

Edify

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Immeasurable Joy for All Nations

Missions is at the heart of who we prayerfully aim to be at Waterbrooke Church. Our mission statement declares that Waterbrooke seeks to be a gospel-centered multi-ethnic family that is captivated by

Jesus, compelled to love others, and called to make disciples to the glory of God. God's vision throughout the Scriptures has always been to bring the nations to Himself and to make them one beautiful, unified, and yet diverse family under the lordship of King Jesus. Isaiah 56 carries this promise that "the foreigner" will join himself to the people of God: "And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister

to Him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be His servants... these I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer."

Can you imagine the joy of all the peoples gathering to worship God, knowing that in Christ, they are no longer seen as strangers and aliens? In Christ, they are now sons and daughters and fellow citizens with all the saints! That is my joy in Christ. I, a Gentile, have been welcomed into the household of God. Most of Waterbrooke are Gentiles welcomed in Christ into the joy of God's family.

In Mark 11, Jesus cleanses the temple because it appears that the Gentiles were pushed out of the temple so that the money-changers could sell pigeons. Think about how Jesus' vision clashed

with their actions. They wanted profits from the poor rather than the joyous prayers of all the peoples. Jesus' zeal for the nations consumed him, and it was for that reason he went to the cross. His mission was clear and His passion was undeniable. We are told in Luke's gospel that seeing outcasts and sinners repent and come to God through Christ brings incredible joy amongst all the angels in heaven (Luke 15:10).

When the Bible talks about missions, it speaks about joy both in heaven and on earth! It speaks of joy now and joy for all eternity! Missions is driven by a Spirit-given desire for all peoples to be filled with immeasurable joy at their salvation. So Waterbrooke exists to spread the joy of salvation in Christ.

As Psalm 67:4 declares, "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth." Let's pray together for this joy! ♦

- Senior Pastor Kevin Dibbley



The Dibleys fellowship with a refugee family from Afghanistan. See page 3 for the full story.

LET'S GET TO KNOW: Bruce Eaton, Elder

By Karen Kowalke, Treasurer

If you ever wondered how Waterbrooke started, Bruce Eaton is a good person to ask. He and his wife Gina – and their three sons Emery, Evan and Carl – were among the eight families who left Ridgewood Church in Minnetonka to plant Waterbrooke in 2000. Challenged to move beyond the comfort of their long-term church, the Eatons were excited to focus on outreach and threw themselves wholeheartedly into all the work necessary for a church plant. Now, 24 years later, Bruce remains involved serving on the Elder Board, serving on the Finance and Building Committees, and leading the Sunday morning crew of greeters.

When asked where he gets joy, Bruce shares, “I’m the most content and joyful on a missions trip.”

It all started with a two-week trip to Papua New Guinea in 1997. He went to rebuild a home for Wycliffe missionaries who were translating the New Testament in the Lote language. As he was there, Bruce marveled at the God-given contentment of the missionaries. Despite the hardships, heat, and lack of medical care, the missionaries experienced a purpose and joy that vastly overshadowed what they had given up.

Remembering videos of the Lote tribe dancing and weeping at the eventual delivery of the New Testament in their own language, Bruce says, “I could not *not* do missions.”

More missions opportunities came. Bruce and Gina made numerous trips to Hungary, where they ministered to Roma (Gypsy) children in orphanages. The young people had limited opportunity to experience love in their difficult circumstances, and Bruce felt so blessed to offer God’s love for them. Most recently, Bruce traveled to Turkiye (formerly Turkey) with Inter CP (see article on next page).

Bruce is glad that Waterbrooke’s goal is to be a missions-near-and-far church, and he’s glad that we pray for the nations weekly during Sunday services.

Because he feels that “you won’t share what you don’t cherish,” Bruce’s prayer for Waterbrooke is that we develop an even deeper passion to worship God. He prays that all of us will know the joy of sharing the Good News so that all nations will come to full knowledge of Him. ♦



Bruce Eaton • photo by Lisa Washington

Did you know?

- **Bruce’s hobbies include ice hockey, kite surfing and sailing.**
- **He voluntarily eats lutefisk.**
- **Because of his Swedish descent, Bruce’s favorite foods are mostly white or beige.**
- **Bruce ran away from home in the second grade, but he returned two hours later because he ran out of saltine crackers! ♦**

Miracle Power at Work in Refugees' Lives

By Karen Kowalke, Treasurer

It had been a long day in December 2021. Waterbrooke's Bruce Eaton and two other men on a missions trip to Turkiye (formerly Turkey) had spent time in tiny villages talking to refugees from Afghanistan. Many of these refugees had walked more than 2,100 miles from Kabul — to escape the Taliban. Now they were stuck in Turkiye, either hiding or making meager wages.

Not finding fertile ground to share the gospel, the missions team decided to stop in a restaurant. When their waitress, Ruzia, brought some tea, she noticed the missionaries were praying. Intrigued, she invited them to visit her home, where she lived with her mother Nazia and sisters Tahmina, Ruby and Saphina Alimi. They all spoke Farsi and limited English.

During their visit the next day, Bruce and the missions team learned why the Alimi family had fled Afghanistan. After the Taliban killed Nazia's husband, his brother wanted to force Nazia to marry him and intended to make money by selling her daughters as brides for older Afghan men. Now the Alimis lived in constant fear that Turkiye might deport them back.

The team shared the Good News with them, focusing on how Jesus showed loving grace to women. After the entire family prayed to accept Christ, they said this was the happiest they'd been in years. They showed their joy by singing, dancing and praising the Lord with the team!

Back at home, Bruce had sporadic contact with the family through WhatsApp. He tried to help them from a distance, giving their names to missionaries heading to Turkiye, trying to find a church there, and praying regularly that they could find a permanent home in a more accepting country. He knew the odds were against them.

Then recently, a miracle! The United Nations relocated the Alimis to California. And if that wasn't amazing enough, Bruce learned this just as Pastor Kevin and MariAnne Dibbley were headed to California. They were able to meet with and encourage the Alimi family in person.



Above: Bruce Eaton (center) and missionary Socrates Angud met the Alimi family on a trip to Turkiye in 2021. Below: Now living in California, the Alimi family — Tahmina, Nazia, Ruby, Ruzia, and Saphina (not pictured) — recently hosted Pastor Kevin and MariAnne for this traditional home-cooked meal.



The family still faces difficulties hunting for jobs, improving their English, and adjusting to life in America. But their future is much brighter now, thanks to God's miraculous intervention and answers to prayer. ♦

Karen Kowalke and her family started attending Waterbrooke in 2000, and for the past 15 years, she's handled finance and human resources for the church. She enjoys hiking at their Black Hills cabin, reading, and improving her rusty French.

Mission Update from De La Vegas in Honduras

Hi, dear Waterbrooke family!

We are so thankful to God for you all and miss you very much. We look forward to seeing you soon...

There has been so much going on, and we can truly feel your prayers. Your encouragement to our family and friendship has been such a gift of God, more than you know! We can't wait to be in fellowship with you again... We thank God for you and love you all. Thank you for your prayers.

Lauren, Diego, Ellie, Joaqui and Rowy

Here are some specific praises and requests:

- Praise that the family is doing well.
- Praise that circumstances and environment allow their family to be together and enjoy the Lord together.



Joaqui, Ellie, Lauren, Rowy and Diego De La Vega

- Pray that the De La Vegas continue to foster a grace-filled environment in their home and at their new church, *Gracia Soberana*.
- Pray for the gospel to spread as they host a women's group and guys' nights.
- Pray for Diego's new ice cream business *UnCono*, that it would grow and open more doors for ministry and serving at church.
- Pray for the De La Vega kids to know Jesus personally and love Him with their full hearts, and pray He shows them His mighty grace and love. ♦

Multilingual Singing Unites the Church

By Pastor Gabe Zepeda

Have you noticed that at Waterbrooke we sing praises to God in more than one language? Sometimes we sing in Spanish, Italian, French, Korean, Hebrew, Arabic, Swahili, and Portuguese. As a worship pastor who is Latino, I greatly enjoy singing worship songs in multiple languages. But one question I often get is, "Why do we sing worship songs in multiple languages if the main language we speak is English?" Another objection I hear is, "Why do we sing in multiple languages? Isn't that something that only applies to bilingual or trilingual churches?" I appreciate those honest questions, but I would even take the question a step further: Should we sing praises to God in multiple languages when we gather for corporate worship on Sundays?

Yes! We should praise God in many languages when we gather for corporate worship on Sundays. One of the main reasons for this is because multilingual worship cultivates reconciliation.

Sin separates us from God (Genesis 3). And as the story of Babel reveals, sin also separates us from one another culturally and linguistically (Genesis 11). But the gospel has the power not only to reconcile us to

God, but also to one another. When the Spirit fell at Pentecost, and Christ's first Jewish disciples burst out in various tongues understandable to the different ethnicities around them, God was reconciling all peoples to Himself. Pentecost in Acts 2 is the reversal of Babel in Genesis 11. Christ came to break down every wall of hostility that divides us culturally and ethnically. He did this by making peace through the blood of His cross (Ephesians 2:14–16).

Through Christ, the church is one multiethnic family reconciled to God and to one another. Therefore, our corporate worship should reflect the diversity and multiethnicity of the body of Christ. We should sing worship songs in many languages because the church is multiethnic and multilingual. In doing so, we declare that we are not divided by cultural or ethnic differences, and we celebrate the unity and diversity of the church, which was bought by Christ's blood at the cross. ♦

Editor's note: This is the first in series about multilingual singing. Catch our next issue for more reasons to sing in other languages.

Gabe Zepeda is Waterbrooke's Pastor for Worship and Gospel Formation. He and his wife Rebekah have four children: Gabriella, Micah, Aletheia, and Zion.

Gospel Hope Reaches Detroit Community

By Diana Barto

Sliding into a chair at the coffee shop as rays of sunshine pour through the front window behind her, 16-year-old Savannah Blohowiak is beaming. Currently a student at Southwest Christian High School, Savannah is full of life as she describes the three-day mission trip she took in March.

With a team of nine fellow SWCHS students and three adult chaperones, Savannah flew to Detroit, MI, leaving her phone, her family and her comfort zone back home in Victoria.

This is the first team from SWCHS to partner with Detroit's Mack Avenue Community Church (MACC) and MACC Development, which are working to transform the Mack Avenue neighborhood spiritually and physically.

Savannah, who has been at Waterbrooke since she was 7, says she felt the Holy Spirit prompting her to go on this trip, to "be weird for Jesus," and to help reach those who need Jesus in this neighborhood that has been devastated by crime, violence and poverty.

MACC is improving the quality of life in this area by creating safe, clean community spaces, including



Savannah sits on top of a machine in a new laundromat MACC Development built to help revitalize part of Detroit.

a laundromat and a café. As part of that revitalization work, Savannah's team got their hands dirty. They did some demolition and clean-up work at an abandoned grocery store where illegal drug dealing had become a problem. They also cleaned out a deserted apartment and then did some yardwork at a local pastor's house.

Most memorable for Savannah is the time she spent bonding with the friendly people at MACC, enjoying their unique personalities and seeing their passion for Jesus.

"They are on fire for Jesus!" she says.

Other highlights of the trip were the talent show MACC put on for local residents and the "transportation challenge." She and one half of the team had to navigate the public bus system to go buy groceries for the group's lunch while the other half walked to find breakfast food for everyone.

The trip taught Savannah about God's faithfulness, His forgiveness, and just how far He goes to reach the broken. The people in this part of Detroit are more open to getting to know the Lord, she says, because of all the brokenness there.

"They are looking for hope," Savannah says.

The trip also inspired her to be bolder and more confident in her faith and to shine light in her own community. What's more, she says she'd love to go on another mission trip, especially one with the Waterbrooke youth.

Savannah encourages her church family at Waterbrooke to take advantage of missions opportunities.

"Go!" Savannah says. "Be uncomfortable!" ♦



Savannah (top left) and the team from SWCHS helped clean up an abandoned grocery store in a Detroit neighborhood that's being transformed.

Diana Barto is married to Michael and serves Waterbrooke as editor of *Edify*. When she isn't baking or visiting their two daughters at college, Diana enjoys tea parties, flower photography and theater outings.

Missionary Care: 5 Ways to Support Well

By Linnea Barto

Here are five practical ways we can encourage and lovingly support our missionaries.

1. Pray for Them and Their Work

This may seem elementary, but the most important thing a church can do to serve their missionaries is to be faithful in prayer for them. Paul, writing his letter to the church in Rome, pleads for the church to pray for him, saying, “I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf...” (Romans 15:30).

As a missionary to Peru and training leader for Mission to the World, Laura Dougherty encourages her readers to pray for the sent ones. She suggests setting up times for small groups, Sunday school classes, or entire congregations to pray with missionaries via a video call. Churches can organize prayer chains. And a pastor can encourage families to pray together for a specific missionary family every day. No matter how it's organized, regular prayer for missionaries is a vital aspect of how the church is called to love the missionaries they send out.

2. Listen and Reach Out

A second way to serve missionaries is to communicate with them while they're on the field. People in the church can reach out over social media, email or WhatsApp and let missionaries know they're praying for them. In addition, many missionaries have online prayer letters they send out on a regular basis with specific prayer needs and updates on their life and ministry. Senders can respond to these to let missionaries know they're praying.

Resonate Global Missions encourages believers to “make an effort to read your missionary's prayer letters. It will give you a better idea of their work and how you can pray for them.” What's more, they encourage responding to missionaries' update letters: “Even just one or two sentences of encouragement will let your missionary know you care about them and are praying for them.”

3. Ask Questions

Similar to the point above, another way to love missionaries is to ask them questions. As a missionary to Malawi who has come back to live in the states, Catherine Allison writes, “Curiosity



Waterbrooke's missionary to Italy, Karise Pagano (center), meets with Linnea Barto (left), who is a member of her Barnabas Team, and Abbey Hubin (right), who will be interning at the Alba Safe House this summer in Italy.

communicates interest, and interest communicates care.” A way to care for missionaries is to be truly interested in them, their lives, and their work. Christians should take the step outside of their comfort zone to approach someone who lives in a different culture, country and sometimes even continent for the sake of the gospel.

What should senders ask about? It depends on the missionary and region, but believers can ask about the missionary's life, how the culture is different, what they miss when they're overseas, and what their day-to-day work looks like, among many other things. They can ask for stories about the people missionaries are ministering to overseas, but senders also should be careful not to expect adventure stories from every missionary. Sometimes spreading the gospel in a different land looks more like doing administrative work for a parachurch ministry than a swashbuckling rescue mission. No matter what it looks like, Christians can be genuinely interested and thankful for missionaries' faithful work overseas.

Allison says, “Most missionaries I know desperately want to talk and share, but won't bring it up themselves. Most just need somebody to listen to

their experiences, their stories, their struggles, and the beauty of their lives overseas. Be that somebody.” Especially when missionaries are back from the field on furlough or for a trip, it’s encouraging when people come up to them and want to know what they do, how they do it, and what they’ve learned. Not only is this a part of communicating that missionaries are loved and welcomed, it’s also fascinating and inspiring for the believers at home who are asking questions and learning about how God is working in another place.

4. Create Teams to Encourage

Because missionaries face so much spiritual warfare and are often rather isolated, they need extra encouragement. This can be hard to get when they’re in a country that doesn’t have many (if any) churches or when the church in their country is unhealthy. Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis has addressed this problem in a unique and effective way by creating Barnabas Teams.

A Barnabas Team is a small group of people who gather to pray for, encourage and serve a missionary or missionary family to the best of their abilities. These committed senders seek to support and encourage their missionary by helping to meet needs that are physical, emotional, and spiritual. The Barnabas Team “is a group of people with whom the global partner can be open and honest, allowing

What is a Barnabas Team? And Who’s Barnabas?

- A Barnabas Team is a group of six to 12 senders who support and encourage a specific missionary or missionary family by helping to meet needs that are physical, emotional and spiritual. This is a group of people with whom the missionary can be open and honest, allowing them to see his or her needs and to share in successes and defeats.
- The team gets its name from Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus, who was part of the early church. His real name was Joseph, but he was nicknamed Barnabas, which means “Son of Encouragement” because of how he lovingly supported the Apostle Paul. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. Read more about him, Paul and the first missionary journeys in the book of Acts. ♦

them to see his or her needs and to share in successes and defeats.” And Dougherty, outlining a similar idea, says, “Assigning this group to regularly call, text, respond to prayer letters, organize, send care packages, and keep up with missionary’s challenges will provide great moral support and alert the church to specific needs.”

Waterbrooke implements Barnabas Teams to encourage its missionaries in Italy and Honduras. Focusing on one missionary or missionary family enables the team to thoroughly and lovingly care for their sent one without being overwhelmed. It’s more important for a church to send a few missionaries and do it well than for a church to support many missionaries on the surface level only, leaving their missionaries feeling alone and unknown.

5. Honor, Don’t Idolize

It’s easy to assume that since missionaries go to faraway places and see the works of the Lord, they must be super-Christians, people who are extra passionate about the things of God and always walk in step with the Holy Spirit in a way that no Christian who remains at home could ever be, except maybe a pastor. While this sounds odd when written out, it’s a very real perception some people have of missionaries. But the church must be careful not to idolize missionaries. Instead, believers ought to love and care for missionaries as brothers and sisters in Christ who have been called to the ends of the earth.

Allison writes, “The hero worship of missionaries has caused grave damage—to missionaries, to the church, and to missions as a whole. Acknowledge them, yes. Celebrate them, absolutely. Dub them a hero or superstar? Please, no.”

Christians ought to love their missionaries by honoring them instead of idolizing them and expecting them to always be strong.

In addition, many have unrealistic expectations of their missionaries, wanting a headcount for how many have been saved in the last year because of the missionary’s work. Senders need to realize that often, missionaries don’t get to see the fruits of their labors. Instead of wondering whether or not the missionary is doing anything for the kingdom, senders ought to encourage the missionary to be faithful in what he’s been given to do, regardless of whether he ever sees the fruit. ♦

Linnea Barto is a junior at Boyce College/Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, where she is studying strategic communications. When she’s not away at college, you can catch her reading Scripture at Waterbrooke or creating origami butterflies for friends and strangers.

Post-Christian Italy Needs the Gospel

By Diana Barto

Imagine being the only believer in a city of 250,000 people. You attend church just once a month because it's in another city an hour away, and fuel to get there costs \$10/gallon. When you do go, only about 30 believers worship with you. No children or young adults attend the service, which has a sit-and-go mentality and theologically questionable preaching.

It's a dim scenario, lacking adequate encouragement from fellowship and from God's Word. But for believers in Italy, it's common. Healthy evangelical churches that teach the gospel are rare. And for every 250,000 Italian citizens, there's only one evangelical believer.

Dominated by Roman Catholicism, Italy is a valid mission field that needs the gospel, says Karise Pagano, a missionary sent out from Waterbrooke through Entrusted Word Ministries.

"My vision is to see people living in Italy come to know the Lord as their Savior and to grow in their knowledge and understanding of Him. And to see them reach out into their families and communities, sharing Christ and discipling fellow believers," she says.

Italy is an incredible place to visit, but it's a whole different thing to live there as a missionary and challenge Satan in his playground, Karise says. Government corruption, organized crime, and the false teachings of Catholicism make missions work challenging and expensive.

"It's a hard place, a desert, a very post-Christian culture," she says, "But it's worth it for the sake of the gospel!"

Karise has been serving Italy full-time for 11 years. She says God has been faithful in His provision and timing. Living dependently on the Lord and trusting Him to guide her and to provide her housing and



a church in northeastern Italy • photo by Harry J. Burgess

funding isn't easy. At times she's thought, "I don't think I can do this." But then she's seen God work to completely fund her ministry.

"The most profound thing has been watching Him provide, watching Him work behind the scenes – even in the detours, which turn out to be the actual path," she says.

For the last two years Karise has lived in Mantova, where she's been discipling women, helping with a music ministry, and working with Alba Safe House. But this spring she is relocating to better serve Alba, an anti-trafficking and recovery ministry. She looks forward to more stability and less travel, as well as more frequent interaction with the women in recovery and more time with those she serves alongside.

Comforting and grieving with others is a key part of Karise's work and yields the most beautiful moments in her ministry, she says, recalling a time when she cried with a friend who otherwise would have been grieving alone.

"Grief is a big part of my life... It's okay to be a mess and lament," she says, "This is one of the reasons God has me here. ♦