I KEPT MY BABY
Desperation didn’t have the last word

THE LONG GAME
Cursed boys striking goals

Defending the oppressed and pleading the case of the widow

A BETTER WAY TO DIE
Easing suffering in Tunisia

The BMS World Mission magazine
hat I love most about BMS World Mission is the sheer range of work we do around the world – and I think that diversity is exemplified in this issue of Engage. There is hope and joy to be found in each of the stories, even though some of them deal with issues that are hard to think about, and harder to live through.

Death is one of them. Yet you should most definitely read the beautiful reflection on BMS’ end of life care work in Tunisia that you will find on page 7. It was written by my good friend and former intern Hailey, who lost her own mum to cancer when she was just 14 and can testify – as, I am sure, can many of you – to just how valuable the support of well-trained doctors and nurses was to her mum and her family.

You can also read about how football is transforming life for ‘cursed boys’ in Guinea (page 16), how your gifts have kept a struggling family together on the Thai-Burma border (page 10), and how BMS-supported lawyers are saving children from forced marriages and fighting gender based violence in Mozambique (page 12).

I hope you read every page in this magazine, because I really believe the work on every page is worth supporting. I hope that some of the stories you find here will cause you to rejoice, and that others will inspire you to pray. I hope that, in this new year, you will be spurred on to continue supporting BMS – and ask that you would encourage others to support us too, by giving the card you will find in the centre spread of this magazine to a friend. This card will help more people read about what God is doing.

Thank you so much for reading. And thank you to every one of you who has written to me in response to the last two issues. Some of your letters can be found on page 19, and some of your amazing fundraising efforts are celebrated on page 6!

Happy New Year and happy reading!

Jessica
Editor

Write to me at magazine@bmsworldmission.org
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Warming Ukraine’s abandoned families this winter

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“Studying theology has equipped me for my future ministry.” A Sudanese Christian wants to thank you

One of the amazing creations from Ladywell Baptist Church, Livingston
Thermal underwear and heaters that don’t use too much electricity are making Ukraine’s harsh winter more bearable for displaced children and families affected by the ongoing conflict. In the so-called ‘grey zone’, close to the fighting around Ukraine’s eastern border, over 1,000 Ukrainians are being provided with urgent supplies from November into January, thanks to a joint relief effort by BMS World Mission and the European Baptist Federation (EBF). Our most recent grant of £10,000 will help those displaced by the violence and political instability that followed Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. German Baptists will lead this latest EBF relief effort, and Ukrainian churches will be used to store thermal clothing, energy-efficient ceramic heaters and heating fuel provided thanks to the BMS grant. All of the help will go to people in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions who have, up until now, not received any relief.

Ukraine’s winters can be brutal, with temperatures reaching 20 degrees below zero, so heating and warm clothing are essential for survival. But many of the 1.5 million people who remain displaced within Ukraine can’t afford them. They have exhausted most of their financial reserves and lost their jobs when they fled their homes. With the country’s currency devalued by fifty per cent and hostilities continuing, the conflict that seems to have disappeared from headlines in the UK still desperately needs God’s intervention and our prayers.

“BMS is grateful to be part of a co-ordinated, international Christian response to the needs of people who have been largely forgotten by the international community,” said Rachel Conway-Doel, BMS Relief Facilitator. “We are even more grateful that UK Christians continue to make our relief work possible with their giving.”}

**UKRAINIAN CHURCHES HELP DISTRIBUTE BMS WINTER RELIEF**

Germans, Britons and Ukrainians are working together across Europe to help those left freezing by a forgotten war.

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**Vital statistics**

- **Country:** war-torn Ukraine
- **Aim:** winterisation
- **Cost:** £10,000
- **Partners:** EBF, Ukrainian and German Baptists
- **People helped:** 1,004 children and adults
- **People who made it possible:** BMS supporters

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bmsworldmission.org
DO WE STILL NEED TO SUPPORT MISSION?
Kang-San Tan

MS World Mission represents a unique legacy not only for Baptists in the UK, but for Christians everywhere, regarding the enduring power of the gospel of Jesus in changing lives across generations. I am delighted to join this work.

Today, we live in an interconnected world – communications are instantaneous, missions are polycentric (from many directions) and some overseas churches are bigger than congregations in Britain. At times, you may wonder whether we still need to support mission to other nations.

In 2 Corinthians 5: 14-21, the Apostle Paul suggested two enduring motifs for all Christians to participate in God’s mission. First, “Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died” (v 14). In this issue, you will read of stories of BMS workers modelling Christian love among people in great need (for example Ben, working with ‘cursed boys’ in Guinea, page 16).

Second, Paul was motivated by God’s commission in the ministry of reconciliation (v 18-19). Despite the finished work of Christ, millions remain untouched by his love. And so, despite the changing contexts of mission, Christ’s commission remains as urgent as ever. We need to pray for both ‘givers’ and ‘goers’, motivated by Christ’s divine commission and love.

At the start of 2018, if you are not already a 24:7 Partner – giving, praying and sharing in our work and mission – please may I encourage you to sign up? Together we can continue in BMS’ rich tradition of sharing Jesus so that ‘one million lives are transformed’.

Dr Kang-San Tan took up the post of General Director of BMS World Mission in October 2017.

To become a BMS 24:7 Partner, visit bmsworldmission.org/partners

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HUGE TURNOUT FOR YOUTH EVENT IN FRANCE

Over 400 young French Baptists gathered in Poitiers to worship God, pray and learn more about their faith in October 2017. Your giving and support helped make this possible.

The Connexion youth conference was pioneered two years ago by BMS World Mission worker Sue Wilson, and Connexion 2017 was a roaring, singing success.

Evangelicals make up less than one per cent of the French population and most youth groups only have a handful of young people in them, so events this big are very rare. Christians can often feel isolated and excluded, so the opportunity to gather was hugely encouraging.

“With an event like this, we can worship the Lord together,” said Benjamin, one of the French youth leaders at Connexion “We know we are not alone.”

Pray for our new workers

Flying out this January:
Mark and Susanna Barrell (with Lizzie): Mozambique
Chris and Debbie Carter: Albania
Pippa and Toby Vokhul (with Jakey, Ella and Millie): Nepal

In training to leave later:
Louise and Peter Lynch: Bangladesh
James and Ruth Neve: India
Lisa* and Timothy*: Guinea

To find out more, go to bmsworldmission.org/newworkers

*names changed
Cooking up a storm

Brentwood Baptist Church raised a delicious £300 through the Thai curry night they held as a fundraiser for BMS workers Ashleigh Gibb and Kathryn Smith in Thailand. Thank you so much to everyone who organised, cooked for and attended the event. The whole thing looks truly scrumptious!

Magnificent money-making boxes

This incredible papier mache SpongeBob SquarePants money box was made by Roy and his grandson as part of the fundraising efforts of Ladywell Baptist Church, Livingston. Inspired by a story about a former BMS World Mission worker in Kosovo who made a specialised chair out of papier mache for a child with disabilities, the children and young people at Ladywell decided to put their creative skills to the test.

Their time and perseverance paid off as they created an amazing array of papier mache money boxes and raised a fantastic £150 for the work of BMS. Well done and a huge thank you to everyone involved!

Thank you for raising money for BMS. You’re the best!

We love hearing about the ways you and your church are supporting us. If you’ve been fundraising for BMS and haven’t got in touch, drop us an email, Facebook or Tweet us, or write to us using the addresses on page 2. Don’t forget to send us pictures of what you’ve been up to, too!
It’s 2003 and I’m a terrified 14-year-old girl standing next to a hospital bed. Mum’s two-year battle with breast cancer is coming to an end. Desperate to express something profound, I say, “You always gave the best advice.” I hold back my tears. Mum smiles and flashes me that honey, everything will be okay look.

Minutes later, I collapse on a bathroom floor. Alone with only my tears and God. The most pain I’ve ever experienced. But I know that my 39-year-old mother Kelly felt more. Physically – surgery, chemotherapy and radiation – but also emotionally. I can’t imagine the heartache she felt, leaving three children and a husband behind. And yet somewhere in it all, there was a silver lining: Mum experienced joy alongside her suffering. She rocked a brunette wig, spent her days loving people and even took the family on holiday to Yellowstone National Park. All of that was only possible because of the excellent doctors and nurses who helped her manage her pain and gave her the support she needed to thrive.

That’s what palliative care does. It’s life-giving. Simple, yet such a gift. And that’s why I feel compelled to tell you about the incredible work that BMS has been doing to help dying people find comfort and hope in Tunisia.

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“This work is desperately needed. In Tunisia, palliative care is not an embedded part of medical culture and often doctors and nurses don’t have the time or knowledge to help a patient who has a terminal illness.”

“We started the palliative care work in Tunisia to be Christ’s hands and feet in a situation where people are vulnerable and marginalised,” says David*, a doctor and former BMS worker who pioneered a five-year pilot end of life care project in southern Tunisia.

It’s never easy to say goodbye, no matter where you are. Yet in the darkest moments, palliative care can help bring life.

Words: Hailey Brenden
David and his wife, Louise*, who worked as a BMS palliative care nurse, poured their hearts into the project when it began in January 2011. “One of our goals was to train local health professionals with the hope that it would be sustainable,” says David. One of the ways they did this was by organising a palliative care conference in January 2012. It was a huge success, with over 120 local health professionals attending.

The medics shared their anxieties about things like breaking bad news to patients and talking to children. “We were then able to provide more information on how to communicate,” says Louise. “We were able to share things that would actually help them.”

David and Louise helped spur on palliative care efforts in other ways too. They encouraged local professionals to start a palliative care charity and, in collaboration with them, opened a centre for patients and families where they could be listened to, given help and have access to literature that explained how to care for people at home. Non-medical volunteers were also trained to work in people’s homes and offer nursing services or friendship.

Mary*, a nurse who specialises in palliative care and who has been serving with BMS since 2012, has seen the direct impacts of our palliative care work in Tunisia.

“One lady’s son came into the hospital and was incredibly angry,” says Mary. “His dying mother was sent home and he didn’t know how to help her.”

The hospital decided they needed to do a home visit. “We wanted to find a way to reassure the son and the rest of the patient’s family,” says Mary. During the visit, Mary and the team of doctors and nurses gave the family advice on ways to help their mother both practically and medically, sharing how to move her to keep her comfortable and what medicines she needed.

On their follow-up visit they saw a positive change. “This home that had been so tense was very peaceful,” says Mary. “The family felt like they could do something for their mother in the last few weeks of her life.”

Palliative care granted the patient and family peace.

Yet patients and families aren’t the only ones who need this. Medical professionals in Tunisia need peace too, but often they don’t find it when they feel they have no choice but to give up on patients who are terminally ill. “Death is often seen as failure,” says David. “But there’s always something you can do to improve the quality of life.”

That’s why BMS is invested in palliative care training. And it has made a difference. Mary has seen a transformation in a head nurse she works with in a Tunisian hospital. “He really cares about giving good care to patients,” says Mary. “We’ve worked alongside him and he’s started to change the way he works.”

Mary remembers one woman who had breast cancer. Bleeding very badly, she came in to get a dressing changed. The nurse asked Mary to go with him to change the dressing. “He hadn’t prepared anything in advance,” says Mary. “There was no thought about privacy and no pain relief given in advance.” Mary worked with him and afterwards shared ways to better support a patient in the future.

The next time Mary and the nurse went in to do a dressing together,
she noticed a difference. They were treating a man with a large tumour on his back, but this time the nurse had prepared a trolley and closed doors for privacy. “It was lovely to see the way his own practice improved,” says Mary.

Dignity and life to the full, for as long as life lasts. That's what BMS hopes to achieve for more people who have terminal illnesses in Tunisia.

“Yellowstone,” Mum says. “That’s where we’re going this summer.” My first thought is, ugh, no way. I’m devastated at the thought of missing my sports tournament for a family holiday.

But, Mum won. And so did joy.

Hiking through the park in the hot sun, Mum stops to rest several times. All this walking is hard for her. But further down the trail, we’re rewarded with wild waterfalls. Mum’s smile is the biggest it’s been all day. Cruising around winding roads in our mini van, I hear beautiful voices singing. It’s Mum and Jason Mraz belting out The Remedy. Her favourite. At some point in the trip, Mum ditches her wig for a blue baseball cap. I’m not sure why, I’ve never seen her do this at home. But I love it. Mum is brave and free.

As we drive out of the park I am in awe. Yellowstone is beautiful. And when I reflect, what’s most beautiful is all the joy it brought to Mum.

Less than a week later I was in that hospital room saying goodbye.

As hard as it was to lose my mother, I can look back and be thankful. I know that because of the great care she received, she was able to find deep moments of joy alongside her pain.

And that’s what BMS palliative care is doing in Tunisia. What a gift.

Please pray

We want to continue our palliative care work in Tunisia, but doors need to be opened.

Will you join us as we pray that God will make a way for our workers and partners to keep on making a difference, and to extend this ministry of life, even in death?

Pray for:
• Fresh opportunities
• People of peace and influence to open doors
• God’s Spirit to move people to compassion and enthusiasm

Hailey with her mum

*names changed
I kept my baby

In desperation, Aye Aye was about to sell her baby. BMS World Mission helped her to keep her daughter.

Words: Jessica  •  Photo: Alex Baker

We sit on the wooden floor of her small bamboo house, and she tells me a story.

“Daily life was such a struggle. It was so difficult,” she says. “My husband could not get a job. We had a lot of debt. That’s why…” She doesn’t really pause. She just says it. “That’s why I was going to sell my baby.”

Aye Aye, a mother of three, was facing an impossible choice. She could risk her whole family starving, or she could sell her baby daughter to a stranger. Watching Aye Aye bow her head shyly and look at the floor as my translator asks her another one of my questions – ‘why did you come here?’ – I wonder what other life could possibly have been worse than the one she arrived at in Thailand. A life of poverty and desperation. What would it have driven me to?

Of course, when Aye Aye came here, she didn’t know it would be like this.

“I came to Thailand because of the economic situation in Burma,” she says. “We came to hopefully get a job.”

She thought life would be better. It wasn’t. Jobs were no easier to come by. Food was scarce. Money was tight. The family got into debt. They had to pay up.

“They needed to pay off just $40,” says BMS-supported worker Daniel, who heads up the work of our partner in Mae Sot, on the Thai-Burma border. “But I could see they’d lost their hope. They couldn’t find any alternative.

“I went there and Aye Aye was in tears. She couldn’t even look at her child,” he says.

Daniel was instrumental in helping Aye Aye keep her baby. Having heard about her situation, he went to visit her on behalf of BMS partner Compasio. He told her how important it is for a child to grow up in a loving family. But he didn’t offer empty judgement. He offered practical help – food packages, counselling, support to help her children go to school.

At first, Aye Aye refused. She believed it was impossible – how could these people help her? But when she eventually realised Daniel was serious, she decided to trust him. She realised she could keep her baby. That baby is now three years old.

Her name is Ngwe Che, and I meet her at an early childhood development centre run by BMS partners you help support. She is singing and dancing along with a handful of other Burmese children – all of whom come from single-parent or struggling families. She’s a serious student. She’s growing up in poverty. But she has a family. And she has a future.

“I am so thankful to people who are supporting,” says Aye Aye when I ask her what she’d say to people like you, whose giving has helped us help her. “If they did not support, I couldn’t survive like this. So I really thank you.”

You don’t have to look very hard in Mae Sot to find a desperate family, living on a rubbish dump or in a little shack, close to losing hope. A family like Aye Aye’s. And as more desperate people flee violence and hopelessness in Burma, more families will follow.

“We know we cannot save the whole world,” says Daniel. “We cannot save all the migrants here. But we can start with one family. We can help one child. And God is in that. “This is really God’s heart.”
In a small church, with an orange sand floor and iron-sheeted walls, the attention of 25 people is focused unwaveringly on a tall woman in her mid-fifties. An experienced Mozambican lawyer, speaking to them in their own language about their rights. One minute everyone is roaring with laughter, the next they’re silent. Lidia commands respect. She’s teaching them about gender based violence. About what Scripture says. What the law says. Giving them biblical keys to unlock answers. Is it okay to beat your partner? No. Is it okay to force a teenager to marry? No. People are answering. Nodding. Understanding. Some of them are visibly moved.

After the session, which lasts all morning, nine people come forward to ask Lidia questions. That’s Saturday, and on Tuesday morning two people arrive at the Christian lawyers’ office in Maputo to get advice about the family issues and domestic violence they’re experiencing. They’ve discovered that help exists.

This is what the Association of Mozambican Christian Lawyers (AMAC) is all about. Teaching people the law. Speaking up for the poor and needy. Defending the abused and oppressed. Christian lawyers coming together, in one of the least developed countries in the world, to share God’s heart for justice and see the vulnerable realise their rights.

Through your gifts, prayers and support, BMS World Mission has been walking with AMAC every step of the way. The association was born, in part, out of our legal work in Uganda with the Ugandan Christian Lawyers’ Fraternity; and over the last six years, we’ve seen AMAC grow from a dream into an established organisation educating churches, schools and communities on their rights and providing legal aid for

Words and photos: Jessica
some of the country’s most marginalised people. A small number of Christian lawyers – from Mozambique, Uganda and the UK – are demonstrating that the law is good, that much of it comes from the Bible, and that it’s for everyone. They’re gathering members and momentum. And they’re just getting started.

The challenges facing many Mozambicans are huge and varied, so the BMS-supported justice league has a lot of work to do.

For the poor and vulnerable here, the law is literally a foreign language. It is written in Portuguese and almost 50 per cent of the population, like many in the church Lidia was visiting, don’t speak it fluently. An added problem is that the laws, although good, are relatively new (with Mozambique only obtaining independence in 1975, and then suffering through civil war from 1977 to 1992) so they have not had long to become established. Widespread poverty and a lack of opportunity mean that countless people are suffering injustices without even knowing there are laws in place to protect them.

The justice system is simply inaccessible.

“People with no money believe that there is no justice in the world,” says Gervasio, a BMS-supported lawyer in Beira. Our team is working to show them that’s not true.

Legal education saved Aida* from a loveless, forced marriage. She was 16 when her parents demanded she marry a 40-year-old man or face a severe beating. Her sister, a preschool teacher, attended an AMAC legal education session and had one of her friends ask about child marriage. AMAC explained that it is illegal in Mozambique for anyone under the age of 18 to get married, and it is also illegal to beat a child.

Equipped with this knowledge, a group from the training went with Aida’s sister to her parents’ house and confronted them, explaining what they had learnt about the law. The parents confessed they hadn’t known it was wrong. They were sorry and relented. That was a year ago. Now, Aida is living with her sister and is part of a church. She is free from fear of violence and forced marriage, and is thankful to the Christians who helped her.

Education is helping people trapped in abusive marriages too, by changing the minds of their pastors. In Mozambique, pastors are often called upon to mediate cases between church members, but many believe that when it comes to marriage, reunion is always the answer – even in the case of extreme domestic violence. This is changing. One pastor who was strongly against ever condoning separation when he first met with AMAC, stood up at the
end of the legal education in his church and told his congregation: ‘if your partner hits you once, come to me. If it happens again, go to the police and I will support you.’

“A lot of change can be made through education,” says Kathy, a lawyer who has just finished four years of service with BMS in Mozambique. “We’re empowering the Church to take justice seriously and to act.”

Not all injustice is obvious. Working in churches and communities, the BMS-supported legal teams based in Beira and Maputo regularly meet people who are unregistered citizens or who believe they are married when legally they are not. These legal misunderstandings can have big ramifications. By explaining simply how to register a baby (or in many cases an adult) or get married legally, AMAC is helping people learn when they are outside of the law and what to do about it.

On the outskirts of Beira, eight couples recently got married. Through AMAC training, these men and women discovered they weren’t legally husbands and wives. Now they have the protection marriage can bring – the women will no longer lose their homes and security as well as their partners if their husbands die. It’s all very biblical. Disputes over land. Widows and orphans.

All our legal education is focused on empowering the most vulnerable in society. AMAC runs sessions with rural, untrained pastors and with city street boys; with teenagers in schools and with preschool teachers working with disadvantaged children. Our lawyers have even started working with a deaf church, where the congregation struggles to understand or be understood by the community and is very vulnerable to abuse and injustice.

As well as teaching people about their rights, BMS-supported legal workers are advocating for the voiceless. We’re representing imprisoned street children to see that they get a fair trial and don’t remain in custody indefinitely. We’re helping single mothers to receive the child maintenance they’re entitled to. And we’re supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Tiago* sits on a pew in First Baptist Church in Beira and quietly tells a story. A grown man raped his 12-year-old niece. It took nearly four years to get the culprit convicted. The man got two years for his crime – impersonating a police officer to scare a child into following him to an isolated place, sexually assaulting her and then running

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away. He is appealing his sentence.

The injustice is brutal. While Tiago’s niece still suffers, her attacker has never been imprisoned and despite being convicted, he will remain free until his appeal is heard and denied. “Here in Mozambique, rape is a crime. Yet the accused person was never arrested,” says Tiago. “It’s very difficult for [my niece] to forget what happened. It’s never left her mind.”

The AMAC team has been walking alongside Tiago’s niece since he brought the case to them. No-one is happy with the outcome, but Tiago has hope that some justice will be done. “Without doubt, AMAC should continue,” he says.

“Without doubt, AMAC should continue,” he says. “They assist people without charge. They walk with the client step by step. They gave us good treatment, provided psychological assistance and accompanied us in court.”

Annet, our legal team leader in Mozambique, has been helping to support Tiago’s niece. She has more reason than most to empathise, having herself survived sexual violence as a child – an experience that motivated her to become a lawyer in the first place. “Justice is at the heart of God. It’s a mission from God himself,” she says. “If Mozambican lawyers can understand why it’s important for them as Christians to do justice for the poor, they will transform many lives.”

And Mozambican lawyers are doing just that.

But they need your support. There aren’t many lawyers here, let alone Christian lawyers willing to give up the lucrative career they’ve studied hard for to pursue justice for the vulnerable. And yet those who have captured the vision are holding fast to AMAC’s mandate: “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow” (Isaiah 1: 17).

Your gifts, your prayers and your partnership are vital. “Without BMS support, maybe we can’t survive,” says Luis Generoso, AMAC’s Executive Director and one of its founding members.

And it’s so important that AMAC survives, and thrives. “If you don’t have justice, you feel like you are not valuable,” says Marie Josee, a BMS-supported lawyer in Maputo. “We exist and manage to do this work because of BMS. I want you to know that the money and the efforts you are giving are not in vain.”

In a small church, with an orange sand floor and iron-sheeted walls, the attention of 25 people is focused unwaveringly on a tall woman in her mid-fifties. She’s telling them about their rights. Telling them that the Bible and the law say that they have value. She’s handing them a set of keys. Giving them a way to unlock some of the doors they’ve been trapped behind.

She’s opening their minds. And the knowledge she is giving them is setting captives free.

*Names changed
MS World Mission worker Ben is a better Muslim, but not in the way Mo Farah might be.

He’s also a great manager, but only partly in the way Sir Alex Ferguson is. Ben is a football manager in a mostly Muslim country in West Africa, and the club he’s started is called Blessed Boys FC. It’s a space where boys who’d otherwise be left behind can learn the lessons that the beautiful game can teach – lessons about goals and how to strike them – and discover that they are valuable to God.

Ben is a committed Christian (so committed, he’s moved from Angola to Guinea to serve with BMS here). And ‘better Muslim’ is not a reason to write to the editor. It’s just what the people call him in the little town where he and his wife (also a BMS worker) now live. It’s a compliment, particularly to a known Christian who never worships in the mosque. A recognition of the difference he’s making; taking deprived kids, angry young men and ‘cursed’ boys under his defending wing.

Boys like… let’s call him Joao. Joao was born cursed. His mother died while giving birth to him and all his life Joao was told it was his fault. Told that, from the moment of his first breath, the evil power that killed his mum was attached to him. And as he grew, the label stuck. Ditch school to kick a ball around the streets? Of course you would, cursed boy. Never make it to the top of the class? Not surprising, really. Cursed boys can’t amount to much. Get involved in silly, maybe illegal, things? Nobody expects better, least of all you. Cursed boys do not have a future. Why would boys like Joao think beyond tomorrow?

Then one day, a stranger came to Joao’s town. He was as old as Joao’s father might have been had he still been around. And he called Joao blessed. He started to teach Joao the long game. Not just the game of football, but the game of life. Ben brought a vision of a God who sees no child as cursed, no boy beyond redemption, and he spoke a language boys like Joao could understand: the poetry of corner and cross, the syntax of the team. And things began to change.
While other managers would beat their boys, berating them for failure and modelling violence to get results, Ben did not. That’s not how a Blessed Boy behaves, he’d say, and boys like Joao would listen. Rules and boundaries as clear as white lines. Discipline and consequence for fouls and straying offside – but never vicious, insulting, condemning – Joao would sit out games and come back determined to do better, be better. When parents weren’t able or available, Ben would advocate for boys at school. He set up summer classes with his wife – a passionate teacher – identifying academic weaknesses and tutoring his boys (and other kids, their sisters, too) so that athletes became achievers in their schoolwork. Football and education.

Today they’re model students, many of Ben’s boys. The BBFC rules are clear: no cutting class to practise – school comes first and no Blessed Boy should be on the pitch outside of scheduled training times. They’re learning structure. Learning formal rules and tactics, the techniques that separate the game they love to watch on TV from the scuffling madness they’d all be playing on the street if Ben’s club wasn’t there. They’re learning self-control, self-worth and that nobody is cursed into their future. BBFC boys respect themselves and their team. “Individualism wins trophies, but teamwork wins championships,” says Ben. And 54 boys in his club are learning that is true.

“The sense of hopelessness here is vivid sometimes,” says Ben, “and one can either be repelled by it or try to do something.” Something is being done. If you support the work of BMS you are doing something beautiful here, through the beautiful game. Boys robbed of any sense of choice by poverty are choosing to be better. Boys told by broken homes, polygamy and economics that they might as well give up are looking to the future. They are learning: think about the long game.

Boys like Joao. Joao is not one boy. Joao is many boys, and almost any boy in Blessed Boys Football Club. Ben talks about a boy like Joao, top of his class and captain of one of the BBFC teams: “He actually thought that he was done. That there was no hope for him in life. Now he’s doing well. We’re working on his skills and employability. I’m offering him career guidance. I’m trying to help him see that he has in himself all that it takes to become somebody.”

Joao is not one boy, but he is not nobody. He’s 54 strong, he’s getting better every day and he is somebody.

**INDIVIDUALISM WINS TROPHIES, TEAMWORK WINS CHAMPIONSHIPS**

HELP US TRANSFORM LIVES

Your gifts to BMS help us fund the God-inspired work of people like Ben. They help change the lives of people like Joao.

Visit: bmsworldmission.org/give or phone 01235 517641 to make your donation today.
Dear friends,

God is good all the time, and all the time God is good!

Before meeting Jesus Christ and experiencing his salvation, I used to think that I could save myself through doing good deeds and I depended on my self-righteousness. I was born into a Christian family, although both of my parents were originally non-Christian. I thank God that my parents became Christians.

In 1993 I attended a conference for young people and during one of the sessions the speaker talked about justification by faith. I gave my life to Jesus and I was sure that he would grant me salvation through his death and Resurrection. My life has changed since then and now I am certain that I have eternal life in Jesus Christ.

I used to preach in my home church in Sudan. I wanted to gain more knowledge about the Holy Bible and theology and someone told me about ABTS in Lebanon and recommended that I apply. After I graduate, I plan to establish a school for teaching others about Christian doctrine. I want to return back to my people in Sudan and give them the correct teachings about God so that they may build a strong faith.

In Lebanon, I lead refugee home group Bible studies every week. I also preach and teach at a church.

Studying theology has equipped me with the right tools for my future ministry of Bible teaching and discipleship. I learned how to interpret the Bible and how to apply the lessons we extracted from it. I also learned that there are several methods to discipleship, depending on which group I aim to reach. In my case, I will be focusing on youth and new believers who are newly discovering about the Bible and about Jesus. Studying here has supplied me with the tools needed to disciple them.

My country Sudan is Muslim. It is very hard for Sudanese Christians to worship or preach the gospel. But I have a vision for Sudan that comes from my faith in God. My prayer and my vision is that he will break through into my country, and we will see all the people of Sudan coming to Christ.

The scholarship support I receive is vital. I need to be studying full-time here and therefore cannot work during the time of my studies. The seminary not only provides education, but also provides room and board – all of which are covered through the generous support of partners such as BMS.

I truly thank you, and I pray that the Lord would bless your ministry and reward the toil of your love for us. Thank you for supporting me.

Patrick

BMS supports the work of ABTS, equipping leaders to serve the Church in challenging places.

Patrick* is from Sudan and is in his third year studying at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS) in Lebanon. Your gifts help to fund his tuition and maintenance fees.

*Name changed
I approve

Dear Jessica

You asked for comments on the new format of Engage. I fully approve of more in-depth articles from BMS workers in location telling of their experiences or of enterprises with which they have been involved. I thought highly of your artist portraying the personnel in France. As we know Christine Kling and have long followed progress in Nepal the latest edition had particular appeal for us.

Carry on the good work!

Graham Little
Hillhead Baptist Church, Glasgow
(currently out of our old building and worshipping in the local hotel!)

Does Engage cost the earth?

Dear Editor,

I’ve just received the latest Engage/Mission Catalyst et al mailing in the post – thank you to you all.

Before opening the plastic wrapping I always look for the recycling information to ensure such packaging has been used so that I can take it to the appropriate ‘bank’ at my local supermarket. I fail to find such information on the BMS mailing.

Please either inform me (and all other Engage/Mission Catalyst recipients) that we can recycle, or take action urgently to source recyclable packaging and display instructions prominently on the addresses page!

Many thanks

Rev Dr Anne Phillips

Love in action

Hi Jessica,

I love the latest issue of Engage. Makes me proud to be a 24:7 supporter.

Blessings,

Charles Boyton

A reply from the editor

Thank you for your great question Anne. Yes, the plastic wrapping on Engage and Mission Catalyst is recyclable. We will be sure to spread the word!

Jessica

French nation illumination

Hi Jessica,

Just to let you know that Engage issue 39 was equally as good as issue 38! I was particularly touched by the Broken Art article, which very clearly and heartbreakingly told the story of what lots of Syrian refugee children are having to live with. Vive la Revolution was an eye opener into the work going on in France. Until fairly recently I would never have considered France, or any other European country, as a ‘mission field’! How wrong I was. Thank you for illuminating me!

Carry on the great work.

Moira Ritchie,
Castlehill Baptist Church, Bearsden, Glasgow

Get in touch!

If you’ve been inspired or challenged by anything you’ve read in Engage, have been busy raising money for us, or have anything else you want to share, we would love to hear from you. Get in touch using one of the methods on page 2!
We want to tell more people what God is doing.

Get a friend to subscribe to Engage by giving them the card attached to page 10. Your friend will receive wonderful, inspiring stories. And you’ll both be in with a chance of winning a great selection of Christian books!

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The winners of our prize draw will receive books from authors such as Henri Nouwen and Joyce Meyer (courtesy of the great team at Hodder and Stoughton). Make sure both your names are on the card to be entered.

Go on, you know you want to!

Competition closes on 15 March 2018 and is only open to people living in the UK.