ENGAGE

MISSION STORIES / PRAYER / OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

WINTER 2016/17

#YOLO
unemployed
sceptical

millennials: generation y bother?

independent
commitment-phobic
debt-ridden

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

How do you react to change? Some of us relish it. Others, me included, want to run away from it!

The past year has been one of change with significant consequences. Many of us are fearful about what happens next. In this Engage we look at how Christians are coping with increased persecution in India and Iraq (page 14 and 20). We also ask what the world needs in 2017 (page 28).

Change can be exciting though. We see the positive impact BMS World Mission workers are making in Uganda (page 16) and Sarah Stone explores the relatively untapped potential of involving Generation Y in mission (page 8).

It is another brilliant article from Sarah, who after this issue will become the Editor of Engage while I take charge of a brand new annual Prayer Guide. I wish her all the best and you a very blessed 2017.

Chris Hall

HIGHLIGHTS

8
MILLENNIALS: GENERATION Y BOTHER?
Millennials are underrepresented in the Church and in overseas mission. They are one of the biggest challenges facing the Church. They’re also one of its greatest resources.

14
PERSECUTION AND REVIVAL IN INDIA
People are coming to Christ every day in India. Opposition is growing against the Church and it is often violent. But acid attacks, beatings and arrests can’t stop God moving.

16
THE FANTASTIC FOUR: INTEGRAL MISSION IN UGANDA
Four BMS workers are meeting the physical and spiritual needs of struggling communities in the post-conflict north of Uganda.

18
PUNCHING TO SURVIVE: A BOXING MIRACLE IN AFGHANISTAN
A boxing club in Afghanistan proved to be more than just a place to get fit for a BMS worker serving in the country.

REGULARS

03 MISSION NEWS
06 KEEP ENGAGED
06 FIONA CASTLE
07 BABIES, BABIES, BABIES
13 24 HOURS IN... AMSTERDAM
20 THE BIG INTERVIEW: MINDY BELZ
23 GO PRAY
24 GO SERVE: BMS ACTION TEAMS
26 IDEAS FOR YOUR CHURCH
28 OPINION: WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS IN 2017
30 FIVE MINUTES WITH RUSSELL MOORE
31 REVIEWS

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Almost 3,500 people in India have given their lives to Jesus after watching a Christian movie.

“A year ago I was being attacked by demonic spirits. I tried many ways of being delivered from these demons – but none of these rituals freed me from the attacks. Many times I tried to kill myself, as the spirits were really controlling me. I did not know what was happening to me.”

Watching a movie screened by BMS World Mission and our partners in India turned Amandeep’s life around. The film was projected onto a big screen in his village and Amandeep, who comes from a Sikh family, was excited to go and watch, as were his friends. They had never seen a film about Jesus before.

“As I began to watch the movie, I was again attacked by evil spirits who urged me to leave the place,” says Amandeep. “I was shocked to see that Jesus healed demon-possessed and sick people. As I continued to watch, I felt something very heavy being lifted from my body. At once I understood that, while watching the movie, Jesus was working to release the demons from me.”

Amandeep’s story is one of almost 3,500 testimonies of lives transformed by Christ thanks to prayer-covered screenings of the Jesus film in unevangelised villages in two regions of India. The screenings were supported by BMS and run by one of our partners in the country.

Amandeep no longer suffers from demonic attacks. He is healed, he is free and he is sharing his testimony with others who are yet to meet Jesus.

Standing against sexual violence in South Sudan

BMS World Mission has raised with the UK Government the plight of women experiencing atrocious gender based violence in South Sudan.

The horrific experiences of women and girls who have suffered gender based violence (GBV) in the fledgling African State are almost unspeakable. Yet a group of brave women have shared their stories in a study recently published by the We Will Speak Out coalition, of which BMS is a founder member.

BMS Deputy Director for Mission Steve Sanderson visited the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to help raise the experiences of these women. “The Government seemed receptive to the argument that faith communities are at the heart of the solution to sexual violence in fragile states,” says Steve.

BMS’ mission imperative demands that we should do all we can to be good news to those surviving sexual violence. We can’t and won’t, therefore, turn a blind eye to the atrocities being committed in fragile places like South Sudan.

Visit bmsworldmission.org/dignity

Demons cast out and Christians born in India

Almost 3,500 people in India have given their lives to Jesus after watching a Christian movie.

Reaching more river pastors

The BMS World Mission River pastors training centre appeal raised almost £18,000 to support theological education for isolated pastors in Peru’s Amazon. Your gifts have enabled us to travel further and invite more pastors to the training.

“Thank you to everyone who has supported our work,” says BMS worker in Peru Laura-Lee Lovering. “We couldn’t do this without you.”
**Mission News**

**BMS news in brief**

**Flying overseas**
- To Kosovo: Robert* and Rose*
- To Thailand: Ashleigh Gibb

**New at BMS HQ**
- Melanie Bister, Overseas Mission Team Administrator
- Jen Hamlet, Mission Personnel Administrator
- Celia Terrill, Financial Services Team Member

**Goodbyes**
From BMS HQ
- Jenny Balshaw, Regional Team Leader Administrator
- Sarah Goodwin, PA to the General Director
- Jeanie Herbert, Regional Team Leader for East Asia
- Kathy Kavanagh, Mission Personnel Administrator
- Roshan Mendis, Regional Team Leader for Central and South Asia
- Carol Wright, Mission Personnel Administrator

From overseas
- Afghanistan: Barney*
- Italy: Alex and Huw Anderson
- Peru: Sarah McArthur

See page 7 for exciting BMS births!
*Names changed

**BMS transforms little girl’s life**

A young girl born with severe medical conditions is now well and on the road to adoption thanks to BMS World Mission work at Hope Home in Thailand.

Malee* was born with a long list of medical conditions: multiple organ damage, slow brain development, heart and liver problems and slow growth. Her 15-year-old mum couldn’t cope. She couldn’t afford to get her daughter the medicines she needed, and eventually took the difficult decision to hand Malee over to state care.

The social welfare department in Thailand wanted to get Malee into Hope Home – a sanctuary for children with severe disabilities, founded by BMS mission worker Judy Cook. Fortunately, there was an opening for Malee.

When Malee arrived, aged 18 months, the Hope Home team quickly got her the medication that she so desperately needed. And it turned out that her condition was very treatable – once she was put on the right medication all of her organ damage reversed. She was healed.

Today, Malee is three years old and thriving. She has some slow development and hearing problems but, beyond that, all of her medical problems have gone away. She’s even in the process of being adopted – something that doesn’t always happen for children at Hope Home.

“It’s been a privilege to work with Malee,” says Judy “I’ve always had a heart for children with special needs. I believe they bring something extra special with them.”

*Name changed

**Marie Joseé: from refugee to BMS-supported lawyer**

Marie was separated from her family when they fled the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Now, she’s using her experiences to help others suffering from injustice.

Her experiences during her year in a refugee camp in D R Congo left Marie determined to do something with her life. “She knows that God’s hand is always in the impossible because God saw her through her own impossible story,” says Kathy Russell, a BMS lawyer and Marie’s colleague in Mozambique.

Marie believes God hates injustice and has a passion to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Through faith in God and sheer determination, Marie was able to study law and qualify as a lawyer. Now, she’s working with BMS lawyers Kathy, Annet Ttendo Miller and Damien Miller to provide justice for those without it.

“Marie has been able to see God move in dire circumstances to protect her and keep her strong,” says Kathy. “I am absolutely delighted that she will be working with us.”

*Names changed
The secret epidemic: mental health in Afghanistan

An estimated 50 per cent of Afghans over the age of 15 suffer from a mental health disorder. A BMS World Mission doctor is trying to help them.

Afghanistan’s history is marred by war and conflict.

“When I used to work in the north of Afghanistan I didn’t know a woman who hadn’t lost a child, or a close relative, to the fighting,” says Catherine*, a BMS doctor who is working with a partner to improve the provision of mental healthcare in the country. “The exposure to violence is really quite phenomenal.”

Statistics from the World Bank suggest that around half of Afghan people over the age of 15 suffer from anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder. The need for help is huge. Catherine heads up the mental health work of our partner organisation in the country, and raising awareness of the issues is key to their approach. The team are also training medical students and doctors in mental healthcare and directly supporting traumatised Afghans through counselling.

One woman came to the counselling ready to kill herself. Her husband had divorced her and taken away her child. She was alone, her status in Afghan society very precarious. “She was having a lot of suicidal thoughts,” says Catherine. “She had hit the bottom and didn’t think there was any hope.”

Through the counselling, this woman realised she did have choices. That she did have a life. Since receiving help, she has decided to get some more education and to pursue a career. She wants to become a mental health counsellor and help other people trapped in despair like she was.

*Name changed

BMS responds to Ecuador earthquake

Fragile communities in Ecuador devastated by April’s earthquake are being supported by BMS World Mission.

April’s earthquake stole the lives of 661 people and left another 27,000 injured.

Thanks to your gifts, BMS has enabled local Christians to distribute food packages and medical kits to more than 420 families in the province of Manabi – an area badly affected by the disaster. While providing this aid, the Ecuadorian Christians have also been able to share the gospel, and some of those helped have come to faith in Christ.

Ecuador

Afghanistan
Thanks so much to West Cliff Baptist Church, Cornton Baptist Church and Leigh Road Baptist Church for using Syria’s Forgotten Families in your harvest services and for letting us know about it on Facebook!

We hope you found all the resources helpful and were moved by what you saw in the video. If your church is using Syria’s Forgotten Families this harvest we would love to hear about it!

BMS World Mission

“We have a precious gift, and the story of her arrival is a special one. We have been blessed in the most profound way.”

In their latest blog post, mission workers Annette and Damien share about the birth of their new daughter Patience.


TO MY FORMER SELF

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO A YOUNGER YOU?

They say that hindsight is a wonderful thing, and I suppose that most of us recognise foolish or wrong decisions we have made in our earlier lives.

If I had to write a note to my former self, the most important information it could contain would be the reality and truth of the Christian faith:

“Fiona, it is not a ritual, it’s a relationship. You don’t have a finger-wagging God telling you that you are not good enough. He is not warning you that unless you tick all the boxes and work really hard, you won’t get to heaven. You no longer need to worry that you don’t match up to his expectations. He is a God who loves you just as you are. If you will only let go, give your life to Jesus, who was willing to die in your place for all the wrong you have ever done, to give you new life and a new understanding. He says, ‘Come to me and I will give you rest.’ He doesn’t say, ‘If you work harder, I might accept you.’ He wants you to rest in his love.”

If I had learnt this truth in my earlier life, I would have felt comfortable in my own skin, without the need to struggle to be a people-pleaser. It would have saved me from being completely devoid of self-worth until I eventually discovered this truth for myself, aged thirty five. I had always believed in God, gone to church and thought I was a Christian, but no-one ever told me of the joy and miracle of inviting Jesus into my life. It changed my attitude to everything.

If only that could be my note to the whole world!

Fiona Castle OBE is an international Christian speaker and writer. Her late husband Roy was an entertainer and TV presenter.
Babies, babies, babies!

SAY HELLO TO DEDICATED, A NEW MEMBER OF THE BMS WORLD MISSION FAMILY, CELEBRATING THE BLESSING OF NEW BIRTHS ALL AROUND THE WORLD.

There is no better alarm clock than a newborn. Sleep soon becomes a distant memory at the brilliant smile of your own young child. For several BMS workers and UK staff, this is now the case. 2016 has been a bumper year for BMS babies, and you can see some of their beautiful faces all over this page!

Why are we telling you this? Because babies are cute! And because this year, BMS is introducing a new resource called Dedicated, designed to give ministers, family and friends the opportunity to introduce their newborns into the church family and the loving arms of God.

At the same time, Dedicated gives families and churches the opportunity to remember and support other children around the world – babies born into poverty or warzones and those far less fortunate than ourselves.

You can find out more about what the Dedicated resource can do for your church on page 27 or at bmsworldmission.org/dedicated. Meanwhile, please keep the BMS babies and their families in your prayers as they serve God around the world, if at least for a good night’s sleep!

Top: Daniel, son of Tom (and Hannah) Riches, Mission Personnel Organiser at BMS HQ
Above left: Joshua, son of Liz and Sergio Vilela, BMS workers in Mozambique
Above right: Patience, daughter of Annet Ttendo Miller and Damien Miller, BMS workers in Mozambique
Right: Reuben, son of Joe and Lois Ovenden (and brother to Connie), BMS workers in Uganda
The Church and mission can’t afford to lose a generation - we need millennials.

We’re the smart phone, social media generation. We were raised to share our opinions, to speak our minds. By the age of 21, millions of us were thousands of pounds in debt. We were taught we could be anything, anyone, we wanted to be. But that’s a lot of pressure. We don’t really know what we want. So we try things out. We take our time to commit. We wait to start our careers, to get married, to have a family. We’re told we’re frittering away our twenties and that we need to settle down. But that’s easier said than done in a world with high youth unemployment and even higher house prices.

So we live in the now. But in the back of our minds we’re worried that we’re missing out on something. We wonder whether we should be doing more with our lives. We go to church and our friends think it’s odd, but ‘nice for us’. And it seems like the Church thinks we’re a bit odd too. It tells us, in a slightly worried tone, that we are its future – we’re not too sure what that means for today.

I’m a millennial Christian. A member of Generation Y. We are one of the biggest challenges facing the Church. We’re also one of its greatest resources. We have unique gifts, traits and experiences to offer God’s people and the world. But we’re in a minority amongst our peers and, in most cases, in the Church. We need you to understand us, we need you to encourage us and, most of all, we need your prayers.

So, who are we? We’re the people who were born between 1980 and 2000, or thereabouts. The ones who were growing up over the millennium. As with any generation, the time in which we were raised has had a massive impact on who we are. “They were born into a world that was supposed to be safe,” says Alison Allen, who is writing a PhD on Generation Y and mission. “It was the end of Communism, the end of the Cold War – and then suddenly you had 9/11 and, a few years later, the financial crash. The things they were told when they were children turned out not to be true.”

Safe certainties were pulled out from under an entire generation, with the result that, according to Alison, Generation Y has a mistrust of authority. That’s a defining characteristic of millennials. The tendency to delay adulthood is another. Stereotypes and generalisations
can never accurately describe a group of people (let alone an entire generation) – but failing to make long-term commitments, having short attention spans and seeking happiness in the moment are also all regularly listed as examples of what is wrong with us.

Generation Y is underrepresented in the Church – there are so few of us that we’ve actually been described as the lost generation. And we are, in turn, underrepresented on the mission field. It’s easy to put that down to the negative stereotypes. But there are many other legitimate reasons why young Christians are held back from full-time ministry abroad.

A few decades ago, giving up your life to go and serve in mission would have earned you a great deal of respect. That is not the case amongst millennials. Sophie* is 26 and is training for long-term mission in Tunisia with BMS World Mission. “When you tell people how long you’re going for there’s usually a snap reaction (before anyone can get their features in order and look suitably impressed) of: ‘what’s wrong with you?’” she says. Becoming a missionary has always been countercultural, but choosing to step out and give at least four years to work overseas as a millennial is, quite frankly, an alien concept to most people in their twenties.

“The Christian Generation Y is a minority amongst peers,” says Ben Drabble, Short-term Programmes Co-ordinator for BMS and the man who runs our gap year mission programme for 18 to 23 year olds. He says that, whereas in previous generations most people would have identified as Christians or at least existed within Christendom, that’s not the world for Generation Y. “It’s socially a really vulnerable thing to do to commit to mission,” says Ben. “It is met with a lot more scepticism in a secular age.”
It’s not only the decision to embark on overseas mission that is counter-cultural in this scenario – choosing to make a long-term commitment to one place, one organisation, one job, is a rare thing to see in a generation where everything moves so quickly. And this is not just having an impact on mission. Business is feeling the effects, too. “My boss said to me: ‘the age of the career is dead,’” says Sophie. New entrants to the job market are unlikely to stick in any one place for long.

Ashleigh Gibb agrees that committing to the long-term seems more difficult now than it was for our parents and grandparents. She is a Generation Y mission worker who’s just beginning work in Thailand with BMS. “I look at my step-dad, and he’s been in the same job for a good 20 or 30 years,” Ashleigh says. “But if I said to myself that I’m going to go do mission for 16 years, that would be quite daunting. I don’t like looking that far ahead. I usually think in year blocks.”

The fact that most millennials don’t (and can’t afford to) own a house is another big obstacle to committing to long-term mission. “The generation who are coming back from mission now – either retiring or returning because their children are going to university – own a house, so they’ve got somewhere to live,” says Alison. “The younger generation are not able to buy a house before they leave. That’s just impossible. So what are they going to do in the future?”

That’s a very legitimate worry for our young mission workers. On top of lacking the security of property, many millennials are debt-ridden. The 30 per cent or so of Generation Ys who have gone to university generally find themselves at least £20,000 in debt by their early 20s, and there are not enough jobs for everyone to have one. Those who haven’t been to university might be more financially secure, but they often don’t yet have the skills or experience needed for the mission roles we’re looking to fill these days. Because it’s not just people who have changed with our changing world – mission has changed too.

“We don’t send the 20-something pioneers like we used to,” says Ben. Mission in this postmodern era looks different from 50, 30 or even ten years ago. Mission agencies like BMS are often looking to send capacity builders – people with specific skill sets who can train and equip local people to do the work long term. “Sometimes when mission agencies talk about wanting to have more Gen Ys overseas, what they actually want is 30 year-olds with 20 years’ experience,” says Ben. “And they wonder why they can’t get it!”

So, should mission agencies and the Church just give up on my comfort-seeking, commitment-phobic, cash-poor generation? Ben doesn’t think so. “Mission agencies may be able to survive for twenty years or thirty years without the involvement of millennials, depending on how big our reserves are,” he says. "But we can’t skip a generation of the Church. We would be doing the Body of Christ a disservice if we did.”

We may be different from those who have come before us – but that could be a good thing. “We have a fresh outlook on life,” says Ashleigh. “We don’t have all the ties that older people might have, so we are free to go and be as God wants us to be. And we can also grow.”

Millennials don’t want to be defined by lacking commitment, money and independence. There are plenty of positive generalisations true of Generation Y too. We’ve grown up working in teams and we’ve been
neighbours and friends with people from all over the world since childhood. That means we’re collaborative and very willing to learn from the World Church. We’ve been raised to believe in serving the poor practically, so integral mission – sharing the gospel while meeting people’s physical needs – is a concept that’s quite natural to us. We care about other people, and stats show that loads of us are involved in volunteering locally. Even the fact that we’re less focused on the long-term has a positive side, as it means we’re not so concerned with security, houses and pensions, and we’re willing to step out and embrace the now.

“What I love about Gen Ys is that they’re enthusiastic and creative, good at working in teams, love community, and generally have an innate care for the world and for mission,” says Ben. “In my experience, they are very adventurous, enthusiastic people.”

Millennials aren’t just stereotypes. We’re not all sitting at home playing video games, living with our parents and floating from one job to the next without any drive or ambition. We’re also fitness instructor Ashleigh, going to help women escaping the sex trade in Bangkok. We’re excellent communicator Sophie, giving up a good, secure job in the UK to serve people in the Muslim-majority country of Tunisia. We’re palliative care nurses and TEFL teachers, development workers and educators.

And whilst the very definition of long-term mission with BMS has changed – now meaning anything more than four years – there’s no reason to believe millennials won’t serve for as long as our predecessors. “It will be interesting to see over the years whether it turns out that Generation Y is every bit as committed,” says Alison. “They may well end up staying the 30 years that older missionaries would have stayed, but they don’t know from the start that they will.”

Then there are the 30 or so millennials BMS sends into short-term mission every year on our Action Teams Christian gap year programme. These are the Christians Ben is working with – young, adventurous, and energetic, keen to serve and to learn. Every year we see these millennials come back from their time overseas on fire for God and passionate about mission and discipleship. The challenge for all of us, as the Church, is how we can help these passionate Christians stay on track through their twenties. How we can walk alongside them and help them use all of the wonderful gifts God has given them.

“The role of the Church here is absolutely huge,” says Ben. “And if churches take on board this challenge of bringing Generation Y back, that will have repercussions for the whole kingdom of God.”

So, please pray for us. Pray for Sophie, Ashleigh and our other millennial mission workers. Pray for our Action Teams. Pray for the 20 and 30-somethings in your churches and those of us working at BMS HQ. Pray for the Generation Ys who are skint, searching and wondering whether there is more to life. And, if you can, get to know some of us. Encourage us. Share your wisdom with us. Because, while we might be the Church of tomorrow, we’re also part of the Church today.

Words: Jessica
The Millennial Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
We thank you for millennials,
For their enthusiasm, their creativity
and their ability to embrace the now.
We pray for those who are struggling:
with debt, with adulthood, with commitment,
And we ask you to help us to help them.
May our churches be welcoming families
for all generations,
May we find ways to include and encourage
our young members, and give them
opportunities to serve – at home
and overseas.
Help us to see and draw out the very
good gifts in Generation Y we pray.
Amen
A ten-minute train journey from Schiphol Airport will bring you to the Nieuw West area of Amsterdam. Here you must visit the Baptist House, home to the International Baptist Theological Study Centre, where we work. Try to arrive at 10.30 am so that you can join with us and the staff of the Dutch Baptist Seminary and Baptist Union of the Netherlands for prayers (in a blend of Dutch, English and other languages), followed by coffee and lots of chat before we all return to our offices. Before you leave, go and visit our impressive library of 40,000 books – something to suit all interests!

Can’t get to the Netherlands? Reading David and Dorothy’s updates from Amsterdam is the next best thing. Visit their blog at: reclaimedground.wordpress.com

**THE BAPTIST HOUSE**

**BLOEMENMARKT**

Catch a tram into the city centre to see the famous floating Bloemenmarkt (flower market). The flower stalls are on houseboats on the Singel canal and the market has thousands of colourful and fragrant flowers throughout the year. If you can’t visit Amsterdam when the tulips are in season, then you can buy some bulbs here to plant when you go home. Need a sit down? Pop into Studio 2 (a lovely little café on Singel) for pannenkoeken (pancakes) before your next stop.

**BEGIJNHOF AND ENGELEASE KERK**

Just around the corner from the flower market, you can escape from the noise and bustle in the Begijnhof – an enclosed courtyard dating from the 14th century. It was built for a group of Catholic women living as nuns and the houses are still occupied by single women. Also in the courtyard is the Engelse Kerk (English Church), established in 1607. A congregation of more than 40 nationalities meets here each Sunday morning for an English language service followed by coffee, cake and lively conversation. Be sure to visit on a Sunday!

**AT THE MOVIES**

Take a wander through the streets around Amsterdam Centraal Station to The Movies – the oldest cinema in Amsterdam. It is not like the usual modern cinema complex and therein lies its charm. Four small theatres with art deco design, a cosy bar/restaurant and a wide range of interesting and/or entertaining films make The Movies well worth a visit, even if you don’t have time to stay for a film.

Wij wensen u een prettige reis! (We wish you a pleasant journey!)
PERSECUTION AND REVIVAL IN INDIA

The graphic images we have of persecuted Christians in India are too disturbing to publish.

Here instead are pictures of BMS-supported work that can lead to Christians being attacked and arrested.
ACID ATTACKS, BEATINGS AND ARRESTS CAN’T STOP GOD MOVING.

The numbers are impressive – thousands of churches planted in India over the last 15 years, 2,000 of which are the direct result of BMS World Mission support. The stories of transformed lives are inspiring. A man blinded in a fight hears about Jesus and now is leading others to Christ. A woman becomes a Christian soon after seeing the Jesus film and is healed of Hepatitis B. The ministry of Ben Francis, an evangelist and our gifted Associate Team Leader for India, is truly energising. He has trained and motivated thousands of church planters. People are coming to faith in Christ every day. But the Church growth that BMS and others are supporting in India is coming at a cost.

OPPOSITION IS GROWING AND IT IS OFTEN VIOLENT

Attacks on Christians in India are on the rise. A report published by the Evangelical Fellowship of India stated that between January and June 2016 there were 134 incidents across the country where Christians had been targeted: from burning churches to physical attacks against believers. A leader of the Hindu extremist organisation Dharm Jagran Samiti in Uttar Pradesh said in 2014: “Our target is to make India a Hindu Rashtra [realm/country] by 2021. The Muslims and Christians don’t have any right to stay here” (Daily Mail).

As Ben and his team of evangelists are planting churches in unreached areas, they often face hostility. “When you go to a new place, there is always persecution,” Ben says. “So we are used to all of this. If you say to my guys, ‘have you ever been beaten up?’, they can’t count how many times.”

Unlike in the Middle East, where many Christians are leaving their region to escape persecution, for Christians in India it is often impossible to go elsewhere.

“In India, Christian communities are poor,” says Ben. Many Christians are from traditionally lower caste backgrounds. “Where would they go? They have nowhere to go. So they stay, which is a very good thing. If they leave, then they have lost the battle.”

One of the most shocking cases Ben has seen recently is a woman who had acid thrown in her face by extremists in her village for becoming a Christian. Ben and his team are supporting her and seeing if they can arrange some plastic surgery. Despite the attack, she is staying in her village.

“She is not going to leave Jesus.”

A Christian couple Ben works with were arrested recently and the husband was held in prison for several days. It is becoming a common occurrence.

“Now to put a Christian into prison, you don’t need a reason,” Ben says. “All you have to say is: ‘They are forcibly converting us.’ These Christians have never forcibly done anything in their lives.”

But there are signs that the peaceful stand Christians are making for their faith is beginning to have an impact.

“A lot of people who were persecuting Christians are realising that we are not resisting. No matter what they are doing, we are reacting with love,” says Ben.

More moderate Hindus are also starting to question the tactics of extremists. “They are thinking: ‘We belong to this religion and our people are doing things to them and they have not done anything to us,’” says Ben. “Why are we so threatened by them? All they are telling us is a story. All they are telling us is how to have a better life, how we can be free, and for that information people are beating them. Is our belief so weak that the good news this person tells us will change us?”

Contrary to extremists’ plans, Ben and his team are finding that persecution can often lead to a greater response to the gospel. When church planters from Ben’s team were briefly arrested in a village for showing the Jesus film, they returned 48 hours after their release to show the film again. Many more people came to see the film than when they showed it the first time.

The lesson for Ben is that we have to endure persecution if we are going to make a difference for Jesus.

“The world is being threatened by people who are not afraid to kill themselves to kill the world,” he says. “The question we need to ask as Christians is: are we willing to die so others may have life? Are we ready to die to bring people to freedom? Are we willing to die to give them the good news? If you don’t have this mindset, then we have cut the Christian cloth too easy.”

How, then, can we pray then for these incredibly brave men and women who, supported by BMS, are growing the Church in India and transforming lives, risking their own lives in order to save others?

“Pray for justice, for peace, for strength and for determination,” says Ben. “Pray that Christians experiencing persecution will look to the Lord for help.”

With the Lord’s protection, let’s pray thousands more churches will be planted by these fearless Christians in 2017.

Why not support BMS work in India by becoming a 24:7 India Partner? Go to bmsworldmission.org/Indiapartners

Words: Chris Hall
If Jesus is the superhero we follow, then integral is the name of our mission.

On paper integral mission sounds like the absolute best way to do God’s mission in the world – sharing Jesus and helping people meet their physical needs. It’s something that drives our vision here at BMS and it’s what sets us apart from organisations that focus solely on development. But what does it actually look like on the ground? In Gulu, in northern Uganda, these four ordinary people have accepted the call to live out this special kind of mission.

**LINDA DARBY:**
Justice Woman

If Linda Darby had a super power, it would be her heart for justice.

When Linda is not spending time with her husband Tim and children Joshua and Annabelle, she’s making justice and faith her mission.

Dropping out of school in Uganda is a problem, particularly for girls. Abuse, unwanted sexual attention, teenage pregnancy and period problems are some of the obstacles to education that teenage girls face. As part of Linda’s work with a BMS legal partner in Uganda, she’s striving to protect children from abuse and empower them to get the education that they deserve.

She’s playing an active role in a pilot project to create child protection policies in schools. The goal is to equip teachers so that they are able to protect the students in their care and lower the number of students who drop out of school because of gender based violence.

“There’s so much injustice in Uganda,” says Linda. “I think the best way for me to do my job is to use my skills to help others obtain justice as well as tell them that Jesus loves them and that they are worthy.” Bam!

**TIM DARBY:**
Toilet Man

Tim Darby is saving the world, one toilet at a time.

Okay, so maybe that’s a stretch, he’s not really saving the world, he’s more subtly saving lives. He does this by training and equipping people to build latrine slabs or toilet seats, and sharing Christ at the same time.

So, why latrine slabs? In Uganda it’s very common for people to rely on toilet seats made of twigs and mud placed over pit latrines. These kinds of toilets are a serious health risk, as people can often get diarrhoea-related diseases like cholera, and parasites like hookworm.

“We wanted a project that would empower local Ugandans and would allow us to share our faith,” says Tim.

Tim is helping to train Ugandans to make their own concrete slabs and turn the skill into a business. BMS funded the project to train people to start up to 20 businesses, with two people running each business. During training, groups also devote time to do a Bible study and devotions each day.

“I’m hopeful that this project will help a lot of people,” says Tim. “It’ll help people who need to generate an income and it’ll also provide community members in rural villages with access to affordable and hygienic latrines.” Pow!

Four BMS World Mission workers are meeting the physical and spiritual needs of struggling communities in the post-conflict north of Uganda.
Joe Ovenden wouldn’t strike you as a superhero kind of guy. He doesn’t wear bright masks or capes and his work is not always the centre of attention.

Joe is actually more of a behind-the-scenes kind of guy as he works as a programmes co-ordinator and lives with his wife Lois and their two children, Connie and Reuben.

“My work on a day-to-day basis is behind a desk in an office, so from an outside perspective it might not look like integral mission,” says Joe. “But I always have a spiritual and practical focus in everything I do.”

One exciting project that Joe is overseeing is helping 100 families make a better living through farming, by providing agricultural advice and helping them plant crops that will earn more income. Faith is also an important part of the project, as it is used as a way to share Jesus and disciple new Christians, as well as connecting these families to Baptist churches in the area.

“One farmer had an excellent crop of chillies,” says Joe. “He was able to double his agricultural income for the year, and it made a huge difference for his family,” Joe says. “It was so rewarding to see that happen. It was amazing.” Bang!

Lois Ovenden isn’t using super powers in Uganda, she’s actually giving them away.

Lois is using her skills as the only speech therapist in her area of the country to give children and adults who struggle with speech and language difficulties the power to communicate and the belief that they’re made in God’s image.

She’s helping children like Joshua – a young boy who was born with Down’s syndrome. There’s often a grim future for children born with this condition in Uganda. Many don’t learn to communicate and some don’t survive.

When Lois met Joshua, he had delayed development and no communication skills. Lois began doing speech therapy with him and, over time, his life was transformed – he began walking, talking and signing. Instead of living a life of isolation, now he’s able to connect with the world around him.

For Lois, integral mission seems to come naturally – alongside helping patients practically with their communication, she also prays with them and their families and shares God’s love.

“It’s important for me to bring my faith into therapy,” says Lois. “In Uganda it’s a lot about changing people’s attitudes towards disability. I remind them that everyone is created in the image of God.” Zap!

Words: Hailey Brenden

THE REAL HERO

We’ve painted our mission workers in Uganda as superheroes, but it’s all in jest. We know (and they know) that they’re not. The real superhero is Jesus and they’re doing their best to follow his ways through both the work they do and by sharing their faith with others.
Once I stepped into the boxing club, all the fear disappeared.

I was at my wits’ end, that’s the main reason that I went. At that point the security situation in Afghanistan was really tough, the work was really stressful and there was no freedom. I wasn’t coping that well. I was aware that I might not be able to finish my term, aware that the potential outcome was for me to leave Afghanistan early. I knew that I had to change – because if I didn’t change I wouldn’t last.

I had a really big responsibility with my role in the organisation and I didn’t want to let them down.

So one thing that came to my mind was: ‘maybe I should join a boxing club’. There was a boxing club just next door, and that would give me opportunity to exercise and to connect with local people. It would also be a way to get out from the compound.

Serving in Afghanistan was never going to be easy, but BMS World Mission worker Barnie can testify to the fact that God always finds a way to keep us fit for the task he has given us. And the way God kept Barnie fit? Sending him to the boxing club, of course.
I am middle aged, so for me to pick up boxing is a bit crazy.

As a foreigner who doesn’t speak the language that well, it was quite daunting the first time I went – walking into a boxing club with a lot of trained boxers, that is quite scary. But they were really welcoming and really warm towards me.

I hadn’t done any boxing or martial arts before. I am middle aged, so for me to pick up boxing is a bit crazy. But as it turns out, by God’s grace or, if you put it another way, a miracle, it all went smoothly. To be honest, it could have easily gone wrong – if someone didn’t like me or if I couldn’t cope with the training, the whole thing would have fallen apart. But it all went well. Looking back, you can only ascribe that to a miracle.

For two years, we have had quite a substantial drop in the number of expatriates in Kabul for various security reasons. You don’t see that many foreigners now in the place where I live. I am the only foreigner who has gone to the boxing club, so they were quite surprised to see me.

Most ex-pats find it really hard to meet locals because of the security restrictions. There’s also a general distrust of foreigners because of the past history of war and fighting. But through boxing I managed to build up new relationships. I’d go to the club every day and they got to know me and day by day it slowly broke down barriers. And that’s how I managed to reach out to them, and talk to them, and befriend them.

It really helped me. It opened up opportunities for me to connect with locals. And after I’d been there for three months my new Afghan friends would come to my house to play games, like Settlers of Catan. They’d have kebabs at my place. It really created a bonding, a ripple, that I don’t think would have easily come without this boxing.

There was a lot of circuit training, focusing on endurance and running, sit-ups, push-ups and punching bags. We didn’t usually have sparring at all – I don’t think I’d want to be fighting any of my Afghan friends. I think they are all much tougher than me! I just really enjoy the exercise.

It is surprising, really, how God worked through boxing, because I certainly wasn’t expecting that. I was purely doing it because I was aware that I would not be able to last longer in Afghanistan without some outlet. Through boxing, I was able to connect with locals, build friendships with them and also practise my Dari. I would never have thought that God would open a door through a boxing club, but as you can see, when you venture out of your safety zone, miracles do happen.

Barnie was talking to Sarah Stone

*name changed
Mindy Belz has written for US Christian magazine *WORLD* since 1986, becoming its editor in 2004. In her new book *They Say We are Infidels* she recalls her regular visits to Iraq since the war in 2003.

Q

In the UK, many believe that the Iraq war was a big mistake. Some would argue that the exodus of Christians from the country was caused by the coalition invasion. What do you think?

A

There are a number of foreign policy experts I respect in the United States who would to this day say there was justification for going into Iraq. I would say staying in the way that we did, becoming a target for international jihadis and thereby making the Iraqi people targets, there wasn’t justification for that. We should have seen that coming.

It seems to me, after visiting Christian communities for over a decade, if we had been looking at what was happening to them and other minorities in Iraq, we could have seen what was happening to the country as a whole. Our political and military leaders were dealing with the Sunnis, Shias and the Kurds (to a lesser extent), simplifying
the narrative of Iraq down to those three groups. We were simply pretending that the minorities didn’t exist.

You have been regularly visiting Iraq, staying with Iraqis and moving about the country. That sounds an incredibly brave thing to do. What motivated you to potentially put yourself in harm’s way?

I was in Baghdad in late 2003 and I had an appointment within the Green Zone. I said to the person I was meeting with, “The streets are really bad out there. There are craters where we dropped bombs and the sewers are bubbling up into the street. We could do a lot by just repairing the roads and helping people that way.” He responded: “You’re probably right, but none of us get out to see that. We don’t go out there.” And that was before it was truly, truly dangerous for Americans to be out on the streets of Baghdad.

I resolved at that point not to base my reporting out of the Green Zone, not to spend my time with the American officials. I don’t say that to denigrate them – they were all in very different and important ways doing hard work. But they were disconnected from the beginning.

You have visited Iraqi Christian villages that had recently been reclaimed from ISIS control. What was that like?

It was like nothing I had seen before. A town which once had 5,000 or more people was completely empty. Shops, schools and churches were closed, the houses were boarded up and in most cases looted and destroyed by ISIS. There was a huge level of destruction and sadness there. The only thing I saw moving, aside from me and the soldiers I was with, was a donkey who was walking down the street. And that is the case for most of these places now.

Has the West abandoned Christians in Iraq?

It is hard to see it any other way. Speaking as a Christian who lives in the West and is a regular churchgoer, I feel for my own brothers and sisters here in America in our churches, that we in a sense, have abandoned them. We live in a democracy. We did not press our leaders to take notice and we did not insist that they be part of the foreign policy and military equation there. There was no sense that our military leaders were under obligation to protect minority communities.

Do you feel this is the end of Christianity in Iraq? Or do you have hope that something might change?

I like to think that the scriptures in the Bible are true, that God will never forsake his people. Will they be wiped out?

The numbers suggest that they will. There has been an 80 per cent decline in the number of Christians from before the start of the war in 2003 until now. I’d like to think though that there would be a remnant there because God would allow that.

What have you learned from the Christians you have met in Iraq?

So much. You have a large Christian population in the Kurdish north of the country. When people in Mosul and those living in Nineveh Plain were forced out overnight by ISIS and were literally running for their lives, the people in those northern churches heard what was happening, got in their cars and drove down and started rescuing them. The persecuted church was rescuing its own when no one else was doing that and that to me is a tremendous example.

Another thing that has been really impressive is how the persecuted church prays for those who are persecuting it. One of the lay leaders of a church in Baghdad – I sent him an email saying: “How are things going?” He said, “Great.” And things weren’t great – there were bombs in the street and they were worried about ISIS coming to Baghdad. He said, “We are continuing to meet as usual and we’ve started a new prayer group. We have one to pray for ourselves and for our persecuted brothers and sisters in the north and we have another prayer group to pray for our enemies.” I don’t think that is something that we think about in the West because we don’t feel our enemies bearing down on us the way they do.

What do you hope your book will achieve?

When we see the headlines and we see the news, often our focus is on ISIS, on the people in the black masks. My hope in writing this book is that the people standing on the street, on the sidelines, the somewhat unnamed, unnoticed victims of ISIS would become our focus. My hope is that they would become real people to us, and that becoming real people, we would want to pray for them, we would want to help them. We would want to be on their side and we would want to defend their cause.

Mindy Belz was talking to Chris Hall

They Say We are Infidels is published by Lion Hudson and available from all good bookshops.
NEW FROM BMS IN 2017

1. Engage is changing
Look out for the new look magazine this June

2. Brand new BMS Prayer Guide:
   - Prayers for BMS work until January 2018
   - Devotions from David Kerrigan, Claire Ord and Chris Hall
   - Perforated pages to tear off and put in your Bible, on your fridge or anywhere else!

3. BMS World Mission Prayer Guide 2017
   A full year of prayer, Bible verses, inspiring quotes and devotions.

4. Action Teams WE'RE RECRUITING FOR 2017-18
   GAP YEAR OF A LIFETIME
   PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR A LIFE OF MISSION FOR THE LAST 25 YEARS
   “SUCH AN AMAZING YEAR”
   For more information go to facebook.com/bmsactionteams or bmsworldmission.org/actionteams

DAYS OF PRAYER
Sunday 5 February 2017
Join us in praying for BMS World Mission work around the world.
For more information and resources go to bmsworldmission.org/dayofprayer

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For more information and resources go to bmsworldmission.org/dayofprayer
Dedicated

Thanking God for the birth of a child is one of the great celebrations in both the life of a family and of a church too. A new resource from BMS called Dedicated enables this celebration to not only bless a child’s parents and wider family, but also children and families around the world. By giving a gift through Dedicated, family, friends and the wider church family can help children in need worldwide who BMS is supporting through our work, from healthcare for babies in Africa to preschool education in South America.

PRAY FOR:

- BMS workers in Afghanistan, for safety and God’s peace in a challenging location
- more skilled people to come forward to serve in the country
- stamina and strength for indigenous workers taking on larger workloads

Find out more about this resource at bmsworldmission.org/dedicated

Afghanistan

Afghanistan continues to experience volatility and upheaval. Over the past year, the Taliban has been making gains in both the north and the south of the country and orchestrated regular attacks in the capital, Kabul. The Government is struggling to cope with the challenges, not just with security, but also with corruption and high unemployment. BMS World Mission and our partners are working in a variety of areas to help improve the lives of ordinary Afghans, including maternal health, mental health and sanitation. There is a desperate need for more skilled staff to do this important work as many of the team have left over the last two years.

PRAY FOR:

- good relationships, both in the teams and with the workers and partners they are helping
- a life-changing experience of serving God in mission for every team
- the Action Teamers, that they will bless others through who they are and what they do

Find out more about this resource at bmsworldmission.org/dedicated

Action Teams

BMS Action Teams is a gap year programme for young people aged 17 to 23. It allows them to experience and contribute to world mission. In October 2016, eight teams went out to serve around the world: Thailand, Italy, Zimbabwe, Kosovo, Uganda, Albania, and India (Kolkata and Delhi). They are serving local communities in a number of ways including teaching children, supporting trafficked women and helping with a food distribution programme. On their return to the UK in March, they will be touring churches, sharing stories of the amazing ways God has worked in their lives and in the lives of those who they have met and served.

PRAY FOR:

- church leaders, that they will find Dedicated a helpful and inspiring resource
- parents, that they will be inspired to help babies and families worldwide
- families in need who BMS will help thanks to the money raised

Find out more about this resource at bmsworldmission.org/dedicated

Get regular prayer points and resources from BMS at bmsworldmission.org/prayer

Chris Hall is Editor of the BMS Prayer Guide 2017
Sarah Whybrew fell in love when she went to Thailand on an Action Team in 2010/11. But not in the way you might be thinking.

“I came back with a love for Thailand and overseas mission,” says Sarah. “It was a life-changing experience.” Sarah’s heart was transformed while she was in Thailand working with disabled children and helping to run after-school Bible clubs. The challenge gave her a new-found confidence and changed her view of God.

“I realised that God is not just an English God,” says Sarah. “But that actually he’s a God that understands and loves all languages and people.”

Sarah’s heart for the world grew through mission, and the experience impacted the path she took when she returned to England. After going to university, she felt God call her back to her beloved Thailand, this time as a Christian gap year team leader.

Returning from Thailand for the second time, Sarah still felt God’s call on her heart to overseas mission. A door opened when an opportunity to work as a Short-term Programmes Administrator at BMS presented itself. Today, that’s where Sarah continues her mission journey.

“I love working for a place where there are maps on the walls and we have people come into the office who’ve been working overseas,” says Sarah. “I find it so inspiring when they share about what they’ve been doing and how God’s been using them around the world.”

Life-changing. Challenging. Faith-stretching. These are a few of the words that people have used to describe what it’s like to go on a gap year with BMS. An Action Team is an experience that allows young people to grow and also to serve God and others around the world. But what happens when the year is over? We have three exciting stories from former Action Teamers who share how doing the BMS gap year programme inspired them down further paths of mission.

Doing an Action Team year with BMS taught Brian Leitch to overcome challenges and develop his own faith. It also showed him that he wanted to embark on a life of overseas mission.

“For me, it was the first time away from home,” says Brian. “It was all about being in this completely new world where you have to learn to stand on your own two feet and build connections within a new community.”

Brian went to Jamaica in 1994/95. His Action Team’s mission was focused on doing youth work in schools and churches. Brian remembers how the challenging moments strengthened his faith, like when he was asked to preach at church. The thought was terrifying to Brian, he didn’t believe he could do it.
“It was a situation where I felt totally out of my depth,” says Brian. “And it really made me stop and think, who do I trust in these kinds of situations? It taught me to look to God.”

Following his gap year, Brian studied economics and politics at university, and then went on to complete a Masters in development economics. After university, he decided to pursue overseas mission with BMS. Today he, his wife Mo and their two children, Evie and Eddie, are living in India. They are helping women who've been impacted by gender based violence by equipping churches to stand up for them.

When Brian reflects on the journey he took to get to where he is today, he wouldn’t have it any other way. “Doing an Action Team was a life-changing experience,” says Brian. “I would recommend it to anybody.”

STEP OUT IN FAITH

Trusting God, overcoming challenges, developing faith and having your heart transformed – those are just a few of the rich blessings that can come from an Action Team experience. And sometimes (as seen from these stories), it can lead a person to continue a life of overseas mission.

“Doing mission is an adventure,” says Debbie. “Sometimes I think that if I’d known everything that was going to happen, I might not have taken that step. But that’s what being a Christian is all about, isn’t it? Stepping into the unknown, trusting God and taking a journey with him.”

Wondering if God could be calling you to do an Action Team? If you’re between 17 and 23 years old, why not check out the opportunity to serve God around the world? If not, maybe you know someone who you could share these stories with – it might be just the thing they need to hear to begin their own mission journey. You can find out more information and apply today at: bmsworldmission.org/actionteams
KIDS CARE
My home away from home in India

Join us as we journey to India for our next issue of KIDS CARE! Children will get to learn about Indian culture and how to care for people in need.

We’ll travel to the streets of Kolkata where children will meet a young boy named Rohan. They will find out about his experience living with his family on the streets and also discover how BMS World Mission is supporting a mobile school that is helping children like him. This issue will give kids the chance to think about how they could help people within their own communities.

We’ve also included lots of fun activities! Children can create an Indian elephant mask, hold a fundraiser to raise money for refugees and snack on some delicious corn pakora. As a bonus, we’ve even included the BMS all-age film called Syria’s Forgotten Families to get kids thinking about how they can help others in need!

We hope you can join us for this KIDS CARE! You can download this exciting issue at bmsworldmission.org/kidscare

Loans for Life appeal update

At BMS World Mission, we are often blown away by the incredible generosity of our supporters.

Last Christmas, we asked for your support for our Loans for Life appeal, and so far we have raised over £48,000 in support of men and women in Mozambique who want to lift themselves out of poverty.

BMS workers Fiona Welsh and Carlos Tique Jone have been hard at work in Mozambique, supporting the Loans for Life microfinance project. They have been travelling around the country, meeting and encouraging the new businesses.

Some of these businesses have already made a real difference in the local community, with one new business person saying to Fiona, “at least our families are now eating every day”.

It has been an encouraging start, but there is so much more to do. Would your church consider trying the BMS Business Challenge?

All you need is some enterprising church members. Get those taking part into teams and then each team gets £10 to buy resources for their new ‘business’. This could be for art materials, ingredients for cakes or even soap and sponges to wash cars. After a few weeks, call the teams together and select the most successful apprentice team. The challenge is all about turning this £10 into as much as you can!

Find out more at bmsworldmission.org/loansforlife

Thank you for being part of this mission in Mozambique.
Dedicated

It’s that moment when parents approach you and ask for a dedication or thanksgiving in a church service, that you will need Dedicated, a new BMS World Mission resource which connects the gift of a newborn baby here in the UK with underprivileged children worldwide.

Dedicated is written with church leaders in mind. It is a tool to assist, in some small way, in the busyness of day-to-day pastoral work.

It also provides an opportunity for parents to make a special moment even more meaningful. Around the world there are families who struggle to provide even the most basic needs for their children. Dedicated gives an optional opportunity for the parent(s), other family, friends and perhaps the wider church family, to give financially towards helping those elsewhere in the world who really need it. They can touch the life of another family.

BMS workers are providing antenatal and maternal healthcare for thousands of mothers and their babies in the deserts of Chad and the mountains of Afghanistan. We are also involved in pioneering local preschool education in South America and sub-Saharan Africa. And a baby’s dedication offers an opportunity to make a difference too.

The Dedicated resource suite comes in a document wallet designed to be close at hand on a church minister's study shelf.

It contains:
- A helpful checklist for ministers
- Suggested readings, words and prayers for a service
- A certificate
- A faceplate for a gift book or Bible
- A leaflet you can give to parent(s) explaining what BMS does and how they might give, should they choose to do so

There’s also a family details form and gift envelope in the pack.

Dedicated has been mailed to all Baptist ministers but if you would like additional resources or just want to find out more please visit bmsworldmission.org/dedicated

We are really pleased to offer a little help amongst the many demands of church life, and also to raise awareness of the plight of so many families around the world. Together, we can do something to help them!

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.
1 John 5: 14

Every year we gather as staff, supporters, mission personnel and partners to pray for BMS work around the world. It’s a great opportunity for us to wait on God, to praise him for what he’s done and to discern the direction he wants to take BMS in the coming months and years.

It’s a huge encouragement when churches pray with us, whether in church services, prayer groups or individually.

More information and resources will be made available at bmsworldmission.org/dayofprayer
WHAT THE WORLD

2016 HAS BEEN A TOUGH YEAR FOR MANY PEOPLE WORLDWIDE. HOW CAN WE MAKE 2017 BETTER?

UK: COSTLY, CHRISTLIKE LOVE

I have a Bacharach and David song from the mid-sixties whirling around my head: “What the world needs now is love, sweet love, It’s the only thing that there’s just too little of. What the world needs now is love, sweet love, No, not just for some but for everyone.”

If that seems a bit too sugary for you then remember, the God we worship is defined simply as “Love”: he who “so loved the world that he gave his only son”, and who said the greatest commandments were that you love God and love Mr and Mrs Awkward over your garden fence.

So I’ll opt for love for 2017, but ditch the saccharine because love is hard! Its brutal and demanding and yes, its costly!

It’ll cost us to see refugees as our problem and love them and actually do something. Heavens, we may even need to protest!

It’ll be demanding when neighbours need more from us than a cheery wave and a comment about the weather. They may be grieving and they need to be loved too.

It may be difficult in the next year to demonstrate your Christian faith in your school or in the hospital where you work and not get sacked, but pray that you’ll find a great way to show how much you love people there too.

And that’s before we start with the people in church who drive us nuts!

“Oh, not them too Lord!” Yup – invite them for Sunday lunch – that’ll do the trick!

And it’ll be tough giving enough money away so that God believes we’re serious about this – but money can be translated into love for people who are sick, starving, homeless and trapped in faraway places. So my vote goes for love in 2017 – Christlike love.

David Kerrigan
United Kingdom

MOZAMBIQUE: LOVING THE OUTSIDER

L ast year I attended several of Beira’s “community courts”. These informal courts run by local elders help Mozambicans to resolve their differences. During one hearing, a young woman stood alone whilst her in-laws occupied the other side of the makeshift courtroom, subjecting her to vicious slurs and insults. The reason – her husband’s child from a previous relationship had become sick and died. She was a northerner, from a different culture, and had been unable to bear her husband a child. Now she stood accused of murdering the child by witchcraft. Fortunately, she was exonerated by the court.

This story exemplifies a serious challenge facing the world today. Social tensions prompt many to focus on the outsider, and to point the accusatory finger. The political far right offer a nostalgic vision of nationalism to many who feel threatened by outsiders and their otherness. Such an approach is dangerous and elitist. As people of divergent identities continue to occupy the same space we each have to decide how to relate with those who are different.

Jesus was born into a society that was also struggling to know how to relate to outsiders. Israel was a vassal of the Roman Empire. Some of Jesus’ contemporaries, called zealots, advocated open violence against non-Jews to maintain Jewish independence and identity. Yet Jesus deliberately ministered to foreigners, including a Roman centurion, Samaritan woman, and Canaanite’s daughter.

The Bible clearly indicates what our response to outsiders should be. The command to love your neighbour (Leviticus 19: 18) was extended to the foreigner (Leviticus 19: 33-34; Deuteronomy 10: 19). Love your neighbour as yourself; love the alien as yourself, even though he may not share your background, culture, and religion. As the political far right has gained ground globally in 2016, I believe this is the remedy our world needs in 2017.

Damien Miller
Mozambique

Damien Miller is a BMS mission worker in Mozambique.
FRANCE: PEACE AND SECURITY

After being pummelled over the last 18 months by various waves of terror attacks and violence, we are very conscious that our neighbours, our community, our region and indeed our country are crying out for peace and security. Affected by other factors that are shaping the country (persistent unemployment, perceived ongoing economic fragility, friends suffering from various illnesses, and threats, either real or imagined), people around us are living daily with fear.

As mission workers and church leaders, we see this in so many different places: people who are bound by their fears, both on an individual level and on an intangible societal level. So our prayer and hope for 2017 is that France discovers a new sense of peace and security.

This will not come about, as many believe or push for, as a result of presidential elections being held this spring, which may in fact heighten the sense of fragility and inequality. But as Christians, we have much to share to bring a sense of peace. We know that we cannot control life, but we can encourage others to rest in God’s loving hands, and to lean on him when we feel threatened. We can live in an attitude of release, rather than straining to hold on to our fears and the objects of our fears. We can live out life in a community (the Body of Christ), creating a sense of belonging that counters the sense of isolation that fear engenders. Living with a generous spirit and open hands that force us to look to and invest in others, rather than focusing on our narrow fear-tinged world, and worries for the future.

Claire-Lise Judkins is a BMS church planter.

NEPAL: EDUCATION AND ETHICAL ENTREPRENEURS

Nepal has experienced many dramatic changes in the last decade such as insurgency, democratic movement, a new constitution, many new governments, earthquakes, a blockade, floods and landslides.

These unsettling changes have led many Nepalis, particularly men, to leave the country to earn more money working overseas – Nepal’s economy now heavily relies on remittances sent by migrant workers. The downside of this is that children are only raised by their mothers, without any emotional attachment with their fathers. Family relationships often breakdown because of this separation. The farming the family used to do can be abandoned with wives moving to a neighbouring town to put their children in expensive private schools, leaving a predominantly elderly population in the villages they lived in. This situation cannot go on. In 2017, Nepal is in desperate need of ethical entrepreneurs and investors to create jobs so that families stay together, the economy grows and communities flourish.

The needs of Nepal are not very different than the rest of the world. There is a need for fresh air for city dwellers, nutritious food and clean drinking water for all, shelter and warmth for those displaced by earthquakes, floods, landslides and war. Political instability and corruption are on the rise so there is the need for righteous political and civil society leaders to work for the welfare of nation and people.

Close to my heart is the desire that everyone worldwide should have access to contextual quality education. Teachers should be more accountable and responsible in their profession and schools should not be a place for politics. Education should be more than a means to a high salary, white-collar or good English language job. Education should enable students to think globally and act locally.

Dil Bahadur Chhetri
Nepal

Dil Bahadur Chhetri is a teacher trainer at a BMS World Mission educational partner in Nepal.

The views expressed here are the writers’ own and do not necessarily reflect those endorsed by BMS World Mission.
When this article is published, the United States will have voted for a new president. What are your hopes and concerns if either Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump are elected?

There are different sets of problems that come along with either of the candidates. These challenges range from abortion culture and religious liberty pressure over to questions of racial fragmenting and beyond. We have a difficult four years or so ahead of us, regardless of who wins this election. I think the good news is that it should remind us what we should have known all along: that we are a different people. We have been called out to bear a different kind of witness.

Donald Trump described you as a ‘nasty guy with no heart’ on Twitter. What was your reaction?

I disagree with Donald Trump on many things but I agree with him that I am a nasty man with no heart, which is why I need the gospel. I need a gospel that will grant me a new heart and will cleanse me of nastiness. So I cling to Jesus Christ for that. Donald Trump is right.

Southern Baptists are perceived by many to be conservative, right wing and predominantly white. Is that right?

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is increasingly becoming one of the most ethnically diverse denominations in American life. Our fastest growing segment is among African-American and Hispanic, as well as Asian American congregations. The SBC is far more diverse than many would think. That is also the case in terms of age. There is a resurgence of younger people who are not only involved in Southern Baptist life but also in leadership.

From the outside, American society looks deeply divided. Is that the case? And what can the Church do about it?

American society is deeply divided over basic issues and questions. That’s been developing for some time but it has never been in more contrast than this year. What the Church has to do is to give a prophetic voice that articulates a different way.

The Church in the US appears to be undergoing a similar decline to what has happened in Europe. How does the Church address that?

I don’t think that the Church is in decline in the United States. What is in decline is a kind of cultural nominal Christianity. For much of the 20th century, and even before, to be a good American meant to be identified as a Christian. It took an especially courageous person to admit that he or she was an atheist. So the rise of people with no religious affiliation doesn’t mean that we have more atheists in American life – it means we have more honest atheists. That is a positive development for the Church because an ‘almost gospel’ is no gospel at all. What we are seeing is a vibrancy in churches around the country. The relative secularising of American life gives us the opportunity to maintain the distinctiveness of the Christian gospel.
In Finding a Way Ahead: Spiritual signposts to healing and wholeness Angela Harper, who studied at Spurgeon’s College, applies her learning to real life issues in a very honest and heart-warming way. Many of us are plagued with low self-esteem. We worry about what others think of us and if we match up to their expectations. This book has a way of changing our thinking, helping us to begin to understand how God loves and cares for us and how we are unique. It goes on to encourage us to look outwards, towards the needs of others. No-one is exempt from problems in life and Harper describes some of those she has experienced in her own life.

Harper explains that “valuable gifts are forged in times of darkness,” and that God can use the difficulties we have gone through with a compassionate understanding, rather than a judgmental attitude.

Although the layout of the book is slightly random, this is a book from which anyone can benefit. It paints a broad picture of circumstances in our lives, to which we can relate in different ways, teaching us to apply God’s Word as well as studying it.

Review by Fiona Castle, an international speaker and writer.

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In The Passion and the Cross, Ronald Rolheiser explores the mystery of suffering and the meaning of the cross from human, divine and creation perspectives. It is focused on the love of Christ and helps us to grasp this love in more breadth and depth.

This concise book leads us, in five chapters, through the Easter narrative from the Garden of Gethsemane to the glory of the resurrection. Each chapter is divided into forty distinct and brief reflections and is ideal as a resource for Lent devotions.

Roland Rolheiser is a Roman Catholic priest and a member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a congregation of both lay and ordained people who are dedicated to serving the poor across the world. His deep spirituality and experience means that The Passion and the Cross is rich with perceptive insight and often includes pertinent stories and illustrations that bring each reflection to life. My copy already has lots of page corners turned down and pencil notes highlighting especially profound bits! Use it during Lent and let Rolheiser’s reflections speak to you personally and allow the Lord to speak into your own life and discipleship.

Review by Lynn Green, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

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As a lover of country music, I always get a little defensive when it is described as a depressing or dreary genre – because I don’t think that’s true at all, at least of modern country. The depth of the storytelling in some country songs has made me shed tears in the past, so I try to promote it where I can.

As a fan of Lady Antebellum (Hillary Scott’s band), the fact that this album combines worship and country is pretty much the dream for me. However, this album, which the world reached peak pomp and popcorn-friendly Algiers (with added romance, living under occupation and the insurgents more than your violent responses they incite, while it sometimes feels like the injustices inherent in living under occupation and the violent responses they incite, has one sympathising with the insurgents more than your average Disney epic does. But while it sometimes feels like the insurgency classic The Battle of Algiers (with added romance, pomp and popcorn-friendly filler), this is a resistance movie with a message of grace mixed in with the cry for justice. 2016’s version will go down in history as a very enjoyable remake, and also, I suspect, as the point at which the world reached peak Morgan Freeman.

Review by Sarah Goodwin, who works for a Christian volunteer programme.

Review by Jonathan Langley, Head of Content at BMS World Mission.
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.

Saturday 13 May 2017
10:30 am to 8:30 pm
Harrogate International Centre, Harrogate

baptistassembly.org.uk