

One of the things I love about being a part of the Celebration Congregation, is that we are involved in missions and ministry not only in the New Orleans region, but all around the world. Through supporting missionaries who have come out of our church, missionaries who are strongly connected to our church, and missionaries connected with the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board, we are daily involved in bringing the message and ministry of Jesus to hurting, needy and lost people all around the world.

And the Lord is doing a great work around the world in response to the missions support of our church and many other churches throughout the world. Let me give some examples below.

- Although Europe has been spiritual dead and dry for some time, there are some churches that are involved in the “Cell Church Movement” with us that are thriving and beginning to impact their nations with the Gospel. Also, in Eastern Europe, especially among the nations that were formerly under Communist regimes, there are great churches and ministries that are transforming their regions, nations and governments in great ways.
- Africa is experiencing a great move of God especially in the southern regions (Islam is still strong in northern Africa). Countries like Cameroon, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia, along with other African nations, are seeing people come to Christ in droves. One church in Nigeria has a 60,000 seat worship center, and there are reports in African nations of people being raised from the dead by the power of God. Even in countries like the Sudan, God is using missionaries like our Brett and Cathy Hoelzer, to bring the ministry and message of Jesus to previously unreached people groups.
- In the Middle East and Muslim African nations, the Christian Church is operating primarily underground through Cell groups (like our *Life Groups*). However, scores of people are coming to faith in Christ, which is triggering a backlash from Muslim leaders. The Church, however, always grows and thrives in the face of persecution. Several years ago I said to a pastor from Pakistan, “The Muslims are probably going to kill you.” His response was, “That will only facilitate the spread of the gospel in my nation.”
- In Southern and Southeast Asia, the Christian faith is also making inroads against Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Two of our members are going to one of the Southern Asia countries later on this summer with great hopes and expectations. At the end of June, we will be having with us a pastor from Indonesia, the most populated Muslim country in the world. Although he and his congregation face much persecution, they have over 25,000 people in worship services and cell groups every weekend, as they constantly overcome great challenges to reach people in their hostile culture.
- On the Asian continent in the Far East, Christianity continues to grow substantially, especially in the nations of South Korea (now almost 40% Christian) and in China. South Korea actually has a number of churches that have over 100,000 members, including the largest church in the world, the Full Gospel Yoiddo Church that I have had the privilege of worshipping in. The government of China doesn’t allow Christian missionaries in their country. However, many Christians (including several supported by Celebration Church) come in as teachers, scientists, salesmen, etc., and utilize their evening and weekend hours to win people to Jesus, form small groups, and start House Churches. 28,000 people come to faith in Christ daily in China even in the midst of repression and hostility.
- In Australia, a very secularized nation, Christian churches and ministries are growing. In fact, some of the greatest Christian music and ministry today comes from Australia.

- Latin America is certainly one of the places where God is doing His mightiest work. Virtually every nation in Central and South America is experiencing revival in certain regions as churches are growing, people are being reached (40,000 people per day are coming to faith in Jesus in Latin America, and cities and nations are being impacted. There are Cell Churches in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador and Peru that have well over 100,000 members.

Although Islam continues to grow around the globe and even in the United States, the Christian faith is also growing. 178,000 people a day are coming to faith in Christ around the world. And our prayers, support of missionaries, and church-sponsored missions trips are key to bringing the life-changing gospel of Jesus to hurting, needy and lost people around the world.

This week we have a Missions Team from our Church ministering in Comayagua, Honduras. Led by our St. Bernard Campus Pastor, Craig Ratliff, the team is doing street evangelism, prayer walks, working on a Children's project, ministering in hospitals, schools, prison and 11 churches, and conducting a Leadership Conference for local pastors and church leaders. Please be praying for Pastor Craig, Chase Clunan, Patrick Egan, Miles Guirrerri, Chris and Cindy Meilleur, and our missionaries Terry and Arlene Dupont (Open Eyes Ministries) as they bringing the message and ministry of Jesus to people in the 3rd most poverty stricken nation in the Western hemisphere this week.

Two of my "heroes", Godwall and Ruth Martinez, are missionaries from Celebration who lead a Church in Turrialba, Costa Rica that is impacting a city for the Lord. They moved to Turrialba when Godwall was 73 years of age (I don't know what Ruth's age was because I never ask a lady her age). Godwall had been a mechanic for most of his life, but in his latter years had also served as a deacon and minister for Celebration Church.

When Godwall and Ruth moved to Turrialba, they started a *Life Group* that quickly grew into a small congregation. When they had approximately 80 people meeting in their home, Pastor Godwall called and told me they needed a church building badly (and you can understand why). Within a short time, funds had been raised from our church, generous individuals within our church, other mission ministries and other churches, and a 200 seat worship center and ministry facility was built. Today, at 80+ years of age, Godwall and Ruth Martinez lead a thriving congregation that is impacting a region for the Lord. Their story is a reminder to us that God can powerfully utilize any of us regardless of our age, profession, background, etc.

Once again, let me say how glad I am to be a part of a great Church in New Orleans that is bringing the message and ministry of Jesus to not only the people of our city and region, but all around the world. The hope of our world is all of us continuing to pray, serve and give so that one day all of the people of the world might have the opportunity to experience the presence, power and provision of Jesus in their lives.

Pastor Dennis

P.S. I'm looking forward to seeing all of our Leaders, Assistant Leaders and future Leaders at our *May Leadership Summit* this coming Wednesday, May 27 (6:30 pm in the CCCS Auditorium).