

mission:world

NEWS

CO:MISSIONED: IN AND THROUGH THE CHURCH

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The mission of Christ is the focal point of the New Testament. It is interesting to watch as a group of unknown tax collectors and fishermen “turn the world upside down” in obedience to the mission of Christ. The book of Acts covers thirty-three years, and in that timeframe the gospel advanced from Jerusalem to Rome, Paul and his missionary teams started over twenty churches, and those churches started other churches. Almost every New Testament epistle is a letter back to a brand new church or to someone who was leading a brand new church. Hence, the opening line of this paragraph would be better stated as follows: The mission of Christ, in and through the church, is the focal point of the New Testament.

Mission: To fulfill God’s mission by sending and partnering to share God’s story, make disciple makers, and start churches that multiply among the nations.

The word commission has a few synonyms such as assignment, duty, responsibility, mandate, etc. Before we analyze the meaning of being CO:MISSIONED, perhaps the first step is to come to grips with the fact that, as followers of Christ, we have been “missioned.” A God of mission could only produce and expect a people of mission. We have a God-given mission!

Looking in the familiar passage that we refer to as the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, we gain more insight to the importance of being CO:MISSIONED with emphasis on the fact that this commission is not of our origins, desires, or abilities. It is indeed a CO:MISSION with the colon communicating that this is from another and not our own invention.

Vision: To see every partner church around the world engaged in the process of starting a church.

In verse 18, Christ affirms that “all authority” has been given to him in heaven and on earth. The eternal God/resurrected Savior has inherent (it belongs to him by nature) authority because he is God. In verse 19, he then commands us to go and make disciples of all nations, and our authority is inherited from Christ—it is not our own. What a great encouragement! We are CO:MISSIONED and our authority is from the God who has ALL authority.

Another aspect of our CO:MISSION is that we have been commanded to make disciples of all peoples by Christ himself. Christ came in fulfillment of a mission; we go in fulfillment of a mission.

The last truth about our CO:MISSION is that we go with Christ. He is always with us, and we do not advance in our own power, but in his.

CO:MISSIONED is indeed to be “missioned” but not by ourselves. We are on a continuing journey with Christ to fulfill his mission. We do that with his authority (from), according to his mandate (by), and through his power (with).

The BMA worldwide family now includes close to 2,000 churches. BMA Global Missions has planted almost 800 churches and is currently planting 450 more! We are church planters! We do believe that “the mission of Christ, in and through the church, is the focal point of the New Testament.”

We are excited about 2023 to see more of the synergistic effect continue in worldwide church planting. Many faithful servants have sown and cultivated over many years in dozens of countries and now God is giving the increase through the multiplication of disciples and churches.

BMA Global Missions mobilizes churches and people to the mission field (send), helps plant churches that plant churches (start), and provides care and support for healthy leaders and churches (support). We are so grateful for the opportunity to partner with your church. Please continue to be faithful as you renew and refresh your church’s commitment to the basics of our CO:MISSION: pray, give, send, and go.

Please pray as BMA Global Missions reaches for new goals in 2023 and beyond. Some of these goals include a significant increase in the number of missionaries we send from our churches over the next ten years, specifically targeting urban areas of the United States for multiple church plants, increasing the number of language groups with church plants from seven to fifteen inside the United States, and assisting churches around the world to achieve maturity and multiplication.

Thank you all again for being faithful in our God-given CO:MISSION that is fulfilled from, by, and with the Lord Jesus Christ.



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CO:MISSIONED IN LATIN AMERICA—CONTINUING THE LEGACY

BY: David Dickson
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The churches and missions of Central America and the Caribbean face unique challenges as they labor to be effective in their evangelistic efforts, church planting, and discipleship of new believers. The region is known for its extreme weather, repressive governments, and poverty level. The BMAA has had a missions presence in this area for an entire generation, but in almost every country American missionaries have handed off leadership responsibilities to national pastors and leaders. As a result, each country has developed its own personalized method to conduct missions efforts in partnership with our association of churches in the United States.

In Nicaragua, churches and missions are prospering in cities and towns scattered around the country, but there is also a renewed effort to reach the more isolated areas of the Atlantic side of the country. Traveling on horseback or in boats down the jungle rivers, people are sharing the gospel and planting new works. Leadership training and Bible instruction is regularly conducted even in the most isolated areas of the country. A recent hurricane dealt a serious blow to the economy, especially on the Atlantic side of the country where crops and homes were devastated. But these strong folks are recovering and forging ahead with efforts to share the Word even in difficult circumstances.

The tiny country of El Salvador is considered one of the most violent countries in Latin America with street gangs holding enormous sway over everyday life and even local government. In spite of that, with strong local leadership, new missions are being planted and established churches are growing. BMAA medical missions has been a positive influence here, as has the shoebox ministry.

The churches and missions among the Garifuna populations in Honduras continue to reach out to other communities of their ethnic group, and a Garifuna language mission was recently established in the Bronx, New York.

In Guatemala, our churches that are concentrated in the capital area are expanding their facilities to accommodate growing congregations.

Costa Rica continues with a well-developed plan to train and send out new missionaries around the country.

In the Caribbean, Puerto Rico is still recovering from yet another hurricane but recently ordained a missionary/pastor and continues to plant new missions on the island.

In each of these countries, the absence of an American missionary has not slowed efforts to fulfill the Great Commission. While it is true that American missionaries have had a significant impact on those efforts—in many cases by pioneering the first works in the country—national

leaders have successfully stepped into leadership roles and assumed responsibilities previously held by American missionaries. And since the primary goal of cross-cultural missionaries is to “work yourself out of a job,” it all adds up to a missions success story!

The role of BMAA Missions has rapidly evolved over the last several years in this region. In the absence of American missionaries, national leaders have accepted the challenge to take ownership of their own missionary vision for their countries. As that vision is clarified, the BMAA has stepped in to encourage and facilitate the realization of each country’s particular vision. We have participated in joint efforts to fund missionaries from their countries that are sent out both locally and internationally. Medical teams have made visits to several areas to address health needs of the least fortunate and raise the profile of our local churches. Periodically, training sessions and Bible classes are conducted throughout the region. Through Lifeword the gospel is being preached in difficult-to-reach areas.

American missionaries are no longer “in charge” in Central America and the Caribbean, but as an association of churches we are providing resources to the men who are “leading the charge” in their respective countries. Many serve in areas where they walk a virtual tightrope to avoid being targeted by the government or violent gangs. All work with extremely limited budgets. They all have asked for our prayers. We should honor that request.



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NEWS

CO:MISSIONED in Europe—*Harvesting* the White but Difficult Fields

BY: Larry Barker

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What develops culturally, even spiritually, in Europe eventually makes its way to North America. In the United States nearly half of adults (48%) describe themselves as both religious and spiritual. That number has grown at an alarming rate from 19% to 27% of those who now say they are spiritual but not religious. Comparing that to Western Europe, 53% of adults say they are neither religious nor spiritual, and that philosophy is growing and spreading at an unprecedented speed.

Yes, the opportunities are plentiful, but the soil is very hard and requires a lot of cultivating because of the post-Christian culture that permeates. One country is the poster child for this sad lack of spirituality: Czech Republic, where missionaries Larry and Tammy Wood work alongside our ChangeMaker Milan Bulak. Almost 90% of Czechs aged 16-29 say they have no religion. Over 70% of the same age group say they never pray and only attend services on very special occasions.

Pray for Czech Republic.

Missions in France (Sean and Kendall Pasley) is very similar, and the reality of living in a secular culture is evident everywhere they look. Because the church has existed on European soil for 2,000 years, we might assume all is well, but the exact opposite is true. The terms that fit France and much of Western Europe are post-Christian culture, post-Christian society, post-Christian ethics, and post-Christian values. This is why our missionaries and ChangeMakers are so important to spread the gospel.

Pray for France.

Portugal's percentages are not as bad as France's or Czech Republic's, but in talking with ChangeMaker Marco Gaspar and other pastors, it is a difficult field where most men feel that going to church is not manly and is for women and children only. The churches there are small but determined to remain faithful to sound doctrine and to their calling no matter how difficult it might become. We recently held a leaders' retreat in Portugal focused on encouragement, and God moved mightily.

Pray for Portugal.

God is moving in both Western and Eastern European countries through the efforts of Larry and Tammy Wood and our ChangeMakers. Please pray for the people there. We hear reports that even though there are severe hardships, they remain resolved and encouraged that the Lord will be with them no matter what happens. We talk about persecution here, but in our much easier lives we really do not understand nor can we relate to the hardships of those living in a war zone.

Pray for Ukraine.

Portugal, France, Czech Republic, Ukraine, and Romania comprise my region. Romania has a very dear place in my heart, after having lived there in 2000 and 2001. With the exception of the COVID year, we have been

making trips there since 1997. Our ChangeMakers are Dani Bagosi and Bogdan Bilav. We have American missionaries, Bryan and Pam Risner and Cristian and Vanessa Martinez (He grew up in Mexico and she is Romanian). We also have two single ladies working in-country: Candra Barnett with the Risners and Sara Filimon (Vanessa Martinez's sister) working with the Martinezes.

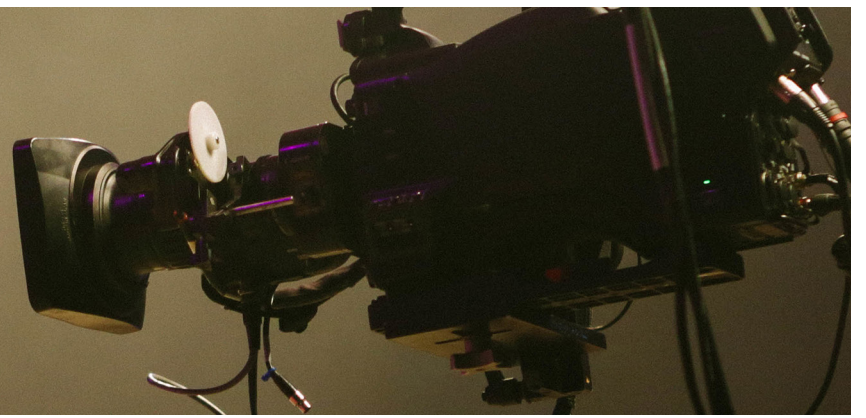
Romania's population is decreasing. A country of 22 million not too long ago, it has decreased to 18 million. In a 98% Orthodox nation the Romanian Baptist Union recently reported that in the last ten years the number of Baptists has decreased from 120,000 members to 90,000. Obviously, Baptists are losing ground in their ability to effectively reach Romania with the gospel. Western Europe is challenged with secularism while Eastern Europeans (Ukraine and Romania) believe they do not need the gospel because they are "Christian" nations. However, their religion is works-based, very ritualistic, and ceremonial.

Pray for Romania.

Yes, the fields are white unto harvest, but they are difficult because people believe, from different perspectives, that they are okay and do not need to change. Pray for our workers there that God will raise up laborers (Luke 10:2), provide their needs (Phil. 4:19), open doors of opportunity (Col. 4:3), and produce fruit that will remain (John 15). Please commit to praying for them and their families that they will remain encouraged and focused on the task God has called them to and placed before them.

Pray for Europe!





A Digital Impact: Proclaiming God's Word and Making Disciples

BY: Donny Parrish
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2023 holds much promise for the ministry Lifeword. Poised to make more global impact through the proclamation of God's Word and the making of disciples than in any time in Lifeword's history, we are setting ambitious ministry goals for the coming year.

These are not academic goals; they are a track on which to run. Our goal is not that Lifeword or the BMA of America can be made famous, but that the name of Jesus might be made known to the world. With those thoughts in mind we offer the following ministry targets for 2023.

Broadcasting

In 2023 Lifeword will seek to increase the number of languages in which we broadcast to 160. Currently, Lifeword offers a gospel presentation in 145 languages around the world. In the past we have measured our success by counting the number of countries impacted by our programming. However, with the advent of internet broadcasting, that matrix is no longer useful. Modern travel and world-wide immigration have allowed countries around the world to become much more diverse in languages spoken by their population. We will broaden our outreach through digital technology and through traditional radio where needed. Our goal will be to speak in the heart language of people around the world through whatever broadcast medium best suits that culture. The addition of 15 new languages will not only increase the number of languages in which we share the gospel, but it will exponentially increase the number of people who can hear and spread the gospel.

Programming

Creating new programming that taps into the interest and draws those who do not know God or are far away from God will be one of Lifeword's top goals for 2023. We will use our expanded television production studios to produce more internet shows to speak the heart language of the viewer. We will use our new podcasting studios to produce new and exciting podcast formats. The goal for every Lifeword production is to take the viewer or listener to the cross of Christ. Using media to cast a wide net through interesting and experiential programming will allow us to speak into different cultures and share with them the Good News of Jesus.

Discipleship

Lifeword will use 2023 to refine and test our new discipleship portal called "Follow." This exciting project invites and equips those who engage with Lifeword programming to become fully-devoted followers of Christ and to connect with a local church. We will also refine our digital discipleship process so BMA church members can use "Follow" as a personal discipleship tool.

Print

Lifeword will continue to expand our efforts to introduce and challenge readers through blog content. We will seek out gifted writers who are faithful to God's Word and compelling in their writing style. Our goal will continue to be to use digital media to ask pertinent life questions and offer answers through the truth of God's Word.

Financial

The best estimates from missiologists are that nearly 3 billion people on earth have never heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. This gives you and us and the ministry of Lifeword a daunting, but exciting task. We will need to increase our financial base to meet this global challenge, but may we never forget: God will fund His ministry.

Lifeword sits in a strategic location at this pivotal point in history to tell the world the story of Jesus. What a joy to take part in this work! Thank you for joining us.

