I did not come to bring peace but a sword... (Matt 10:34)

Mixed in with its core message of love and grace, I am sometimes surprised to recognize the level of violence accompanying the gospel. Although Jesus is making a metaphorical statement in the passage above, the central act of the gospel - the crucifixion of God himself - is rooted in an act of violence unlike any the world has ever seen. Perhaps it is no surprise there is a long history of mayhem connected to the spread of the gospel in the first century - John the Baptist beheaded (Mark 6), Peter and John jailed (Acts 4), Paul beaten, whipped, and shipwrecked (as he eloquently documents in 1 Corinthians 11). As Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 11, serving as a missionary can be a dangerous business!

My observation of missionaries is that they tend to be above average risk-takers. In addition to a deep desire to share the good news of Jesus with people in other parts of the globe, there is also a spirit of adventure that accompanies forays into foreign territory. Much of this adventure is found in the process of learning the ways of a completely new culture - new language, new customs, new neighbors, new rules. But in many places there is also an increased risk of personal safety. This can take the form of a political coup or hitting a pedestrian while driving on a crowded roadway or getting mugged while waiting for a bus. Talk to enough missionaries and you will begin to hear real life stories that make
Be Careful Out There (continued)

your hair stand on end - kidnapings, emergency evacuations, terrorist threats. Scary as they are, incidents such as these should not surprise us. The sharing of the gospel has been associated with violence since its inception.

God has a strong track record for protecting his messengers as evidenced by his numerous rescues in Acts. This, however, does not imply that missionaries should court violence. In fact, it suggests that it is often wise to take extra precautions to avoid harm's way. In this month's issue, we have several short pieces that talk about personal safety while living abroad. The first is an article on the MRN website written by Richard Chowning several years ago. Chowning highlights the need for missionaries to pay attention to security issues, particularly with the increasing trend of moves to creative access countries. This is followed by a brief article by Dottie Schulz on Situational Awareness. Dottie reminds us of the importance of being aware of our surroundings, especially in circumstances that are potentially dangerous. Last, we include two links. The first is a web page on emergency procedures from the US State Department. The primary audience for this site is employees of the State Department, but (as they note) there is useful information here for anyone who lives abroad. Emergency evacuations are not commonplace but they do happen and it is good to be prepared. The second link is from a blog called The Fulfilled Missionary that offers several safety tips for missionaries living in high risk areas. We hope you will find some useful information in this collage of articles.

Years ago my favorite TV show was Hill Street Blues. For those of you old enough to remember (or those who have seen the reruns), the show always began with the morning briefing led by the crusty sergeant who concluded the meeting with the admonition "Be careful out there." We serve a God who stands ready to protect us in our time of need but allow me to echo the words of the sergeants. While sometimes we throw it to the wind, using a bit of caution is often a good idea.

Links:
State Dept [http://www.state.gov/www/flo/paper10.html]
The Fulfilled Missionary [http://fulfilledmissionary.com/2011/01/30/seven-safety-measures-for-missionaries-in-these-days-of-uprisings/]

Situational Awareness

Dottie Schulz
MRN Director for Missionary Care

This week, I read that the Netherlands has raised their alert level for terrorist attacks to "substantial." This concerns me as my daughter and her family live in the Netherlands. I remember going through security at an airport and thinking, "My! Security seems to be lax here," only to return 14 days later and almost miss my flight because security was so tight. The level of threat had been raised from yellow to red within that short amount of time. We are all aware of security issues these days.

A missions' most valued resource is her people—that means YOU! Therefore, one of the top priorities is your safety and security. Missions Resource Network has put together a Security Manual which provides guidelines and security tips. While use of the manual cannot guarantee you will be kept out of harm's way, the information will help you become more aware of things you can do to enhance your safety.
Book Review - The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church by Alan Hirsch


Review by Sam Shewmaker

Alan Hirsch was born into a Jewish family and grew up in South Africa. He came to follow Christ after his family moved to Australia where he became a part of the South Melbourne Church of Christ, later renamed the "South Melbourne Restoration Community." It was from here that Hirsch and his wife planted churches among the marginalized and urban poor of Melbourne. This became the lab in which Hirsch developed the central missional and incarnational principle he refers to as the missional-incarnational impulse.


In The Forgotten Ways, the author begins by recounting the characteristics and growth of some of the historical Christian movements including the early church, the Chinese church of the Twentieth Century, and the Methodist movement. Most of these movements experienced high growth rates even under very adverse conditions. The early church grew from about 20,000 to about 20,000,000 in the two centuries between A.D. 100 - 310. It did this on the move, often persecuted or at least unrecognized, with no buildings, few resources and no professional clergy.

TO CONTINUE READING, CLICK HERE

Missionary Renewal Retreats

For the fifth year in a row, MRN is hosting a retreat for missionaries who are on home assignment or who have returned from the field - in fact, this year we will host two! The first is in Nashville, June 3-7 at Lipscomb University and the second is June 17-22 at the Prothro Conference Center in Lake Texoma, Texas (close to the Dallas/Fort Worth area).

The purpose of each retreat is to offer a time and place for missionaries to gain spiritual refreshment, to share their stories, and to be able to fellowship with other missionaries. The feedback we have gotten from participants in previous years is that this has been a great time of blessing.

The Nashville retreat is a partnership between MRN and Lipscomb. Spiritual renewal will be led by several individuals with the Institute for Christian Spirituality located on the Lipscomb campus, while at Lake Texoma, Tim Woodroof will lead this portion of the retreat. In both cases, staff from MRN will facilitate groups to give missionaries the opportunity to share about their experiences.
Missionary Renewal Retreats (continued)

The cost for the retreat is $50 per person, and is for adults only. Space is limited, so if you would like to register or simply get more information, contact Marti Van Roy (marti.vanroy@mrnet.org). We hope to see you there!

News and Notes

Note: Each month we will let you know about events happening among churches of Christ that are focused on missionary care.

Upcoming Events

- June 17-21, 2013. Missionary Renewal Retreat. Lake Texoma, Texas. Sponsored by MRN. Mark the date!
- July 1, 2013 - Official "First Day on the Job" of Mark Brazle, joining MRN as Co-Director for Missionary Care.

We hope you have enjoyed this issue of The Messenger. Let us know if there are topics you want to see addressed in this monthly newsletter and if you have ideas about ways to make it more useful to you. We'll look forward to hearing from you and to connecting again next month.