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HERALD

The magazine of
Grace Baptist Mission

A VISION FOR THE GOSPEL IN TOGO



GRACE BAPTIST
MISSION



FROM THE
CHAIRMAN,
TOM FORRYAN

Getting to the root cause

One of the big challenges facing cross-cultural Christian workers in less prosperous countries is money. Not usually that they don't have enough, but that they have so much more than the people around them. Their money could help a child get an education, or a sick relative access healthcare, or a destitute family find somewhere to live. So they do what they can to help. But what if they could throw their energies into fundraising to set up a new school or clinic or housing development? It is a question that presses in on all of us: in a world of famine, war, and natural disasters, what is our most effective contribution to human welfare? Where should we best direct our efforts?

'Federalism' is the biblical doctrine that Adam's choice to reject God was on behalf of all his descendants. Every single human being enters this world sharing in Adam's guilt and under the curse of death because of our first ancestor's sin. Our GBM doctrinal basis reflects this (in clauses 4 and 5), drawing from scripture passages such as Romans 5:12-21: 'Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin' (v.12); 'many died through one man's trespass' (v.15); 'one trespass led to condemnation for all men' (v.18).

In Romans 5 Paul is not trying to persuade us of federalism, but to emphasize the significance of Christ. The question at issue seems to be: 'Can the death of one man really fix everything that is wrong with our world?' When we look at the misery, heartache, and pain that has come

into the world because of the God-imposed curse of death, is the cross of Christ enough to overturn that curse? How does 'that one man Jesus Christ' (v.15) with his 'one act of righteousness' (v.18) measure up to the scale of the manifold and complex challenges we face?

Paul's answer is simple: just as our problem began with one man, so God's remedy depends also on one man. As Adam brought guilt, condemnation, and death for 'all men' who belong to him (v.18), so Christ brings justification and eternal life for 'all men' who now belong to him. These are those who once were under the reign of death (v.17) but who received the free gift of righteousness and now reign in life. As a result of God's surprising intervention (see the three 'how much more' statements of verses 15 to 17) the natural progression of sin to guilt to condemnation to death has been overthrown. As he puts it elsewhere, 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive' (1 Cor. 15:22). Truly, in Christ we have received 'the abundance of grace' (Rom. 5:17)!

We do what we can for the needs of the people around us—however, whether at home or overseas, we never forget that we serve a God who, in Christ, has overturned the root cause of all our hurt and soon will bring it all to an end. So above all we must echo the words of our Master as we hold out the great invitation, 'Come to the feast, for all is now ready.'

GBM exists to help churches support their missionaries worldwide, in ministries of evangelism, church planting, training, compassion and radio



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GBM family news From our churches and our Mission

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Cover: *Naftali, a Togolese sister and translator for Hélène Flanders, listens while Hélène teaches a group of women in Atakpamé, Togo. While many of the women could understand much of the French that Hélène was speaking, Naftali's translation into Ewé allowed them to hear God's word in their heart language—see page 16.*

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Chips for Ships

GBM / OneHundredFold missionary Keith Charlton has been working on an innovative outreach project in partnership with Liverpool port chaplain Chriswin Raj. **Paul Brunning** joined Keith on a visit to meet Chriswin at Liverpool docks, to see something of this unusual but valuable ministry

Mission to seafarers on Merseyside has a long history, but the formation of Maritime Christian Ministries, for whom Chriswin works, dates back to 1998. Chriswin joined MCM as Liverpool port chaplain five years ago, to serve the seafarers that arrive in Liverpool docks, and the other Merseyside docks such as Garston and Eastham. These are vast commercial ports where cargo ships from across the world come in, bringing consignments of cars, clothes, and consumer goods—and whatever else goes into the great metal containers that are piled high on the decks. Ships also bring grain, oil, and other commodities that are so important for our everyday lives. As we looked around the docks, the sheer scale of the ships, the stacks of containers, and the silos of dry produce, was quite overwhelming. We may rarely think about these ships and the seafarers that crew them, but we certainly notice the effects if this global commerce is ever interrupted.

Multinational mission

Chriswin's ministry is to provide the seafarers—mostly men, but with the occasional woman—with pastoral care. He will be a pair of listening ears if they want to unburden themselves of their cares. He helps them with shopping for their everyday needs, and sometimes a rare engine part, bolt or nut that they want for their ships. But Chriswin seeks above all to be a channel of God's grace for them while they are docked on Merseyside.

On a typical cargo ship there will be something like sixteen to twenty-two crew members. They can be a real multinational mix: lots of Russians, Ukrainians, Chinese, Filipinos, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Indians (including many from Chriswin's home state of Tamil Nadu); plus smaller numbers of seafarers from other countries such as Cape Verde, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Greece.



Facing page: The Bunan Star—one of the ships Chriswin visited—at anchor in Liverpool

Top: Liverpool's maritime history is depicted on the side of a waterfront warehouse

Above left: Chriswin and Keith across the Mersey from Liverpool docks

Above right and below: Seafarers on shore in Liverpool





Facing page left: Vast silos store the grain and other dry goods that the ships bring

Left: Liverpool port chaplain Chriswin Raj and his wife Sangeetha

Chips for Ships

But where does Keith Charlton and his OneHundredFold ministry come in? Keith finds and formats gospel material—both evangelistic and discipleship content—that can be stored, distributed, and accessed electronically on microSD cards, or ‘chips’. This can include the Bible in text and audio formats, video and audio sermons, Bible overviews, Bible studies, apologetic material, and much more. Much of this content is evangelistic in character, but some of it is chosen with the aim of building up Christians as well. Keith says, ‘My hope is that people become Christians through hearing God’s word on the chips, and so there’s media on there also to feed them and help them grow as new Christians. So we include a series of videos on how to understand various books of the Bible, about certain words and certain themes in the Bible.’

The chips slot into the recipients’ smartphone, giving them a library of Christian content that they can take with them wherever they go, and access without the need for an internet connection. So far, Keith has produced ‘Chips

for Ships’ with English, Chinese, and Brazilian Portuguese content, but he has plans to add many more languages.

Chriswin takes up the story: ‘When I first started as chaplain with MCM I found that seafarers are increasingly glued to their screens—and so much of what is out there on the internet is evil, harmful, and addictive—all the more if they are struggling with depression or loneliness. I have printed Bibles and other literature, but I began wondering how we could make use of technology to carry the gospel to these seafarers on their mobile phones.

‘That is where OneHundredFold, and Keith, came in. The OneHundredFold chips are packed with gospel material and they don’t need the internet to work. They have their own app that lets you search and use their media. Brother Keith Charlton has filled a gap and has helped to make my ship visiting more efficient and effective as I try to give these seafarers biblically sound, doctrinally sound evangelical resources.’

Brief encounters

Keith’s ‘Chips for Ships’ really do meet a need

for Chriswin. When he visits a ship that has come into dock, his contact with each individual seafarer may be quite brief. He may have half an hour, or an hour or so, with them. He might get to see them for a few days whilst their ship is in the dock, then perhaps never see them again. But he can now leave them a chip that contains an abundance of good material. Chriswin continues, ‘On their journeys across the high seas, they’re able to watch and read and listen to this gospel material that can continue the work that I was able to do face to face when I met them.

‘Seafarers live and work in a very hostile environment. They are stuck with the rest of the crew—strangers that they have never encountered in their life before. If an ordinary seaman does something wrong and this is being abused by an officer, he needs to face this person for the rest of his contract. These men truly need the gospel. They need to know that they’re not alone, that God is watching over all the Earth, and watches over them. They need Christ, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and God’s word to nourish their soul.’

Bread upon the waters

An intriguing verse in Ecclesiastes says, ‘Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days’ (Eccl. 11:1). In its context, this is often understood to refer to diligent labour that brings a reward—and perhaps especially labour for the Lord in spreading the gospel. The application to Keith and Chriswin’s ‘Chips for Ships’ outreach comes easily to mind. As Chriswin places each chip into the hands of a seafarer, he is casting the gospel bread of life upon the waters of the great oceans. ‘It’s a very rare missional opportunity to be a port chaplain’, he adds. ‘I will probably never again see this man or woman that I meet on the ships. If they turn to God, and God in his mercy saves them, I’ll get to see them in glory—but in most cases, not before. So please pray that in some way we will get to see the fruit of our labour. So much has been invested into making chip for ships—so many man-hours, so much talent, and creativity. We want to pray that we’ll be faithful and wise in planting the seed. We give it freely, but we want it to be put to good use.’

...the OneHundredFold chips are packed with gospel material and they don’t need the internet to work...



Find out more about OneHundredFold at 100fold.org

Find out more about Maritime Christian Ministries at mcmuk.com

Watch Paul’s interview with Keith and Chriswin, filmed on the banks of the Mersey, at vimeo.com/1106153840 or scan the QR code.

Lights in darkness— God's love shining in South Africa

For the first time in seven years, GBM was able to run an Envision programme in South Africa. Six young people from six churches around the UK formed a team to serve for four weeks over the summer (the South African midwinter). Team member **Joshua Recalde** shares his impressions of this inspiring experience

'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' These words from John 1:5 have always captured my imagination. The image of a dark room, late in the night, with seemingly no hope of dawn ever coming. And then, a flickering candle, the incarnate Christ, alive and bright, completely invincible to the attacks of the swirling darkness around. As our team were able to witness Christ's work in South Africa, and assist it in some small ways, this verse often came to my mind.



Morning Star children loved to pile on top of the team at the end of the day!

South Africa is a place where—at least to us as visitors—we could see the result of the Fall more clearly than at home. From the staggering inequality, to the road signs advertising free abortions, to the broken family lives and past trauma of some of the children we spent time with, we saw dark sin like a thick, swirling fog.

But amongst it all, like many bright flickering candle flames in the night, were God's people at work—from Morning Star Children's Centre, to Honeyridge Baptist Church, to Thandanani

orphanage. These were the three places where the six members of the GBM Envision Team to South Africa volunteered during our month in the country.

Week 1: Morning Star Children's Centre

Morning Star is a small Christian daycare centre based in Welkom. It serves around a hundred children, mostly from the slums, and all from families affected by HIV/AIDS. We served in the

kitchen, packed vegetables, and served meals for some of the time. But mostly we were with the kids, meeting them on the Morning Star minibuses, teaching them to make peppermint creams, painting faces, supporting pre-school teachers, telling Bible stories, and towards the end of each day functioning as mobile climbing frames and human swings.

This was an exhausting week for all of us, and I know that none of us could have made it to Saturday without a special gift of God's grace. At

the end of most days we would collapse next to a wall in the playground and the children would pile on top of us in a heap.

It was an immense privilege to serve with God's people there, and we were all struck with how full of the Holy Spirit the teachers, administrators, and supporting local pastors all were. Seeing their intense love for God, lived out through a love for each other, and the children, in the face of all the evil and sin surrounding them, was truly inspiring.

Weeks 2-3: HBC at HBC

For the rest of our time in South Africa we were in Johannesburg, and for the middle chunk of the trip we were supporting Honeyridge Baptist Church with their Holiday Bible Club, leading small-group Bible studies with children aged six to thirteen, leading worship, and generally supporting with the setup and performance of the many other activities organized for the children.

Even though most of the children we worked

with at Honeyridge were from less deprived backgrounds than those we met at Morning Star in Welkom, we still saw the darkness of sin. In our small groups (roughly ten children of a particular school grade and sex) we saw what sin, whether from divorced parents or from internal flaws, could do to destroy or seriously damage young lives. And we often struggled to ask questions, and lead the studies, in such a way as would lead them to deal with the gospel personally, at a level past their 'Sunday School understanding' of God.

But God was good, both in giving us strength and energy, as well as wisdom to minister the gospel and connect with the children. And the fellowship of the team of seventy or so helpers of which we formed a part proved another God-given blessing. The light of their love for each other was one that the darkness of all the Evil One's slings and arrows could not overcome.



Ready to go!—the team meeting up at Heathrow. L-R: Alex, Joshua, Simeon, Ashley, Zanny, Josie



Week 4: Thandanani

In our final week we served at Thandanani House of Refuge, the orphanage that the church oversees. This was a more relaxed time than our previous weeks of service. Thandanani functions like one big family, with around twenty children between the ages of four and eighteen, a few house-mums, and one house-dad. While many of the people we worked with come from traumatic backgrounds, they are all normal people. They aren't helpless victims, they are image-bearers of God, with all the unique, individual, and lovely traits of people, as well as all the sin and corruption that comes with this fallen world.

But it did hurt our hearts to hear about some of what they had been through. I can't speak for all the team, but it broke my heart to have to leave so soon. We saw the scars left by the darkness swirling outside the walls

of Thandanani. But far more distinct, and far more powerful, was the light we saw inside its walls. The house-mums, social worker, and the house-dad, clearly love those children. A picture of God's parental love for his own rebellious children.

Besides playing group games, football, reading stories, and serving lunch, we also split every day into two groups. The younger group would listen to a Bible story, while the older group would do a longer Bible study. God blessed both group leaders with wisdom to connect with children and their needs, despite all the challenges.

I can't speak for all six members of the team, but for myself, I know that I saw, as never before in my short eighteen years on this earth, what the burning flame of God's love looks like as it triumphs over a darkness that cannot overcome it.



Faith comes by hearing

When the Lord called **Phil and Heidi Knight** to Koboko in north-west Uganda they had only one project in mind: to help the Keliko tribe to translate the Old Testament into their language. But alongside this, the Lord has given them another opportunity to spread his word

People here are hungry to know what the Bible says (rather more so than in the UK), but their ability to read is limited. So when we heard that solar-powered audio New Testament devices ('Proclaimers') were available in the local languages, we asked the group who produces them—Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH)—about getting a few for our Kakwa neighbours.

Bigger plans

But God had bigger plans. We mentioned our idea to the Keliko translation team and the scheme grew rapidly. The Keliko people are refugees from South Sudan, whose language was

only written down towards the end of the last century. Training people to read is a sizeable part of the translators' job—there is very little point translating the Bible if no one can read it!

Our vision was to have groups of people regularly meeting to listen to God's word in their own language, at the same time as reading along in a printed copy. But how could it be paid for? FCBH provide the Proclaimers and training free of charge, but there is a cost to provide the Bibles, the training venue and accommodation, food and travelling expenses for the trainees. We approached GBM about this, and they gladly met the need from their legacy fund. Praise the Lord!



After listening to a Bible chapter, the groups discuss what they have heard together

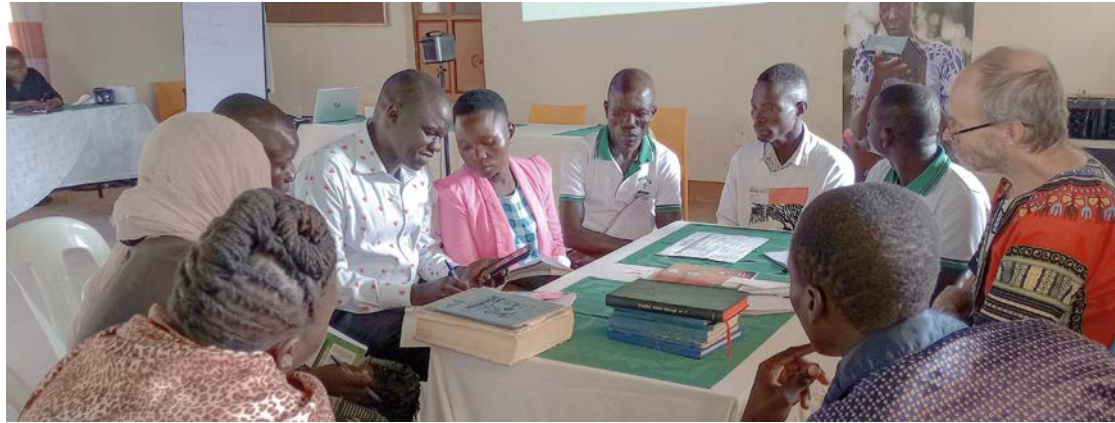
People were invited from every Keliko community in South Sudan, Congo, and the seven refugee camps in Uganda, along with Kakwa speakers from in and around Koboko. In the middle of June, forty-seven delegates arrived, keen to be trained in how to use a Proclaimer, how to set up listening groups, and to train listening group leaders.

Loving the Word

One perceptive trainee asked, 'Can it take three days to learn how to turn on a Proclaimer?' Definitely not—it's as easy as turning on a radio. But without training, experience shows

that the Proclaimers seldom do much good. The workshop was run by Christine Kitui—a born teacher with much wisdom and godliness. Christine highlighted the need for trainees to personally know and love the Word of God, and emphasized the benefits of working with the local church if possible. She recommended that groups should meet regularly at a set time and place, once or twice a week. It is important that the Bible be allowed to speak for itself—starting at Matthew 1 and finishing at Revelation 22—one chapter per session, missing nothing.

Christine's simple plan for each session was to listen to the chapter and then consider three



questions:

What did you hear? No matter how obvious, what went into your ears? Share and discuss. What did you learn? Any insights? Share and discuss. What are you going to do about it? Share and discuss.

New discoveries

As we practised leading group sessions it was exciting to hear the testimonies of the trainees as they answered the questions. Just from Matthew chapter 1, people heard things they never knew before that completely changed their understanding of God's word. For example, one woman discovered that Joseph and Mary had no physical relationship until after the birth of Jesus—up until then she had assumed Jesus to have two fathers, God and Joseph!

Another trainee discovered that some of Jesus' ancestors were the sort most families would keep quiet about (Judah/Tamar, Salmon/Rahab, David/Bathsheba). Knowing your ancestors is very important around here, so the genealogy of Jesus and God's complete forgiveness which allowed such people to be in the ancestry of Christ impressed them.

During a second practise session we looked at the story of Legion. One woman already knew the story, and for all her Christian life she had been scared of pigs because Jesus sent the demons into pigs. She believed all

pigs to be descended from those pigs and to be possessed, which is why pigs like mud, are aggressive, and squeal a lot! She feared people who kept pigs, would not eat pork, and told her sisters off whenever they ate it. Having listened carefully to the whole story, she realized that the demon-possessed pigs had all died in the lake. She testified that she was no longer scared of pigs and was determined to apologize to her sisters.

Listening groups

Each of the trainees received a bag containing a Keliko (or Kakwa) Proclaimer and three copies of the written New Testament. It's good to see the stack of New Testaments in our office diminishing and being put into use. The trainees' mission is now to train people to run listening groups among their families, neighbours, and churches. If each of them trains ten leaders and each group consists of ten people, that's 4700 hearing and discussing God's word every week—just from one training workshop!

Reports and testimonies and requests for more Proclaimers will come to us, and we will send them on to FCBH. God willing, this small seed will grow more and more to his glory.

Meanwhile, we are now trained and equipped with Proclaimers, as was our original intention. We hope to train listening group leaders among our neighbours so that both Christians and Muslims can hear and understand God's word.

JOSHUA OLUWAGBEMIGA / UNSPLASH CLÉMENT FALIZE / UNSPLASH MUHAMMADTAHA IBRAHIM / UNSPLASH



Could you lead our Mission?

After twelve years of service as GBM's Mission Director, Daryl Jones is planning to retire during 2026. Mission Council are now seeking the Lord's provision for a new man to take on this role as **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**.

The CEO will be the Mission's executive lead under the direction of the board of trustees (Mission Council), with responsibilities including:

- Presenting and preaching to inspire engagement in cross-cultural mission
- Working with sending churches to provide pastoral and spiritual support of missionaries, including overseas visits
- Leading and supporting Council in considering new missionary candidates
- Bringing spiritual leadership to the staff team
- Ensuring efficient management of GBM's operational and administrative functions

For the full job specification and details of the application process please visit **gbm.org.uk/ceo**

The closing date for applications is **30 November 2025**. All application enquiries should be sent to Council chairman Tom Forryan at **chair@gbm.org.uk**





A vision for the gospel in Togo

At the end of May, **Ian Flanders** returned to Togo, where a small but faithful group of churches are working hard to realize their vision for wider gospel influence in the country

There are few countries in francophone Africa that one can visit with relative ease and safety, but Togo is one of them. I had been there twice previously, in 2016 and 2018, and this time I travelled with my wife H  l  ne and GBM chairman, Tom Forryan. For both, it was their first visit to Africa. Our destination was the provincial town of Atakpam  , located about one hundred miles north of the capital, Lom  .

Hosts and churches

We stayed in a guesthouse run by a Christian, and the accommodation was of a good standard with amenities that many Africans do not possess (running water, WC, fridge, and air conditioning). We were very well looked after by Wijneke Kanri, a Dutch missionary who is married to Alexandre, a Togolese pastor and

one of the key leaders within the 'Grace in Christ Churches of Togo.' This small association comprises around a dozen churches; most located in and around Atakpam  , others in Lom  . These churches have a doctrinal position, ecclesiology, and ethos similar to our own. Sadly, this makes them a scorned minority in a context where many unorthodox and wild ideas predominate, foremost amongst them, the prosperity gospel.

Ministry—Tom and Ian

On my first Sunday, accompanied by H  l  ne, we walked up a steep rocky path to attend a church named Kpatam  , where I preached. Tom worshipped and preached at a more accessible church called Campement. Worship is far more Bible-centred and reverent than in many African



Arriving at Kp  tam   church



Ian and Tom meeting a Togolese pastor



H  l  ne with the Bible club children



Naftali with Ian after the first women's meeting

churches. It starts at 8am and finishes beyond 11am. The first hour is a Sunday School involving interactive Bible study, and then later an hour is given for the sermon (this includes translation from French into Ewé). Traditional French hymns are sung; many have been translated into the local language. There are times for prayer and opportunity is given for people to give testimony of God's goodness.

As well as preaching on the two Sundays, I also taught—with Tom's help—for three evenings during the week. This was to those undertaking a ministry training course, but the sessions were opened for anyone who wanted to attend and around fifteen to twenty were present for each session. We did an overview of three of the Minor Prophets: Jonah, Habakkuk, and Haggai. The teaching on these unfamiliar parts of Scripture was much appreciated.

On the first evening, just as I had finished and a question-and-answer session was underway, a massive thunderstorm erupted with torrential rain pounding on the corrugated iron roof, making it impossible to hear each other speak. This lasted for an hour and a half before conditions improved enough for people to return home. Most had walked or arrived by 'Zed' (taxi-moped).

Memorable moments

Hélène and Tom returned to the UK after a week, but I stayed on for a few extra days and had the opportunity to make a few visits, of which I want to share the following highlights.

I was taken to visit a lady—a long-standing member of the church. When I arrived, she sent word to all her neighbours, inviting them to hear a visitor announce the gospel. A few minutes later her modest courtyard was filled with around twenty children, teenagers, and women

and I was able to give an impromptu message from the parable of the lost sheep in Luke's Gospel. This was followed by some discussion around a couple of questions and comments raised.

One evening I visited a rural church and ate with two pastors and their families. We had a good and insightful time of fellowship, and their story reflects something of the vision of the churches and the context they find themselves in. The two men originally attended Pentecostal congregations but enrolled on the ministry training programme run by the Grace in Christ churches. During this time, they came to an understanding of sound doctrine, and they started to teach this in their home churches. However, this was not well received, and they ended up being ejected from them. Yet today, both are faithfully persevering as pastors in small village churches where life is not easy and the challenges great.

Ministry—Hélène

Hélène had been longing to visit Africa for many years, and she really enjoyed her time there. She had the opportunity to run two afternoon Bible clubs for children. Thirty or so attended, and they were thrilled to participate in all the activities that Hélène had prepared—they do not usually get visual aids or craft work, so this was a special time for them. Pray that the spiritual lessons would be as memorable as the occasion. Hélène remarked that the children were wonderfully well behaved and a delight to teach.

Hélène also led two afternoon women's meetings, and these were well received and appreciated. She taught one session on the life of Joseph and another on Elijah. The young woman who translated Hélène from French into the local language has requested to receive our



On the Tyrannus Project building site

booklets and has the desire to also learn how to teach women. The meetings concluded with the women singing and dancing and Hélène enjoyed participating in this.

Tyrannus Project

This small group of churches is undertaking an ambitious construction project conceived with a view to facilitating the spread of sound biblical and doctrinal teaching throughout Togo and beyond. The Tyrannus Project involves three stages. The first, which is well underway, is to build a Christian conference centre. The second will be to add an on-demand print facility to the complex, and this will make available and encourage the dissemination of good Christian books to the region. We will give them permission to print our *Espérance Aujourd'hui*

booklets and this will provide an additional outlet for our written resources in this part of the world. The third stage will be the opening of a fully-fledged Bible training institute designed to prepare men, from all denominations, for pastoral ministry.

The Lord has been providing for this project in remarkable ways and at present one of their main prayer requests is that the right people be found to fill key positions such as the manager of the print facility and the director of the Bible institute.

Radio

Our radio ministry, *Espérance Aujourd'hui*, has never had a huge presence in Togo but I took along a few memory sticks containing all our radio programmes—just in case! Providentially,



The possibility arose to place EA on a radio station in Atakpamé

an unexpected opportunity arose to meet the Togolese director of operations for an American mission in Togo, and we learned that they run two radio stations. We gave him a couple of memory sticks, and he said he would place them with the radio stations. Do pray that this would happen.

Then we had discussions with some of the Grace in Christ pastors about getting our programmes placed on a commercial radio station in Atakpamé that has a wide reach. We left a memory stick with the pastors, and they will discuss the matter and approach the radio station. One issue that concerns them is that many Pentecostal pastors from the town already have prime time spots on the radio station but sadly just seem to use the time to run each other down. Pray for wisdom to know whether

it would be beneficial or counter-productive to air our programmes in such a context, especially as the airing time would need to be paid for.

As is the case when I visit Africa, I feel that I have gained as much as I have given. It was encouraging to see the level of commitment to God's word and church life by so many of these believers. It was stirring to see their dedication to bringing about the vision for wider gospel influence that the Lord has laid upon their hearts. It was humbling to see their devotion and faithfulness to Christ in a context where many are poor and where the safety nets we depend upon when misfortune strikes are virtually non-existent. However, they rely upon the Lord, in prayerful trust and hope, and upon each other, in brotherly love.



A time for giving thanks

After more than forty years' service in Colombia, **Theo and Sonja Donner** have reached an important milestone in their lives. Some things are changing as a result but much else will continue

This is a time for giving thanks. Our relationship with our sending church, Eden Baptist Church in Cambridge, and with GBM changed in July—which makes this an occasion to thank all those who have so generously supported us over the years in our ministry in Colombia, ever since we were commissioned at Eden in the summer of 1982. With Theo having turned seventy, we have become 'associate missionaries' with GBM and our status as international workers with Eden also changes.

But our ministry in Colombia is not changing. Theo continues teaching at the Biblical Seminary of Colombia here in Medellín, and attending to all the other commitments that come his way. We hope that you will continue to pray for us as we seek to serve the Lord in this country. We plan to be in the UK in October, including at Annual Mission Day in London when we will share something of God's faithfulness over the years. It has been some journey!

Life in the Seminary

This year started with two new courses at the Seminary for Theo: 'Historical Theology' in the master's in Biblical Interpretation, and 'The Study of the Old Testament' for a new master's in Christian Ministry. This new programme is for people in ministry who have a prior university degree, but no degree in theology. It is still awaiting approval from the Ministry of Education. Initially, the Seminary was informed that the Ministry had turned down the application for accreditation, apparently because they could not see how one could combine students present in person with students connected by Zoom. The Seminary was given an opportunity to appeal the decision and, so far, we have not heard back from the Ministry. In fact, of course, the Seminary has been using the system (students present in person and students connected by Zoom) for years already in the existing master's in Biblical Interpretation but, after the experience of this last semester, I agree that it is a major challenge.



It remains difficult for students and prospective students to raise the funds needed to study at the Seminary, so flexible and online options are important. Nevertheless, under God's blessing, the number of students and professors is growing—but there is still a need for more professors, including what we might call 'missionary professors' who are willing to serve the Church by training future leaders here in Colombia. Please pray that the Lord would send the people of his choosing.

Writing and teaching

During the second semester, the familiar courses on Torah and Paul are back on the menu. At the end of July Theo participated in the Seminary's commemoration of the anniversary of the Council of Nicea (in 325). In November, Theo hopes to spend a week in Peru (Huánuco) speaking to some 150 pastors on the challenge of the Old Testament.

Since last year, Theo has also been working on converting last year's talks 'In Search of Historical Israel' into a book. We hope that this book will be published shortly. (The original recordings are available on YouTube—in Spanish—if you search for 'En busca del Israel histórico'.)

For some years now, Theo has met once a week (at 6am) with a group of friends eager to study the Bible. From the start we have been recording these meetings on video for anyone who is unable to attend for whatever reason. We have now started uploading these videos to YouTube. We are starting the study of Romans and would much appreciate your prayers for this new venture.

Colombian life

Sonja has been attending to a house full of grandchildren over the summer, assisted by Saskia's daughter, Grace, who came to join them from the other side of Medellín. Grace goes about with them to translate when necessary and to shepherd them through the pitfalls of Colombian life and culture. One of Sonja's highlights from outside of family life is the ladies' prayer group, which continues to be a source of inspiration.

Colombia is moving into an election year (a new president should be taking office in August of 2026) and certain elements in the country seem eager to stir up trouble. One 'pre-candidate' was shot earlier this year; he survived for two months but died in August. The teenager who fired the gun is in custody (most unusual by Colombian standards). The left-wing president we have right now (a one-time guerrillero), has not been able to carry out as much of his agenda as some of us had hoped, but neither has he done the damage that many others expected. Colombia appears relatively untouched by the turmoil that is changing 'the world as we know it' everywhere else. The other challenges of life here continue to affect society—including gang activity, occasional earth tremors, and this year a long rainy season that caused landslides and damage to harvests. Yet we can look back through our years here and give thanks to our faithful God who has supported and encouraged us so much.



DISCOVERING LAMENT

GBM's *Serving Today* radio programme brings clear, faithful, and practical Bible teaching to pastors and church leaders in the majority world. Andrew



Cook recently recorded a series with **David Couchman** on the subject of lament. In this article, taken from the introductory episode to the series, David asks why we need to discover lament

In this series of *Serving Today* programmes we're going to be looking at how we can help the people we serve come to terms with loss, grief, and suffering in their lives. This doesn't sound like a very cheerful subject! It doesn't sound like something we want to think about or talk about! And yet we can't avoid the reality of grief.

We live in a sad and sorry world, a world messed up by sin and suffering. There's the distress caused by the evil actions of people, such as wars and pollution. Then there are natural disasters—epidemics, earthquakes, floods, and famines. These aren't caused by wicked people. They seem to 'just happen', without any reason.

Our personal worlds are torn by griefs too—the breakdown of our relationships, serious illnesses, and losing the people who matter to us. For the follower of Jesus Christ, grief is often made worse when God seems so distant and silent. We're bombarded by doubts and questions, fears and anxieties. We need to discover how to handle our grief well—how to lament. To lament means to express our grief and distress.

For the follower of Jesus Christ, it means expressing our grief and distress to God. It can include complaining to God, or asking God questions about our situation: 'Why, Lord?'—Why this? Why me? Why now? 'How long, Lord?' and 'Where are you, Lord?'

Lament grows out of the tension between what we believe (that God is good) and what we experience in our lives (pain and loss). If we didn't experience the loss and pain, we wouldn't need to lament, and if we didn't believe that God is good, there wouldn't be any point in lamenting.

Now we may think that it's wrong to complain to God or to question God like this. But the Bible includes a lot of lament. It seems that God can take it, and God wants us to bring our grief and distress to him.

One reason why we need to discover how to lament today is that our Christian experiences—for example the songs we sing, the sermons we listen to (or preach), and the books we read—haven't equipped us to handle our grief well.

It can sometimes seem as if there isn't any place in our churches for people who are suffering loss, grief, and pain—for us to acknowledge what we're feeling and how it's affecting us spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and even physically. It's almost as if we think it's sinful to complain to God, or to question God's ways.



The church sometimes seems to encourage a kind of dishonesty in those who are grieving. It wants us to plaster a smile on our faces and say that everything's all right—even when our hearts are breaking.

And yet... and yet... the Bible has a huge amount to say about lament. The 'go-to' places in the Old Testament are the books of Job and the Psalms. There's even a whole book called Lamentations. When did you last hear anyone preach a sermon from it?

So we all go through grief, loss, and pain, but our Christian experience hasn't prepared us to handle it. Lament is there in the Bible, but missing from our Christian experience, and there isn't any room for it in our churches. Something's gone wrong. As we go on with this series, we'll explore how we can re-discover biblical lament,

and how we can help the people we serve when they're grieving and distressed.

The 'Discovering Lament' series on *Serving Today* will be airing on TWR Africa from mid-December onwards.

Those of us in the UK, and elsewhere, can still listen to the series via our podcast—search '**GBM Media Podcast**' on your preferred podcast app, or access the podcast feed via the GBM website. The series is scheduled to go out on the podcast from early December.

The series is based on David Couchman's book *Discovering Lament: Bringing Our Grief to God*, which is available from Amazon as a paperback or Kindle e-book.



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GBM FAMILY NEWS

From our churches and our Mission



Trevor Condry (1947-2025)

On 19 August, former GBM chairman Trevor Condry was called home to be with the Lord. Trevor served with enthusiasm, insight, and commitment on Mission Council from 2006 until he stepped down last year. During this tenure he was chairman for five years from 2010.

Trevor's loss will be keenly felt in the church at Southport, in the wider GBM family, and, above all, by Trevor's wife Bertha and the family. Please pray that they will know the Lord's comfort and strength.

Grace Church Didcot—a day to rejoice!

Saturday, 24 May was a day of rejoicing for us, as friends from Hanney and Abingdon, as well as Suffolk, Kent, and Warwickshire all packed out our hall for our Constituting service. Mark Fisher from Hanney led the first part of the service, Ian Flanders and Jim were set apart as elders, and two men were recognized as deacons. Fifteen of us stood to read the church covenant, and then together, moving down the row, we all gave the right hand of fellowship to each other! Chris Hawthorne prayed for us, and then Mark Fisher preached from 2 Thessalonians 2-3, exhorting us to stand firm and hold fast to the gospel, trusting that the Lord who has led us this far will always prove faithful.

It was a day to testify to God's



grace, and to rejoice that among us were at least four people who had become Christians through the church's witness. Several who had been with us in the early stages came back to share our rejoicing.

As we look back, we can only say this is God's doing, which gives us hope as we look to see what he does among us in the future, and to seek him more earnestly in prayer.

Jim Sayers

Church news snippets

Grace Baptist Church Wood Green, supported by Grace Baptist Partnership, have been planting a new church in Enfield Lock. Earlier in the summer it was constituted as **Grace Church Enfield Lock**, and a special thanksgiving service was held on 23 August. Pray for them as they now independently pursue recognizing elders and increasingly take charge of the practical and administrative aspects of church life.

Hope Church, Gravesend are planning a Recognition and Welcome Service for their new pastor, GBM chairman Tom Forryan, on Saturday, 13 September. All are warmly

invited to join them for this day of thanksgiving to the Lord.

Mount Road Baptist Church, Hinckley, are thankful to have called Chris Hill as pastor. He commenced his ministry at the church in July, and an induction service is planned for Saturday, 6 September.

West Hill Baptist Church, Wandsworth are also rejoicing in the Lord's provision of a new pastor, Ben Wighton. They will hold a welcome service for Ben and his family during the afternoon of Sunday, 28 September.

Women of Grace and Guts

Julia Jones has been researching and writing on the lives and ministries of some of the early SBM/GBM missionary women in India. Those of us at our Athelington camp this summer have had a preview of one story, that of Winifred Booth, who laboured to bring the gospel to many 'zenana' women—living effectively as prisoners in their own homes. The fruit of Julia's work is the new book,





Women of Grace and Guts, to be published by DayOne later this year. We hope to have copies available at Annual Mission Day at the reduced price of £6; if you would like to reserve a copy

to collect then email daryljonas@gbm.org.uk (postage will need to be added for any copies sent out afterwards). All royalties will be used to buy books for pastors in the developing world.



Athelington Family Camp

More than 160 people were with us for our biennial Athelington Family Camp in August. We were blessed by James Hammond's clear, engaging, and helpful ministry from Judges (search 'GBM Media Podcast' to hear the

recordings). Our evening mission meetings took us to Uganda, France, Kenya, Nigeria, Poland, the UK, and South Africa, and the mostly dry weather allowed plenty of opportunity for fellowship, fun, and games!

GBM ANNUAL
MISSION
DAY 2025



MISSION
yesterday, today
and tomorrow

When Jesus gave his Church the Great Commission, he promised to be with us 'always, to the end of the age' (Matthew 28:20). That's how long the Church's mission will last—2000 years and counting!

GBM's history stretches back for only 164 of those years. But by God's grace, we trust that there is more to come. At **Annual Mission Day 2025** we will be looking back at some of the things the Lord has done through GBM, and looking forward in hope and expectation.

Please join us on **Saturday, 25 October 2025** to be encouraged and challenged. Hear how past mission is bearing fruit, how today's missionaries continue to labour faithfully, and how future needs call us to remain in the task. This is mission yesterday, today and tomorrow. Choose from a programme of missionary presentations throughout the day, meet the exhibitors, and gather to worship together with Christians from many churches.

God willing, we will be joined by **Theo and Sonja Donner, Nathan and Urpha Javed, Daniel Caballero, Andrzej Kempczyński**, the **GBM Radio Team**, friends from **Serbia, Central Asia, India**, and more.

PROGRAMME

11:00am – 12:30pm	AGM for Church Delegates
11:00am – 2:45pm	Choice of missionary presentations
2:00 – 4:00pm	Let's Go! Mission Club for primary-aged children
3:00 – 3:45pm	India—Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow
4:45 – 6:00pm	Closing meeting with worship and ministry. Preacher: Ray Evans

VENUE

Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ.

Friends House is opposite Euston Station and is a ten-minute walk from Kings Cross and St Pancras stations. The nearest underground station is Euston Square.

FOOD & DRINK

The Friends House café will be open, and there are many nearby outlets where you can buy food. Alternatively, you may bring a packed lunch.

LIVESTREAM

The plenary sessions from 3:00 – 6:00pm will be livestreamed (but **not** the AGM or missionary presentations). Register for online access at gbm.org.uk/amd



Grace Baptist Mission CIO, 12 Abbey Close, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 3JD

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MISSION

yesterday, today and tomorrow



Join us for

GBM ANNUAL MISSION DAY 2025

Saturday, 25 October 2025

11:00am - 6:00pm

gbm.org.uk/amd



Preacher: Ray Evans

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