

ANNUAL UPDATE 2017

New Opportunities and Innovative Approaches
to Ministry Among the Least-Reached



Cultivating Christ-honoring transformation



“See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up;
do you not perceive it?

I am making a way
in the wilderness and
streams in the wasteland.”

—Isaiah 43:19 (NIV)

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

Knowing What to Do

We live in fluid, chaotic times, at home and abroad. With continual changes and erratic conditions in global politics, economics and security, Christar workers around the world keep looking for the most appropriate and innovative ways to live and serve among those who are least-reached[†] for Christ.

For many years now, Christar has held creativity as one of our core values. And there's a reason for that. It's because our volatile world and changing times keep us continually on our toes. We have to be watchful, agile and resourceful. As I see our workers adjust their plans, relocate as needed and adopt lifestyles of flexibility and patience, I am often reminded of the small Hebrew tribe of Issachar, of whom it is said that the leaders "understood the times" and knew what to do (1 Chronicles 12:32).

In 2017, our co-workers began a number of new projects and initiatives to address the realities of access and service in the places they work. Many of these new programs came directly from assessing the current, critical needs of the people around them and developing ways to minister in the midst of those concerns. The stories in this update highlight a number of these creative approaches.

Others in our ministry are seeing new fruit in places that have been seemingly barren for many years. Through these projects we are reminded that God is at work in the "hidden places," and so we press on in faithful service.

Finally, another pillar of Christar's ministry is prayer. For years we have prayed specifically for two people groups without access to churches that preach the gospel in their languages and in culturally relevant ways: the Deaf living among Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims, and the peoples of the Lake Chad Basin in central Africa. In 2017, we began to see ways God is moving us to begin church-planting efforts among those groups.

It is my hope that as you read this update, you will be encouraged and you will be concerned. May your encouragement come from seeing God at work in the lives of the peoples He loves and sent His Son to save. May your concerns be for those who are still waiting to know the gospel and to enjoy the hope of eternal life. And may both motivate you to join us even more fully in praying, giving and perhaps even going, to join with God in what He is doing in our times.



R. Stephen Coffey

Dr. R. Stephen Coffey
President and Director, Christar U.S.

[†]Least-reached: Those who have little or no access to a church that preaches the gospel in their language and in a culturally relevant way.

UNIQUELY PREPARED



Ahmet* never expected to run into a follower of Christ in his university Hebrew class, especially not one from the same predominantly Muslim region in the Middle East he called home. Ahmet, an Islamic scholar who'd memorized the entire Quran, had always believed his religion was part of his nationality. But his classmate Mert, who'd come from the same place, had chosen to follow Christ.

As the class discussed how Islam interprets topics such as the reliability of Scripture and the nature of God, Ahmet listened to Mert present logical arguments in response to the Islamic worldview. Over the course of a year, God used Mert's witness to soften Ahmet's heart. He began to study the Bible diligently, and eventually accepted that Jesus was indeed the Savior.

Soon after Ahmet professed faith in Christ, he heard about a ministry to refugees at Mert's church, which had been planted by Christar workers. This fellowship had founded the Anatolian Christian Community (ACC), which seeks to plant churches where none exist and be a conduit of the gospel among the displaced. It stood out to Ahmet because it was run by local Christians, and he soon saw how God had uniquely prepared him to be part of it.

One of the ACC's greatest needs was an Arabic-speaking interpreter who could help them better communicate with refugees. Although Arabic wasn't Ahmet's native language, he was able to speak it thanks to his extensive study of the Quran.

Ahmet tagged along with ACC members as they held a Christmas celebration for refugee children and distributed aid to 100 displaced families. He soon found himself translating between Arabic and the local language, sharing his testimony in Arabic and praying with refugees. Ahmet, who once dedicated himself to memorizing and interpreting the Quran, is now using the language of that book to bring the hope of Christ to refugees!

OPEN DOORS TO REACH THE DEAF

Approximately 70 million people worldwide use a sign language as their primary language.‡ Just one in 50 have been introduced to the gospel. Many live in places that are mostly or completely untouched by the good news, and because they are often separated from the larger Hearing society around them, they have even fewer opportunities to learn of the gospel.

Simply bringing the news of salvation to these places isn't enough. Even if a Deaf person lives in a community with many churches, a significant number of Christians and access to printed Scripture, he or she is unlikely to be reached with the hope in Christ. Deaf communities have distinct languages, cultures and worldviews. Therefore, to effectively reach them, we need to send followers of Christ who can be accepted in Deaf society, respect their unique gifts and challenges and communicate the good news in their sign languages.

Through the Deaf Initiative, Christar is expanding its church-planting efforts to include reaching the Deaf with the gospel. We have begun to explore opportunities to partner with like-minded organizations and look forward to partnering with churches to send workers to serve in Deaf communities. And, we praise God that He has already started to bring workers to Christar to serve among these least-reached people.

We desire to plant churches among the Deaf who are living amid populations of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists for the same reason we serve among Hearing peoples: God has promised there will be people from every nation, tribe, people group and language (including sign languages) worshiping around the throne of God. We align ourselves with the promise that salvation in Christ is not just for the Hearing, but for the Deaf as well.

‡Statistics from Deaf Bible Society





HOPE 26 YEARS IN THE MAKING

In 1991, Nathaniel and Trudy,* Christar workers in Japan, invited local businessmen to a 10-week conversational English class. Ten men showed up, and after each week's English instruction, they stayed for a 30-minute Bible study in Japanese.

At the men's request, Nathaniel and Trudy extended the class a week longer than planned so the group could watch a video on the life of Christ. After the lessons came to an end, several of the men agreed to meet in the couples' home weekly to study the Bible. One even read through the entire New Testament during his daily commute to work.

But, Nathaniel and Trudy didn't see any of these men place their faith in Christ. Years, then decades, went by, but Nathaniel and Trudy witnessed no evidence of God's Word at work in any of their hearts. However, the Lord was moving in the life of one of their daughters: Mrs. Tanaka.

At her baptism in 2017, Mrs. Tanaka shared that 14 years prior, she had fallen into a deep depression and wanted to end her own life. Her mother suggested that she visit Nathaniel and Trudy to see if they could help. But, Mrs. Tanaka couldn't drum up the courage to seek the couple's assistance.

Two years ago, however, she agreed to attend a ladies' Christmas luncheon at a church Christar workers, including Nathaniel and Trudy, had helped to plant. One of the couple's teammates, Lacey, went out of her way to greet this newcomer, and Mrs. Tanaka was drawn to the love she felt from followers of Jesus, as well as moved by the guest speaker's message. Before she left, she signed up for a Bible study.

Mrs. Tanaka also began attending weekly worship services. At first, she struggled to comprehend the truths she was hearing. But, as she continued to study the Bible, God opened her eyes to His plan of salvation. In spring 2017, Mrs. Tanaka became a new creation in Christ.

A few months later, Mrs. Tanaka's parents, including her father who had attended the English classes 26 years before, witnessed their daughter publicly profess her faith and be baptized. During a meal that followed, both expressed their gratitude for the positive change they've seen in Mrs. Tanaka's life.

The story that began in 1991 isn't over yet. Nathaniel, Trudy and their team continue to ask God to use Mrs. Tanaka to begin stories of eternal hope in the lives of others.

INTRODUCING THE BREAD OF LIFE

In the midst of one of the worst ecological crises in the world, God is opening opportunities for ministry!

The people of the Lake Chad Basin live under the weight of three extremes: extreme climate, extreme poverty and extreme ideologies. Lake Chad in central Africa has shrunk by 90 percent since the 1960s, turning once-fertile land into desert, and severely limiting resources. Many people have been stripped of their livelihoods in a region that's home to some of the poorest communities in the world. In addition, over 2 million people have been displaced, and the presence of groups like Boko Haram has led to ongoing conflict and tension.

Even more devastating is the fact that most of the 17 million people impacted by this crisis are least-reached. Many belong to people groups no one is seeking to reach with the gospel.

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But, when Charstar workers serving through the Lake Chad Basin Project look at these grim statistics, they see open doors for bringing the hope of Christ to people who've never heard the good news, while blessing communities in tangible ways. Through Eden Vigil, a ministry of Charstar that serves and mobilizes workers who combine church planting and creation care among least-reached peoples, Charstar is investigating opportunities for environmental ministry in the Lake Chad Basin. We look forward to sending teams to this region as God reveals the opportunities He's opening to share the everlasting hope of the gospel while caring for His creation.



WORTH THE SACRIFICE



We praise God for the 14 new long-term workers who arrived on the field in 2017! In the fall, Charstar workers Ken and Kelly celebrated the completion of their first year of long-term ministry in South Asia. Below, they share their reflections on sacrificing time with loved ones so that least-reached people can know their Savior.*

It's been a year full of learning, change, joy and grief. . . . Every significant life event there is has taken place among our family or close friends during our first year overseas. Holidays and birthday were celebrated, close friends got married and had babies, we had our first baby and someone very dear to us passed away unexpectedly. During those times we wanted nothing more than to be celebrating or grieving with the people we love most. . . .

So much of our lives has changed, including the food we eat, what we wear, how we interact with one another when we're around others, the language we speak, the amount of privacy we have and just about anything else we do, see and hear on a day-to-day basis. Though just about every facet of our lives has changed, our conviction for being here remains.

Our neighbor once unknowingly reminded us of our reason for being here after we asked him about all the different belief systems represented here. He was immediately able to list off four while Christianity never crossed his mind. We are looking forward to the scene in Revelation 7 where there is a "vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb."

The many moments away from our family and friends on this side of heaven are worth it if they are spent in pursuit of seeing people of every nation and tribe and people and language standing with us in front of the one true God.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE SHADOW

Christar worker Rachel* estimates that 90 percent of the women she's befriended in her Middle Eastern community have suffered sexual abuse, often by a family member. In a place where just a small fraction of the population has heard the gospel, these women have few opportunities to learn about the healing only found in Christ.

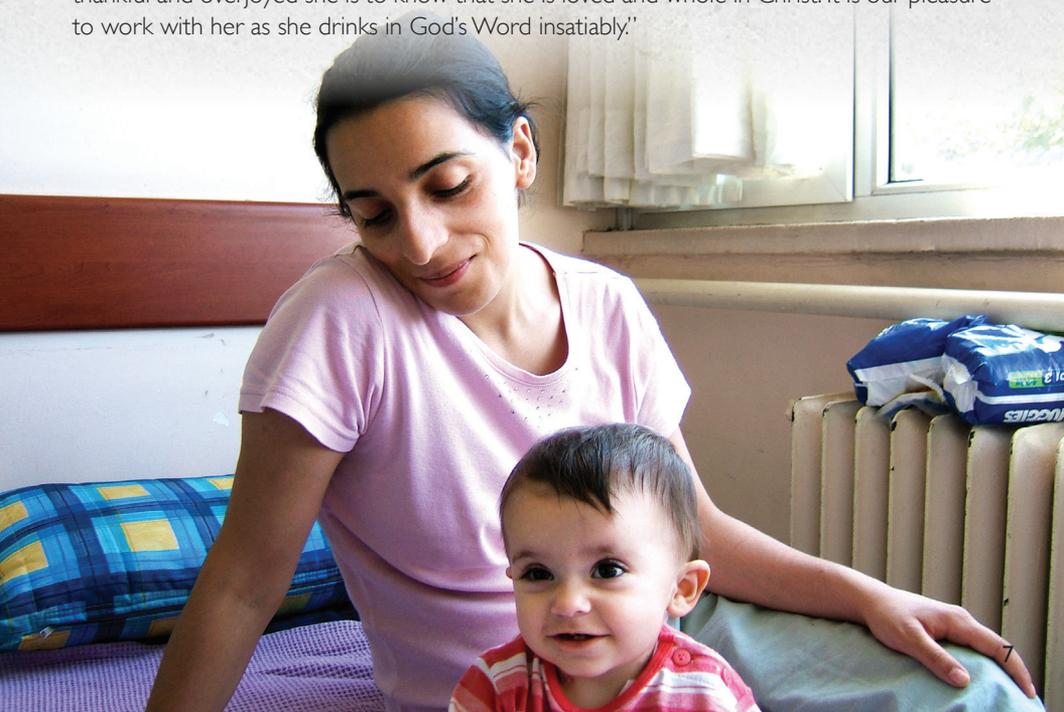
In 2017, Rachel and her husband, Jonah, opened the Battered Women's Center to help these ladies and their children find shelter from abusive situations and learn of Christ's deep love for them. Through this ministry, they provide practical assistance and spiritual and emotional support, with the goal of imparting lasting hope.

Betty, who struggles with bipolar disorder, was in a state of depression when she was attracted to the message of hope she found on the Battered Women's Center Facebook page. Rachel and Jonah connected Betty with Selma, a local woman they'd led to the Lord and were discipling. Through Selma's kindness and witness, Betty placed her faith in Jesus.

But when Betty's parents learned that she'd trusted in Christ, they forbade her to have any contact with Rachel and Jonah. Betty hadn't been treated well by her family before trusting in Christ, and her situation only worsened.

But, by God's grace, Rachel and Jonah began to gain the trust of Betty's household. She's now permitted to occasionally attend worship services and meets with Rachel and Jonah regularly.

Rachel and Jonah continue to see God at work in Betty's life. "We have been blessed to see Betty be slowly delivered from this shadow that was looming over her," Rachel shares. "She continues to take steps of sanctification and healing from her past. ... She has expressed how thankful and overjoyed she is to know that she is loved and whole in Christ. It is our pleasure to work with her as she drinks in God's Word insatiably."



SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE

The vision of Christar
is to cultivate

**CHRIST
HONORING**

transform
in c... who... t to l



The Christar Mobilization Center U.S.

The Christar Mobilization Center U.S. (CMCUS) exists to see more workers cultivating Christ-honoring transformation among Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and other least-reached peoples around the world, and to equip and care for these workers so they can minister effectively and thrive on the field. Our office personnel in Richardson, Texas mobilize, assess, train and serve those who use their God-given gifts, talents and skills to make disciples of Christ and establish churches in places with little or no culturally relevant gospel witness.

The staff in the CMCUS provide timely, professional support services to workers as they prepare for cross-cultural work, while they are on the field and during times of home assignment (furlough) in the United States. This includes:

- Processing funds, overseeing insurance and tax reporting
- Offering support for emotional and spiritual needs
- Providing resources for cross-cultural families
- Promoting project needs
- Mobilizing additional workers
- Engaging individuals and churches in prayer for work and workers
- Partnering with sending churches
- Delivering training programs/resources

2017 Highlights

The CMCUS Mobilization Department is blessed to recruit and train new workers to help bring the hope of Christ to communities where few know Him. In 2017, the department:

- Connected with more than 535 potential workers interested in Christar
- Participated in 96 conferences and other events
- Hosted "The Journey Deepens," a retreat to help prospective workers discern their next steps into missions, sponsored by MissionNext in conjunction with Mission ConneXion
- In cooperation with MissionNext, hosted "Mobilization Ideation," a time for mobilizers throughout North Texas to gather and collaborate on effectively recruiting and preparing new workers for service

By God's grace, and in answer to our prayers:

- 15 individuals participated in New Personnel Orientation, a two-week conference that allows new applicants to get to know Christar and begin preparation for effective ministry.
- 22 individuals participated in Pre-Departure Orientation, which provides further training for cross-cultural ministry in areas such as team building, family issues and related topics.
- 14 new workers began long-term service.
- 12 individuals participated in Blaze, a four-day training for effective short-term ministry.
- 19 new workers began short- or mid-term ministry.

Our Member Care Department provides support and resources for Christar workers, while they're on the field and during home assignment. In 2017 the CMCUS Member Care Team:

- Cared for and equipped 38 workers through RENEW, weeklong restorative debriefing retreats
- Provided one- or two-day office debriefs for 20 units (couples or individuals)
- Traveled to visit workers on home assignment on at least 10 occasions
- Provided transition coaching for four units
- Provided consulting by videoconference for 25 units
- Participated in two field conferences involving over 25 counseling/consulting sessions
- Consulted with numerous sending churches about field workers' needs
- Networked through men's and women's conferences
- Collaborated with member care personnel from seven other organizations

2017 Financial Report

Income:

- Individuals: \$7,810,289
- Churches and Organizations: \$6,959,375

Expenses:

- Church Planting: \$9,433,790
- Training and Education: \$1,498,463
- Medical Work: \$449,792
- Mass Media: \$142,260
- Relief: \$55,519
- Administration: \$3,551,777



Christar Mobilization Center U.S.

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Christar is registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and is committed to the highest standards of biblical stewardship. As a long-standing member of the ECFA, we are in full compliance with their established standards for financial accountability, transparency, fundraising and board governance. Independent annual audits are conducted by CapinCrouse. Audit reports are available upon request: treasurer@christar.org

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*Names have been changed, and images are representative.