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The ADC Disciple

Anabaptist Disciples of Christ is an affiliation of Conservative Anabaptist churches seeking likeminded fellowship, instruction, and accountability in church administration and congregational life in the Biblical pattern of the Apostolic church.

Business As Missions

by Tim Byler

Editor's note - the following article is an excerpt from a sermon Brother Tim preached at Bethel Fellowship August 14, 2022.

Just outside the backyard at the house we lived, in Indonesia, was a graveyard where all the village babies and little children were buried. And for a small village like ours there was a considerable number of graves there. My wife and daughter Katie were walking home from the beach where Katie had been swimming with the other village kids as they liked to do, and as they were walking past the graveyard that one particular day, Katie asked, "Mommy, all of our neighbors are Muslims, aren't they?" "Yes, they are," replied Eleanor. Katie, while looking at all the little graves, replied, "So that means if their mommies don't become Christians they'll never see their babies again?" Who is going to tell these grieving mommies – daddies – brothers – and sisters so they can be reunited with their babies!?

Friends, that is the burning in my bones! That is the fire in my belly! Who is going to tell these people and literally millions and millions more...about Jesus?!!!

But… it hadn't always been that way for me. In fact, it had never been my dream in my growing up years to go to into missions. I don't recall much being taught about it and I just knew it was not going to be something that I did. I grew up in southern Ontario. As far as I knew, I was going to just grow up, go to the church that my parents attended, get a job, get married and work my whole life, pray that my children would grow up to be upstanding members of the church and then I would grow old and die with my happy loyal family around me. I now can't believe the small dreams I had and the bleak picture that they painted.

But that all changed when I was almost 21 years old. One day Amish Mennonite Aid (AMA) called and wondered if I would like to go to Paraguay and teach school there. I didn't even know where Paraguay was. I had to look it up on map. I didn't know a single soul there. But I was ready for a change in life. And anyway… anyone can survive two years, right?

So I went. And in my two years there, God really got a hold of my heart and changed me. It was during my time there that I knew that someday I would be going into missions again – probably long-term. And it was also there that I met Eleanor. She had actually been born in Paraguay and lived there until the age of 14 when her family moved to Ohio. AMA asked her to teach for 2 years as well and so her term and mine overlapped a year. As our friendship grew and we started dating, I told her that I felt like God was calling me into long-term missions and if she was going to marry me that is what she was getting into.

Very soon after my term of service was over, we got married and started our family in Plain City. And for a number of years we just lived our life. We settled into the routines of married life. I worked and eventually got into business. Life was going well and it was after six to seven years of marriage when I was either getting bored with life or God began nudging us that we began to question if this was all there was to life. Where was the fulfillment? Surely this was all that we were called to do with our lives?

And it was at that time that United Bethel Mennonite Church in Plain City put on a Perspectives course. That course forever changed our lives….

- As we went through the course starting in Genesis all through Bible and up through history till present day…
- As we learned about God's heart for missions all throughout the Bible….
- As we learned about the history of missions…
- **As we learned about tremendous need and the huge task that still remains!**

It was as if we were drinking from a fire hose. Our eyes were opened and we could never unsee what we had seen. We could never unknow what we now knew. But what to do….

Immediately after the course, I along with my brother-in-law began to go to Columbus to witness to Somali refugees. I had to do something until Eleanor and I figured out what God was calling us to. Columbus has approximately 88,000 Somali refugees. While going there and attending different conferences, we met a full time missionary to the refugees in Columbus so we teamed up with him.

About a year after beginning this, Eleanor and I got connected with Pioneers, the sending organization under which we went to Indonesia.

We passed the Bible test and the interviews and I got my GED and did the seminary work. We did the required trainings and we began to raise some support and then the tough part..where in the world to go?!

I had no real life skills apart from business. And we were sold on Business as Missions. And we were holding on to Romans 15:20: "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation." It doesn't take long to realize that if you want to go somewhere where there have never been missionaries and there are no known believers, you are not looking at a country that is just handing out visas to missionaries.

Most countries are open to someone that has a plan and money to invest into their country.

So what could we do? I had no valid degree for a country like that. I had no degree that would get me job and thereby access to a closed country. What could a little guy from Canada do with an eighth grade education - with now a GED and some seminary - who had never done anything in life but grow up on a farm - and then got involved in business? There was one option… go somewhere and start a business. Most countries are open to someone that has a plan and money to invest into their country.

To make a long story short, we felt God calling us to Indonesia. And with Indonesia having the world's largest population of Muslims, it fit right in with what we had been studying for the last few years. And so in 2014 we sold our house and we began preparing in earnest to leave in the fall of 2015.

We finished our trainings and settled on a city in Indonesia – Makassar - to study the language. We applied and got accepted at a university there to study language and culture. We sold many of our household possessions and our vehicles and we left as we were going indefinitely, probably for life. Excited, naïve, not knowing what lay ahead, but we headed our way into the country with a one year visa in hand and Romans 15:20 in our hearts.

We ended up in the huge city of Makassar for eighteen months studying language. Shortly after we arrived there, another family also with Pioneers came and we over time became friends and eventually teammates. During our time of language learning, we did a lot of survey trips. Then one day our area leader told me about two islands out in the middle of nowhere. To get there, it meant taking a flight from our city to another island and from there riding a boat for sixteen hours to get to the destination. He also indicated he would like to make the trip sometime. I was immediately interested and told him if he ever went, I would like to go along. So we planned the trip. From the first time I stepped foot on those islands, I fell in love with them and the people there. And from then on, other survey trips held no meaning to me as those islands became my focus. Eventually both our families went to visit those islands. Eleanor and I were fully committed to making those islands our final destination and then Pete and Linda felt called there as well so we became a team beginning of 2017 and moved there.

What you must realize is that there is no way a foreigner can just move out to those small islands without a reason. Our student visa had run out and we received an extension but we needed to move ahead with a business visa. As we surveyed the islands and listened to the people, we learned that cocoa was a huge crop on the islands. In the past it had been a much bigger cash crop but disease and a lack of care had greatly reduced the crop yields. The prices had fallen significantly because of the unethical dealings of the buyers for the large companies.

After reviewing this information, along with the fact that Pete (our teammate) was also an agriculturalist, we decided to go into the chocolate business. We moved to the island with a registered chocolate business - never having made a pound of chocolate in our lives - two rented houses - and no clue where we would end up building our business.

We decided to start a chocolate business in which we did everything from training the farmers how to manage disease and improve crop production to buying the raw cocoa bean directly from them and processing the beans and sending a finished product off the island. It was a real journey. Starting up a company in a foreign country is bad enough and being involved in food production added a whole ton of red tape issues. The first year was rough. We spent a significant amount of time looking for a building or land to build on. Things don't just happen overnight and with each passing week, suspicion grew. Suspicion from people who didn't know us well, from local authorities and from federal authorities as outwardly it didn't look like much was happening. This caused for stressful visits from 'intelligence officers' and immigrations officers. One particular time, a lengthy interrogation by six immigration officers caused some real stress.

But as time went on, and we began building the factory, small as it was, these visits became friendlier and friendlier and within eighteen months or so, the chocolate began to sell and we kept adding employees and in the last several years we were there, the visits from these agencies were largely mere formalities.

When Eleanor and I left, we had twenty-three employees. Indonesian national TV stations interviewed us. I had business cards from congressmen, federal attorneys, and others who had come all the way from the capital to visit our place and buy chocolate. And the production room and quality control manager was a lady with a sixth grade education. Just amazing!

Many of our employees were complete disasters. Only one or two had ever had a job. Imagine being a fisherman or farmer where all you've ever done is what you want to do and when you don't want to do anything for the day - you don't. Now you have to show up for work every day at eight o'clock and work for someone else. We have unlimited employee stories. We had employees from various surrounding villages as you can't have them all from one village. For example, a funeral lasts nine days, and if all your employees are from one village, the business will shut down for nine days.

This was just one of the many reasons we wanted employees from various surrounding villages. However, these villages would sometimes fight at night. Every few months there would be a massive fight that would break out at night between our village and the one to the east or the one to the west. People would get injured and tear boards off our picket fence and beat each other up with them. Thankfully, there are no guns, but machetes were the weapon of choice and whatever pieces of wood or rocks they could find. Because the village was so important in our employees' lives, they would fight for it. Sometimes we would have our employees in one village fighting our employees in the next village during the night. And I took special delight in making those employees work together the next day and talk about it.

Why Go Start a business? Why Business as Missions?

After what we learned through the Perspectives course, Eleanor and I had decided that if we were going to go be missionaries, then we were going to go somewhere where there had never been missionaries before. There are still many, many people groups like that but the reason they still have never had missionaries is because they are either extremely remote or the country they live in is very hard to access and even hostile to missionaries. You simply cannot go to these places as a missionary.

Once the authorities saw that we were running a legitimate business, they loved having us there.

So we had to get more creative. Some people have a degree that will get them a job in a country like this. And that is great. I had no degree. So we decided to go start a business. If you go with a business plan and have access to money to invest, most countries are happy to have you. Interestingly, even Indonesian believers could not just simply move out to the islands we lived on. They would be questioned and if found out that they came to spread the gospel, they would at best be run off the island, and at worst, killed.

As we went, I had my dreams of how business could work to get us access and to help us form relationships. It worked! Once the authorities saw that we were running a legitimate business, they loved having us there. Once that locals saw that as well, they had our back and supported us.

Business is just the perfect way to be a missionary. It gives you instant inroads into relationships with all levels of people, from your neighbors to the authorities locally and provincially.

In a country where you can't go in as missionaries, you're not allow to proselytize; how do you even go about it?

We wanted to help them with disease management for the cocoa trees and yield improvement, so we went to the villages around the island that wanted help and talked with the farmers. We were there for the day. We worked some and hung out and talked. But then we had a perfect reason to keep going back without raising suspicion. Later we needed to go back regularly to see how the trees were doing. Then we followed up to see how the crop was coming and then finally we bought the crop from them. All this happened naturally and we were able to have relationships forming all around the island.

The employees that we had were really twenty-three disciples that we spent time with every day, modeling a godly life and getting into all kinds of conversations. And before long, we were much more than their employer. They came to us for advice concerning their marital, family, and personal problems. We were able to get deeply involved in their lives, their family's lives, and even situations involving the village they were from.

The authorities were also a challenge. There was a lot of reporting to do. We were able to make friends (mostly) in government offices. We modeled honest business practices and dedication to upholding their rules and regulations. This left them wondering, "Why? No one else does it like that."

We had many clients. Many became regulars - people who came once and engaged in conversation and then came back on a regular basis. This was the way deep relationships were formed.

Additionally, we were able to help many people out financially as well. Twenty-three families had a steady income because employment with us. Many farmers around the island were getting a good price for their cocoa beans and improved yields.

Business provides natural ways to keep meeting more people and natural ways to keep going back and forming good relationships with the people while also creating value for them.

And that's what makes me excited about this day and age in missions. Our people are perfect for this. We are bred to be entrepreneurs. It's what we do and do well. As I look out over this group… how many businesses are represented here??? All we need to do is go across the seas…. make that our home and start businesses!!! We are so blessed with a heritage that promotes a great work ethic, puts a high value on being wise with finances, and has been cultured with so many great business values that just work for us. Our people are set up for this.

There is something for everyone to be involved in and it works!!

It gives everybody something to do whether going or staying. Those going will need investors, maybe even business coaching, support, or even a market for their product. Those staying can do business coaching for the ones going who maybe aren't as gifted in business. Those staying can provide markets for product, investment for start-up businesses, and maybe even franchise a business overseas. There is something for everyone to be involved in and it works!!

It just takes some creativity. We started a chocolate factory but we know people who have gone to these hard-to-access countries as pilots, English teachers, business consultants, medical professionals, professors, and organic vegetable and dairy farmers. We are aware of a fellow who started a cheesecake shop and now has several branches. We know people who have opened cafes and tourist businesses. The possibilities are endless and can be profitable as well. I tell you again, if we could go, anyone can go!

Used with permission.
Tim and Eleanor Byler live in Plain City, Ohio and have three children – Dustin (14); Allison (12); and Katie (9). Tim is the Missions Pastor of Haven Fellowship Church and serves ADC as Chairman of the Missions Committee.

Ladies Corner

Written by Londa Beachy

"I lay awake at night, wondering how I'll be able to feed my children." This statement was made to me in a conversation about six months ago, starting me on a journey of claiming God as my Provider. From a parent's and especially a mother's perspective, providing for our children is front and center of our focus at all times, especially in the economic times we live in currently. Can we live through economic uncertainty without fear and worry? What does that kind of faith and trust in God as our Provider translate to? What assurance is there for us to claim? The following Scripture verses give us that assurance. Ephesians 3:20: "…. He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to His power that works in us." Philippians 4:19: "My God shall supply ALL your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." 2 Corinthians 9:8: "And God is able to make all grace abound in you, so that in all things at all times, having ALL that you need, you will abound in every good work." Matthew 7:11: "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!" Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us ALL things?" There are many more verses that could be added to this list!

When Moses was commanded by God to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt, he asked God who he should say sent him. God replied, "I AM…." Our complete God gave Himself an incomplete name. He knew in what capacity He would be needed in every situation through the end of time! He was essentially giving them a book of blank checks to be used as needed. Instead of "pay to the order of…", He gave them "I AM….". This tends to look lofty and beyond our comprehension if we try to define God in terms of being everything but if we break it down, tear out one of our checks and write "I AM PROVIDER JEHOVAH-JIREH," it becomes a name of intimacy and connection. It signifies an express understanding of the details of our lives and the situations we find ourselves in. As parents, it's impossible to provide well without investing time and energy into our children's lives. It's seeing who is growing out of their clothes at the speed of light, who decided this week they no longer like bananas, who needs batteries for their flashlight, and who needs a band aid for a skinned-up knee. It means being constantly present, involved, and in communication. It shows up when talking through things when there are struggles with friends at school or celebrating a decent grade on a dreaded math test. God is SO much better at providing than we are as parents. I've seen Him provide in a situation that translated to hundreds of thousands of dollars and even in small, seemingly insignificant things such as food grade buckets and strawberries for less than the going rate, funds for vehicle repairs, and school tuition.

What has become so clear in the last half year is how much God wants to provide for our needs. He doesn't always give us what we want but when He can see our story from beginning to end, He will ALWAYS supply what we need. He delights in giving us things but even more, He delights in our delight. When we recognize that every good thing is from Him and are grateful to Him, not only does He receive glory and honor but our faith is strengthened and we begin to trust Him even more to provide.

Can we live through tough economic times without fear and worry? Absolutely! "I AM Provider" is able to give above and beyond what we can ask or think. Sometimes He's just waiting for us to hand the situation over to Him!

Londa is married Mike Beachy and they have four children: Eric (14); Brooklyn (12); Ryan (10); and Regan (8). Mike and Londa live in Millersburg, Ohio and attend Bethel Fellowship.

ADC Church Profile —

Anchor of Hope, located in Chuckey, Tennessee was founded in 2009.

The leadership team consists of Reuben Smucker, Pastor; Allen Hochstedler, Deacon; and Gene Fisher, Elder.

The church is located at the foot of the Appalachian Mountains in rolling beef cattle country.

The church's greatest impact has been in the "marketplace" – members of the church operate three bulk food stores, a fried-pie production business, and various construction businesses. The church supports a foster care ministry in Wytheville, Virginia. The Pastor serves as a volunteer prison chaplain under the Carolina Chaplaincy Program.

The church had originally opened a worship facility in Mosheim, Tennessee, hence their original name was Mosheim Christian Fellowship. By God's grace, the church grew from ten people attending to sixty. After several years, five families moved out of state and two joined a community church. For six years, the church functioned as a house church with about twenty-five in attendance. Then in 2019 several new families began attending, hence the need for a larger facility. The church then relocated its worship facility from Mosheim to its current location in Chuckey and also chose a new name.

PASTOR SPOTLIGHT

Dale and Carolyn Hochstetler serve at Fairhaven Mennonite, Goshen, Indiana where Dale was ordained as minister November 12, 2000. Dale and Carolyn have five children: Veronica, married to Nevin Hershberger; Jared married to Sandra; Jeanne married to Justin Miller; Caleb married to Karla; and Cameron. They have two grandchildren. Dale is self-employed as a farmer.

Dale reflects on his pastoral journey: "My mentors in my ministry have been Dan B. Miller, Harvey Miller, and Wilbur Yoder.

A study I enjoyed was about the children of Israel's journey in the Promised Land.

I have enjoyed spending time with our junior youth and youth over the years.

I'm blessed with an amazing pastoral team consisting of Wilbur Yoder, Phaylon Schrock, and Marion Miller."

Dale also serves as a pastoral member of the board of Christian Missions Charities.

Thank you Dale and Carolyn for your service to the Church of Christ!

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Nate Yoder – *Editor*
614-736-1727
janate3@frontier.com

P.O. Box 55, Walnut Creek, OH 44687 | anabaptistdisciplesofchrist.org