when he was healed from cancer.

Growing up as a devout Muslim, Sanjay* gave his life to Jesus when he was healed from cancer. Now, despite persecution, he shares the gospel with everyone he meets. Since his conversion, Sanjay has led hundreds to faith in Jesus and planted 50 small house churches for Muslim background believers, supported by BMS World Mission.

West Bengal, where Sanjay lives, is one of the least evangelised places on the planet. When he discovered Jesus was real, Sanjay started telling everyone he could about Christ. “My family threw me out,” he says. For years, he was persecuted by many in his community. But despite great opposition, he has led hundreds to Christ.

“Apart from Jesus there is no life,” Sanjay says. “I am even more excited to tell others what Jesus has done. Every day I want to live for my Lord and keep on doing what I’m doing.”

*name changed

STANDING ALONGSIDE THE DISABLED AND DYING

No BMS personnel left Tunisia following the terrorist attacks that killed 39 people, 30 of whom were British. Instead, they rededicated themselves to helping transform the provision of palliative care and the support for those with disabilities in the country.

Care for people with disabilities and for those with terminal illnesses has been neglected in the past in Tunisia, often for cultural reasons. But BMS believes no one should have to suffer in silence.

Since 2002, we have been supporting special needs education in Tunisia, and for the last four years we have been involved in a programme to promote social, economic and educational inclusion for people with disabilities.

Our workers have also been helping to pioneer palliative care in the country – training medical professionals and families on the benefits of palliative care for those who are dying. “People should not be dying in pain,” says Louise, a former BMS worker in Tunisia. “Palliative care is incredibly important.”
NEW STRATEGY TO TRANSFORM ONE MILLION LIVES

This May, BMS World Mission revealed a new strategy to transform one million lives in the next five years.

BMS aims, with God’s help, to transform one million lives by 2020. The new BMS strategy was officially launched at the Baptist Assembly in Oxford this May.

With your support, we are intentionally going where others can’t. We’re aiming to bring God’s transforming love to the world’s most marginalised people and least evangelised communities, with a special focus on fragile states and desperate, often dangerous, contexts. We are going to do this through church, development, education, health, justice, leadership and relief ministries.

We have targets – numbers of people we want to see touched and changed by our work. And these are bold, faith-stretching and measurable. But this is not a numbers game. If it were, we’d do the easy thing. Focus on the easy places. Do the easy work. With integrity, excellence and love guiding us, we’re aiming for lasting transformation, not box-ticking or headline-grabbing. In this, we have faith that God will honour our work in ways we have not even imagined.

OPENED EARS IN NEPAL

A six-year-old boy can hear for the first time thanks to the support of a BMS worker.

Unique was born deaf – and this year, for the first time in his life, he can hear. BMS worker in Nepal Wendy Hall befriended Unique’s parents and encouraged them to get him fitted for hearing aids.

The day they did is one she will always remember. “His eyes widened and his mouth fell open. He started to sing and laugh,” says Wendy. “His mother’s eyes were tearful and every eye in the room was fixed on him.”

SEWING SUCCESS

A short-term BMS mission team from Perth has helped women in Peru’s Amazon to gain self-esteem and a new skill.

Twelve women from Nauta, in Peru’s Amazon, have learnt to sew bags and are starting to sew children’s clothes, thanks to textiles teacher Maggie Robertson and the Perth Baptist Church Insight Team. With their new skill, these women have the chance to earn some money for their families – and they have also grown in self-confidence.

“Having taught for most of my career, I might have helped one or two people learn to sew,” says Maggie, “but for these people, it’s going to make a difference to their actual lives.

“I honestly believe it is one of the most worthwhile and fulfilling things I have ever done.”

For more information on going on an Insight Team visit: bmsworldmission.org/serveoverseas
Dear Editor,

I was interested by the article focused on personal evangelism [Apathy in the UK? spring 2016] – that contained some excellent insights and advice – because my own experience, which was shared by other Christians at a recent Lenten series is that, at a personal level, individual Christians in most denominations are quite proactive in sharing their experiences. The problem we all agreed was not with individual Christians, but with those who claim to represent Christianity in the various denominations who are so taken up with maintaining their own organisations that they have no time to talk about Jesus to anyone else.

John R Hudson

Dear Sir,

I was interested in your Coffee for a cause article [Ideas for your church] in the spring edition of Engage but disappointed to find no mention of Fairtrade coffee and tea! As a member of a Fairtrade Baptist church, I would like to think that BMS World Mission would take the opportunity, whenever possible, to encourage churches to buy Fairtrade products (especially coffee and tea), which is such a simple thing to do and makes such a difference to the lives of countless numbers of underprivileged people throughout our needy world. It may well be that Tring Baptist Church does in fact use Fairtrade coffee but, if so, what a pity that isn’t mentioned! What they are doing is wonderful but, sadly, many Christians still don’t realise the enormous difference that can also be made simply by purchasing goods that bear the Fairtrade symbol.

Veronica Golding

Editor: BMS is committed to Fairtrade tea and coffee (we use it at our offices in Didcot and at the International Mission Centre) and encourages everyone doing Coffee for a cause to do likewise.

We do not have space to include all readers’ correspondence that we receive and letters that are printed may be edited for publication.

More letters are online at bmsworldmission.org/engage

Care about our planet and wondering what difference your voice could make?

Subscribe to the Worth Saving email to receive:

- thought-provoking articles
- beautiful desktop images
- climate-changing action

bmsworldmission.org/worthsaving

Take part in our creation care photo competition at: bmsworldmission.org/competition
All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. (1 Cor 9: 25 NLT).

Many years ago, I heard a comment by a very successful sportsman, who, when told how lucky he was to have been so successful, replied, “Yes, and it’s amazing that the harder I try, the more successful I become!”

As the Rio Olympics come into focus, let us remember all the hours of determination, discipline and dedication the competitors will have put into their sport to get this far. It doesn’t happen by chance or luck.

I fondly remember Eddie ‘the Eagle’ Edwards, who never even managed to get close to a medal and who was derided by the public for his “failure”. But he did the best he possibly could and at the time was the only Briton who had ever competed in the Winter Olympics.

At the age of 61, I ran my first London marathon. I never expected to win, only to finish! My family asked if everything had been cleared away by the time I finished! Well, not quite, but it had taken months and years for me to build up enough endurance to even take part. I also reminded my family that at least I had had a go and that they were simply bystanders!

There are many things we struggle with in life, but we have to endure if we are to accomplish God’s purpose for our lives.

In Hebrews 12: 1 (NLT) it says: “Let us strip off every weight that slows us down… and let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us.”

If we want to win the race of life, we have to remain faithful to God’s instructions, whatever the reasons and whatever the consequences.

And that’s life!

Fiona Castle OBE is an international Christian speaker and writer. Her late husband Roy was an entertainer and TV presenter.
How do you cope with living through the war in Syria? Denial helps.

“Most live in false hope,” says Fares, a Christian NGO worker originally from Aleppo, who visits Syria every month to support the Church there. “You want to encourage each other, even though you know this hope is not real. There are always promises – ‘this is the last month’ or ‘this is the last week of war’ people say. It is the opposite – it’s getting worse and worse.”

The pressure on families in Syria today is intense. When they go their separate ways to school or work in the morning, they don’t know if it will be for the last time. “You are not sure whether you will meet again in a few hours or not,” says Fares. “Maybe a sniper, maybe a bomb or a rocket will kill you.”

Electricity and drinking water are luxuries – you’re lucky to get an hour of each a week. Basic living is a luxury too. A family of five need to earn 200,000 Syrian pounds every month. The average monthly salary right now is 30,000 pounds. Syrians are resorting to desperate measures to make up the shortfall. “People lose their hope and it forces them to even lose their values,” says Fares. “They steal, they kill, only to gain money because they need to feed their kids and their families.”

No wonder that millions of Syrians have fled their country. A Christian part of the city of Homs that Fares knows well used to have 80,000 families living there. Now there are only 50. “It has become a city of ghosts,” Fares says. “Everything is ruined.”
Lebanese Christians’ attitudes to the refugees from across the border.

“We were hesitant at first because the Syrians were our enemies and we had a bad history with them – they occupied our land for 30 years and killed a lot of people,” Pastor Jihad says. “But God’s grace turned the hatred and anger in our hearts into love for these people. Now we are serving them with love.”

In *Syria’s Forgotten Families*, the new BMS harvest appeal resource, you can see the impact your support is having in the lives of Ali, Nermine, Nada, Husam and many more, through Pastor Jihad’s church. By providing food parcels and setting up a school for over 300 children, refugees are not only being helped by the church but barriers are being broken down between Christians and Muslims.

Supporting the relief efforts of this church in the Bekaa Valley is one way BMS has helped Syrian refugees since the war began. Thanks to your generosity, we have so far given nine relief grants totalling over £140,000 to help refugees and internally displaced people in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. This has provided hundreds of families with food aid, nappies, hygiene supply packs, and winter-preparedness items like blankets and stoves. It has also made education initiatives like the Learning Support Project in Beirut, which is managed by BMS mission worker Louise Brown, possible.

BMS Manager for Mission Steve Sanderson believes that it is vitally important for us to continue to support the Church in Lebanon as they cope with the refugee crisis. “There needs to be international support for Lebanon to enable it to remain stable and for it to accommodate the refugees that are there,” he says. “Lebanon has got to be our priority at BMS.”

**The water is safer than the land**

Some Syrian refugees are finding the cost of living in countries like Lebanon, where they are not legally allowed to work, too hard. They are joining thousands of other refugees and migrants making the perilous journey to countries like Greece and Italy by paying people smugglers to get on flimsy boats to cross the Mediterranean.

Sam took the journey in Christmas 2015. He had not planned to come to Europe at all. He escaped persecution in Nigeria and ended up in a detention centre after going to Libya in search of work. In detention he saw horrific things, which ultimately drove him to break out and make the dangerous journey to Italy. And it certainly was dangerous – a few hours into his journey the rubber dinghy he was on began to sink. Sam was in the water for four hours, people treading water around him crying, praying and dying. In the midst of this horror, he felt led to sing the Christian chorus Count your blessings, name them one by one. “If I am going to die, I am going to count my blessings,” he said. That night in the sea, he re-committed his life to Christ and that was when he was picked up by a rescue ship. He is now living in Italy, in the southern port city of Reggio Calabria, and attending the church run by BMS workers Ann and David MacFarlane.

Ann says that the sheer number of refugees and
migrants arriving into Reggio Calabria and other ports in southern Italy is overwhelming.

“Our streets are absolutely full of people begging, literally on every corner, every traffic light, everywhere,” she says. “They are waiting for documents and the bureaucracy here: there is a real feeling of hopelessness.”

Unemployment in Reggio Calabria is incredibly high. Ann says that most of the people in her church are poor. But despite this, they are doing all they can to help migrants and refugees. The church has a food bank and Ann is part of a group of Christians who welcome refugees with food, water and clothing as they arrive. Ann also helps out at an information centre for migrants and refugees at the town’s railway station. She says that increasingly Christians feel led to help.

“The generosity of people has been quite overwhelming,” she says. “They have been very welcoming, doing everything they can.

“You are seeing at first-hand human misery. As a Christian, you can’t close your eyes to it.”

Ann is aware that it is not just her church that is helping. “We would not be able to do what we are doing without the support we are getting from the UK. We really depend on the prayers of everyone. We can only turn to God at a time like this.”

To help offset the pressure in southern Italy, many migrants and refugees are being bussed up to towns further north. BMS worker Alex Anderson, who is based in Matera, says that some of the tiny towns where the migrants end up have “never seen a black person before.” The local population struggles to know how to respond to their new neighbours.

Alex has been working with a Brazilian pastor in the village of Gravina, encouraging the Baptist church there to help the migrants. As most new arrivals don’t know Italian, Alex helped start language lessons at the church.

"IF I AM GOING TO DIE, I AM GOING TO COUNT MY BLESSINGS"

She has trained two other women who are now leading these classes. One of Alex’s students, called Simon, became homeless after being thrown out of the place he was staying due to religious tension with other migrants. Initially the pastor was not sure what to do, but when Alex offered for Simon to stay with her and her husband Huw, it jolted her into action. The pastor decided to let Simon stay with her family instead.

This was a huge step for her and has made a big difference to the acceptance of migrants by the church. “People are now treating them like human beings,” says Alex. “They are being involved,
"It is our calling to practise hospitality"

they are being invited to people’s houses and that was just not happening before. Before, they were hangers on, they sat at the back, listened to the service and then left. Nobody would speak to them at the end of the service. Now it is completely changed and they are very much part of the community."

Building support

Feeling part of a community is something that refugees are desperate for. Many who get to Europe are struggling without it, says Dr Martin Accad, Director of the Institute of Middle East Studies (IMES) at BMS partner the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut.

“Every day we hear from family members of Syrians who are here in Lebanon who are saying: ‘I’m in Germany. I’m bereft. I can’t take it anymore. I’m going to come back.’

Dr Accad believes that the Church can play a big part in addressing this.

“The role of the Church in the West should be offering community and spiritual, emotional, psychological and recreational support to refugees.” Dr Accad is advocating that churches set up focus groups in order to better understand the situation that refugees have come from and how best to support their needs. He then recommends reaching out to these refugees, believing it will dispel a lot of the fears that Christians have. He fully acknowledges the fear that many have of ISIS and terrorism, but is concerned that keeping refugees out will make the situation worse, not better.

“If today we are afraid of the Syrian refugees, we close our doors and are inhospitable and allow them to settle in ghetto-like communities, then in ten years’ time we might have hundreds of extremists who have felt rejected, wounded and, having already seen so much violence, become perpetrators of violence in western society,” he says. “To be honest, that is one of my worries, that the fears that some have will become self-fulfilling prophecies if the Church is not very intentional about countering that narrative.

“It is our calling as Church to practise hospitality. Fear is the greatest enemy of hospitality.”

The hospitality of the Church in Lebanon, supported by BMS, is providing desperately needed hope to refugees. The hospitality of the Church in Italy, supported by BMS, is providing hope to migrants and refugees. Whether refugees arrive in the UK, Europe, or stay in the Middle East, the Church has a vital role in keeping hope alive for refugees and migrants not just for today, but for the future.

Words: Chris Hall

The names of all of the refugees mentioned in this article have been changed.

To order Syria’s Forgotten Families and make a donation to our harvest appeal go to bmsworldmission.org/syriasfamilies
Adoption is a beautiful thing, yet it can be a long and agonising process. BMS World Mission workers Louise and Arthur Brown have found this to be true. Their story is one full of faith in God and a realistic understanding of the struggle faced by parents waiting to adopt.

The phone rings. My husband Arthur’s face goes white as he sits down. I’m confused. This can’t be a call about his meeting.

Suddenly I hear Arthur say, “four months old.” The words shock me, and now he has my full attention. Can it be the orphanage?

I look at Arthur as he ends the call. He says, “There’s a little boy who’s four months old and needs a mum and dad. I’ve just been asked if that’s us.”

We both look at each other. We don’t need to say a thing, we just know. The answer is yes. It is mind-blowing to us that, after seven years of waiting, it is finally happening.

Arthur and I had always had the desire to adopt, even before we met and were married. Even after we had two girls of our own, Jessica and Naomi, the desire to adopt was still in our hearts. We believed that we were called to give a home to a child in need.

At the time when Arthur and I were finally ready to pursue adoption, we were about to move to the Middle East with BMS. We decided to wait until we arrived in Lebanon to begin the adoption process.
But, we soon realised that the adoption system in Lebanon was quite complex and that family law in Lebanon is handled by religious courts. The three major religions in Lebanon are Islam, Christianity and Druze. Within the Islamic faith and the Druze faith, adoption doesn’t happen, so all adoptions are to Christians. And within that system, you can only adopt through your specific Christian denomination.

Giving up your child for adoption is even harder. Particularly for single mums. Legally, a single woman is not allowed to give up a child for adoption in much of the Middle East because adoptions must be initiated by the child’s father. So the only way for a single mum to be able to put her child up for adoption is to completely abandon their boy or girl at an orphanage.

Despite all these local adoption challenges, it was fairly straightforward for us because we are Christians. We were, however, quite low down on the adoption list because we had children and still had the ability to have more children. Naturally, the people on the top of the adoption list were those who did not have children and were not able to have children. So, we waited.

As the years went by, we honestly gave up hope that it was ever going to happen. We ended up having child number three, our son Jack, on our own.

After Jack, we thought our family was complete. We hadn’t really planned on having four children, but neither of us wanted to close the door on adoption. Even though it seemed unlikely that a child would come along, we decided to keep the adoption papers in with the orphanage. We decided that if God opened the door, we would still walk through it.

And so we continued to move on with our lives. In addition to our BMS work, I started my Masters, Arthur was doing his doctorate and life for our family of five was very busy. It had been seven years since we put the papers in to adopt and we hadn’t even talked about the idea for about a year. Then, suddenly, everything changed.

I remember one of my friends saying, “I just know there’s a child out there for you.” And I thought, ‘well, God isn’t doing anything about it. He hasn’t in seven years.’ And my friend said she was going to pray.

Two weeks later, we got the phone call about adopting little Jonathan. I was in complete and utter shock. I knew it could happen, but I really never thought it would.

And from there it was a complete whirlwind. Four weeks after the phone call, Jonathan moved into our house! It was a crazy time trying to get the children to understand that they had a new baby brother coming and running around trying to sort out all the practical things for a new baby’s arrival. On the bright side, though, it was the shortest pregnancy ever!

Suddenly, there was a sweet new little boy in our house who changed our world. Luckily he had been in a wonderful foster home, so he was a very happy and confident little boy. He adapted very quickly – Arthur always says he settled in properly within two days! And all of the kids were happy to have a new baby brother.

For me, adapting wasn’t as easy as I thought it would be. I was a bit overconfident right away, thinking: ‘I’ve had three children, four will be no problem!’ But adoption turned out to be just as exhausting as when I had my own kids. The only difference was that this time it came from all the change and surprise involved in the way adoption is done in Lebanon. For the first six months it was the whole learning process of what happens when you have a baby all over again.

Today Jonathan is three years old and has been the biggest blessing. There’s no greater joy than when he wraps his arms around us and calls us Mum or Dad. And I don’t think I’ve ever laughed so much in my life. He is the funniest boy in all the world, the ultimate entertainer.

We feel so lucky. This adoption has been such a joy and an amazing insight into how our Heavenly Father feels about us.

Louise Brown was talking to Hailey Brenden

BMS worker in Thailand, Judy Cook, works at Hope Home, a place of love, support and constant care for children with disabilities whose parents cannot take care of them. To support BMS work with children and others in need around the world, become a 24:7 Partner today.

bmsworldmission.org/partners
“Everything has been devastated by the earthquake and everything is unsettled.”

When the first earthquake shook Nepal on 25 April 2015, so much changed for Bir Bhada Dimdung and his family. Not only was his home destroyed, but his neighbours’ houses were too. Almost all of the houses in the Sankhu area of Lalitpur District where he lives were either destroyed or badly damaged. Bir Bhada and his family are still living in a temporary house 12 months on. But thanks to the generous giving of BMS World Mission supporters, soon, he will be able to not only build his own house but help build others too. He has now received stonemason training to enable him to build homes to withstand future earthquakes.

“Before the training, I had no idea about what sort of house was earthquake-resistant and I would have just used stones,” Bir Bhada says. “Now I have ideas for earthquake-resistant houses.”

The skills he has learned mean that he can be paid more for the work he does, increasing the opportunities for him and his family.

“My hope for the future is to build a better shelter for my family and to provide higher education for my son,” he says. “My son gives me a new hope.”

Sita Maya Ghising lives in the same district and her home was destroyed too. Thanks to BMS, she has received training in livestock management, dairy production and growing vegetables. The training is giving her ideas for a new, more hopeful future.

“I want to have a strong family and be a role model so that change can be seen in me,” Sita Maya says. “I am not so well educated, so I want to establish a big farm and get registered. I started with milk after the earthquake and want to grow my farm and dairy produce business.”

Bir Bhada and Sita Maya are just two of the people whose lives have been transformed by the £540,000 you gave to the BMS Nepal earthquake appeal.

Sita Maya Ghising
In the first few weeks after the disaster, over £50,000 provided:

- food relief
- blankets
- tarpaulins
- medical supplies
- a vehicle for distributing relief and helping with long-term recovery efforts
- training for those responding to the earthquake

The majority of the money raised is going towards the second phase of rehabilitation, which should take about three years. During that time we will be contributing to the transformation of over 54,000 lives by supporting education and health programmes, enabling livelihood training like that given to Bir Bhada and Sita Maya, and providing materials and support for the construction of hundreds of new earthquake-resistant homes for those currently living in temporary shelters or severely damaged homes. With your help, we are also helping to train people to prepare better for future earthquakes.

BMS mission worker Jerry Clewett, who initially directed the disaster response for one of our partners in Nepal, says that the response from BMS in the first few days and weeks following the earthquakes was vital in enabling workers to be able to help 12,000 severely affected people in seven communities. “The pledges of money from BMS and other partners were absolutely crucial,” he says.

SINCE THE FIRST EARTHQUAKE 12 MONTHS AGO, THERE HAVE BEEN OVER 400 AFTERSHOCKS.

“All of the support has had a fantastic impact, both in a tangible way by enabling work to be done, and in an encouraging way – knowing that people care outside Nepal.”

Since the first earthquake 12 months ago, there have been over 400 aftershocks. BMS mission worker Ruth Clewett says they have grown used to them but they still put them on edge.

“Paradoxically, part of you is a bit blasé,” she says. “When there is an aftershock, you shrug it off. At the same time we’re a bit hyper – if someone knocks into the back of your chair, you jump.”

With recent earthquakes in Ecuador, Japan and Afghanistan, some believe there might be another earthquake in Nepal soon. “There is a lot of superstition and fear here,” says BMS worker Debbie Drew.

Despite the fear, many good things have come out of the response to the earthquakes. A community spirit to look out for each other has grown, with many taking helping the needy into their own hands.

“I can see signs of hope,” says Jerry Clewett. “There is a lot of goodwill, particularly from the more wealthy people in Kathmandu and especially the younger people. I think there is a growing civil awareness and willingness to support others who are less well-off in the villages. Providing that positivity continues, there will be a lot of hope for the future.”

It will take years for Nepal to fully recover from last year’s earthquakes, and BMS is committed to helping in that process through recovery work, our mission worker presence and prayer. Please continue to pray for Nepal and especially for good leadership there.

“Pray that God will raise up people who will be truly concerned about the needs of the poorest and worst-hit people,” suggests BMS worker Andy Saunders. “Pray that God will raise up leaders in all areas of society, who have a real heart for the country.”

The work we are doing to help earthquake survivors would not have been possible without your generous support. Thank you.
Learning another culture as a mission worker is not without its challenges. And inadvertently admitting to cannibalism is likely to be one of them. We face it every time we venture forth from the safety of our little island. The shame, the fear, the potential (or, let’s be honest, inevitable) embarrassment. You try to order a salad for your vegetarian friend and the waiter brings her a goat’s head. You think you’ve said you’re going to visit a neighbour, and end up telling the world about your date with an armadillo. Somehow you’ve mortally offended your taxi driver when all you wanted to do was pay him. It’s all part of going abroad and being British.

And a couple of misunderstandings as a tourist overseas is nothing compared with the weeks, months, or even years of embarrassing language struggles BMS World Mission workers have to go through before being able to communicate fully with their new colleagues, friends and neighbours. Before being able to feel truly at home.

There’s not a BMS mission worker on this beautiful earth who hasn’t had that awful “I can’t BELIEVE I said that” moment. And while we sympathise, we really do, it seems like at least one good thing should come out of their humiliation. Like a laugh, say.

It’s great to extol the virtues of our workers overseas, but every now and then it’s good to be reminded that they’re all only human. So here, for your reading pleasure, are some of the very best (or worst, depending on how you look at it) BMS language faux pas.

Where shall we start?
Perhaps at the top, with BMS General Director David Kerrigan. David used to be a BMS worker in Bangladesh, and he remembers with searing clarity the day he sat a spoken language exam during his first year in the country.
Telling a story about hospitality, David tried to say: “I invited a friend to my house and we had a meal with him.” He actually said: “I invited a friend to my house, and we ate him.”

A refreshing take on missionaries and cannibalism. It was also with a language teacher that Lily*, a BMS
worker in Afghanistan, had her most memorable linguistic mix-up. Fresh-faced during her very first week of study in the country, she was just trying to be polite. She casually wished her language teacher good health. What she actually wished him? “A good time in hell.”

Dark.

Lily is swift to assure us that she is only one of many in her team who have made some fairly awkward (to understate things) language faux pas. One of her friends learnt that it was polite to thank everyone when you leave a meeting, so she dutifully went around the room saying “tashnob, tashnob, tashnob”. But ‘tashnob’ doesn’t mean ‘thank you’, does it? It means toilet.

Another of Lily’s colleagues spent quite some time asking everyone, “are you a camel?” instead of “how are you?”

---

**FABBA FAUX PAS**

What do mission worker language faux pas have to do with ABBA, we hear you ask? Truthfully, nothing. But we are firm believers that two great things are even greater when brought together. We think you’ll agree that these FABBA faux pas confirm that belief.

**CHIQUITITA**

**Megan Barker, Nepal**


**MAMMA MIA**

**Louise*, Tunisia**

“I was language learning in Massy, France. And after sharing a meal I said what I thought was: ‘I feel full, thank you for that delicious meal,’” Louise says. Stony silence.

No traditional “De rien.” No response at all. Mostly because she had actually said: “I am pregnant.”

**HEAD OVER HEELS**

**Beth*, Tunisia**

When complimenting a friend’s new (and very lovely, we’re sure) haircut, Beth accidently said: “Your new horse is beautiful.” Total ‘mare.

She also told her language teacher that she was dead. Which seems unnecessary.

**THAT’S ME**

**Jess, Mizoram Action Team**

Jess tried to say ‘thank you’. She actually said: “I am a fool.” Harsh, but in this case fair?

**GIMME! GIMME! GIMME!**

**Margaret Gibbs, former Regional Team Leader for East Asia**

While in a market as a mission worker in Albania, Margaret tried to order six eggs (‘veze’). Instead, in contravention of more BMS rules and local laws than we can count, she ordered six girls (vajze).

**WATERLOO**

**Claire Bedford, Chad**

While learning language in France, Claire went to a coffee shop and asked to borrow a coffee to go. Which might be taking Anglo-French friendship too far.

**TAKE A CHANCE ON ME**

**Emily, Albania Action Team**

Not strictly a language faux pas, but definitely an unfortunate cultural mix up. Trying to make friends on a walk in a park in Tirana, Emily offered a flower to one of the men from her church – and thus inadvertently professed her undying love for him. Oops.
Your new horse is beautiful.

I inadvertently professed my undying love for him.

What’s your favourite food?

Dog.

It’s easy to make mistakes. That’s something to which Mark Ord, Co-Director of the BMS International Mission Centre, can attest. While a BMS pastor in Italy, Mark once preached a whole sermon exhorting his congregation not to discourage one another. “Do not discourage!” he repeated, over and over again. Rather than look chastened, his congregation smirked, too amused to correct him. Turns out, he was repeatedly telling them: “do not fart”. A fair instruction, but not what he was going for.

Then there’s our Regional Team Leader for Africa and South America, Mark Greenwood. We are afraid it would be impolite to tell you what he said to the boy he was trying to compliment on looking like his mother. Needless to say, he was quickly informed of his mistake. He hasn’t used that phrase since.

Something else we can’t mention is what BMS Manager for Mission Steve Sanderson asked to shake when he was working in Tanzania and wanted to greet a colleague.

Moving swiftly on.

Let us transport you to Bangladesh, where Alex* and Rachel* are working with BMS.

Scene: a BMS house in Dhaka.

Enter Alex, with a spring in his step, feeling particularly proud and ready to impress after his fourth day of Bengali language learning.

Alex: [Calling triumphantly in his best Bengali] My wife! My wife!

Housekeeper: [Offstage: barely suppressed guffaws and sniggering]

Alex: What?

Housekeeper: Um… Congratulations?

Translation of Alex’s greeting for the audience: “I am a wife! I am a wife!”

Oh, Alex…

That’s almost as bad as his actual wife Rachel trying to explain to a driver that she was finished for the day and he could go home, thereby accidentally (and briefly) firing him. Not a high point.

But you’re probably exhausted from all that cannibalism, damnation and constructive dismissal. So let’s conclude our travels with Louise Brown in Lebanon. Trying both to make new friends and be health conscious is as hard in Arabic as you’d imagine. Louise had just started to support preschool teachers in a Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut and she was invited to join them for a drink.

Having been diagnosed with high blood sugar, in her best Arabic Louise explained to her new friends that she couldn’t drink the sweet tea because she was a diabetic.

Little-known fact: the Arabic words for ‘diabetic’ and ‘alcoholic’ are pretty easy to mix up.

There are hundreds more unreported BMS language faux pas, many of which should never be printed, or, if we’re honest, spoken aloud! But the fact our BMS mission workers press on with learning new languages in order to be more effective and develop more meaningful relationships in the places God has called them to – despite the frustration, isolation and humiliation involved – is really rather wonderful.

Tashnob to you all.

More than learning a language

Beth*, serving in palliative care in Tunisia, is having to learn both French and Arabic to serve with BMS.

“Having started learning French and now learning Arabic, I believe learning language is not just learning new grammar rules and vocabulary, it’s a lesson in humility and relying in full dependence on God’s grace and kindness,” she says.

“I was reminded frequently that ‘God is gracious’, to which I would reply ‘and so are people’. After 16 months in France, very rarely did anyone get frustrated, impatient or appear rude to me, quite the opposite!

“Language barriers are only temporary and are quickly lessened when we ‘just give it a go’. And if we can make someone laugh with a language faux pas… oh well… at the end of the day, it makes a funny story around the table.”

Beth*, serving in palliative care in Tunisia, is having to learn both French and Arabic to serve with BMS.

“Having started learning French and now learning Arabic, I believe learning language is not just learning new grammar rules and vocabulary, it’s a lesson in humility and relying in full dependence on God’s grace and kindness,” she says.

“I was reminded frequently that ‘God is gracious’, to which I would reply ‘and so are people’. After 16 months in France, very rarely did anyone get frustrated, impatient or appear rude to me, quite the opposite!

“Language barriers are only temporary and are quickly lessened when we ‘just give it a go’. And if we can make someone laugh with a language faux pas… oh well… at the end of the day, it makes a funny story around the table.”

Words: Jessica
**QINGZHOU**

**IF YOU’RE VISITING THE CHINESE CITY OF QINGZHOU, WHERE SHOULD YOU GO? BMS TEACHERS DAVID AND JENNY MEWES SHARE THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS.**

**CLOUD GATE MOUNTAIN**

The most famous tourist spot in Qingzhou is Yunmen Shan, Cloud Gate Mountain, which we would definitely recommend as a sight worth seeing. There is a stone path that takes you past a Buddhist temple on the way to the summit. On a rare clear day, there are spectacular views of the city and surrounding countryside.

**OLD QINGZHOU**

Next, you should stroll along the old streets in the centre of what used to be the ancient walled city. During the day, vendors sell anything from sugared fruit to fine, intricately woven lace. At night the buildings are lit up by red lanterns lining the street. On festivals and holidays, you might see performers singing Beijing opera accompanied by Chinese musical instruments.

**GO TO CHURCH**

Right in the middle of the ancient street is the old BMS church, now a Three Self Patriotic Movement church. A museum of how Christianity arrived in Qingzhou is housed in the old buildings on the left of the gate as you enter. Most Sundays the church is full.

**WEIFANG NURSING VOCATIONAL COLLEGE**

A short walk from the church will bring you to what was once Yidu Medical School, founded by BMS in 1885. The college has changed its name to the Weifang Nursing Vocational College, and we work on the new campus six miles away. Here you can join us as we teach English and listen and speak to very well behaved and disciplined classes of up to ninety nursing students.

**COOK YOUR OWN**

After a long day of walking through historical sites, you might enjoy a meal at a hot pot restaurant near the bank of the river that runs through the city centre. You can cook your choice of meat, fish, tofu and vegetables in a small pot filled with a fragrant stock flavoured with Chinese dates and goji berries. Once the meat is cooked, you dip it into sesame sauce before eating. Delicious!

**DANCE IN THE PARK**

After dinner, take a stroll to Dongyi Park where you can watch young people playing badminton. Or you might even like to join in with the older dancers in the square!
Host of a weekly programme on Premier Christian Radio, an after-dinner speaker and an author of fiction and non-fiction, Pam Rhodes is most well-known for presenting BBC 1’s flagship religious programme Songs of Praise since 1987. She also runs Biggleswade Cat Lodge with her husband Richard Crow.

Q

You’ve been presenting Songs of Praise for almost 30 years now. What is it that you love about it?

A

The people that I’ve met, because those who appear on Songs of Praise on the whole aren’t celebrities, professionals or speakers. They are just your neighbours and mine, in streets and towns up and down the country and indeed around the world. They are not just the ones who speak between the hymns, but the ones I have stood singing alongside in churches big and small – the stalwarts of our church life who are there every Sunday, when the cameras are only there once in a lifetime.
Who have you enjoyed interviewing?
The majority of interviews that I remember the most are those with really challenging situations, where ordinary people rise to the challenge and come through it in a way that is really hopeful. I often wonder why people would bare their souls and talk about quite intimate and painful experiences on television to millions of strangers. In every single case it’s because they hope that what they’ve been through and the lessons they’ve learned on the way, especially about the importance of faith and God’s part in it, will be helpful to others whose circumstances might be different but who are going through similar feelings and experiences.

In 2014, the format of Songs of Praise was changed. Do you feel this was the right decision?
Changing the format of Songs of Praise was a bit of a wake-up call. For many years it had been all cosy, and probably given the impression of always being in the local parish church and everyone being middle-aged and wearing their best clothes and everything, which doesn’t really reflect the whole breadth of the Christian movement in this country now.

It has always evolved over the years but it most certainly needed to change. We are not based solely in one local church now. We have a much more countrywide look at what is going on and several different items in a programme. It can be very topical and can look at the things that are challenging Christians, using the best examples and the best people to speak about it. I think we needed that.

As well as Songs of Praise and your other media commitments, you also look after cats. Is that right?
Yes. We have an old barn in our garden which has become a cattery for people going on holiday. The majority of the cats come from the local RSPCA. In a way, the state of society is reflected through how we look after our animals. When we went through the recession, cats were thrown out by families onto the streets and out of moving cars, kittens were found in sealed boxes that were left on the common and we’ve nursed them all through.

You’ve written two books on hymn writers and present a weekly hymns programme on Premier Christian Radio. Why are hymns so important to you?
Hymns are a forgotten, overlooked resource. I think an awful lot of what we learn about Bible stories and about the life of Christ and about God being relevant in our lives is expressed beautifully in hymns. Obviously it’s the combination of words and music, but the words are usually at the heart of it. And when those words meet the perfect piece of music, they become more than the sum of the parts, and the whole result is something that remains in your heart and memory, sometimes for your life.

Did you find it helpful exploring the lives of hymn writers?
If all you know is that a hymn was written by someone with initials and the day they were born and the day they died, you never really think about the person who created those words that actually stick in your mind. But if you know the human story of the person behind it, what sort of situation they were facing, what their insecurities were, if you know a bit more about their lives, their context, it resonates and echoes with your own.

How important is your faith to you?
It has always been incredibly important to me. I can’t remember a time when it wasn’t at the heart of who I am. It wasn’t a road to Damascus experience. It just made absolute sense to me. I feel that I have a very close relationship with God. I feel that I share everything with him and I feel that it helps me very often to work through challenges I am facing. Obviously in difficult times of life, it is the thing that you cling to.

I think most inspirational and moving for me is not so much what is happening in my faith, but what people have shared with me about theirs. Because their challenging situations have been so dramatic and so painful and so shocking sometimes and they’ve come through a situation that I have felt, ‘Gosh, how would I have reacted to that?’ Like a lady who lost four children in a house fire and whose faith is stronger than ever through it. And you think, ‘would my faith be stronger than ever?’ The trouble is, you don’t know until it actually happens to you. It’s a privilege meeting people who’ve been through so much and whose experience shows that having a relationship with God and the prayer and the support of other Christians help you through. I’ve heard it so many times – it must be true.

Pam Rhodes was talking to Chris Hall

Then Sings my Soul: 40 Reflections on my favourite hymns (Lion Hudson) is available from all good book shops.
Being a Christian hospital chaplain in a Muslim area sounds like a challenge, but it is one that Pastor Djibrine loves. In fact, his life has prepared him for it.

Djibrine was brought up in a Muslim family in rural Chad and was taught the Qur’an at school. Life changed at the age of 18 when his uncle became a Christian after meeting mission workers at college. His uncle took Djibrine to church and he gave his life to Christ.

It was a costly decision. Djibrine’s father told him to leave home and didn’t speak to him for many years. They were finally reconciled a year before his father died. “He actually became a Christian just before he passed away,” Djibrine says.

Two years after coming to Christ, Djibrine began studying at Bible college and went on to be a regional pastor for 17 years. Soon after, BMS World Mission supported hospital Guinebor II opened, and in 2011 Djibrine became its chaplain. He’s been there ever since.

As part of his role, Pastor Djibrine prays and chats with patients, supports staff members, and organises discussion and Christian film evenings. He gets mocked by some patients, but takes it in his stride. “I got asked once if the white people had paid me to become a Christian! These type of comments give me an open door to chat and discuss my faith and I really enjoy that,” he says.

Please take a moment to pray for Pastor Djibrine.

KIDS CARE

Through fun activities, discussions, craft and games help young people learn about God, the lives of children in other countries and how their actions can make a difference.

Use quarterly or save up the year’s material for your holiday club.

Download KIDS CARE free from bmsworldmission.org/KIDSCARE
PROJECTS: Syria’s Forgotten Families

Our news is full of heart-rending stories of people escaping from conflicts around the world. An estimated nine million people have fled their homes in Syria to escape fighting. Many of these have settled in Lebanon, a country half the size of Wales but with a million more people!

BMS World Mission has been helping Syrian refugees in Lebanon since 2011, first with immediate relief, food, blankets, medical help, and then, alongside continuing relief needs, longer term support for refugee families. By providing education for children and practical support for their parents, we are trying to make sure that the next generation of displaced Syrians is not lost. Find out how you can help refugees in Lebanon and around the world, at bmsworldmission.org/syriasfamilies

PRAY FOR:
• an end to the fighting which has displaced so many
• the families who have had their lives turned upside down by conflicts around the world
• those involved in relief work in refugee communities
• churches to use this resource

PEOPLE: Mission workers ending service

We give thanks for those who have responded to God’s call to mission overseas. But we are mindful that, for many, this is just one part of the plan he has for them. Over the coming years we will have many new workers being trained up and sent out. We will also be bidding farewell to those who have reached the end of their service with BMS.

Whether it is retiring after years of faithful service, or taking up a new role here in the UK, we lift up our brothers and sisters in mission as they begin the next chapter in their lives.

PRAY FOR:
• the work that continues overseas despite changes in staff
• a smooth transition for workers moving from one context into another
• Christians to respond to God’s call to mission

Get regular prayer points and resources from BMS at bmsworldmission.org/prayer  
Aidan Melville is sub-editor for the BMS Prayer Guide

PLACES: Bangladesh

You probably have clothes sporting ‘made in Bangladesh’ labels in your wardrobe. The textile industry accounts for three quarters of the country’s exports. But part of this pillar of the Bangladesh economy is built on the backs of some of the poorest people in the country. Around 45 per cent of the population live below the poverty line, with many living on less than 52p a day.

Bangladesh is also one of the most disaster-prone nations in the world. Cyclones, floods and mudslides regularly claim many lives and destroy infrastructure. As the effects of climate change start to take hold, rising sea levels are likely to render vast swathes of the country uninhabitable, displacing up to 20 million people.

PRAY FOR:
• industry leaders working towards improving working conditions in the nation’s garment factories
• the small, but growing, Church in Bangladesh, for spiritual strength and wisdom
• those in Bangladesh already affected by our world’s changing climate
A volatile fragile state BMS has been involved in for several years is Afghanistan. Catherine, who is a mental health director, has been serving there for the last 12 years with her husband Rory*, who is enabling communities to collectively improve their wellbeing through practical, life-changing projects and relationships. Catherine says a lack of infrastructure can be a huge problem but it can also mean you make a huge difference. “When you are starting from such a low level, even small changes can actually produce quite significant results,” she says. “We have had the privilege of being one of the first organisations to train anyone in psychiatry in Afghanistan. Just having one psychiatrist in a region of four million people isn’t so great, but it really does have an effect. “The fact that very few people want to come and work in Afghanistan inspires me because now that I have lived here a while, living here is not so difficult for me. Obviously I would like to live in other safe countries but the difference I could make there is not nearly as significant as the difference I can make in Afghanistan.”
We asked Catherine and Rory what qualities you need to survive in a fragile state. They gave these ten top tips:

1. **HAVE A CALLING**
   If you feel called by God to work in a fragile state that is a huge help.

2. **RELY ON GOD**
   You trust that God is in charge of your future and that he will protect you. You get used to not having as much control over your life as you would want. If you believe in God, and you trust your survival is through him, then you will find a way.

3. **BE PATIENT AND FLEXIBLE**
   We never set out on a journey in Afghanistan knowing that we are definitely going to arrive. In the winter, with the infrastructure here, there is a 30 to 70 per cent chance that we will arrive on the day we plan to arrive. We make a lot of plans, but you need a lot more patience than you do in western life.

4. **BE SLOW TO ANGER**
   You need not be too judgemental. Don’t be quick to express an opinion. If you are always angry about the situation, it is not very helpful. Everyone is facing exactly what you are and actually, as westerners, we live a safe, quite cocooned life compared to some of the poorest people.

5. **BE READY TO CHANGE**
   Probably the most critical thing is to be prepared to change. People in the West don’t get pushed a long way out of their comfort zones. But if you are prepared to be pushed a little bit out of your comfort zone and change as a result, then I think you will fit in in a fragile state pretty well.

6. **LOVE PEOPLE**
   If you enjoy being with people that will help, because what sustains you are the relationships you have with the local people.

7. **DRUM UP SUPPORTERS**
   Make sure family are supportive and they see some of the value of the work that you will do. Having a network of people who pray for you is important.

8. **CULTIVATE SELF-AWARENESS**
   You have to be fairly aware of yourself and how your personality reacts under pressure. You need to look after your mental health and take responsibility for that.

9. **PREPARE TO COMMIT**
   If you can, commit for a few years. If you stay longer you can have a bigger impact.

10. **BE REALISTIC**
    You have to be fairly pragmatic, that if things change, they will change slowly. You have to be prepared to deal with disappointment and loss, and to accept that sometimes things fail. You are not going to change the world, but you are going to help a few people.

So, do you think that God is calling you to serve in a fragile state? We are looking for people with skills in healthcare, education and development. Get in touch by visiting bmsworldmission.org/vacancies
We would love to hear from you.

*Names changed*
IDEAS FOR YOUR CHURCH

KIDS CARE

Treasure hunt in Chad

Want to take kids on an exciting adventure to Chad? You can when you join us in our latest issue of KIDS CARE as we travel to this beautiful African country. Kids will learn all about the culture and find out how to love God with all of their strength.

They will hear the story of how a young boy named Yousef, who was suffering from malnutrition, was saved from dying by a BMS World Mission nurse. In addition to the story, we’ve got great questions to prompt your young people to think about how they can share God’s love with others.

We’ve also packed this treasure hunt full of fun activities. Kids can create clay pots, snack on sweet and salty African delights and even take part in a Chadian hoop race – what could be more exciting?

We hope you will join us for this KIDS CARE treasure hunt in Chad! You can download all the resources you need from bmsworldmission.org/kidscare

ACTIVITIES

KIDS CARE

Treasure hunt in Chad

Want to take kids on an exciting adventure to Chad? You can when you join us in our latest issue of KIDS CARE as we travel to this beautiful African country. Kids will learn all about the culture and find out how to love God with all of their strength.

They will hear the story of how a young boy named Yousef, who was suffering from malnutrition, was saved from dying by a BMS World Mission nurse. In addition to the story, we’ve got great questions to prompt your young people to think about how they can share God’s love with others.

We’ve also packed this treasure hunt full of fun activities. Kids can create clay pots, snack on sweet and salty African delights and even take part in a Chadian hoop race – what could be more exciting?

We hope you will join us for this KIDS CARE treasure hunt in Chad! You can download all the resources you need from bmsworldmission.org/kidscare

HARVEST

Please don’t forget SYRIA

This year we have created a resource for your church called Syria’s Forgotten Families that tells the story of Syrian refugees who have fled to Lebanon because of ongoing conflict, terrorism and war.

Living like a refugee

Time: 15 minutes
You will need: A tent (you could use a pop-up tent or hang a tarpaulin over a taut rope) and Syria’s Forgotten Families leader’s guide.

Help the young people in your church understand a little of what it means to live like a refugee. Create a tent in the church and invite people to come and sit in or near the tent. Explain that, while being in a tent might be fun for a while, some refugees have been living in tents for years and have no other home.

If you turn to page 3 in your Syria’s Forgotten Families leader’s guide there are lots of different facts that you can use to teach the young people about life as a refugee. You can talk about the limited access to water and toilets, and explain that less than half of the Syrian refugee children living in Lebanon are able to go to school.

Spend time giving thanks for the blessings in our lives and praying for the Syrian refugees.

You could do this activity as part of your harvest service, or several weeks before, and then you could challenge your church to start fundraising early for the BMS collection.

All the resources can be found on the Syria’s Forgotten Families DVD or downloaded from bmsworldmission.org/syriasfamilies
Corinna Woods

Tell us about yourself
I’m a retired primary school teacher, mother of three children and ‘Nan’ to 11 grandchildren. I love my garden and enjoy classical music. I am a member of Tunbridge Wells Baptist Church. I previously worked for BMS World Mission in Nepal where I taught mission children in a remote Himalayan village and then started a teacher education programme in another remote location.

What made you become a BMS speaker?
The privilege of being able to work in the places where I served is enormous and Nepal is deep in my heart. Being a teacher, I loved home assignment and the opportunity to share my passion with others. When my term of service was complete it was quite a bereavement to feel that the connection with BMS was over and I jumped at the chance to be a speaker.

What do you enjoy about being a BMS Speaker?
Every church is different, but usually there is a long held commitment to BMS and people are keen to know the difference our work is making. I enjoy researching places and people that will help to inform, enthuse and sometimes challenge churches to respond with prayer, giving and feeling part of the work.

What does a church gain from having a BMS speaker visit them?
Speakers have access to some materials that churches won’t have seen. I can present a wide range of issues that you may not have thought about before. I try to help churches engage with BMS in a deeper way. Serving in this way continues to be a real privilege and an opportunity to share my passion for God’s work through BMS around the world.

If you’d like a BMS Speaker to come to your church, then please complete a speaker request form. Visit bmsworldmission.org/speakers

Thank You!

We are pleased to report that last year (2014-2015) we raised £7.2 million and we spent £6.9 million on BMS’ charitable activities. This represents 95% of total expenditure.

We raised £7.2 million

95% of total expenditure on BMS’ charitable activities

We were able to spend £500,000 more than the previous year thanks in part to your overwhelming response to the Nepal appeal.

Thank you for your faithful support for BMS World Mission. You are bringing the love of God to people in desperate need.

Information from BMS finance accounts 2014/15

Have you got ideas?

We are always looking for new and interesting ways to promote world mission.

If you have a service idea or fundraising initiative that you have tried and would like to share, we would love to hear from you.

Just email: churchrelations@bmsworldmission.org or write to: Suzanne Linnell, BMS World Mission, PO Box 49, 129 Broadway, Didcot, OX11 8XA.
A GOSPEL FOR

DOES THE CHURCH HAVE A BIAS TOWARDS THE POOR?
SHOULD WE WITNESS MORE TO THE WEALTHY?

UK: STAND UP FOR THE POOR

Definitely yes… and emphatically no. Yes to a bias to the poor and no to witnessing more to the wealthy. Read on!

A divine bias to the poor is to be found firstly in the characteristic of justice found in the heart of God. A second, but related source, relates to how this ‘divine justice’ impacts people. We get a clue in John 10: 10 “I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

The issue isn’t inequality per se. People were unequal in Jesus’ day when those like Lydia with greater wealth and Paul with greater learning each contributed to the growth of the kingdom. Rather, injustice flows from those who have power blighting the lives of those who don’t.

But injustice can also become structured in systems that prevent the poor from accessing the opportunities others have. It can be as simple in the UK as pay-as-you-go gas meters that charge the highest tariffs to poorer households, structures that take less tax from a huge corporation than from a street cleaner. Legal structures that work for the rich, but not for the poor who can’t afford a lawyer.

“Oh, this is just politics,” I hear some say. Well, the gospel is political. The gospel is God’s good news to humanity and politics is simply the business of the polis, the people, the city. Political processes have immense capacity for expressing or suppressing gospel values.

So, ‘should we witness more to the wealthy’ is an exercise in missing the point. We should witness to everyone. But what we bear witness to might not just be only someone’s personal salvation, but also their responsibility towards the poor. That seemed to be a pretty important litmus test for Jesus. (Matthew 25: 31-46)

David Kerrigan is General Director of BMS World Mission

ALBANIA: WAKE THE RICH UP

The Sermon on the Mount describes a different kind of world, a light on a hill, a world where there could be justice, where poverty could be dealt with – where freedom could be seen for all.

However, I wonder if we (the wealthy) become so comfortable with seeing poverty all around us that it becomes invisible. As newcomers to Tirana we have been shocked by the level of poverty. But our first impression is that many of our new neighbours have become comfortable with having children sifting through their bins for scraps of plastic to sell.

For many it has become normal to see people living on the rubbish dumps. Normal to see young children carrying babies through the busy traffic, begging. The way the wealthy and powerful decide to act on this issue in Albania in the coming years will make a difference to whether children continue to grow up on rubbish dumps, whether the poorest people have access to basic health and education, and whether they have an equal place in the community. As Christians, we must have the courage to speak out and ‘wake up’ wealthy society to the reality within which it lives, and reignite its capacity to care for the poor.

Annie Dupree is a BMS World Mission worker in Albania

Annie Dupree
Albania

The rich can make a difference to the shocking levels of poverty some face in Albania.

28 bmsworldmission.org
NGERIA:
GOSPEL OF FAVOURITISM

The Bible makes it clear that there is “One Lord, one faith, one baptism,” (Ephesians 4: 5). Also, that there is one indivisible, non-customised gospel for humanity. It’s a one size fits all salvation message for humanity.

What then is this gospel? It’s the good news of great joy that is for all people; that after all have sinned and deserved eternal punishment, God, in his rich grace and mercy, sent Jesus to pay the price of sin for all: rich and poor; black and white; men and women; young and old.

When Christianity was first introduced to Africa, poor people were the first to embrace it. This was because most evangelical work started in rural areas. But today, the tide has turned. With more educated ministers, modern technologies, and conducive worship environments, one can say the gospel is available to all and there are more rich people who are committed to the Lord in Africa. However, not all preaching is being constrained by the love of God for genuine conversion. Some preachers target the rich as a way of getting their financial support to execute their ‘big elephant’ ministry projects and ensure personal comfort while the poor are targeted for crowd care.

REACHING OUT TO THE RICH WITHOUT LEADING THEM TO CHRIST AND DISCIPLING THEM IS DECEITFUL

This is a human gospel of exploitation. Reaching out to the rich without leading them to Christ and discipling them is deceitful and connotes a cheap gospel that contradicts biblical teaching of being saved by grace. No matter how fabulously rich a person is, he or she is a sinner. But when he or she is saved, such wealth is an asset for kingdom expansion. Jesus ministered to Nicodemus, the Apostles preached indiscriminately to all, Lydia was converted and was helpful to Paul’s ministry. A gospel of favouritism is scandalous and destructive.

Duro Ayanrinola is General Secretary of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship

LEBANON:
PEOPLE TRUMP WEALTH

Jesus often draws our attention to the poor, the helpless and the marginalised. Scripture is full of passages such as Matthew 25: 35-36, Luke 14: 13-14, Luke 4: 18 and others that call on us to stand alongside the poor. Many verses in the Old Testament talk about God being a refuge for the poor and the needy, and that he protects the oppressed and the weak.

But is it only the materially poor that Jesus was concerned about? I don’t think so. In every encounter, Jesus cared for the person regardless of their financial status. And as the Church we need to take our cue from him. He was not against wealth, but against wealth becoming a ‘god’ in our lives, creating a sense of self-satisfaction that drives us away from him.

In the Middle East today, in what is being described as the worst refugee crisis since the Rwandan genocide, we see powerlessness, homelessness, injustice, discrimination, inequality… situations that strike at the core of a person’s human dignity. And I believe this breaks the heart of Jesus. Like Jesus, our focus should be on the person regardless of anything else.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke about the poor in spirit. Today, we have heroes of the faith at the very frontlines, humble members of our churches and fellow sisters and brothers in Christ who are responding to the needs of Syrian and Iraqi refugees who are seeking shelter in our neighbourhoods. Their genuine care and attention have given these caregivers credibility in the eyes of the larger community. So it is not only the rich that are in a position of influence. In Lebanon and Syria today, it is the poor and the humble that God is using to influence the community positively. Come and see!

Nabil K Costa is the Executive Director of BMS partner the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development, a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance and a trustee of BMS World Mission.

The views expressed here are the writers’ own and do not necessarily reflect those endorsed by BMS World Mission.

Nabil K Costa
Lebanon

Duro Ayanrinola
Nigeria
Your background is in nuclear engineering, which is not a traditional one for a theologian. Has that had any kind of impact on the way you do theology?
I suppose it’s made me rather analytical, but then I think that it was because of my analytical bent that I was inclined towards science and engineering. But I do bring that analytical sort of thinking to theology. I was always more interested in the ethical and philosophical issues around science and technology, which is partly why I decided to leave the field. I wasn’t interested in practicing as a nuclear engineer, but rather in exploring some of the implications of modern science and technology. Which is how I drifted into theology.

Theologically, worldwide, some people identify a growing split between ‘progressives’ and ‘conservatives’, with some people suggesting another Reformation is looming. Would you recognise that as something that is a possibility currently?
Well, not here [in Sri Lanka]. I don’t think so. The divisions were much wider in the 1980s when I started doing Christian ministry, especially with the older, mainline churches. I think those divisions have actually reduced. It varies from country to country and region to region.

Around the world, the Church seems comfortable talking about poverty generally, but less comfortable with the mechanics of wealth and privilege. Is that something we need to address?
It definitely has to be addressed. I’ve often gone along with what the economist Susan George has said, that we should be studying the rich more than we study the poor. Study the ways of the rich and how they made their money and how they hide their money and who bears the cost of the way they have made their money. I think that’s what the Church should be doing.

A perceived injustice in the news recently was the Panama Papers’ tax haven story. Is huge individual wealth like that unjust in a world full of poverty?
Yes, and I don’t see how people can amass so much wealth without some act of appropriation, dishonesty or fraud involved. And that’s where we have to investigate. How was this money actually made? Take the example of these technological giants like Microsoft and Google. A lot of their research was funded by American taxpayers – they received government grants. If they are then hiding their profits, they are actually cheating the American taxpayers.

The argument is often made that what these companies do is legal, though...
Well, Christians of all people cannot simply go by what is legal. We have to frame politics within a moral discourse. We have to inject morality back into politics.

You will be a keynote speaker at Catalyst Live later this year. What can audiences expect from you?
Expect to be provoked. I hope I will be able to deliver stimulation and healthy provocation.

Vinodh Ramachandra was talking to Jonathan Langley

You can read more from Vinodh Ramachandra in the current issue of Mission Catalyst and buy tickets to Catalyst Live at bmscatalystlive.com
Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Scepticism

Timothy Keller

Book ISBN: 978-1444702170

Hodder & Stoughton

Rating: ★★★★★

Tim Keller helpfully starts his book with the acknowledgement that “Word ministry” should not be limited to preaching alone, but also should firstly find its place in the life of every follower of Christ as they share with one another and, secondly, find its place in the small group, writing and mentoring. Turning his attention more specifically to preaching, Keller acknowledges the convergence of divine activity and human effort in the task. After setting some biblical foundations for expository preaching, Keller moves on to perhaps the most distinctive emphasis of his book where he persuasively argues that preaching should not retreat to the corners of irrelevance but rather address the cultural narratives of the day. Preaching must have both a relevance and also an application. While this has a North American focus, there is clear resonance for the UK context. Moving on, Keller acknowledges the importance of the personal integrity of the preacher: the preacher’s words must be matched by their actions. Keller ends his book with a helpful appendix outlining his own approach to preparing an expository sermon. Overall, a useful book for preachers.

Review by Peter Dunn, Director for Mission, BMS World Mission

Let it Echo (Live)

Jesus Culture

Book ISBN: 978-0310438335

Zondervan

Rating: ★★★★★

The new album by Jesus Culture is their ninth live recording and has a stadium atmosphere, which has you really feeling like you are sitting in the crowd. The songs are given more power and meaning by being performed live, with the band and singers complementing each other well.

The album is the epitome of ‘anthemic’, with strong instruments and repetitive lyrics. The style of worship may not suit everyone, but it does make for easy listening, whether it be in the car, at home or at work. The lyrics are focused on glorifying God, and the freedom and love we find in him. I would feel comfortable learning any of the songs in a church context.

The title song Let it Echo is a mammoth eight minutes long, but does not drag at all, using vibrant instrumentation and stirring vocals, and building steadily to an exciting crescendo. Another stand-out song is God with us, which brings out the band’s strengths of powerful guitars and vocals.

It is obvious that plenty of time has been spent on producing these songs, and though some might find it slightly ‘Americanised’, it is still a great worship album. I heartily recommend it.

Review by Amy Allen, Administration Manager at Southern Counties Baptist Association

God for Kids

App (iOS)

Rating: ★★★★★

God for Kids is a great mobile app for children which has been produced by the Original Teamer Joanne Gilchrist. Although specifically designed to be used during Lent, it can be used anytime. The app helps parents and children learn together more about God. It takes you on an adventure with a character called Ru who asks questions using words, images and logic problems that enable children to learn about God being real and how big he is. It appears that more adventures are planned.

There is plenty of encouragement as you progress through various stages that you follow with your chosen character. The variety of puzzles, digital achievement stickers and a simple gaming element will keep most children engaged. The first adventure is free and subsequent levels can be purchased for £1.49 each.

Completing a maths puzzle is required before purchasing to prove you are an adult! Occasionally the gameplay freezes or doesn’t load properly, but overall it is a well thought-out, theologically sound and enjoyable app to use together as parents and children. Older children who can read would be able to use it on their own.

Review by Jonathan Bishop, Associate Minister for Children and Youth at Croxley Green Baptist Church
Don’t forget Syria
The life he treasured has been destroyed.
She’s lived in a tent her entire life.
They deserve better. We want to give them and thousands like them hope.

If you want to know how to help Syria’s refugees, order this resource.
bmsworldmission.org/syriasfamilies

AS A CHRISTIAN MISSION ORGANISATION WE AIM TO SHARE LIFE IN ALL ITS FULLNESS WITH THE WORLD’S PEOPLES BY: ENABLING THEM TO KNOW CHRIST, ALLEVIATING SUFFERING AND INJUSTICE, IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE WITH PEOPLE AS OUR PRIMARY AGENTS OF CHANGE – MOTIVATING, TRAINING, SENDING AND RESOURCING THEM.