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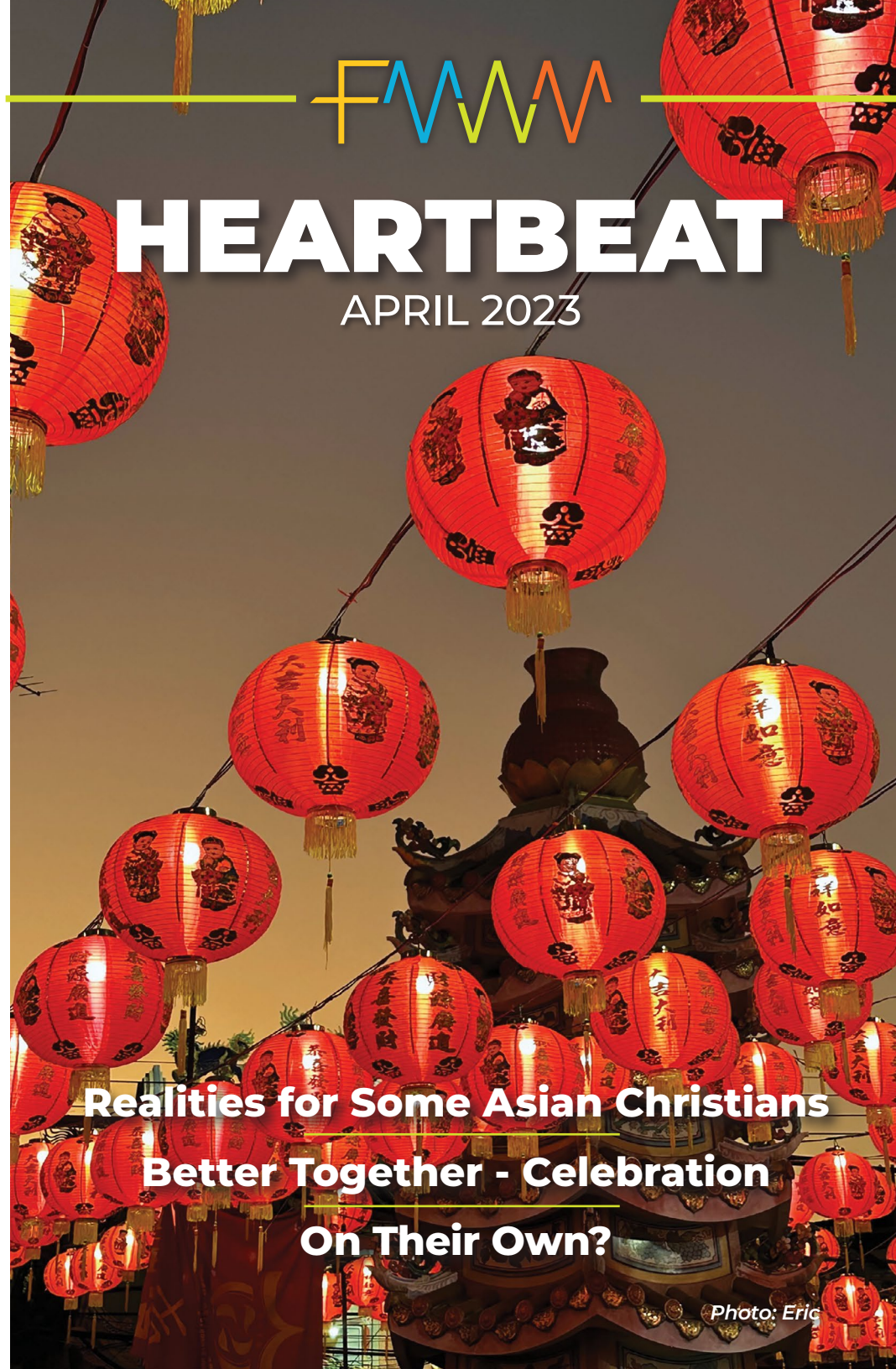
HEARTBEAT

APRIL 2023

PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT
INDIANAPOLIS, IN, AND AT ADDITIONAL
MAILING OFFICES.

PUBLICATIONS AGREEMENT NO. 4-0716549
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Free Methodist World Missions makes disciples by mobilizing the global church and empowering international leaders to establish transformational churches.



HEARTBEAT

APRIL 2023

**Realities for Some Asian Christians
Better Together - Celebration
On Their Own?**

Photo: Eric



Realities for Some *Asian* Christians

By Trevor Foley

Imagine! In one Central Asian country, books must be registered and stamped with approval from the government, or they are illegal to possess or sell. Because these restrictions impact the registration and distribution of Bibles, Christians in this country turn to illegal smuggling to distribute them. In one family's case, the government became suspicious that they possessed illicit literature, so officials came to raid the house. But before the police could arrive to search, the family put their Bibles in the bathtub and burned them.

Now consider this story. Before the Korean War, a girl was born into a Christian family in northern Korea. She went to church for worship and prayed with her family and other Christians. When the war broke out, half of the congregation fled to South Korea, and half of the congregation, including this young girl, were prevented from fleeing

south. The parents were even concerned about talking about faith at home. What if talking about faith became such a habit that they unknowingly talked about it outside the home?

They decided to practice their faith primarily by doing acts of kindness for their neighbors. The girl grew up knowing she was a Christian but knew little of what it meant other than loving her neighbors. When she grew older, she visited a church in China and agreed to work as an underground Christian worker, evangelizing and starting underground groups in North Korea. She even smuggled in three Bibles: one for her and her group and two for the leaders of two other groups. One day, the state security department discovered the Bible in one of the other groups, and the group leader was arrested and executed. The woman decided to burn her Bible for security. She said, "When I think about how I

breathlessly prayed and cried ... how I burned the Word that I had brought with such difficulty ... I was barely able to burn one, the one that was in my house."

These stories remind us of the realities believers face in places throughout Asia. Please continue to join us in prayer for believers who boldly share the gospel and for the millions who have yet to hear the good news of Jesus.

These are stories told by Trevor Foley, our newest missionary in Asia. Trevor's ministry includes helping re-establish a presence for the FMC in South Korea while also working with Voice of the Martyrs – Korea, discipling North Korean defectors at discipleship training schools. Please pray for Trevor and sign up for his newsletter here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc_3J92XKh65f8JusdVYNwEQDxNMeQiHC9IEITIU7bNSILrJw/viewform



BETTER TOGETHER

BELIEVE TOGETHER

Celebration

By Asia Area Director Eric

It was a celebration of our “Better Together” way of biblical interdependency – more than 100 leaders from 17 countries across Asia came together in Thailand last November for the Better Together Converge event.

We celebrated a growing unity across the Free Methodist Church in Asia. As believers, we understand we are Better Together because of a **Shared Identity**. Because we are created to bear and reflect the image of God (imago Dei), through faith, we become more like Jesus each day (2 Corinthians 3:18). As we recognize each of us is created in God’s image, we are compelled to treat one another with the dignity and respect that reflects the love God has shown to us through Christ.

We celebrated the way we are Better Together because of our **Shared Mission**. Accurate knowledge helps us restore ownership of the mission. Everyone in Asia has gifts to offer for the advancement of God’s mission (mission Dei). The mission is not our mission but God’s. No one needs to spend time protecting boundaries and borders when we recognize our shared mission.

Together we celebrated our **Shared Acceleration**. Leaders in Asia are accomplishing more as they work, serve and love together to reach the lost. As we form gospel partnerships, especially cross-cultural partnerships, a force-multiplying effect happens,

allowing us to accomplish immeasurably more than we would on our own.

Shared Sustainability was another part of our celebration. Many of us, particularly those in the West, believe in a myth of independence. The myth points us to a time when we “grow up” – we succeed, no longer need others or the things they have to offer. Somehow, we have concluded independence is the definition of success. But the concept of independence is not a biblical reflection of Christian living – we are called together as one body (1 Corinthians 12) – biblically interdependent. As we work together to solve problems and undo the schemes of our enemy, we are participating in Shared Sustainability. We give generously, love dangerously, live radically and work together with brothers and sisters around the globe, influencing as many people as possible toward Jesus.

Finally, we celebrated the way we are “Better Together” because of our **Shared Destiny**. Something powerful about our shared eternal home inspires us toward a common vision, challenges us toward missional unity, and motivates us to run the race together with endurance.

FMWM-Asia celebrates how we are Better Together when we come together united around our Father’s mission. Join us in celebrating this “Better Together” way!



On THEIR Own?

By Asia Area Director Eric

They are on their own now, right?

It is a question some have wondered as we joyfully announce the continued growth of several of our Southeast Asian countries, moving from mission district status to becoming annual conferences. The Free Methodist Church (FMC) in Cambodia, Creative Access-MR, Creative Access-NP, Thailand and Creative Access-VN have all continued to mature ecclesiastically and are helping lead the way missionally.

In 2022 the FMC in Thailand helped more than 500 people find faith in Jesus for the first time. The church in Thailand has been enjoying a unique sense of the Spirit's help and has experienced remarkable growth. Remarkably, the Free Methodist Church in Thailand has doubled annually for the last five years!

Last year more than 200 people found faith in Jesus in Creative Access-VN. Despite extreme socio-political and economic adversity, five new churches were planted in Creative Access-MR, and 81 people came to faith in Jesus.

Amazing! Leaders have been developed, ordained and deployed everywhere in the past year through visionary kingdom strategies.

But do these markers (including annual conference status) indicate the FMC in each country has developed

to the point of independence? By no means; rather, these are indications of open doors to greater interdependent partnerships with the worldwide FMC.

The FMC in Asia needs the FMC in the USA, and the church in the states needs the church in Asia. As Dr. Darin Land has pointed out, "We often think of churches in Asia as being in poverty and needing financial assistance. The church in the West has the resources to meet these kinds of physical needs. Yet, the church in the West itself is impoverished in some ways. It has different kinds of needs that the church in Asia can meet through its unique resources. God, through His wisdom and generous abundance, has gifted different parts of His church differently so that each part can fulfill the needs of others."

Many of our church-planting pastors and our superintendents across Asia receive a small stipend through FMWM-Asia. While these funds are not intended to meet all their needs, they help offset the extraordinary circumstances many believers face in contexts not always friendly to disciples of Jesus.

So, the answer is no. Churches in Asia are not on their own, and neither are we! We need each other because we are better together!

Vol. 5 No. 4 APRIL 2023

Publisher: Gerald Coates
Editor: Jan Coates
Copy Editor: Matt Schnepf
Graphic Designer: Beth Winchell
Subscription Manager: Matt Alte

Free Methodist World Missions Heartbeat (ISSN 2380-0283) (Print) is published monthly by Free Methodist World Missions, PO Box 51710, Indianapolis, IN 46251. Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Free Methodist World Missions Heartbeat, PO Box 51710, Indianapolis, IN 46251. Canadian Publication Mail Agreement #40716549 Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: Station A, P.O. Box 54, Windsor ON N9A6J5

Email: cpcreturns@wdsmail.com

To be added or removed from the mailing list, or give notifications of address change, contact Matt Alte, (800) 342-5531.

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APRIL PRAYER GUIDE

01 > Saturday | Iraq

Praise the Lord! Christianity is seeing a resurgence in this nation. Pray believers will take advantage of every opportunity to bear witness to Christ.

02 > Sunday | Creative Access Asia-CA

Pray the words of Ephesians 3:16 for Julie. Ask the Father to strengthen her out of His glorious riches and give her power through His Spirit.

Birthday: Julie

03 > Monday | Asia

Pray for continued progress on the production and deployment of video training modules for Christian leadership development in Asia.

Birthday: Darin

04 > Tuesday | Nicaragua

Pray for God's blessing upon a marriage conference being held in Nicaragua this month.

05 > Wednesday | Kenya

Pray for the work of Tumaini Women Kenya. This organization provides access to economic empowerment, skills development and spiritual growth while promoting social and physical health for women and their communities.

06 > Thursday | Middle East

Pray the Lord will strengthen and encourage Area Director Dale as he balances his various responsibilities.

Birthday: Dale

07 > Friday | Hungary

The Budapest fellowship is taking new steps in inviting people to a monthly "dinner church." Pray the Holy Spirit will prepare hearts to experience and respond to God's welcoming love.

08 > Saturday | Latin America/Colombia

Latin America: Pray Area Director Ricardo Gómez will have wisdom and understanding as he leads the Latin America area in carrying out the five-year strategic plan God has laid before them.

Birthday: Ricardo Gómez

Colombia: Pray for missionary Nikki Roller. Ask God to give her a big-picture vision and wisdom as she follows Him in her day-to-day life.

Birthday: Nikki Roller

09 > Sunday | Taiwan

The 70th Annual Conference of the Free Methodist Church in Taiwan takes place April 28-29. Pray for this time of celebration and the additional days of training and vision casting that follow.

Birthday: Lily Kinkead

10 > Monday | International Child Care Ministries

Pray for the young adults who have graduated from ICCM programs. Ask the Father to help them as they pursue work or further education and, most of all, a deepening relationship with Jesus.

11 > Tuesday | Portugal

Pray for Cida Matos as she leads the cell group networks of the Portugal FM churches. Pray the leaders of groups will have encouragement and vision for multiplication.

Birthday: Cida Matos (International Missionary)

12 > Wednesday | Portugal

Pray Cindi Angelo will have the wisdom and strength to make disciples, form local leaders, and equip new pastors to plant churches in Portugal and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Birthday: Cindi Angelo (International Missionary)

13 > Thursday | Bolivia

Pray for Juan Carlos Rodriguez as he mentors leaders in three countries: Bolivia, Guatemala and Creative Access-X. Ask the Lord to give wisdom and grace in these relationships.

Birthday: Juan Carlos Rodriguez (International Missionary)

14 > Friday | Creative Access Asia-PN

Pray for the continued development of churches and leaders as well as the translation of the Book of Discipline into the national language.

15 > Saturday | Nigeria

The pandemic affected the Evangelical School of Theology, which resumed classes in 2022. Pray for this school as it trains and prepares ministers.

16 > Sunday | Greece

Praise the Lord for continuing opportunities to share the gospel with refugees. Pray for Michael and Maria Long as they visit refugee camps, giving aid and leading Bible studies.

Birthday: Michael Long

17 > Monday | Asia

Pray for those across Asia who are persecuted, oppressed and mistreated for their faith in Jesus.

18 > Tuesday | Senegal

Pray for a healthy partnership between the Genesis Conference and the churches being established in Senegal. Ask God for wisdom in the development of the national church leadership team.

19 > Wednesday | Middle East

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). Pray people will experience and testify to the peace of Christ.

20 > Thursday | Ecuador

Please pray for the Crouse family as they experience significant transitions in the coming months; Marissa graduates from university and Alena from high school. Ask God to guide them and provide at each step in their journey.

Birthday: Becky Crouse

21 > Friday | Japan

Pray for a spiritual awakening across Japan and the softening of hearts to hear and receive the good news. Ask the Father to break the powers of spiritual forces keeping people in darkness.

Birthday: Chris Wilkins

22 > Saturday | Guinea Bissau

In 2022, Pastor Rito, the leader, was ordained, and an additional church was planted. Pray believers in Guinea Bissau will be discipled and have a growing passion for reaching the lost in their communities.

23 > Sunday | Puerto Rico

Pray the necessary legal permits will be obtained to proceed with a church construction project.

24 > Monday | Set Free Movement

Pray for Set Free leader Ken Baldo as she and her team in the Philippines help educate children about online safety to help reduce their vulnerability to trafficking.

25 > Tuesday | Middle East

Pray for one female leader serving as a unique and powerful witness in her cultural context, giving testimony of how the gospel and ministry are for all people, genders and classes.

26 > Wednesday | Europe

Pray for the development of the African European Church Network as they seek to plant churches among the African Diaspora throughout the European continent.

27 > Thursday | Tanzania

The FMC now has a presence in 12 of the 26 provinces in Tanzania. Pray for the expansion and growth of the church in the remaining 14 provinces.

28 > Friday | South Korea

Pray for wisdom and discernment as the FMC begins to reestablish connections in South Korea. Pray a healthy and thriving work will emerge.

29 > Saturday | Creative Access Country-X

Pray for the mission district in the country's west-central region. Their soup kitchens and *Refuios de Paz* (Haven of Peace) serve needy people in the area.

30 > Sunday | Togo

Ask God to give Dosseh Takpale wisdom and effectiveness in shaping the spiritual development of churches in the five countries he serves.

Birthday: Dosseh Takpale (International Missionary)

"It is possible to move men, through God, by prayer alone."

– Hudson Taylor