

one ambition

"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known..." ROMANS 15:20

Navigating

RISK

RISK:

*Aversion or
Acceptance*

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Heroes of

FAITH

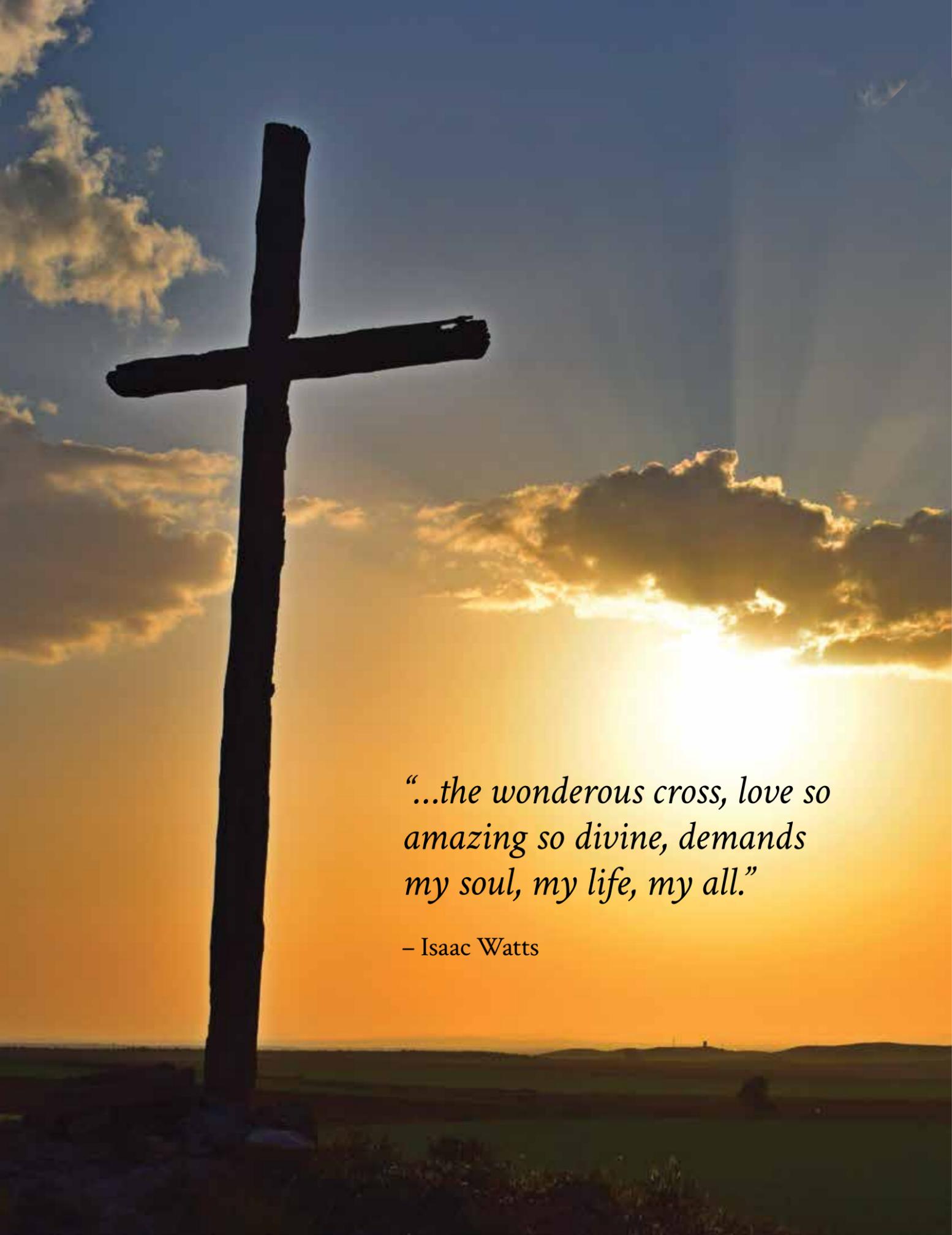
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All in a day's

WORK

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GOD IS WITH US

“Persecution can have harmful effects on the church. But prosperity, it seems, is even more devastating to the mission to which God calls us. ...God makes persecution serve the mission of the church.”

(Desiring God, Spreading Power through Persecution message online)

Before the fall of the Iron Curtain in November 1989, much of the Christian world viewed the former Soviet Union, the East Bloc (Eastern Europe), and the spread of Communism in certain parts of Asia as the biggest threat to the spread of the gospel around the world. As countries bound by Communism reacted to the new political reality, nations opened up to the Christian message. Even the nation of Romania, clinging to its communist leadership, experienced change. In December 1989, the leader Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife Elena were executed in the court room as the country was violently overthrown.

The final holdout seemed to be Albania.

In June of 1990, we were praying about how to minister among Albanians. An American colleague Michael and I joined Adriana, a woman from Holland who knew Albania and had already experienced persecution. Michael and I were completely green, not knowing what to expect. We began in Italy exploring pockets of Albanians living there. We were following the reasoning of one of my professors who asked: “If God is calling you to work among Albanians, is he calling you to the land or to the people?” We felt God calling us to the people, not the country. At that time there were 3.1 million Albanians in Albania proper and 2.5 million Albanians in Kosovo.

Starting in Rome we drove along the west coast of Italy down to Naples. From there, we drove around the southern part of Italy and, purely by the grace of God, discovered a centre of Albanian migration to Italy. That small community was God’s gift to us, leading us to the next leg of our journey. We proceeded to Sicily and finally up the east coast to Bari to catch a ferry to Dubrovnik, Croatia.

We stopped in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, and met with dignitaries including a few professors at the university. We carried clothes for the children as families struggled in poverty. As they struggled against the restrictions of Communism and the lack of freedom, they seemed optimistic. But the poverty was overwhelming.

I will never forget a conversation with one of the professors.

Looking at me eye to eye, he said: “We will get freedom, or we are going to die, and one or the other will come soon.” It was easy to see the agony on his face. The harbored anger between Albanians and Serbians was centuries old yet fresh as could be.

We continued on our journey, each interaction helping us understand the people and their need for the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

There were challenges in crossing the Albanian border as the country was still closed. As we drove through a small village, we were stopped by Serbian secret police. I was driving, Adriana was in the passenger seat, and Michael was in the back seat. We had Albanian New Testaments in our car—contraband! My friend put them on the floor and, while the secret police stood at our door, he tried to discreetly shove them under the seat with his foot.

We were in trouble.

There were two secret police. The older, sterner of the two asked for my documents (passport and driver’s

“...the wonderous cross, love so amazing so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”

– Isaac Watts

*names have been changed for security



*“Be strong and courageous.
Do not be afraid or terrified
because of them, for the Lord
your God goes with you;
he will never leave you nor
forsake you.”*

- Deuteronomy

licence). He studied them for a moment, then he asked to see what was in the trunk. I got out of the car and opened the trunk. My knees were shaking. I was terrified. I knew there was nothing suspicious in the trunk. We had already distributed all the clothing to Albanian children. And the Bibles were in the front seat (hopefully under the seat and out of the sight of the secret police by now).

It was tense.

The older of the two police asked me to pull under the streetlight so they could examine the interior of the car. Adriana, who was a very courageous woman asked, “What do they want?”

I told her. She turned white as a ghost and prayed a simple prayer: “God, please help us.”

Michael, still in the back, was pushing the Bibles harder. When the men came to the door, I started calculating my ability to run!

Right at that moment the older policeman looked away as though someone called his name (there was no one there we could see). He turned and walked away from our car. He just kept on walking. The young man looked at him, then at us, threw up his hands in the universal expression of “I don’t know” and waved us onward.

Without a question, Adriana’s simple prayer brought on a miracle. Once again, God protected us. We moved forward with his mission.

We understood the significance of the encounter. Just one year before, Adriana was in the same area, and it hadn’t gone as well. She was arrested and put in prison for having Albanian Bibles in her car.

In prison, she demanded her right to write the Dutch Embassy in Belgrade. Promptly she was given a piece of paper and a pen. She wrote the letter and gave it to the guard only to watch him ball it up and throw it away. But many miles away, her mother was praying for her and knew where Adriana was supposed to be by a certain time. As the days passed without hearing from her, she prayed and asked in her church if there were any young men who would be willing to go search for her in Kosovo. Two men volunteered and by the grace of God they passed by the jail Adriana was in, saw her car which was registered in Holland. They were able to intercede for her with the Dutch government. Within



With the fall of the Iron Curtain, new regions were “open.” We knew the dangers of crossing into Albania. We prayed for God’s protection.

days, she was out but the experience left an indelible mark on her.

I tell this firsthand story to remind us that there are risks associated with the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Every year, as we inaugurate new candidates, I teach on the Theology of Suffering at orientation. I remind candidates that while we, in Canada and the West, share the gospel, we often share many of the benefits of knowing Jesus. And those are true. **But when we share the gospel with people in some world contexts, we do so knowing that if the person receives Jesus, they may very well be putting themselves or family members in danger. It is important to keep this in mind.**

Sometimes it seems foolish to put ourselves in direct danger. Even as I think about our Albania journey, I wonder if we were foolish or if we were brave. I don’t know the answer. We were simply following the call of God as we prayed for his direction. We’ll leave that for others to judge and most importantly, our master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

What I do know is that, then and now, Jesus never said “Go and make disciples only in nations where it is easy, and the authorities are 100% behind you.” Like some of you, I was influenced, even inspired by Brother Andrew who wrote “God’s Smuggler.” He was a man who narrowly escaped danger many times to share the love of Jesus.

John Piper says: “Persecution can have harmful effects on the church. But prosperity, it seems, is even more devastating to the mission to which God calls us. ...God makes persecution serve the mission of the church.” (Desiring God, Spreading Power through Persecution message online)

As I reflect on our work in many countries world-wide, I understand Piper’s comment more everyday.

We praise God that he not only calls us to his mission in every nation and people group, but he also provides those who will stand with us in prayer. He calls people like you who give to make the mission possible and provide daily needs for those who go. More than that, all the while, he is preparing hearts in the “fields” of today so that there will be some from every tongue, tribe, and nation in that final day.

I trust you will enjoy reading this issue focusing on risk. We want to be good stewards of our human and financial resources as we respond to following God in an age when government surveillance and religious fervor and/or extremism makes Christ’s mission a challenge.

God is not taken by surprise and is leading us to creatively move into some of the places of greatest threat.



RISK: *Aversion or Acceptance?*

By Pioneers Global Security Officer

We each make choices: some safe and predictable; some with inherent risk.

What motivates us to take a risk? And when we face risk, how do we calculate it? Or do we simply avoid risk?

As we walk alongside men and women who are dedicated to bringing the gospel message to all people, we must consider the risk. It's a topic that is quite familiar to mission communities.

The risks to those who carry the gospel cross-culturally are increasing in many locations. This should not be surprising to us given the warnings Jesus shared as recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. These and other portions of Scripture clearly indicate that life will become increasingly more challenging for Christ followers as the return of Jesus draws ever nearer. We cannot, of course, know exactly where we are at this moment in history relative to Christ's return, yet we must not dismiss recent events and the increasing

resistance to the practice or sharing of biblical faith. Given this reality, the topic of risk needs to be a part of the sending process.

There are some in the missions' community who accuse leaders or security advisors of becoming risk averse. This criticism seems to be based on the view that risk has always been inherent to the mission endeavor, and thus it must be accepted in the same way as it has in the past. As leaders, we must look at risk carefully and develop strategies to evaluate, mitigate and navigate risk.

STEWARDSHIP

As a mission organization our primary concern is caring for our members. We have a duty of care to ensure decisions are made in a way that both members and leaders understand the possible risks involved in serving in each location. We are aware of times that the mission community has not held the safety of its team as a top priority. We live with the consequences of those decisions.

When members of a mission organization are hurt or have a bad interaction with local government things change. In many situations, faith-based workers in the surrounding area, sometimes representing numerous agencies, are forced to leave.

Situations that lack stewardship as a value have the potential to threaten the expansion of the gospel. They can also cause irreparable damage to the reputation or even continued operations of a mission organization.

Knowing this, we see the wisdom in taking risk seriously, thinking about the challenges as we send teams into the field and as we care for members.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Navigating risk does not have to devolve into risk aversion. The opposite of gross negligence and a reckless disregard for the safety of members does not need to result in the decision to never send members to high-risk areas. If that were the case mission organizations may as well disband given the context in which they now operate. We believe that risk will actually increase in the future.

In our experience, we can support adult members as they serve in very high-risk areas. But we take the challenges very seriously. We work to maintain an appropriate level of duty of care and good stewardship. Our members walk through a process before they leave for their assignment. The process includes appropriate security training, risk assessment, communication, and listening.

In-person field security training focused primarily on incident avoidance and risk mitigation is essential. Members can be equipped with tools and skills to avoid elevated levels of scrutiny, expulsion, confrontation, and harm. Such training includes methods aimed at dealing with confrontation should it occur. Training content is updated on a regular basis to address developing/evolving threats.

A pre-departure and periodic threat and risk assessment process is also key in helping to ensure that members and leaders are aware of significant challenges as they develop. Consultation and input from trusted local sources are a valuable resource. The result of a robust threat and risk assessment process is the mitigation of the risks identified.

PRE-DEPARTURE PROCESS

- + Receive in-person field security training
- + Conduct a Risk Assessment and Contingency Planning Process
- + Write a Statement of Intent about how you sense you are being led to serve in each location and how you plan to mitigate risks
- + Get input from field leadership, the sending office, the security coordinator, and other key supporters

In addition to training and assessment, we keep the lines of communication open, listening in the decision-making process prior to departure or re-entry. This includes input from field leadership, the sending office, and the sending church.

We are purposeful in developing and adopting a healthy process of security training, risk assessment, communication, and listening. We do this because:

1. It represents authentic and genuine care for the member or members in question.
2. It is core to the stewardship of a healthy organization.

Let me explain.

The process outlined is intended to ensure that no one with a direct interest in the member's wellbeing is taken by surprise if a threat identified in the process comes to pass. In other words, no one should be able to say, "I had no idea that could happen, why did you send a member to serve in that location?"

Given the difficulty of knowing what may unfold in any given area, there is wisdom in using such a process for all members. After all, those serving in Paris may have felt that they had very little risk of terrorism before the attack in 2015 that killed 130 and wounded at least 350 people. It's reported that there have been more than thirty terrorism-related attacks in France since that event.

Secondly, adopting such a process is a healthy approach to the stewardship of an organization. By following a thorough predeparture process, leaders are able to care for their members and protect the agency from damage to its reputation or operations.

Understanding the risks of bringing the gospel message to all people is critical. Each of us, whether you are considering going to the field or are a member of a sending church or a prayer partner of a worker, have a role in the stewardship and care of workers. We have a clear understanding of the risk; Jesus has forewarned us. Care for members and the wise stewardship of an organization's mission is worth the effort given. Let us do this well!

CALLED TO RISK

Obedience to God often requires us to take risks. Throughout the Old and New Testament we are reminded about the inherent risk of serving God.



DAVID AND GOLIATH

1 Samuel 17:45 - "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."



DANIEL AND THE LION'S DEN

Daniel 6:13 - "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays 3 times a day."



ESTHER

Esther 4:16b - "I will go to the king, even though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."



MITIGATING RISK

Matthew 10:16-28 - "Be as shrewd as serpents, yet innocent as doves; Be on your guard; When persecuted in one place, flee to another; Do not be afraid; The Holy Spirit will speak through you."

WALK BY FAITH

Matthew 14:27-31

Risk must always be grounded in our Faith in Jesus
By faith Peter walks on water towards Jesus but begins to sink when he takes his eyes off of Him.

POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 1:7-8

We have been given the power of the Holy Spirit to comfort us, and also to prompt us and embolden us to act for the Kingdom in ways we can only do through his power.

PAUL

Paul's life- He knew it would end in death, but he continued- Acts 21:13b - "I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but even to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus."

"Faith is the willingness to risk anything on God."

- Jack Hyles

Heroes of FAITH



HUDSON TAYLOR (1832-1905)

At the age of 21 he endured a 6 month journey to China to share Jesus. He started the China Inland Mission which would later make up half the missionary force in China.

"The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed."

CORRIE TEN BOOM (1892-1983)

She became the first licensed woman watchmaker in Holland. After WWII began, she used her shop as a front to hide Jews and resistance fighters in the "Hiding Place." In 1944 an informant gave away their secret and they were arrested. Corrie was later released from the prison camp and began a rehabilitation program for camp survivors after the war.

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."



ERIC LIDDELL (1902-1945)

"Chariot of Fire" runner who gave up his race because he didn't believe he should run on Sunday.

1925- He gave up his fame and set sail for China to be a missionary.

HELEN ROSEVEARE (1925-2016)

Called to medical missions in the Congo, she faced challenges.

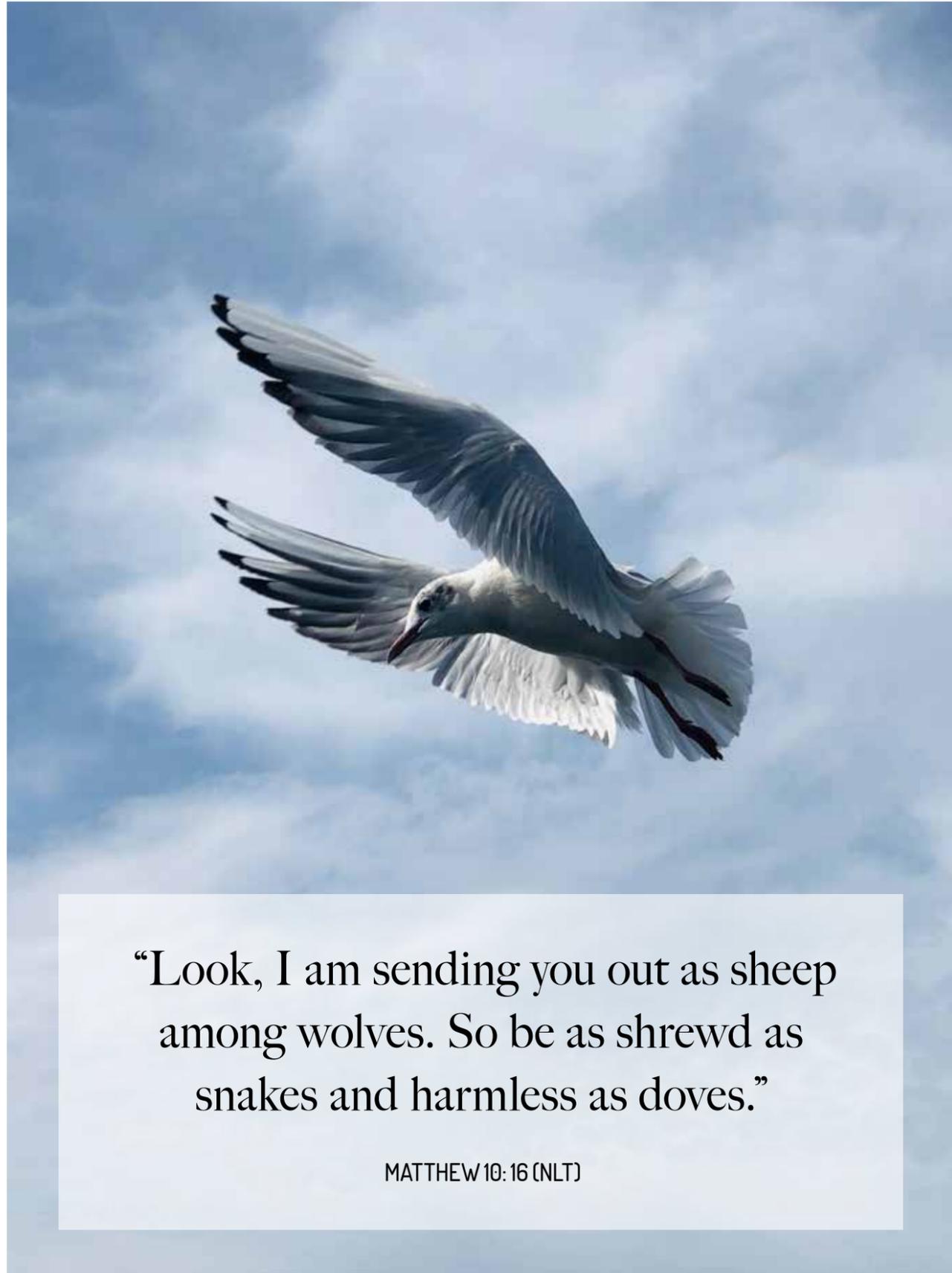
"One word became unbelievably clear, and that word was privilege. He didn't take away pain or cruelty or humiliation. No! It was all there, but now it was altogether different. It was with him, for him, in him. He was actually offering me the inestimable privilege of sharing in some little way the edge of the fellowship of his suffering."



JIM AND ELISABETH ELLIOT (1956)

Jim and 4 other missionaries were willing to risk their lives to share Jesus with the Auca tribe. Sadly, after several friendly contacts with the tribe they were killed, but Elisabeth and other family members went on to share the Gospel with this group who later came to accept Christ.

"I'm convinced that there is nothing that can happen to me in this life that is not precisely designed by a sovereign Lord to give me the opportunity to learn to know Him."



“Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.”

MATTHEW 10: 16 (NLT)

All in a day's **WORK**

By David and Debra

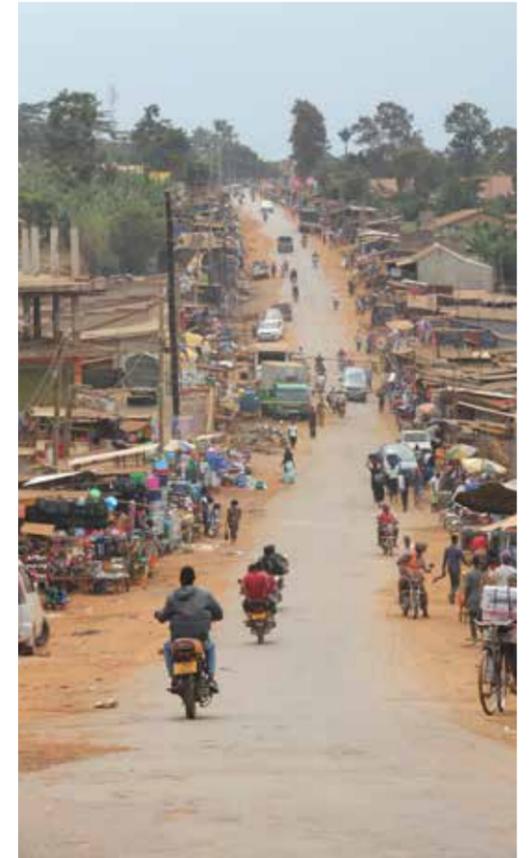
Years ago, I was friends with Mr. Ed, an elderly worker who had spent many years on the field. When people would say goodbye using the phrase, “Take care,” he would reply, eyes twinkling, “No, don’t take care, take risks!”

Life is intrinsically risky. Living overseas and working cross-culturally amplifies those risks. During our time overseas we have faced muggings, political unrest, petty theft, health crises, attacks by animals, car accidents, local confrontations that left stray rubber bullets scattered in our yard, earthquakes, and minor domestic accidents. Despite it all, we’ve successfully raised four children to teenager-hood and had some incredibly rich life experiences. And most days don’t feel risky at all: our host country is our home, and like people everywhere, we go about our lives, mostly not even thinking about the risks involved.

But we still don’t know how to answer the question that people frequently ask on our visits back to our passport countries: “Is it safe?”

No. Yes. We’re always safe in God’s hands. Aren’t we? But God didn’t protect our little daughter from life-threatening illness. If we’d been in our backwater town in our host country, she would almost certainly have died. But we weren’t. In God’s perfect timing we were on vacation in a neighbouring country with good medical care. He graciously provided for our every need. But what if that outcome had been different, if our story had ended in tragedy?

*names have been changed for security



There is a galaxy of smaller risks that workers face daily: loss of closeness to family and support systems, loss of status and self esteem, loss of ease and comfort – what impact does all this have on our mental and spiritual health?

In our case, as workers involved in BAM (Business as Mission), there is potentially huge financial risk. All cross-cultural workers face the risk of failure, and unlike failure in a “normal” job, our failures are often very public, broadcast to our sending organisations, churches, and supporters. Added to that, in restricted access countries, our mistakes can have huge implications on the wider ex-pat community and national believers. The consequences of risks we take ripple out and can impact the lives and ministry of many others. The risk of letting others down, and, worst of all, letting God down, at times weighs heavy on our hearts.

We find ourselves in situations where walking the path of truth and integrity is risky. By choosing not to pay additional “fees” to speed up in-country processes, we can jeopardise visa renewals and alienate authorities. At times we have to be ready to lose everything to maintain our testimony. In our location, certain types of spiritual activity are not tolerated, and yet God calls us to seek the lost and share His Word with them. There is a very real possibility that as God builds His Kingdom, we will face opposition and even expulsion from the place we call home.

Yes, life is risky. Yes, we need to be wise as serpents and gentle as doves as we discern how to act in each situation. We walk in God’s light and seek His guidance and wisdom in each situation. And as we see faith growing in our team and family, as our business grows and allows us to build relationships with the surrounding community, as God’s word is proclaimed in places where it has never been heard, as we see His light begin to break chains of bondage to sin and Satan, we know that the risk is worth it.





PARTNER

with us...

PRAY

- + Praise the Lord , He is always good, always holy, always trustworthy and always with us. His plans cannot be frustrated or undone. Our Almighty God is victorious. What an incredible privilege to be called His children and be invited into His presence.
- + Pray for all believers to hear God's call to reach every nation and people group. Whether that is to stand in prayer, give financially to make the mission possible or for them to go.
- + Pray for Pioneers. That God will guide us, grow us and give us wisdom to make decisions understanding the risk. Pray for our workers, sending churches, prayer partners or families of missionaries to work together as stewards to care for workers as they navigate risks.
- + Pray that God would challenge us as we develop our theology of suffering from a biblical point of view.
- + Ask that God make our team bold in declaring the gospel and not let fear creep in. (Ephesians 6:19-20, Psalm 23:4)
- + Please pray for open doors for the proclamation of the gospel even in hostile environments. (Col. 4:3)
- + Pray that our team can overcome culture and language barriers to declare the gospel clearly. (Col. 4:4-6)
- + Please pray that our workers would daily find their strength in God, even when living under the pressures of high risk. (Psalm 62:8, Psalm 81:10, 1 Peter 5:6-7)
- + Pray as missionary parents wrestle with this that God would guide them in raising their children, bring others in their lives to help them as they instill God's love into their children.
- + Pray for workers to find true joy in the Lord as they face trials, even if they face persecution. (Acts 5:40-41, 1 Peter 4:16, Hebrews 11:24-26)
- + Pray that God would restore joy and hope in workers who have been persecuted and/or expelled from their countries. Pray that they would retain their trust in God and that their joy may be returned. (Romans 12: 15, I Peter 5:10, Hebrews 11:13-16)



GO

Pioneers walks alongside women and men called by God, seeking direction and finding the right fit for their gifts and skills. Here are a few examples of the requests teams have made:

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

We are praying for:

- Christian counselors for people who have experienced trauma, violence and abuse. For counselors fluent in the local language, there are many opportunities to train counselors
- highly relational people trained in Disciple Making Movement to share Jesus over a cup of coffee
- graphic design and IT people to support web design and social media

SOUTHEAST ASIA

We are praying for:

- primary and high school teachers, nurses, and administrators to serve in the newly opened international school
- creative and innovative people experienced in agriculture, aquaculture, marine biology, food product development, and management, logistics and accounting

ARABIAN PENINSULA

We are praying for:

- IT Specialists and programmers
- physiotherapists
- a dietician to encourage local women towards emotional, spiritual, and physical health



GIVE

Help mitigate risk by providing security training for overseas workers. Your gift of \$800 covers the cost of 1 worker.

To give today, go to pioneers.ca/give/projects or use the form and envelope provided to mail in your donation. Or call our office at 519-268-8778.



JESUS

*is coming
soon...*

Does this powerful phrase, Jesus is coming soon, evoke the same hope, excitement, and urgency as it did when you first understood its importance? Our Savior is coming! Generations before us have heard this phrase as the hope of Jesus has been shared. We cannot know the exact date and time, but clues are scattered throughout the Bible.

In Matthew 24:4-14 Jesus told the disciples:

Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come.



... “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:7-8

Are we, the church, ready to remain faithful to the end?

John wrote this warning in Revelation 3:15-16. "I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!"

It is so easy to be overwhelmed with the news we hear or personal circumstances we face. We can start to draw inward and just survive instead of thrive, attempting to manage on our own without resting in the knowledge of God's provision. Our witness can become lukewarm. God told us that we would have trouble in this world, but he also reminded us that he has overcome the world (John 16:33). Our God is a God of hope. He wants us to walk in that assurance of his hope, his victory and confidently take the opportunities he gives us to share his eternal message with others.

God gives us his power through his Holy Spirit to go forth, disciple the nations and see many from all tribes and people worship around the throne.

Even in our troubles God promises a helper:

He said to them, 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

Acts 1:7-8

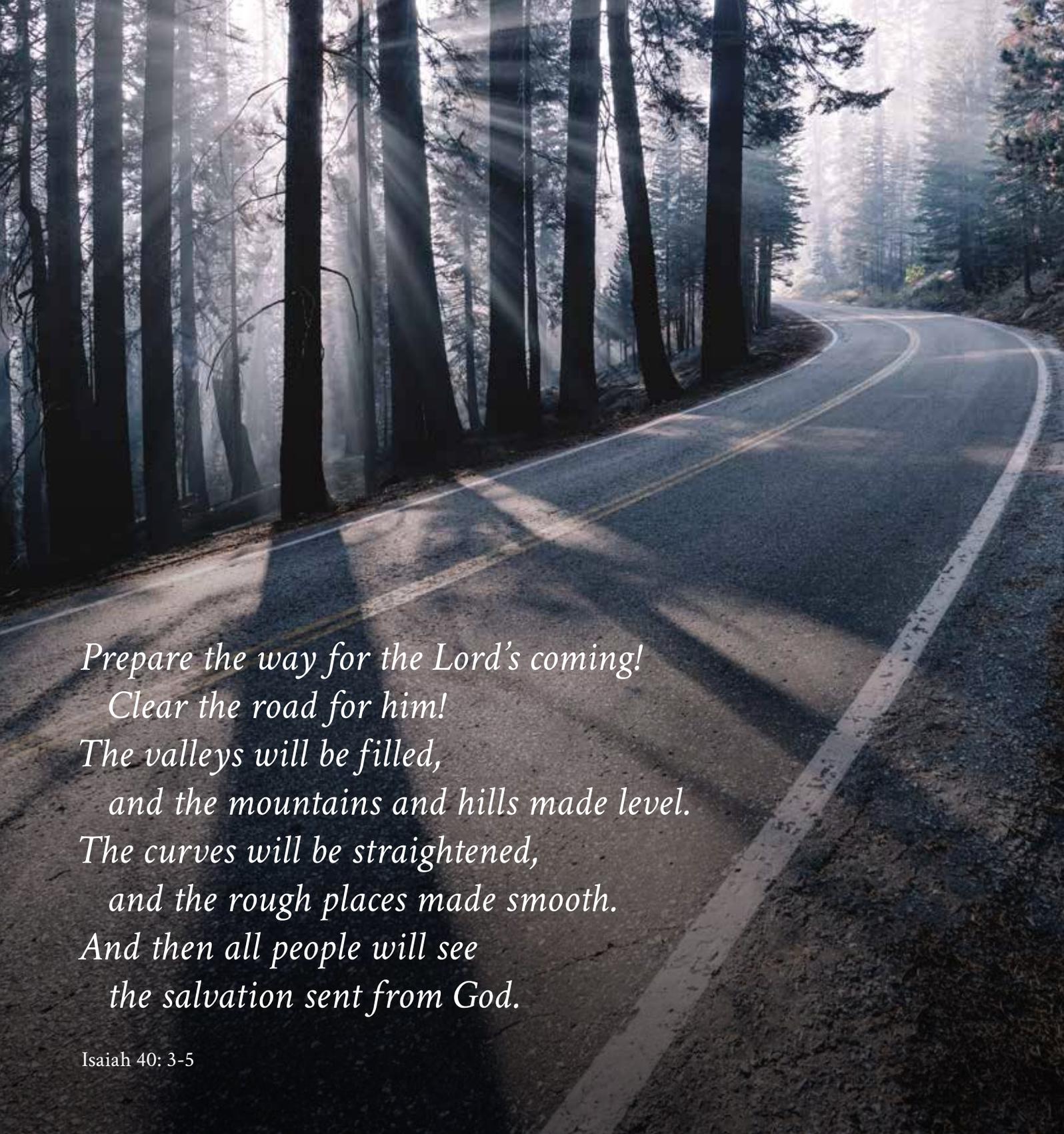
The Holy Spirit speaks and guides us. The Spirit keep us “on fire” for Jesus and the Great Commission he gave us. Staying close to the heart of God is the only way to navigate the risk and hardships in this life. Colossians 3:1-2 reminds us that if then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. We can do this by the power of the Holy Spirit who comforts, prompts and emboldens to act for the Kingdom in ways we can only do through his power. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead!

In 1 Corinthians 1:7-9 Paul assures the church that now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you strong to

the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. God will do this, for He is faithful to do what he says, and He has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. What an honor it is to receive that invitation.

One of my favorite hymns is by Isaac Watts - “When I Survey The Wonderous Cross.” The last line says, “love so amazing so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.” What does your “all” look like? **We are invited to be bold and listen to the Holy Spirit’s prompting to take calculated risks.** Rest in the peace that JESUS IS COMING and through the power of His Spirit remember His love, hope, passion, and desire to share the truth until the time we can say JESUS HAS COME! What a glorious day that will be!





*Prepare the way for the Lord's coming!
Clear the road for him!
The valleys will be filled,
and the mountains and hills made level.
The curves will be straightened,
and the rough places made smooth.
And then all people will see
the salvation sent from God.*

Isaiah 40: 3-5



51 Byron Avenue, Dorchester ON N0L 1G2
519.268.8778 | 1.866.268.8778 | info@pioneers.ca

pioneers.ca