

WORLD VISION®

A young girl with dark hair is peering over a concrete ledge, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. In the background, a shirtless boy is visible, looking down. The setting appears to be an urban environment with rough, textured walls.

February/March 1992

*Chinese
Evangelist:*

**ON THE ROAD
WITH BROTHER
JONAH**

Romania:

**REBUILDING
A HEALTH CARE
SYSTEM**

*Hunger in
America:*

**EVERY
FIFTH CHILD**

BRAZIL'S

WAR

ON CHILDREN



Some Brazilians are fed up. They've had enough of juvenile crime so they've turned to a grisly solution.

Wolmer do Nascimento counted some 60 boys in the gang when he began working with them. They were street kids who slept in the parks or on the pavement and lived by their wits. A few sold goods in the marketplace; others snatched food or resalable items from local businesses or mugged tourists; some ran drugs. Wolmer was a social worker and this was 1985 in Duque de Caxias, an over-crowded, grime-painted industrial sprawl just north of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

Without warning the number of boys began to dwindle. Several were found stabbed. One turned up floating in an open sewer. Others were discovered shot, but some simply vanished. A year-and-a-half after the first incident, 18 from this gang had turned up dead or were missing.

That was when Wolmer and the upright citizens of Duque de Caxias realized the horrible truth: These were not random, unrelated killings. The armies of poor, abandoned children from the slums had grown so troublesome and threatened so many, that some Brazilians were resorting to

a drastic crime-fighting tactic: *extermination*.

Street children have inhabited the world's major cities for years. New York City police files, for example, record the existence of some 10,000 "street Arabs" 100 years ago. Charles Dickens left us a vivid fictionalized account of the mistreatment of street children and the poor in 19th Century England. Today various estimates put the number of street children in the Philippines, for example, at 1.5 million. Brazil has more than 7 million, which is about one in every eight children under the age of 15.

Brazilian death squads, however, have added a new and gruesome twist to the problem. By their barbaric logic, if you kill a juvenile delinquent today, he won't assault you tomorrow. "When you kill



Wolmer

ERIC WHEATER

BRAZIL'S WAR ON CHILDREN

BY RON WILSON

a street boy," the public prosecutor in Duque de Caxias told a reporter, "you take out one of the worst ones, and you also give an example to the others. ... You are exercising social control through fear." In a recent five-year period, Brazilian authorities recorded 1,397 murders of children in 16 states. At least 300 of those were in the Baixada Fluminense, the lowland area north of Rio which includes Duque de Caxias.

The root of the problem is the desperate poverty that leaves children only a grim choice: take to the streets or die. As one writer put it, they are "the human residue of industrialization and urbanization." Peasants have forsaken the villages and countryside and sought salvation in the cities. Mexico City, already exploding and unlivable, will reach 26 million by the year 2000. Sao Paulo will top 24 million. Rio de Janeiro has more than doubled in the past 20 years. Every major city in Latin America has a ring of squalid squatter settlements around it. Crammed into these makeshift shantytowns, the poor

to assault or drug running or armed robbery. Prostitution by both boys and girls is common, and health officials now point to a growing incidence of AIDS among street children. Street kids are a menace to shopkeepers and the public. They drive business away from the area where they live and make the streets unsafe even by day. And the Brazilian system of justice is especially lenient on children.

The popular press reflects this fear and reinforces these attitudes with statements such as, "We cannot feel sorry for these vagabonds and delinquents who will be drug runners and thieves, not honest workers, tomorrow. One can pity a man but not a monster."

But who is killing these kids? Most signs point to the police themselves. A recent report by the Articulation Center of Marginalized Populations in Rio de Janeiro charged that "paramilitary ex-police, paid by businessmen, have taken it upon themselves to clean up the community." Off-duty police and security guards, it appears, have taken on the

When we have money, the military police order us to give it to them. They talk us into stealing for them. One time a military police hit me in the shopping center and took 500 cruzeiros. Then he told me to steal more for him."
-13-year-old street kid

roles of both judge and executioner. On-duty police have been accused of forcing the kids to steal, extorting money, and of sexual abuse.

"The police hit us, pull our hair, touch us in bad places, and call us names," a 15-year-old told a social worker. A 10-year-old reported, "I sleep in the

I'm on the street because my mom doesn't earn very much. It's not enough. I have three brothers and there isn't enough for all of us. My step father earns very little. Sometimes the police make us steal for them, and if we don't, they'll kill us."

-14-year-old street kid

languish, often without running water or sanitation, generally without enough food or a means to earn it, and almost always without hope.

Brazil's slums have a historic link with the landless poor. At the turn of the century, out of work soldiers camped on a hill in the state of Bahia. They named the hill *Favela*, after a wildflower that grew there, and when they moved to Rio and other cities looking for work, they camped on similar hillsides and the name stuck. Like the soldiers before them, the poor in Brazil are setting up shack cities on hillsides, and spawning hordes of pint-sized candidates for crime.

The reason these children are being killed is that many Brazilians are afraid, fed up, and frustrated. The street kids graduate quickly from begging and the kind of minor theft that keeps them alive



MIGUEL RIO BRANCO / MAGNUM

shopping center and at midnight or at dawn the police beat us. They force us to eat excrement, and they throw hot water on us." And a 12-year-old claimed, "They beat us and leave us hungry. My father is dead and my mother sleeps in the rain. First she's with one man, then another. There's not enough room for all of us."

Now come grisly reports from Latin American publications that link the killing of children to the sale of human organs for transplanting in northern countries. A Dominican priest in São Paulo noticed that many of the bodies of assassinated children showed signs of mutilation. And one publication claimed that Brazil issued 4,000 visas for children to be adopted in Italy but Italian records show only 1,000 children entered the country.

The Baixada Fluminense, where a majority of the killings have taken place, has long had a reputation of one of the most violent places on earth. One observer wrote that the notorious Bedford Stuyvestant area of Brooklyn was

like Beverly Hills compared to the Baixada. Another called it a tropical Beirut. Drug gangs battle for control and many merchants have turned to the gangs for the protection that the understaffed and partly corrupt police can't provide.

Not all the children in the *favelas* go bad. Wolmer himself grew up in Niteroi, an extremely poor area across the Bay of Guanabara from Rio which has also seen death squad killings. While his father worked at construction and his mother cleaned the homes of the upper class, Wolmer took to the streets with his seven brothers and two sisters to sell candy. School came hard and slowly, but once he had completed it, he chose to live in the slums again, this time to help other kids break out of it. "Once I was a poor boy," he jokes, "now I'm a poor adult."

When the boys in the gang began to tell Wolmer their stories, he pointed the finger at those individuals the boys identified. Soon he got threats on his life but was able to convince a key police official

ERIC WHEATER



In partnership with Catholic University, World Vision assists children like this from one of Brazil's favelas, in obtaining both formal education and vocational training.

that officers under his supervision were involved. Ironically he now has to depend on those same police for protection.

Sandra Cavalcante is another example of a poor child who found a way out of the slums. Her father had been part of a wave of *nordestinos*, peasants from the north who couldn't make a living in the countryside. Augusto Cavalcante settled in *Favela de Manguinhos*, married, and eventually abandoned his wife and their 10 children. Sandra, one of the youngest, remembers hunger, begging in the streets, and going to work at age 6 with



Children growing up on city streets are not just a Third World phenomenon. According to a recent report in the *Los Angeles Times*, families with young children are the fastest-growing segment of the population now living on U.S. streets. A 1990 survey of 30 U.S. cities shows that families with youngsters now represent at least one-third of the homeless population.

In Los Angeles; New York; Louisville, Ky.; Alexandria, Va.; Kansas City; Philadelphia; San Antonio; Trenton, N.J.; and Portland, Ore., families account for more than 40 percent of the homeless population.

The Rev. Stephen E. Burger, who heads 240 shelters run by the International Union Gospel Mission in Seattle, says that, "In 1974, we had 14 beds for women and children in the mission I worked for in Seattle, and only half were filled. In 1989 that same mission had 120 beds set aside for women and kids and they were full every night. We're seeing that all over the country."

Five years ago there were so few homeless children that Burger's

Gospel Mission did not even include them in surveys. Now children make up almost a quarter of the people sleeping in their shelters. A survey of homeless shelters across the country by the Child Welfare League of America estimates that there are between 100,000 and 200,000 children in homeless families, with an average age of 6.

Schooling is a big problem. According to the United Gospel Mission, some 43 percent of children in shelters who are old enough to go to school are not currently attending classes anywhere.

Moreover, homeless children are three times more likely than children in the general population to be abused or neglected. And more than 10 percent of homeless youngsters need medical care.

World Vision is helping churches across the country to enable homeless children and their families to get back on their feet through a program call Project Home Again. For more information, please contact Obadiah Smith, (818) 305-7819.

her mother in the home of a wealthy family in Rio.

Fortunately for Sandra, an especially bright girl, that wealthy family also helped her buy books and clothes for school. As a teenager she worked in the daytime and went to school, eventually learning enough to work as a secretary and occasional translator. Like Wolmer, she's chosen to live close to the edge of poverty and devote some of her time to gathering food and clothes for kids still trapped in the slums.

Whistle blowers like Wolmer and groups such as CEAP have slowly overcome the Brazilians' disbelief and seared their consciences. The chorus of the concerned is growing and the activists have initiated offensives on several fronts.

D. Mauro Morelli, the Catholic bishop of Duque de Caxias, labeled the Baixada Fluminense a "humiliating laboratory

Sandra Cavalcante remembers the hunger and hard work of her childhood in a slum. Now she chooses to help children trapped in the slums.

of injustice" and blamed "the international economic order" which "generates the misery of our people and the poor of the world." As a Christian pastor, he cried, "I want to scream my despair and clamor for justice for our people." CEAP has begun a UNICEF-funded campaign to raise public awareness and published posters that proclaim, "Don't Kill our Children," and picture a young black child in a slum.

Some groups have moved into the slums to stem the problem at the root and keep the kids off the streets. World Vision, for example, working with partner agencies, sponsors schools, hot meal programs, and clinics. Other groups have started homes for children who are completely abandoned, and still more run community-based programs that teach kids income-producing skills. The street kids themselves even held a national conference in Brasilia and used the press to force a meeting with the president.

None of this seems to have slowed down the death squads. Wolmer lives in hiding, depending on whatever police protection he can get. The head of The Community of Small Prophets, a home for boys in Recife, added his voice to the protests and received death threats for his efforts.

By far the largest agent for change in Brazil is the Catholic church, which has angered the Vatican for its involvement in politics and social movements. Hundreds of priests and nuns identify with the poor in the slums, and the hierarchy exerts what pressure it can on the government. With commitment to the poor which is typical of the church in Brazil, Bishop Morelli proclaimed, "An abandoned child in any part of the world goes against humanity," and he promised, "there will never be peace while even one child is a victim of violence." □

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ERIC WHEATER

Through at least 15 different projects, World Vision acts directly with children and adolescents in the streets, as well as with their families and communities. There are three critical ways these projects help Brazil's street children:

1. *Formal and informal education.* The formal education efforts include pre-schools, daycare centers, tutoring classes, and subsidizing the purchase of school materials and school uniforms. The informal education activities include courses that serve as theoretical bases for vocational training, as well as community organizations and organizations for street children.

2. *Health care.* World Vision assists street children with medical and dental help, food programs, provision of herbal medicine, and housing improvements.

3. *Production groups.* Several of the projects train these children in marketable skills such as iron-smithing and wood joinery, silk-screening, cement block-making, tile-making, flower arranging, candy-making, tricot-knitting, crocheting, sachet-making, embroidery, small-animal raising, vegetable gardening, and agriculture. Many of these children are then organized into groups to run their own production facility.

A TRUE STORY AS TOLD TO
RON MACMILLAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CLIFF NIELSEN

Since 1949, itinerant evangelists have become crucial to the vitality and growth of the Christian community in China.

Independent itinerant evangelists are law breakers on at least two counts: The constitution states that evangelism must occur only within designated religious premises, and preachers must be accredited by the local Protestant Three-Self organization.

The life of an itinerant evangelist in China is hectic, sacrificial, and dangerous. The following story is a weekend in the life of one of these evangelists.

On the road with

BROTHER JONAH

This itinerant evangelist in China has all the characteristics of a true saint.



One of history's greatest itinerant preachers, John Wesley, said that the true itinerant needs only four characteristics to be successful: "a back for any bed, a face for any weather, a stomach for any food, and strength for any work."

That describes Brother Jonah, a native of Shanghai, who has been an itinerant preacher throughout China since 1976. He maintains a schedule that would exhaust a 20-year-old. Jonah is 73.

Ijoined up with Jonah in Shanghai. He was collecting a huge pack of Bibles to take into the interior. The bag weighed 60 pounds, bending his slight frame almost to the ground as he staggered off to the railway station where he bought a ticket to a town in Henan Province.

Sitting in a third-class carriage, he tells me, "I received a request to preach the gospel in the village we're going to. Apparently someone was converted under my ministry elsewhere, and he has returned to his village, where he is the only believer." As Jonah talked, the

people around him listened. He was wedged between two young men; two soldiers stood in the crowded aisle and a family of three sat opposite. They all looked at this small man dressed in a drab and shabby Mao suit. I worried, *Is something wrong?*

One soldier finally leaned forward and said, "Old man, tell us why you seem so happy."

Jonah replied with a question: "What do you think? What would be the happiest thing that could ever happen to you, and I'll tell you whether that has happened to me."

He addressed his question to all who were listening. The wife sitting opposite said, "A big house would make me the happiest person in the world." The man next to Jonah said, "No, I just want to be loved by a beautiful woman." Another said, "I'd like a passport to America," and one of the soldiers shouted, "If I had the power to command the People's Liberation Army, I would be the happiest man in the world."

Jonah grinned. They asked, "Do you have any of these? Is that why you are so happy?"

"Yes!" Jonah replied, "I have all of them, and more."

They were aghast. He smiled again. "Let me see now," he said. "I have a mansion so large an emperor would be green with envy; I am loved devotedly by the most beautiful person in the world; I have the perfect freedom to go wherever I wish; and I happen to be a very close friend of the most powerful man on earth. In fact, I have received all this from one person, and his name is Jesus Christ."

For 20 hours, Jonah talked. He pulled out his frayed Bible and took them through it book by book. Hunched over his Bible, he spoke earnestly to his eager audience.

At dawn we reached our destination. Jonah distributed New Testaments and tracts. He shook hands with them,

For 20 hours, Jonah talked. He pulled out his frayed Bible and took them through it book by book.

and we stepped out.

"They are not far from the Kingdom," he said. "All but one of them were greatly convicted by God, but the fellow sitting beside me could spell trouble." As if on cue, the same young man passed on the station platform. He gave us both a long look.

Suddenly another man approached us. "Praise the Lord," he said, looking at Jonah, "God has answered my prayers and sent you." He pointed to three rusty bicycles. "Our transport," he said. "It's a five-hour ride to my village."

I don't know how Jonah managed to balance on the bike with that heavy bag—nor how he had the strength to keep pedaling and talking at the same time, for the young man was full of questions and Jonah answered them all.

Three hours into the journey I pulled alongside him, my legs aching, and joked, "It's a miracle that you are fit enough to do this at your age."

"That's exactly what it is," he replied.

We arrived at the village mid-morning. He wasted no time in gathering a crowd. He simply dove into a house, emerged with two tin pots, and proceeded to bang them together. He shouted over the din, "Friends, come and hear about a God who can really transform your life!" They came running.

He spoke for nearly an hour about his biblical namesake, Jonah. He told them that they had two things in common with the people of Nineveh; first, they were living in ignorance and defiance of the one true God, and second, God would judge them soon if they did not repent.

It was a new teaching to them, but the 200 villagers listened. Jonah later explained, "Chinese people gape with astonishment when they are told that what is wrong with the world is themselves. All China's religions, right up to Mao's 'religion,' affirm that human beings are basically good, it's circumstances that make them bad. So when they hear that *they* are the ones who are bad, they can hardly take it in."

Jonah went on to tell them about God's love for them, and wept tears as he told them of Jesus' sufferings on the cross. Then he led them in a prayer of repentance. About a quarter of the villagers prayed with him. The Kingdom of God had come to that village.

Jonah spent the rest of the afternoon with three converts he selected to lead the new church and gave them a crash course in Christian doctrine. Leaving a stock of Bibles, he exhorted them, "Do nothing hastily, do nothing out of anger. Every decision you make

should be in accord with each other, and only after much prayer and searching of this book."

That evening, someone rode into the village and said that the Public Security Bureau was looking for an evangelist and his companion. That meant trouble.

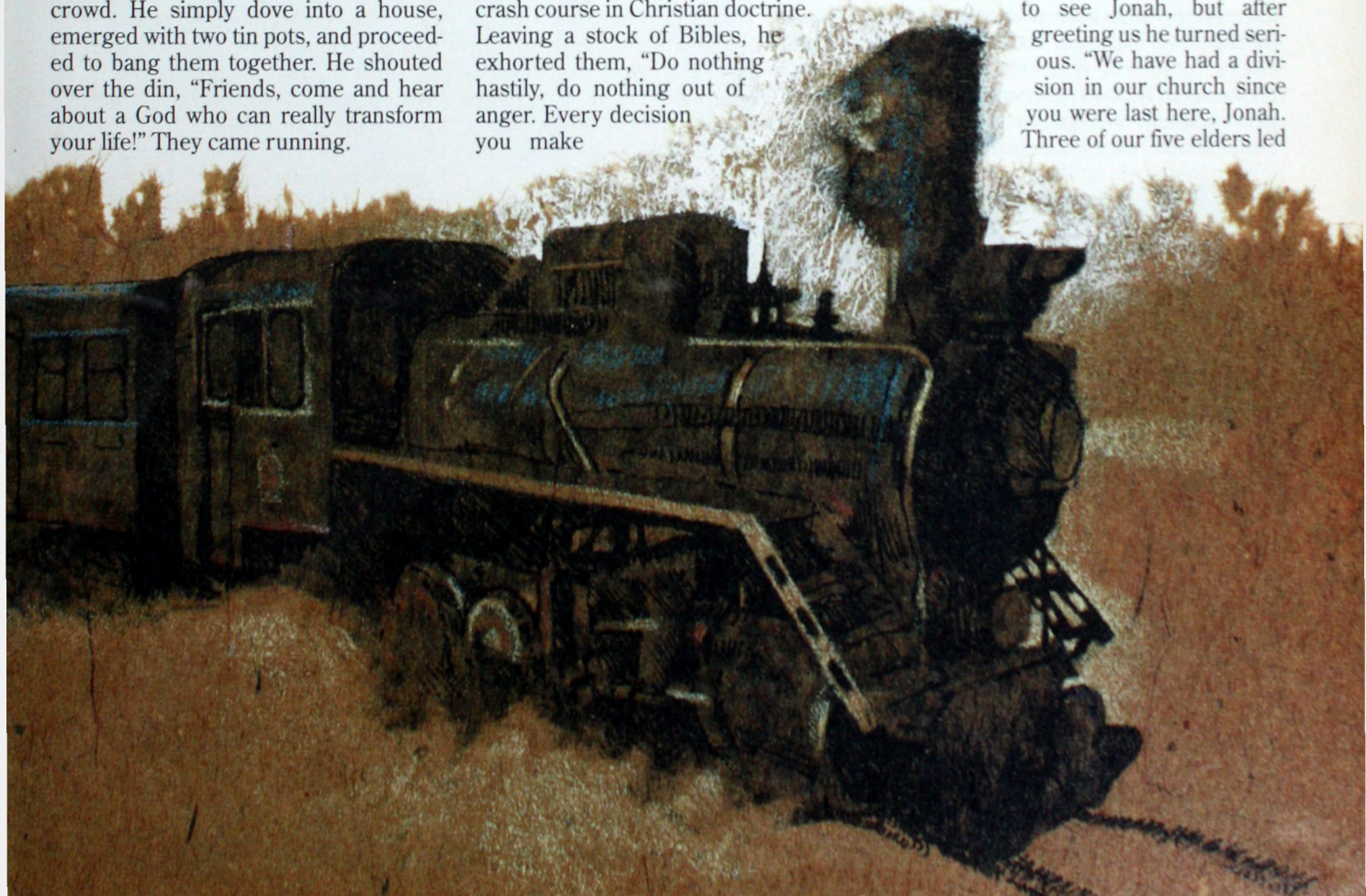
"I knew it," Jonah said. "The young man on the train has informed on us."

We left the village pedalling fast over rutted roads in the black of night. Four hours later, we reached a bus station. The bus was just leaving, and we climbed aboard.

Later we learned what a miracle God had worked for our escape. After we had got on the bus, someone from the village came across the Public Security Bureau car—it had run out of gas barely one mile from the bus station. Had the car been functioning properly, they would have easily overtaken the bus.

Meanwhile we had arrived in this new city. It was Sunday, and Jonah said, "We'll drop in on a house-church leader I know."

The leader was delighted to see Jonah, but after greeting us he turned serious. "We have had a division in our church since you were last here, Jonah. Three of our five elders led



half the church away, and we no longer fellowship together.”

It was a large church, comprised of more than 5,000 members. Three thousand now worshiped with the three renegade elders.

“What was the issue of division?” Jonah asked.

“It has to do with the Lord’s return,” the leader replied. “The three elders believe that the Lord will return in the middle of next year, and that the church should prepare—sell property, leave jobs, and concentrate more on evangelism. The rest of the elders did not share this conviction, and were accused of not showing enough urgency. Eventually they split.”

Jonah said, “Call the original elders together for a meeting with me.” He had been one of the evangelists who helped start this church, and indeed had selected some of the elders.

That afternoon six elders gathered in the house. The atmosphere was tense and strained. Jonah entered the room and surveyed the group. He said nothing. They looked back. He sat down. All of a sudden great sobs heaved his body, tears cascaded down his cheeks, and he cried out in anguish, “O Lord, how we have dirtied your name!”

His grief, so genuine and so deep, broke the strained atmosphere, and soon all the elders were weeping. The Lord’s name had been dishonored; the elders confessed, repented, and were reconciled. There were no words. No fingers pointed. No voices raised. No issues aired. Tears were enough.

Just as we were preparing to leave, there was a knock on the door. To our horror it was the local party boss. Was he there to round up the six elders? Or was he after Jonah, who was well known to the authorities as an undesirable?

“Who is the evangelist Jonah?” he asked.

Jonah stepped forward and said, “I am.”

“Will you come and pray for my 8-year-old son? He is very sick.”

Jonah replied, “Why have you come to me? What makes you think I can help?”

“Because I have heard you are in touch with a God of real power,” the party boss answered.

Yet Jonah persisted, “Why do you think I should ask God to heal your son? After all, you have not shown much liking for Christians.”

Tension mounted. Was Jonah going too far? This man was powerful. One word from him and we would be spending the next few months in jail. But it seemed his child’s need banished all thoughts of revenge.

“I have also heard that Christians are full of love,” he said, “and that they forgive their enemies.”

“Do you think that is true?” Jonah asked. “What sense does it make to reach out to enemies in love?”

With great emotion, the man declared, “All my life I have been taught to hate—to hate tradition, to hate capitalism, to hate the West, to hate the revisionists. Always the cry is ‘hate, hate, hate.’ I know I have accomplished nothing. And I know China has gone no-

It was an amazing weekend: nine hours of hard pedaling, 40 hours on a hard railway seat, and eight hours on a bumpy bus.

where. I know hate only kills. My wife is dead, my family is dead, and sometimes I feel dead myself. Hatred has killed them, and it’s killing me. But I still feel love—love for my son—and I know that without that little love I bear for him, and he for me, I am dead. Christians are supposed to worship a God of love. Maybe this God will take pity on my sick son.”

There was a shocked silence. Jonah said gently, “We do worship a God of love, and he is the One who has given you the love you have for your son. But you don’t have to ask me to pray. Why not speak to God yourself about your son?”

“Will he listen to me?” the man gasped.

“Of course,” Jonah replied. “Now you pray, and we will pray with you.”

The distraught father prayed: “God, since you are love, save my son, and free him to live a life of love!”

We all said “Amen” and hurried after him to his son. The boy was completely well, and two more souls were united to Christ.

It was an amazing weekend: nine hours of bicycle pedaling, 40 hours on a hard railway seat, and eight hours on a bumpy bus. Jonah led more than 50 people from a remote village into the Kingdom of God, he started a church, held an all-night seminar on Bible doctrine to 10 young people on a train, reconciled the leaders of 5,000 Christians, and converted a high-ranking party cadre through the healing of his son.

Was he tired? He returned to his apartment and sifted through his mail. Another invitation had arrived from Gansu Province, requesting him to instruct 600 full-time workers in a house-church movement. That very evening he was on the train to Gansu Province.

He once said, “Rest is for the next world!” Jonah is a man of his word. □

Ron MacMillan is the Asia correspondent for News Network International, for which this story was written.



REBUILDING ROMANIA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Health care became virtually nonexistent for the elderly and 120,000 children. Drs. James and Barbara Bascom are helping to change that.

BRUCE BRANDER / WORLD VISION



In April 1990, Drs. James and Barbara Bascom were invited to Romania as consultants. They expected to visit the country, evaluate the problems within its medical system, and offer their expertise through proposals and occasional visits.

Instead they found there *was* no Romanian medical system. In the inhumane and cruel logic of the Nicolae Ceausescu regime, only industries that produced export items were in favor. Medical care was an expense to cut.

The Bascoms, funded by World Vision and others, made a five-year commitment to stay in Romania and help the country rebuild. James Bascom, a surgeon and specialist in creating physician training systems, coordinates the Medical Education Redevelopment Project (MERP) that calls on medical schools and physicians worldwide to arrange fellowships, lectures, visits to and from Romania, and shipments of equipment and literature.

Barbara Bascom, a pediatrician and child development specialist, manages the Romanian Orphans Social Educational Services Project. With teams of child development specialists, ROSES is currently helping 3000 of the more than 120,000 orphaned and abandoned children who have been held in warehouses, underfed, underclothed, and denied proper medical, developmental, and educational support.

WV: What did you find when you first entered Romania?

JB: The mood of the country was totally different than it is now. People were running in the streets and flashing victory signs. The mood was high and there was a lot of hope before the elections discouraged them again.

The country was in total devastation. The people had poor heating supplies, food was scarce—we saw all the things you saw on the news.

Thousands of children given up by their parents were growing up in cribs. Infants were swad-

dled so that only their eyes showed. They had no physical or mental stimulation, not even the freedom to play with their own feet. Older children developed odd behavior or rocking movements just because they were starved for stimulation.

After visiting some medical schools we discovered that they too were in total disarray. Romania needed to have its medical education system rehabilitated. That was its highest priority. They wanted large quantities of information fast.

WV: Why was the medical system in such poor shape?

JB: During the past two decades, the regime systematically dismantled the medical system until there were no nursing schools or other ancillary training schools. The few medical schools open were severely underfunded. Medical journals became forbidden reading in 1974. Young doctors had to be trained with the antiquated methods of previous decades. Innovation and research within the country was forbidden.

WV: How could oppressing the health system further Ceausescu's goals?

JB: It is difficult for Westerners to envision just how delusional the government was. Ceausescu wanted a country of 30 million by the end of the century and only had 23 million people to start with. So he required that every family have five children, whether they had enough heat, clothing, food, or space.

Women were examined almost monthly to determine if they were pregnant. So if a child was born with a problem the family gave it to the 'orphanages.' In reality most of the children are not orphans; they are simply abandoned by parents too poor to care for them.

The public health system was so distorted. It spent time and money charting women's cycles

while there was a measles epidemic, and less than half the population received the vaccine.

This system lost sight completely of any sense of humanity, spirituality, or fair play. The human being was just another natural resource, like a forest to be cut down when wood was needed.

Furthermore, ill or aged 'resources' were considered things on which medical care shouldn't be wasted. Children with the slightest defects—cleft palate, club foot, a hernia—were warehoused with an unspoken hope that they would die. In fact, in some of the orphanages half of the children died every winter because the government provided lit-

tle heating, few blankets, and thin clothing.

At the other end, no one over 60 had access to emergency rooms and limited access to hospital facilities. Many older people fled to the country to care for children in exchange for the right to live.

It is interesting, however, that the government ran three hospitals—one for the party, one for the Securitat, and one for the military. Each one was modern, with new equipment such as a CAT scan and sufficient supplies. And Ceausescu's 80-year-old mother received very good care.

WV: How does MERP plan to help rebuild the health care system?

JB: We primarily want to work *with* Romanian physicians by offering continuing education courses such as neo-natal and infant resuscitation.

Medical supplies, equipment, videos, texts, and pharmaceuticals are coming from numerous countries. Romanians must learn when to use and how to operate them. We are promoting an exchange program between Western medical schools and professionals in Romania and arranging visits for exchanging information. Computers have been installed in medical libraries and hospitals making information available from medical journals worldwide.

Still, one of the big tasks will be to reestablish confidence in the public health system. For the next two to five years, we cannot expect to offer a public health program and have anyone do anything but run in the opposite direction.

WV: What hope exists for the children now and how will ROSES help?

BB: There is great hope for many of the children. Many will eventually be reunited with their families. But we have a long way to go. Some of the children are very damaged and developmentally delayed; they will suffer lifelong effects.

The survivors are very interesting. It's a combination of survival of the fittest and opportunity or coincidence. The ones who were a little cuter or had something special about them got more attention. The staff did what you would expect for people with very limited resources; they focused on children who seemed to have the most potential and singled out certain children as a teacher might choose a favorite pupil.

We really don't know how many children there are—at least 120,000, including the entire age range. There may be more in institutions we haven't identified elsewhere in the country.

Tons and tons of toys and clothes have been trucked in. But these children need expert services far more than toys—and believe me, they need toys! That's where ROSES comes in.

Our main goal is to train the Romanian staff in the developmental progress of the children by offering staff training, and medical assistance to the children.



World Vision desires to let Romanian children grow up among their own people and culture. Many people in the United States, however, are interested in adopting Romanian orphans. We suggest they consider those children with physical handicaps and special needs.

Romanian adoption can be difficult and expensive. Those interested in adopting should carefully examine the background and credentials of any individual or organization offering to help.

The following agency can provide details on adopting children with a diversity of needs:

International Concerns Committee For Children
911 Cypress Drive
Boulder, CO 80303
(303) 494-8333



We are focusing on institutions that have a relationship with a medical school or training institution. That way, the children can receive expert care, while staff and future professionals can have hands-on experience. This also allows the hospitals to provide diagnoses of the physical problems these children have including malnutrition, cleft palate, cerebral palsy.

A significant number of children have AIDS. They were infected when the staff injected weak newborns with adult blood from previously used needles. These children will need even more special care.

We are directly affecting more than 3,000 children now. That is a large number until you consider the number we can't help yet. There just isn't enough expert staff to go around.

WV: How did you know the Lord wanted you to minister in Romania?

JB: There was no particularly inspiring moment or calling. It was so natural we hardly talked about it before committing. Professionally, we're an unusual couple, partnering for years on committees and development projects. With Barbara in pediatrics and me in surgery we had enough separation that we were complimentary without stepping on one another's toes.

BB: It was almost a feeling of predestination. It challenged us and called on our experiences. It allowed us to work separately but with a coordinated effort. And we happened to have the necessary experience and talent.

You'd think it was a big deal to decide to commit to five years of helping Romania rebuild its medical system from scratch. But it felt like trying something on and discovering that it didn't even need tailoring. It was a perfect fit for our talents, temperaments, and marriage.

We just aren't content with ordinary, well-defined jobs. A position in a little town becomes a county project, then a region and pretty soon one of us ends up in charge of some big program somewhere. Why not help a country rebuild its medical system?

WV: What appears to be the spiritual condition of the people?

BB: We were in Cluj, a city in the middle of Romania, for the first Easter celebration since the revolution. Easter is the most important religious event of the Eastern Orthodox year. Seeing the joy of the people as they publicly worshiped for the first time in years convinced us that they had a lot of soul left that had to be given the chance to grow.

It took 20-40 years to establish the miserable condition at the time of the revolution. In Romania the devastation lasted until late 1989, unlike Bulgaria and other countries that have enjoyed some degree of opening up during the past five years. Romania still remains isolated from much of Eastern Europe.

They say that the people didn't object to lining up for bread and other food because that was the only safe place to visit. Even one's home wasn't always safe.

Yet I can see that their spirit is there. It has been so battered that it will have to be developed, reinforced, and allowed to recover. It won't happen quickly. We look for ways to speed up the trust process, but it moves at its own pace. □

Marcia Coppess is a free-lance writer in Pasadena, Calif.

"Thousands of children given up by their parents were growing up in cribs."



BRUCE BRANDEE / WORLD VISION

World Vision is looking for qualified people to fill the following positions in Romania:

- Child Psychologist
- Clinical Director
- Developmental Pediatrician
- Finance Manager
- Nurse
- Occupational Therapist
- Operations Director
- Physical Therapist
- Speech/Language Therapist

If you have any further questions regarding World Vision's work in Romania and how you can help, please call 1-800-777-5777.

This boy makes charcoal in the Philippines. Children are more susceptible than adults to respiratory disease and other illnesses.

Children **W** at Work

In the Third World, more than 250 million children, some as young as 6, spend their childhood years laboring for pennies. Usually under unsanitary and unsafe conditions, these children may work up to 14-hour days in households, factories, farms, and shops. Others peddle gum, candy, fruit, hand-made toys, clothes, blankets, and other wares on the streets.

To many of the poor, working children are necessary to feed and house the family. In some cultures, people believe child labor teaches children responsibility.

But the work is often back-breaking, the consequences heartbreaking. Children, more susceptible than adults to disease and abuse, suffer low wages, severe injuries, and even death. Factory pollutants may stunt children's growth or cause lung disease. Hours of picking tea leaves from thorny vines can leave little fingers scarred and deformed.

This work also deprives children of education, giving them little chance to climb out of their poverty. Time for play is scarce. The 1990 UNICEF-sponsored World Summit for Children has called for developing nations to create or revise child labor laws that protect children's right to health, education, and a childhood. World Summit leaders, however, emphasize that the only way to eliminate child labor is to reduce or eliminate poverty. □



FAMILY LIFE
EDUCATION
HEALTH
ARMED CONFLICT
SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Top concerns for the world's children,
as identified by UNICEF

CHILD LABOR



ERIC WHEATER

In developing countries, vehicles and draft animals are not widely available. Children carry some of the burden of getting goods to market. A Kenyan boy (below) carries bananas and a Nepalese child (left) hauls oranges.



ERIC WHEATER



BRUCE STRONG / WORLD VISION

Long hours spent working in factories and farms, and selling or begging in city streets keep children from school. Without an education, few children will escape poverty.

SAMARITAN SAMPLER

RESOURCES FOR
HELPING OTHERS
IN THE NAME
OF CHRIST

Compiled and written
by Karen E. Klein



PLAYING FAIR?

You may not have played "Plan-tation" or "The Hunger Cycle" at your last youth gathering, but you might want to give them a try next month. They are two of the board

games included in a new educational resource packet addressing the issue of world hunger from World Vision's Development Education Department.

Aimed at teenagers and young adults, the "Playing Fair?" packet includes five handouts brimming with illustrations, charts, games, real-life examples, and practical ideas on hunger topics including land use, international debt, trade, and the forests.

For example, your students may be surprised to learn how the profits from an average cup of coffee are divided so that the growers get the short end of the bean. Or how the local hamburger stand may be related to the loss of the rain forest in Latin America. The basic packet, containing one teacher's guide and five student handouts, is available free of charge. To order, contact: World Vision, Development Education Department, 919 W. Huntington Dr., Monrovia, Calif. 91016; (818)357-7979

O FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES

When the congregation gathers at the Jacksonville Cross-Cultural Center, the result might be likened to the scene at the Tower of Babel. The church, in Jacksonville, Fla., includes four separate congregations that all speak different languages. "We're a truly international community and we're committed to meeting the needs of this community," says Joffre Vivoni, the Puerto Rican dentist-turned-pastor who founded the first Spanish-speaking Church of God congregation in 1981.

Since then, the multi-cultural

church has added three additional congregations, one ministering in English, one in Tagalog (Filipino), and one in French Creole (Haitian). A total of 14 services and prayer meetings are held each week and a radio program, "Jesus Speaks Your Language," is broadcast on Sunday nights in Tagalog, French, Korean, Spanish, and Italian. During international services, which include all 250 church members, hymns are sung in four languages simultaneously, Vivoni said. The various youth groups rely heavily on pantomime skits. "There's no talking, but you can see the message loud and clear," Vivoni says.

For more information on multi-cultural outreach, contact: The Jacksonville Cross-Cultural Center, P.O. Box 8068, Jacksonville, Fla. 32239; (904) 744-8263.

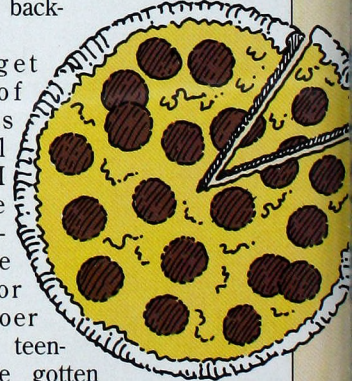
PASS THE PEPPERONI

An uninvited crowd of high school students spent lunch time and breaks on the steps of the Lee Street Christian Reformed Church—skateboarding, smoking cigarettes, and generally hanging out. The church posted "No Loitering" signs, but they didn't work. So Pastor Jim Boer decided to try a different approach. One day about a year and a half ago, he picked up some pizzas and joined the teenagers for lunch. "I thought if I called my congregation to evangelism, I'd better be actively engaged in it myself," he says.

Pretty soon, the church started a regular Friday afternoon "pizza ministry," including Bible study and discipleship, and then began hosting monthly parties and Christian concerts for about 30 teenagers that have no church back-ground.

"We get a flood of questions on spiritual issues and I think we've destereotyped the church for them," Boer says. The teenagers have gotten

help from Boer and volunteer church counselors in issues ranging from substance abuse to attempted suicide and pregnancy. Two of the kids' mothers, both non-Christians, are beginning to get involved with the program. For more information on the pizza ministry, contact Boer at Lee Street Christian Reformed Church, 1271 Lee St. SW, Wyoming, Mich. 49509; (616) 245-9307.



HE'S FEEDING THEIR HEARTS

DAVID WYLIE

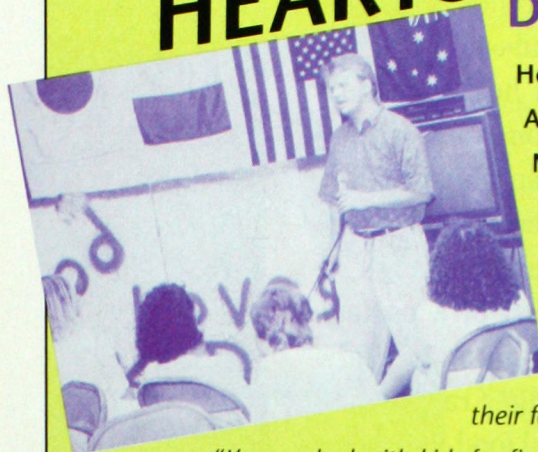
Home: Atlanta, Georgia

Age: 25

Ministry: Youth Pastor

Profile: Big-time extrovert, slightly out of control, loves kids, heart for those who hurt.

Latest Accomplishment: Helping young people put their faith into action.



"I've worked with kids for five years. The best activity we've ever done has been the 30 Hour Famine program. All who are involved become more aware of the reality of hunger, more compassionate in every area of their life."

His Advice: *"The way to a young person's heart is through their stomach."*

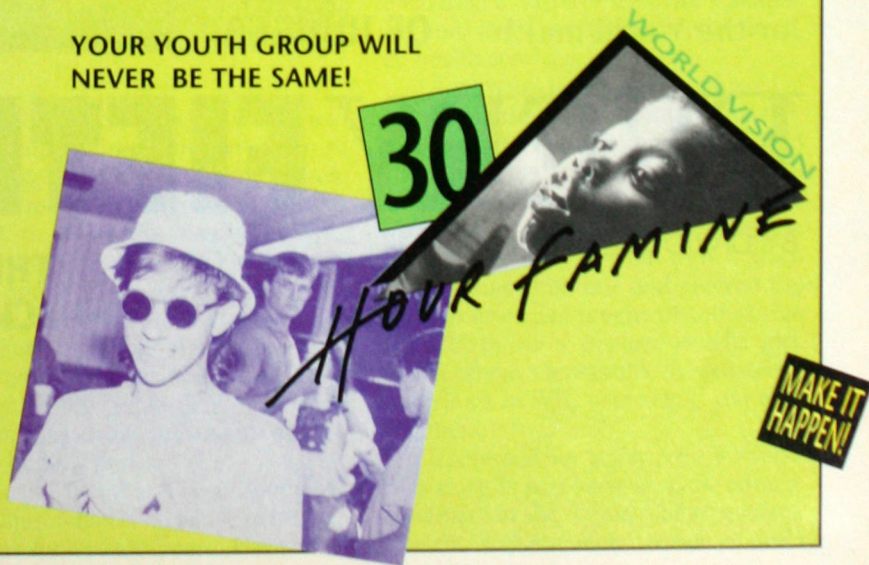
FIND A WAY TO THEIR HEARTS

Join thousands of people across North America on **February 21 & 22, 1992**

Go 30 hours without food and feel what 40,000 children worldwide experience every day. Through World Vision's 30 Hour Famine, your youth group, school or individuals can learn about the causes of world hunger while raising money to fight the problem. World Vision supplies plenty of materials and ideas to make the 30 hours fun and eye-opening, so call now and start planning!

1-800-7FAMINE

YOUR YOUTH GROUP WILL NEVER BE THE SAME!



SUCH A DEAL!

When people in Langley, British Columbia pick up a bargain at the local thrift shop, they're also helping put the Bible into the hands of Romanians. The Bibles for Missions thrift store raises funds for the World Home Bible League in Ontario, Canada.

Staffed by volunteers and fueled by donations of clothing, furniture,



housewares, books, appliances, and other usable discards, the store funnels all its proceeds into sending Bibles to Romania.

If you're interested in more information on the Bibles for Missions stores, contact Ben De Regt, 46651 Hope River road, Chilliwack, B.C. V2P 7L5; (604) 792-1421.

“Development is every biblically based activity of the Body of Christ, his church, which assists in bringing men toward the place of complete reconciliation with God and complete reconciliation with their fellow men and their environment.”

—Bob Moffit,
for World Evangelical
Fellowship

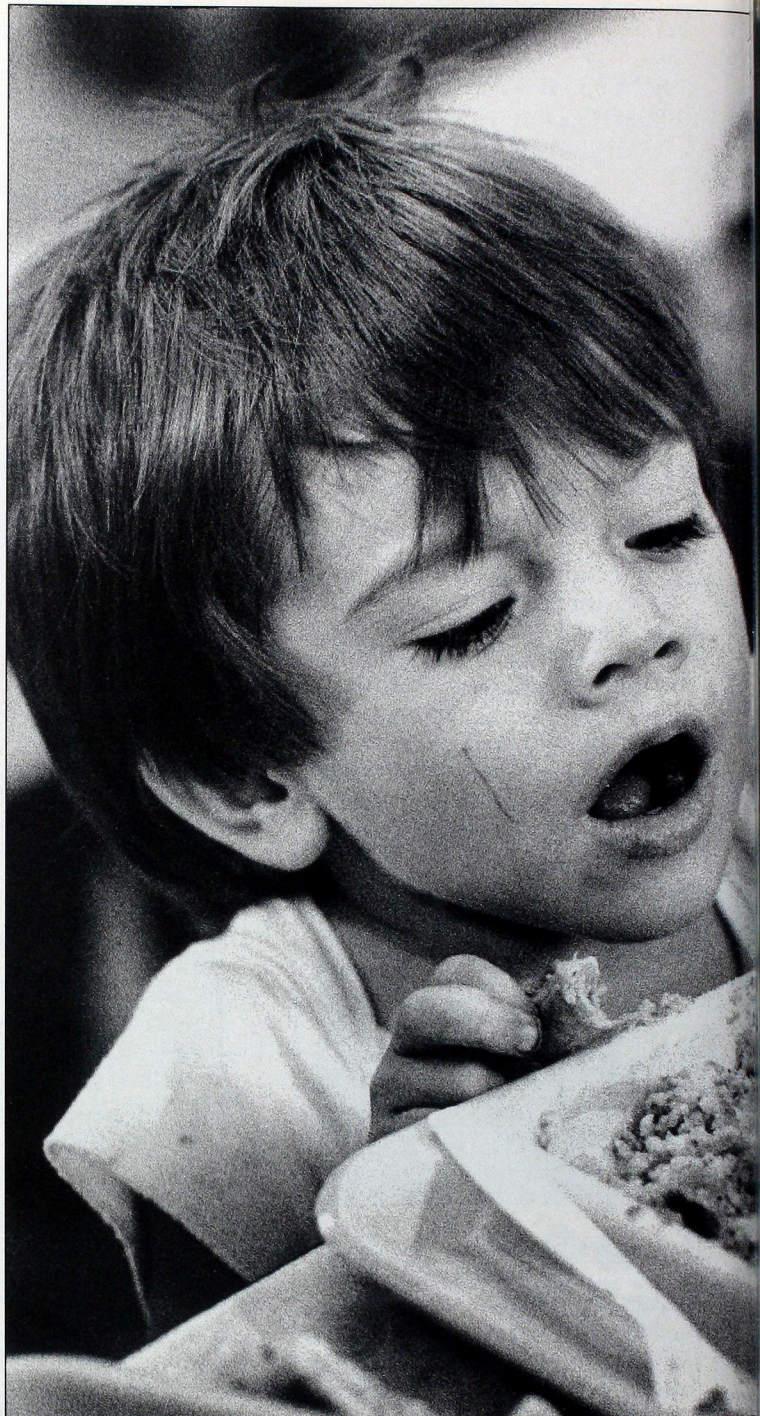


Three years ago in rural Polk County, North Carolina, a medium-sized church held an offering for hungry people. The largest contribution was a mere 25 cents. A small number of other churches across the nation—less than a thousand—joined Tryon Congregational Church in holding similar offerings. Not a single person in any of these churches donated more than a quarter.

Yet their modest donations were multiplied a thousand-fold. Because of enough 25-cent contributions—the cost of a postage stamp at the time—a small group of Christians concerned about hunger raised \$118 million to pay for nutritional food for undernourished children in the United States.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus performed a similar miracle, feeding hungry people by multiplying two fish and five loaves of bread. Today he is still working miracles for hungry people through another kind of bread, Bread for the World, a Christian citizens' movement against hunger. Through its annual Offering of Letters campaign, in which letters are sent to Congress to support important measures that help hungry people, Bread for the World multi-

DESPITE OUR WEALTH AS A NATION, NEARLY 12 MILLION CHILDREN ARE HUNGRY OR AT RISK OF HUNGER.



EVERY FIFTH CHILD

BY DAVID BECKMANN

THIS IS THE STORY OF WHAT ONE CHURCH AND BREAD FOR THE WORLD ARE DOING ABOUT HUNGER.



plies gifts Christians make—gifts as small as a 25-cent stamp.

The Offering of Letters service in 1989 was the first ever held by the Tryon Congregational Church. Church members wrote 80 letters to their senators and representatives urging them to support a bill to increase funding for the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children. WIC is an exceptionally successful program that provides vital nutrients to pregnant women and their children. The program is very cost-effective and improves the lives of children by directing care during critical stages of development.

The church collected the letters in the offering plate and offered them to God as a celebration of faith and citizenship. Six months after the church sent the letters, Congress increased WIC funding by \$118 million. This increase helped more than 200,000 additional high-risk, expectant mothers and babies obtain nutritional food during the most crucial period of their lives. Each letter represented the equivalent of a \$500 donation of food and nutritional counseling to a hungry person.

The 500-member Tryon Congregational Church has been active in hunger concerns for several years. Ever since

the 1984-85 Ethiopian famine, the church's 10-member Hunger Concern and Action Group has met monthly to discuss ways they can respond to famine and to needs in their own community. They have also given to the local food pantry; sent tools and agricultural supplies to developing countries; and provided support for a 10-year-old Indian boy's education.

"We've learned that if we really want to make an impact on hunger, we need to go beyond handouts and charity," says Skip Morse, a member of the church's hunger group. "Bread for the World's Offering of Letters campaign gives us an excellent way to not only help hungry people by feeding them, but to support programs that give them nutritional education and job training so they can be permanently removed from the ranks of the hungry."

Elaine, a 36-year-old mother of three from Tryon, is one of the people the church helped. Elaine was left with two young boys to care for when her husband went to prison. Her 3-year-old son, Jason, was anemic and her newborn baby, David, was terribly underweight (only 4 pounds 12 ounces at birth).

Without her husband's income, Elaine couldn't afford the nutritious foods that her two small boys needed. Desperate and needing help, Elaine went to the nearby Saluda Medical Center and filled out an application for the WIC program.

Through WIC, Elaine received vouchers for foods high in vitamin C, calcium, and iron—the very nutrients that people with little money for food don't get. The clinic helped Elaine improve her sons' diets, increasing iron to build up their red blood cells. They showed her how to stretch her money to feed her family and provided her with recipes for the new nutritious foods. Elaine was encouraged to have a doctor examine her sons and was referred to other needed health services.

Two years later, Jason graduated at age 5 from the WIC program with a normal, healthy hemoglobin level. David was also in the program to the age of 5, after which he was no longer anemic and had an above average height and weight. Elaine became pregnant with a third child during this time and entered the WIC program as a pregnant mother. She gave birth to a normal weight girl, leshia, whom she was able to breast-feed as a result of WIC counseling and food vouchers.

Elaine and her family are a WIC success story, in part because of the advocacy efforts of the Tryon Congregational Church. Unfortunately not all mothers

and children are so lucky. Numerous studies have praised the WIC program for effectively combating hunger; for every dollar spent on the prenatal aspect of the program \$3 are saved in medical costs. Despite this, the program only serves 55 percent of eligible people. Federal funding for WIC is too low to reach the additional 4 million low-income women and children who are at risk of hunger.

The 1980s were not a good decade for children. In one of the richest nations in the world, 11.5 million children under 12 are hungry or at risk of hunger. This sobering figure comes from a recent study by the Food Research and Action Center, which defined hunger as the recurring lack of nutrients and calories necessary to fuel the body, due to a family's insufficient economic resources.

In other words, every fifth child in the United States faces hunger.

America's hungry children don't have bloated bellies or resemble emaciated skeletons. But in contrast to other

children, hungry children are more than four times as likely to suffer from fatigue, more than three times as likely to suffer from unwanted weight loss, irritability, and concentration problems, and twice as likely to have frequent headaches and colds. When children are hungry they can't concentrate in school, and when they're ill they miss school.

Most poor and hungry children aren't in families on welfare, but in families whose parents work or want to work, and do not have enough income to meet their needs. Falling wages for unskilled labor and the current recession are forcing more families to choose between paying for rent or food, heat or health care. An increasing number of Americans must turn to state and federal programs for help.

Thanks to the Tryon Congregational Church and others who call on Congress to increase funding for hunger-combating programs, Elaine received help when she needed it.

The Tryon Congregational Church went further than most in learning about

hunger in America. Members of the Congregational Church's Hunger Group decided to put a human face to their 1989 letter-writing efforts. Two members of the group, Skip Morse and Dave Wells, visited the Saluda WIC office. There they sat through an application interview with a woman applying for WIC. That woman was Elaine.

Morse recalls, "We were so impressed with Elaine. She has shattered a lot of stereotypes of what it means to be hungry in America. For example, she received extra WIC vouchers when she became pregnant last year. After she lost that child due to a miscarriage, she promptly returned the extra vouchers she received. We knew immediately she was a person we had to latch on to!"

Since that first meeting, the hunger group began to develop a relationship with Elaine and her family. They supported her through the birth of her daughter Ieshia and offered help during that period. The past two years, the group provided Christmas dinner, as well as gifts for Elaine and the children. The group has offered further help to Elaine, but as Morse says, "Elaine is a proud woman and hasn't asked for help or handouts."

The Tryon Congregational Church is also taking part in the latest Bread for the World's Offering of Letters campaign; the Every Fifth Child campaign to reduce hunger among children in America. The campaign seeks to pass legislation to increase funding for three cost-effective and proven U.S. government programs—WIC, Head Start, and Job Corps—that address the causes of childhood hunger in the United States.

At least 1,000 churches and more than 100,000 Christians are needed to write letters to Congress for there to be additional increases for these programs. "God is alive and working among all of us, calling us to take care of his little ones," Morse says. "We are planning to do everything in our power to help, so that five out of five children in our nation are fed."

While the cost of a postage stamp has increased since the Tryon Congregational Church held their first Offering of Letters, the benefits that a stamp and a letter can provide for hungry people remain priceless. If you or your church are interested in Bread for the World's Every Fifth Child Faces Hunger in the U.S. campaign, please contact Bread for the World, Offering of Letters, 802 Rhode Island Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20018 or call (202) 269-0200. □

David Beckmann is president of Bread for the World in Washington, D.C.

A young child receives loving care at the Saluda Medical Center. It participates in the government's Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, which has proved to be exceptionally successful for pregnant women and their children.



CHRIS BARTOL

MORE THAN A PUPPET SHOW

BY EMILY KROESE

As the sky-blue "puppet-mobile" turned off the main road and onto the dirt one, I prayed that we were nowhere near our destination.

"How much farther, Pastor Tom?" I asked.

"Oh, not too far. We're in Poncho Villa now."

"Oh." I tried to sound as though that were good news. I looked out the window of the motor home we would use as the base for our Christian puppet show for the next two days. As far as I could see, there was a single color—a dull, dusty shade of desolation, filling me with a shocked hopelessness.

The Mexican sun beat down, making the dilapidated shanties look like they had merged with the barren mountain that rose behind the town. The shanties had neither doors nor windows; instead, they had gaping holes in their plywood walls. The only visual variations were the electric poles, which gave the town a gridlike appearance. I couldn't see anything green or beautiful. "This looks like ground zero," I thought.

Pastor Tom said that when he had started coming to Poncho Villa, the town filled one small valley. "But about 10 years ago, people just started pouring into Poncho Villa. They built homes with whatever they could, wherever they could find room."

When we found the church, my heart sank. Although it was in better shape than the rest of the village, it was not the oasis I had hoped it would be. We pulled through the gate and parked. The building itself was concrete and sturdy, but it had neither doors nor windows, offering no relief from the gritty dust everywhere.

The other building in the church

Reprinted with permission from The Banner.

complex appeared to be in better condition. It was made partially of brick and had doors and windows. Inside, carpeting covered a portion of the cement floor. The walls were also partly paneled.

Our puppetry group had come down to Poncho Villa to give two puppet shows. As we walked from shanty to hut to tell people about the shows, I felt I had stepped back in time. A young woman bent over a washboard, the hot sun blazing on her back. Some children, one of whom was naked, played in the dirt yard, while others jumped over ditches used for waste disposal—both human and otherwise. Mangy dogs lapped at the water

over the curtain, hoping to grasp just one of those magical puppets. Even after the show was over, the searching hands did not rest. What seemed like hundreds of children crowded around us, seeking to touch us, to somehow relate to us.

While I did not understand much of what they said to me, the friendship in the eyes and smiles of these children was clear. So was their desperate poverty. I was disgusted that all I could give them was a second-rate puppet show in broken Spanish.

After a night of rest in the church, we had to go out and canvass again. Another woman and I walked along with our Mex-

THE BANNER



I was disgusted that all I could give them was a second-rate puppet show.

ican partner. We did not speak. We simply absorbed the sights around us. Our guide left us to cover another area.

As we walked up a hill, a young Mexican man strode toward us. He looked rough and had a scar on his neck. Uneasiness swept over me.

"Good morning!" he said to us.

Yet people came out in droves Friday night to see what these blond-haired, blue-eyed gringos were up to. Groping, dirty hands reached under, around, and

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When you place the countertop displays in your neighborhood stores and restaurants, you're giving others a chance to give their spare change to make a difference. Each time you collect the money, you are helping to care for hungry children and families.

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Pasadena, CA 91131-0151 VV22B1


WORLD VISION
Helping People Care

"How are you girls doing?"

"You speak English?" we asked, surprised.

He did. We told the young man about the puppet show. I did not expect him to be interested.

"You are Christians?" he asked us.

We nodded.

"How long have you been Christians?"

"Ah ... all our lives," we said.

"Born into the faith. That is wonderful! I am a Christian, too."

"That's great!" my friend replied.

"Praise God!" I said. Our responses seemed shallow and forced.

"I have not always been a Christian," he said. "I have only been a Christian one year. Before that, I was into drugs." My eyes focused on the large scar on his neck. "When I first became a Christian, my family laughed at me. They thought I had lost my mind because of the drugs. But you see, I believe the promises of Jesus. I believe when it says in the Bible, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household.' I believed, and it came true. In this one year, 15 of my family members have become Christians—my wife, my two children, and many others."

"Praise the Lord," we said, deeply moved this time.

"You see, my family and I, we are poor, but we are Christians."

"That's what really matters, isn't it?" I replied.

The man glanced at his watch and told us he had to go to work. We exchanged parting blessings and went our separate ways.

Later that day we retraced our steps and headed out of Poncho Villa, back to paved roads, back to the States. As the last of the shanties faded into the barren landscape, I remembered Paul's words from Romans 8: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." I began to realize that life was not so hopeless for the people of Poncho Villa. There was a greater future in store for them. Maybe, just maybe, that was why we were down here, to help a few—maybe just one—find that future.

As we turned onto the main road, back toward what seemed like civilization, I thought of my own people, middle-class Americans. How would the comfortable, with all their substitutes for happiness and peace, realize their desperate hopelessness? The young Mexican's voice echoed in my ears, "We may be poor ..." There was no doubt about that. He was poor, but he was so rich.

Emily Kroese is a student at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa.

NEXT TO THE LAST WORD

Most people don't read mastheads regularly but I hope you read ours occasionally. This issue's masthead gives away our age—we just turned 36. It also tells you who World Vision is, what we do, where to write us, and how to notify us when your address changes.

I hope you notice the men and women who make up our recently formed Magazine Advisory Board. They are respected Christian leaders in their fields—education, journalism, and business. We're indebted to them for critiquing the magazine and discussing future issues.

We welcome Chris Redner, former editor of World Vision Canada's **Childview** magazine, as our senior editor, and Tamera Marko, a graduating journalism student at Pepperdine University, as assistant editor.

Two distinctive logos identify our commitment to financial integrity and the environment. We also gladly list our lengthy ties with two Christian press associations.

Who ever said mastheads make dull reading?—*Terry Madison*

WORLD VISION

Volume 36, Number 1

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World Vision is a nonprofit, Christian humanitarian agency dedicated to serving God by helping people care for those in need. It ministers to children and families, provides emergency aid, fosters self-reliance, furthers evangelism, strengthens Christian leadership, and increases public awareness of poverty around the world.

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WITH HELP COMES HOPE

This was my third trip into Mathare Valley, Nairobi's largest and fastest growing slum. It doesn't get easier. There are 350,000 people living many steps below the poverty level. Their common tin roofs stretch as far as one can see, as flat as the common dirt floors on which they scratch out their meager lives.

When it rains, the slum is an instant quagmire. When epidemics hit, there is widespread death. If the piped-in water were to be interrupted, the slum would die within a week.

The pathetic little shops that front each home and the dirty streets themselves are crawling with people. The slum has all the activity of worms working a dump. Adult men seem preoccupied, sullen. They look at us, and their eyes express the anger of unrewarded labor. Materially, we represent what they now know they can never achieve. The women are more forgiving, more open and receptive. They see our fascination with their children, the touch of hands, and they nod in silent acceptance.

It is the children, however, who destroy all barriers. Just as curious as we are, they follow us everywhere, practicing their limited English, wanting to shake our hands, touch our blond hair. They are not afraid. Indeed, we represent a grateful break in the tedium of slum life—a life where play and games are foreign.

Still, we feel exactly what we are: intruders. This is an intrusion. White Americans, sensitive and pragmatically frightened enough to remove all our flashy jewelry before entering. Wise enough to wait for the three police escorts. Curious enough to risk our valuable cameras (this is something we don't often see, something very different, and it needs to be recorded). So we invade where we don't belong and won't stay. The heat and odors, as much as the threatening males, will make our visit brief.

I'm uncomfortable. I feel guilty that the visit itself is so patronizing. *Guilt isn't good*, I tell myself, it's simply a paralytic emotion that won't accomplish anything. But what could I accomplish? My American fix-it mentality is humbled. This is unfixable! Spiritual warfare is going on, and the bad guys are winning. Even Mother Teresa's words, "God has called us to be obedient, not successful," provide little comfort. I find myself looking for our van, our transportation out of the slum, back to the hotel, air conditioning, and a hot shower to cleanse my body, if not my memory.

Just ahead our group is gathering around a young mother. She is smiling, and her personality is engaging. Her children gather around her, and we are told that one of them has been sponsored by an American family. The mother appreciates the help.

She needs a great deal of it, since she has recently been widowed.

Help has come from outside the slum. Someone cares. Someone has responded. Someone this mother has never met cares for and has compassion on her most precious possessions—her children. With help comes hope. Hope is sustaining. The widowed mother in the middle of this slum can smile!

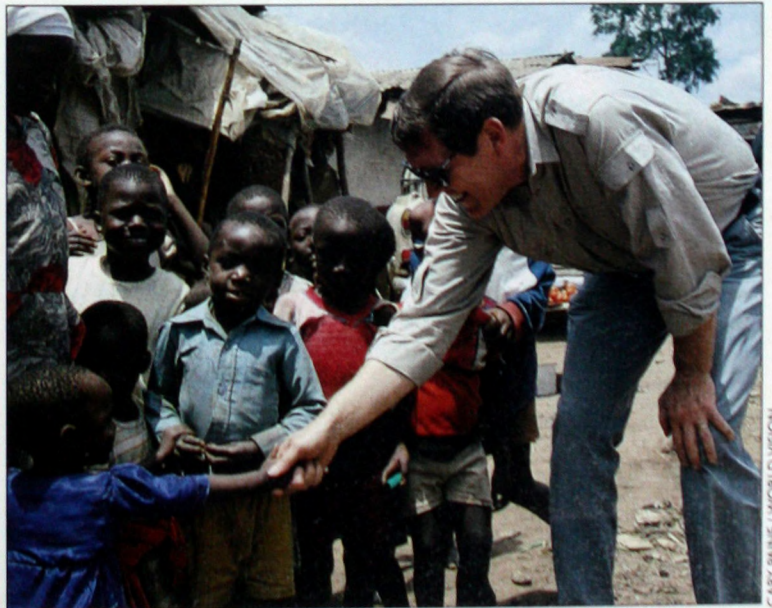
But she also gives *us* hope. She operates a small vegetable stand in front of her dilapidated house. Carrots, lettuce, broccoli, and onions are neatly positioned on a simple wooden stand. One of our group comments on how neat the vegetables are. "I try to make them look like flowers," the woman says.

Amazing. The woman looks at what we would imagine to be the bleakest of circumstances, and she sees flowers where we see vegetables. We see a shack, she a home. We see dirty kids and runny noses. She sees pearls of great price. We imagine disaster at what we see and know. She harbors hope because of someone she has yet to meet.

This woman understands the inherent promise of "walking through the valley." It's in the word "through." We won't stay there forever. There is hope. The time frame may be different for each of us, but the reality of the promise is that we will emerge from our present circumstances, whether it be this side of Glory or the other.

We think of Jesus. Help has arrived! Hope is a reality. The comfort of the Transcendent One carries us through. □

We feel exactly what we are: intruders.



CAROL PARRIS / WORLD VISION

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A long time ago, Jesus fed thousands using just a few loaves of bread and a couple fish. With food from one boy, He met the needs of an enormous crowd.

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February/March 1992

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Evangelist:*

**ON THE ROAD
WITH BROTHER
JONAH**

Romania:

**REBUILDING
A HEALTH CARE
SYSTEM**

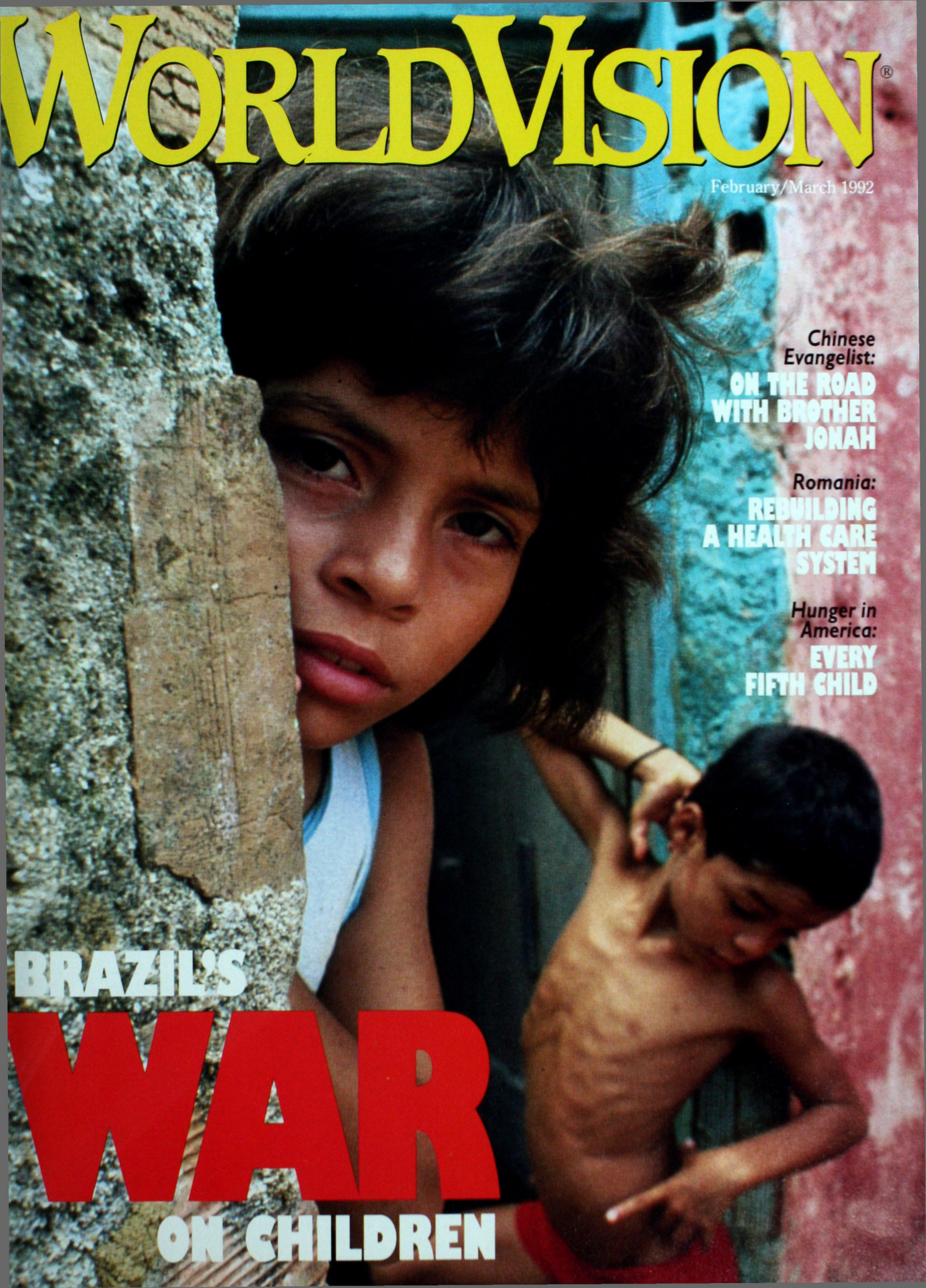
*Hunger in
America:*

**EVERY
FIFTH CHILD**

BRAZIL'S

WAR

ON CHILDREN





Some Brazilians are fed up. They've had enough of juvenile crime so they've turned to a grisly solution.

BRAZIL'S WAR ON CHILDREN

BY RON WILSON

Wolmer do Nascimento counted some 60 boys in the gang when he began working with them. They were street kids who slept in the parks or on the pavement and lived by their wits. A few sold goods in the marketplace; others snatched food or resalable items from local businesses or mugged tourists; some ran drugs. Wolmer was a social worker and this was 1985 in Duque de Caxias, an over-crowded, grime-painted industrial sprawl just north of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

Without warning the number of boys began to dwindle. Several were found stabbed. One turned up floating in an open sewer. Others were discovered shot, but some simply vanished. A year-and-a-half after the first incident, 18 from this gang had turned up dead or were missing.

That was when Wolmer and the upright citizens of Duque de Caxias realized the horrible truth: These were not random, unrelated killings. The armies of poor, abandoned children from the slums had grown so troublesome and threatened so many, that some Brazilians were resorting to

a drastic crime-fighting tactic: *extermination*.

Street children have inhabited the world's major cities for years. New York City police files, for example, record the existence of some 10,000 "street Arabs" 100 years ago. Charles Dickens left us a vivid fictionalized account of the mistreatment of street children and the poor in 19th Century England. Today various estimates put the number of street children in the Philippines, for example, at 1.5 million. Brazil has more than 7 million, which is about one in every eight children under the age of 15.

Brazilian death squads, however, have added a new and gruesome twist to the problem. By their barbaric logic, if you kill a juvenile delinquent today, he won't assault you tomorrow. "When you kill



Wolmer

a street boy," the public prosecutor in Duque de Caxias told a reporter, "you take out one of the worst ones, and you also give an example to the others. ... You are exercising social control through fear." In a recent five-year period, Brazilian authorities recorded 1,397 murders of children in 16 states. At least 300 of those were in the Baixada Fluminense, the lowland area north of Rio which includes Duque de Caxias.

The root of the problem is the desperate poverty that leaves children only a grim choice: take to the streets or die. As one writer put it, they are "the human residue of industrialization and urbanization." Peasants have forsaken the villages and countryside and sought salvation in the cities. Mexico City, already exploding and unlivable, will reach 26 million by the year 2000. Sao Paulo will top 24 million. Rio de Janeiro has more than doubled in the past 20 years. Every major city in Latin America has a ring of squalid squatter settlements around it. Crammed into these makeshift shantytowns, the poor

to assault or drug running or armed robbery. Prostitution by both boys and girls is common, and health officials now point to a growing incidence of AIDS among street children. Street kids are a menace to shopkeepers and the public. They drive business away from the area where they live and make the streets unsafe even by day. And the Brazilian system of justice is especially lenient on children.

The popular press reflects this fear and reinforces these attitudes with statements such as, "We cannot feel sorry for these vagabonds and delinquents who will be drug runners and thieves, not honest workers, tomorrow. One can pity a man but not a monster."

But who is killing these kids? Most signs point to the police themselves. A recent report by the Articulation Center of Marginalized Populations in Rio de Janeiro charged that "paramilitary expolice, paid by businessmen, have taken it upon themselves to clean up the community." Off-duty police and security guards, it appears, have taken on the

When we have money, the military police order us to give it to them. They talk us into stealing for them. One time a military police hit me in the shopping center and took 500 cruzeiros. Then he told me to steal more for him. "

-13-year-old street kid

roles of both judge and executioner. On-duty police have been accused of forcing the kids to steal, extorting money, and of sexual abuse.

"The police hit us, pull our hair, touch us in bad places, and call us names," a 15-year-old told a social worker. A 10-year-old reported, "I sleep in the

I'm on the street because my mom doesn't earn very much. It's not enough. I have three brothers and there isn't enough for all of us. My step father earns very little. Sometimes the police make us steal for them, and if we don't, they'll kill us. "

-14-year-old street kid

languish, often without running water or sanitation, generally without enough food or a means to earn it, and almost always without hope.

Brazil's slums have a historic link with the landless poor. At the turn of the century, out of work soldiers camped on a hill in the state of Bahia. They named the hill *Favela*, after a wildflower that grew there, and when they moved to Rio and other cities looking for work, they camped on similar hillsides and the name stuck. Like the soldiers before them, the poor in Brazil are setting up shack cities on hillsides, and spawning hordes of pint-sized candidates for crime.

The reason these children are being killed is that many Brazilians are afraid, fed up, and frustrated. The street kids graduate quickly from begging and the kind of minor theft that keeps them alive



MIGUEL RIO BRANCO / MAGNUM

shopping center and at midnight or at dawn the police beat us. They force us to eat excrement, and they throw hot water on us." And a 12-year-old claimed, "They beat us and leave us hungry. My father is dead and my mother sleeps in the rain. First she's with one man, then another. There's not enough room for all of us."

Now come grisly reports from Latin American publications that link the killing of children to the sale of human organs for transplanting in northern countries. A Dominican priest in São Paulo noticed that many of the bodies of assassinated children showed signs of mutilation. And one publication claimed that Brazil issued 4,000 visas for children to be adopted in Italy but Italian records show only 1,000 children entered the country.

The Baixada Fluminense, where a majority of the killings have taken place, has long had a reputation of one of the most violent places on earth. One observer wrote that the notorious Bedford Stuyvestant area of Brooklyn was

like Beverly Hills compared to the Baixada. Another called it a tropical Beirut. Drug gangs battle for control and many merchants have turned to the gangs for the protection that the understaffed and partly corrupt police can't provide.

Not all the children in the *favelas* go bad. Wolmer himself grew up in Niteroi, an extremely poor area across the Bay of Guanabara from Rio which has also seen death squad killings. While his father worked at construction and his mother cleaned the homes of the upper class, Wolmer took to the streets with his seven brothers and two sisters to sell candy. School came hard and slowly, but once he had completed it, he chose to live in the slums again, this time to help other kids break out of it. "Once I was a poor boy," he jokes, "now I'm a poor adult."

When the boys in the gang began to tell Wolmer their stories, he pointed the finger at those individuals the boys identified. Soon he got threats on his life but was able to convince a key police official

ERIC WHEATER



In partnership with Catholic University, World Vision assists children like this from one of Brazil's favelas, in obtaining both formal education and vocational training.

that officers under his supervision were involved. Ironically he now has to depend on those same police for protection.

Sandra Cavalcante is another example of a poor child who found a way out of the slums. Her father had been part of a wave of *nordestinos*, peasants from the north who couldn't make a living in the countryside. Augusto Cavalcante settled in *Favela de Mangueiros*, married, and eventually abandoned his wife and their 10 children. Sandra, one of the youngest, remembers hunger, begging in the streets, and going to work at age 6 with



Children growing up on city streets are not just a Third World phenomenon. According to a recent report in the *Los Angeles Times*, families with young children are the fastest-growing segment of the population now living on U.S. streets. A 1990 survey of 30 U.S. cities shows that families with youngsters now represent at least one-third of the homeless population.

In Los Angeles; New York; Louisville, Ky.; Alexandria, Va.; Kansas City; Philadelphia; San Antonio; Trenton, N.J.; and Portland, Ore., families account for more than 40 percent of the homeless population.

The Rev. Stephen E. Burger, who heads 240 shelters run by the International Union Gospel Mission in Seattle, says that, "In 1974, we had 14 beds for women and children in the mission I worked for in Seattle, and only half were filled. In 1989 that same mission had 120 beds set aside for women and kids and they were full every night. We're seeing that all over the country."

Five years ago there were so few homeless children that Burger's

Gospel Mission did not even include them in surveys. Now children make up almost a quarter of the people sleeping in their shelters. A survey of homeless shelters across the country by the Child Welfare League of America estimates that there are between 100,000 and 200,000 children in homeless families, with an average age of 6.

Schooling is a big problem. According to the United Gospel Mission, some 43 percent of children in shelters who are old enough to go to school are not currently attending classes anywhere.

Moreover, homeless children are three times more likely than children in the general population to be abused or neglected. And more than 10 percent of homeless youngsters need medical care.

World Vision is helping churches across the country to enable homeless children and their families to get back on their feet through a program call Project Home Again. For more information, please contact Obadiah Smith, (818) 305-7819.

her mother in the home of a wealthy family in Rio.

Fortunately for Sandra, an especially bright girl, that wealthy family also helped her buy books and clothes for school. As a teenager she worked in the daytime and went to school, eventually learning enough to work as a secretary and occasional translator. Like Wolmer, she's chosen to live close to the edge of poverty and devote some of her time to gathering food and clothes for kids still trapped in the slums.

Whistle blowers like Wolmer and groups such as CEAP have slowly overcome the Brazilians' disbelief and seared their consciences. The chorus of the concerned is growing and the activists have initiated offensives on several fronts.

D. Mauro Morelli, the Catholic bishop of Duque de Caxias, labeled the Baixada Fluminense a "humiliating laboratory

of injustice" and blamed "the international economic order" which "generates the misery of our people and the poor of the world." As a Christian pastor, he cried, "I want to scream my despair and clamor for justice for our people." CEAP has begun a UNICEF-funded campaign to raise public awareness and published posters that proclaim, "Don't Kill our Children," and picture a young black child in a slum.

Some groups have moved into the slums to stem the problem at the root and keep the kids off the streets. World Vision, for example, working with partner agencies, sponsors schools, hot meal programs, and clinics. Other groups have started homes for children who are completely abandoned, and still more run community-based programs that teach kids income-producing skills. The street kids themselves even held a national conference in Brasilia and used the press to force a meeting with the president.

None of this seems to have slowed down the death squads. Wolmer lives in hiding, depending on whatever police protection he can get. The head of The Community of Small Prophets, a home for boys in Recife, added his voice to the protests and received death threats for his efforts.

By far the largest agent for change in Brazil is the Catholic church, which has angered the Vatican for its involvement in politics and social movements. Hundreds of priests and nuns identify with the poor in the slums, and the hierarchy exerts what pressure it can on the government. With commitment to the poor which is typical of the church in Brazil, Bishop Morelli proclaimed, "An abandoned child in any part of the world goes against humanity," and he promised, "there will never be peace while even one child is a victim of violence." □

Ron Wilson is a free-lance writer living in Earlysville, Va. and a contributing editor to WORLD VISION magazine.

Sandra Cavalcante remembers the hunger and hard work of her childhood in a slum. Now she chooses to help children trapped in the slums.



ERIC WHEATER

Through at least 15 different projects, World Vision acts directly with children and adolescents in the streets, as well as with their families and communities. There are three critical ways these projects help Brazil's street children:

1. *Formal and informal education.* The formal education efforts include pre-schools, daycare centers, tutoring classes, and subsidizing the purchase of school materials and school uniforms. The informal education activities include courses that serve as theoretical bases for vocational training, as well as community organizations and organizations for street children.

2. *Health care.* World Vision assists street children with medical and dental help, food programs, provision of herbal medicine, and housing improvements.

3. *Production groups.* Several of the projects train these children in marketable skills such as iron-smithing and wood joinery, silk-screening, cement block-making, tile-making, flower arranging, candy-making, tricot-knitting, crocheting, sachet-making, embroidery, small-animal raising, vegetable gardening, and agriculture. Many of these children are then organized into groups to run their own production facility.

A TRUE STORY AS TOLD TO
RON MACMILLAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CLIFF NIELSEN

Since 1949, itinerant evangelists have become crucial to the vitality and growth of the Christian community in China.

Independent itinerant evangelists are law breakers on at least two counts: The constitution states that evangelism must occur only within designated religious premises, and preachers must be accredited by the local Protestant Three-Self organization.

The life of an itinerant evangelist in China is hectic, sacrificial, and dangerous. The following story is a weekend in the life of one of these evangelists.

On the road with

BROTHER JONAH

This itinerant evangelist in China has all the characteristics of a true saint.





ne of history's greatest itinerant preachers, John Wesley, said that the true itinerant needs only four characteristics to be successful: "a back for any bed, a face for any weather, a stomach for any food, and strength for any work."

That describes Brother Jonah, a native of Shanghai, who has been an itinerant preacher throughout China since 1976. He maintains a schedule that would exhaust a 20-year-old. Jonah is 73.

Ijoined up with Jonah in Shanghai. He was collecting a huge pack of Bibles to take into the interior. The bag weighed 60 pounds, bending his slight frame almost to the ground as he staggered off to the railway station where he bought a ticket to a town in Henan Province.

Sitting in a third-class carriage, he tells me, "I received a request to preach the gospel in the village we're going to. Apparently someone was converted under my ministry elsewhere, and he has returned to his village, where he is the only believer." As Jonah talked, the

people around him listened. He was wedged between two young men; two soldiers stood in the crowded aisle and a family of three sat opposite. They all looked at this small man dressed in a drab and shabby Mao suit. I worried, *Is something wrong?*

One soldier finally leaned forward and said, "Old man, tell us why you seem so happy."

Jonah replied with a question: "What do you think? What would be the happiest thing that could ever happen to you, and I'll tell you whether that has happened to me."

He addressed his question to all who were listening. The wife sitting opposite said, "A big house would make me the happiest person in the world." The man next to Jonah said, "No, I just want to be loved by a beautiful woman." Another said, "I'd like a passport to America," and one of the soldiers shouted, "If I had the power to command the People's Liberation Army, I would be the happiest man in the world."

Jonah grinned. They asked, "Do you have any of these? Is that why you are so happy?"

"Yes!" Jonah replied, "I have all of them, and more."

They were aghast. He smiled again. "Let me see now," he said. "I have a mansion so large an emperor would be green with envy; I am loved devotedly by the most beautiful person in the world; I have the perfect freedom to go wherever I wish; and I happen to be a very close friend of the most powerful man on earth. In fact, I have received all this from one person, and his name is Jesus Christ."

For 20 hours, Jonah talked. He pulled out his frayed Bible and took them through it book by book. Hunched over his Bible, he spoke earnestly to his eager audience.

At dawn we reached our destination. Jonah distributed New Testaments and tracts. He shook hands with them,

For 20 hours, Jonah talked. He pulled out his frayed Bible and took them through it book by book.

and we stepped out.

"They are not far from the Kingdom," he said. "All but one of them were greatly convicted by God, but the fellow sitting beside me could spell trouble." As if on cue, the same young man passed on the station platform. He gave us both a long look.

Suddenly another man approached us. "Praise the Lord," he said, looking at Jonah, "God has answered my prayers and sent you." He pointed to three rusty bicycles. "Our transport," he said. "It's a five-hour ride to my village."

I don't know how Jonah managed to balance on the bike with that heavy bag—nor how he had the strength to keep pedaling and talking at the same time, for the young man was full of questions and Jonah answered them all.

Three hours into the journey I pulled alongside him, my legs aching, and joked, "It's a miracle that you are fit enough to do this at your age."

"That's exactly what it is," he replied.

We arrived at the village mid-morning. He wasted no time in gathering a crowd. He simply dove into a house, emerged with two tin pots, and proceeded to bang them together. He shouted over the din, "Friends, come and hear about a God who can really transform your life!" They came running.

He spoke for nearly an hour about his biblical namesake, Jonah. He told them that they had two things in common with the people of Nineveh; first, they were living in ignorance and defiance of the one true God, and second, God would judge them soon if they did not repent.

It was a new teaching to them, but the 200 villagers listened. Jonah later explained, "Chinese people gape with astonishment when they are told that what is wrong with the world is themselves. All China's religions, right up to Mao's 'religion,' affirm that human beings are basically good, it's circumstances that make them bad. So when they hear that *they* are the ones who are bad, they can hardly take it in."

Jonah went on to tell them about God's love for them, and wept tears as he told them of Jesus' sufferings on the cross. Then he led them in a prayer of repentance. About a quarter of the villagers prayed with him. The Kingdom of God had come to that village.

Jonah spent the rest of the afternoon with three converts he selected to lead the new church and gave them a crash course in Christian doctrine. Leaving a stock of Bibles, he exhorted them, "Do nothing hastily, do nothing out of anger. Every decision you make

should be in accord with each other, and only after much prayer and searching of this book."

That evening, someone rode into the village and said that the Public Security Bureau was looking for an evangelist and his companion. That meant trouble.

"I knew it," Jonah said. "The young man on the train has informed on us."

We left the village pedalling fast over rutted roads in the black of night. Four hours later, we reached a bus station. The bus was just leaving, and we climbed aboard.

Later we learned what a miracle God had worked for our escape. After we had got on the bus, someone from the village came across the Public Security Bureau car—it had run out of gas barely one mile from the bus station. Had the car been functioning properly, they would have easily overtaken the bus.

Meanwhile we had arrived in this new city. It was Sunday, and Jonah said, "We'll drop in on a house-church leader I know."

The leader was delighted to see Jonah, but after greeting us he turned serious. "We have had a division in our church since you were last here, Jonah. Three of our five elders led



half the church away, and we no longer fellowship together.”

It was a large church, comprised of more than 5,000 members. Three thousand now worshiped with the three renegade elders.

“What was the issue of division?” Jonah asked.

“It has to do with the Lord’s return,” the leader replied. “The three elders believe that the Lord will return in the middle of next year, and that the church should prepare—sell property, leave jobs, and concentrate more on evangelism. The rest of the elders did not share this conviction, and were accused of not showing enough urgency. Eventually they split.”

Jonah said, “Call the original elders together for a meeting with me.” He had been one of the evangelists who helped start this church, and indeed had selected some of the elders.

That afternoon six elders gathered in the house. The atmosphere was tense and strained. Jonah entered the room and surveyed the group. He said nothing. They looked back. He sat down. All of a sudden great sobs heaved his body, tears cascaded down his cheeks, and he cried out in anguish, “O Lord, how we have dirtied your name!”

His grief, so genuine and so deep, broke the strained atmosphere, and soon all the elders were weeping. The Lord’s name had been dishonored; the elders confessed, repented, and were reconciled. There were no words. No fingers pointed. No voices raised. No issues aired. Tears were enough.

Just as we were preparing to leave, there was a knock on the door. To our horror it was the local party boss. Was he there to round up the six elders? Or was he after Jonah, who was well known to the authorities as an undesirable?

“Who is the evangelist Jonah?” he asked.

Jonah stepped forward and said, “I am.”

“Will you come and pray for my 8-year-old son? He is very sick.”

Jonah replied, “Why have you come to me? What makes you think I can help?”

“Because I have heard you are in touch with a God of real power,” the party boss answered.

Yet Jonah persisted, “Why do you think I should ask God to heal your son? After all, you have not shown much liking for Christians.”

Tension mounted. Was Jonah going too far? This man was powerful. One word from him and we would be spending the next few months in jail. But it seemed his child’s need banished all thoughts of revenge.

“I have also heard that Christians are full of love,” he said, “and that they forgive their enemies.”

“Do you think that is true?” Jonah asked. “What sense does it make to reach out to enemies in love?”

With great emotion, the man declared, “All my life I have been taught to hate—to hate tradition, to hate capitalism, to hate the West, to hate the revisionists. Always the cry is ‘hate, hate, hate.’ I know I have accomplished nothing. And I know China has gone no-

It was an amazing weekend: nine hours of hard pedaling, 40 hours on a hard railway seat, and eight hours on a bumpy bus.

where. I know hate only kills. My wife is dead, my family is dead, and sometimes I feel dead myself. Hatred has killed them, and it’s killing me. But I still feel love—love for my son—and I know that without that little love I bear for him, and he for me, I am dead. Christians are supposed to worship a God of love. Maybe this God will take pity on my sick son.”

There was a shocked silence. Jonah said gently, “We do worship a God of love, and he is the One who has given you the love you have for your son. But you don’t have to ask me to pray. Why not speak to God yourself about your son?”

“Will he listen to me?” the man gasped.

“Of course,” Jonah replied. “Now you pray, and we will pray with you.”

The distraught father prayed: “God, since you are love, save my son, and free him to live a life of love!”

We all said “Amen” and hurried after him to his son. The boy was completely well, and two more souls were united to Christ.

It was an amazing weekend: nine hours of bicycle pedaling, 40 hours on a hard railway seat, and eight hours on a bumpy bus. Jonah led more than 50 people from a remote village into the Kingdom of God, he started a church, held an all-night seminar on Bible doctrine to 10 young people on a train, reconciled the leaders of 5,000 Christians, and converted a high-ranking party cadre through the healing of his son.

Was he tired? He returned to his apartment and sifted through his mail. Another invitation had arrived from Gansu Province, requesting him to instruct 600 full-time workers in a house-church movement. That very evening he was on the train to Gansu Province.

He once said, “Rest is for the next world!” Jonah is a man of his word. □

Ron MacMillan is the Asia correspondent for News Network International, for which this story was written.



REBUILDING ROMANIA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Health care became virtually nonexistent for the elderly and 120,000 children. Drs. James and Barbara Bascom are helping to change that.

BRUCE BRANDER / WORLD VISION



In April 1990, Drs. James and Barbara Bascom were invited to Romania as consultants. They expected to visit the country, evaluate the problems within its medical system, and offer their expertise through proposals and occasional visits.

Instead they found there *was* no Romanian medical system. In the inhumane and cruel logic of the Nicolae Ceausescu regime, only industries that produced export items were in favor. Medical care was an expense to cut.

The Bascoms, funded by World Vision and others, made a five-year commitment to stay in Romania and help the country rebuild. James Bascom, a surgeon and specialist in creating physician training systems, coordinates the Medical Education Redevelopment Project (MERP) that calls on medical schools and physicians worldwide to arrange fellowships, lectures, visits to and from Romania, and shipments of equipment and literature.

Barbara Bascom, a pediatrician and child development specialist, manages the Romanian Orphans Social Educational Services Project. With teams of child development specialists, ROSES is currently helping 3000 of the more than 120,000 orphaned and abandoned children who have been held in warehouses, underfed, underclothed, and denied proper medical, developmental, and educational support.

WV: What did you find when you first entered Romania?

JB: The mood of the country was totally different than it is now. People were running in the streets and flashing victory signs. The mood was high and there was a lot of hope before the elections discouraged them again.

The country was in total devastation. The people had poor heating supplies, food was scarce—we saw all the things you saw on the news.

Thousands of children given up by their parents were growing up in cribs. Infants were swad-

dled so that only their eyes showed. They had no physical or mental stimulation, not even the freedom to play with their own feet. Older children developed odd behavior or rocking movements just because they were starved for stimulation.

After visiting some medical schools we discovered that they too were in total disarray. Romania needed to have its medical education system rehabilitated. That was its highest priority. They wanted large quantities of information fast.

WV: Why was the medical system in such poor shape?

JB: During the past two decades, the regime systematically dismantled the medical system until there were no nursing schools or other ancillary training schools. The few medical schools open were severely underfunded. Medical journals became forbidden reading in 1974. Young doctors had to be trained with the antiquated methods of previous decades. Innovation and research within the country was forbidden.

WV: How could oppressing the health system further Ceausescu's goals?

JB: It is difficult for Westerners to envision just how delusional the government was. Ceausescu wanted a country of 30 million by the end of the century and only had 23 million people to start with. So he required that every family have five children, whether they had enough heat, clothing, food, or space.

W o m e n were examined almost monthly to determine if they were pregnant. So if a child was born with a problem the family gave it to the 'orphanages.' In reality most of the children are not orphans; they are simply abandoned by parents too poor to care for them.

The public health system was so distorted. It spent time and money charting women's cycles

while there was a measles epidemic, and less than half the population received the vaccine.

This system lost sight completely of any sense of humanity, spirituality, or fair play. The human being was just another natural resource, like a forest to be cut down when wood was needed.

Furthermore, ill or aged 'resources' were considered things on which medical care shouldn't be wasted. Children with the slightest defects—cleft palate, club foot, a hernia—were warehoused with an unspoken hope that they would die. In fact, in some of the orphanages half of the children died every winter because the government provided lit-

tle heating, few blankets, and thin clothing.

At the other end, no one over 60 had access to emergency rooms and limited access to hospital facilities. Many older people fled to the country to care for children in exchange for the right to live.

It is interesting, however, that the government ran three hospitals—one for the party, one for the Securitat, and one for the military. Each one was modern, with new equipment such as a CAT scan and sufficient supplies. And Ceausescu's 80-year-old mother received very good care.

WV: How does MERP plan to help rebuild the health care system?

JB: We primarily want to work *with* Romanian physicians by offering continuing education courses such as neo-natal and infant resuscitation.

Medical supplies, equipment, videos, texts, and pharmaceuticals are coming from numerous countries. Romanians must learn when to use and how to operate them. We are promoting an exchange program between Western medical schools and professionals in Romania and arranging visits for exchanging information. Computers have been installed in medical libraries and hospitals making information available from medical journals worldwide.

Still, one of the big tasks will be to reestablish confidence in the public health system. For the next two to five years, we cannot expect to offer a public health program and have anyone do anything but run in the opposite direction.



WV: What hope exists for the children now and how will ROSES help?

BB: There is great hope for many of the children. Many will eventually be reunited with their families. But we have a long way to go. Some of the children are very damaged and developmentally delayed; they will suffer lifelong effects.

The survivors are very interesting. It's a combination of survival of the fittest and opportunity or coincidence. The ones who were a little cuter or had something special about them got more attention. The staff did what you would expect for people with very limited resources; they focused on children who seemed to have the most potential and singled out certain children as a teacher might choose a favorite pupil.

We really don't know how many children there are—at least 120,000, including the entire age range. There may be more in institutions we haven't identified elsewhere in the country.

Tons and tons of toys and clothes have been trucked in. But these children need expert services far more than toys—and believe me, they need toys! That's where ROSES comes in.

Our main goal is to train the Romanian staff in the developmental progress of the children by offering staff training, and medical assistance to the children.

World Vision desires to let Romanian children grow up among their own people and culture. Many people in the United States, however, are interested in adopting Romanian orphans. We suggest they consider those children with physical handicaps and special needs.

Romanian adoption can be difficult and expensive. Those interested in adopting should carefully examine the background and credentials of any individual or organization offering to help.

The following agency can provide details on adopting children with a diversity of needs:

International Concerns Committee For Children
911 Cypress Drive
Boulder, CO 80303
(303) 494-8333



We are focusing on institutions that have a relationship with a medical school or training institution. That way, the children can receive expert care, while staff and future professionals can have hands-on experience. This also allows the hospitals to provide diagnoses of the physical problems these children have including malnutrition, cleft palate, cerebral palsy.

A significant number of children have AIDS. They were infected when the staff injected weak newborns with adult blood from previously used needles. These children will need even more special care.

We are directly affecting more than 3,000 children now. That is a large number until you consider the number we can't help yet. There just isn't enough expert staff to go around.

WV: How did you know the Lord wanted you to minister in Romania?

JB: There was no particularly inspiring moment or calling. It was so natural we hardly talked about it before committing. Professionally, we're an unusual couple, partnering for years on committees and development projects. With Barbara in pediatrics and me in surgery we had enough separation that we were complimentary without stepping on one another's toes.

BB: It was almost a feeling of predestination. It challenged us and called on our experiences. It allowed us to work separately but with a coordinated effort. And we happened to have the necessary experience and talent.

You'd think it was a big deal to decide to commit to five years of helping Romania rebuild its medical system from scratch. But it felt like trying something on and discovering that it didn't even need tailoring. It was a perfect fit for our talents, temperaments, and marriage.

We just aren't content with ordinary, well-defined jobs. A position in a little town becomes a county project, then a region and pretty soon one of us ends up in charge of some big program somewhere. Why not help a country rebuild its medical system?

WV: What appears to be the spiritual condition of the people?

BB: We were in Cluj, a city in the middle of Romania, for the first Easter celebration since the revolution. Easter is the most important religious event of the Eastern Orthodox year. Seeing the joy of the people as they publicly worshiped for the first time in years convinced us that they had a lot of soul left that had to be given the chance to grow.

It took 20-40 years to establish the miserable condition at the time of the revolution. In Romania the devastation lasted until late 1989, unlike Bulgaria and other countries that have enjoyed some degree of opening up during the past five years. Romania still remains isolated from much of Eastern Europe.

They say that the people didn't object to lining up for bread and other food because that was the only safe place to visit. Even one's home wasn't always safe.

Yet I can see that their spirit is there. It has been so battered that it will have to be developed, reinforced, and allowed to recover. It won't happen quickly. We look for ways to speed up the trust process, but it moves at its own pace. □

Marcia Coppess is a free-lance writer in Pasadena, Calif.

"Thousands of children given up by their parents were growing up in cribs."



BRUCE BRANDER / WORLD VISION

World Vision is looking for qualified people to fill the following positions in Romania:

- Child Psychologist
- Clinical Director
- Developmental Pediatrician
- Finance Manager
- Nurse
- Occupational Therapist
- Operations Director
- Physical Therapist
- Speech/Language Therapist

If you have any further questions regarding World Vision's work in Romania and how you can help, please call 1-800-777-5777.

This boy makes charcoal in the Philippines. Children are more susceptible than adults to respiratory disease and other illnesses.

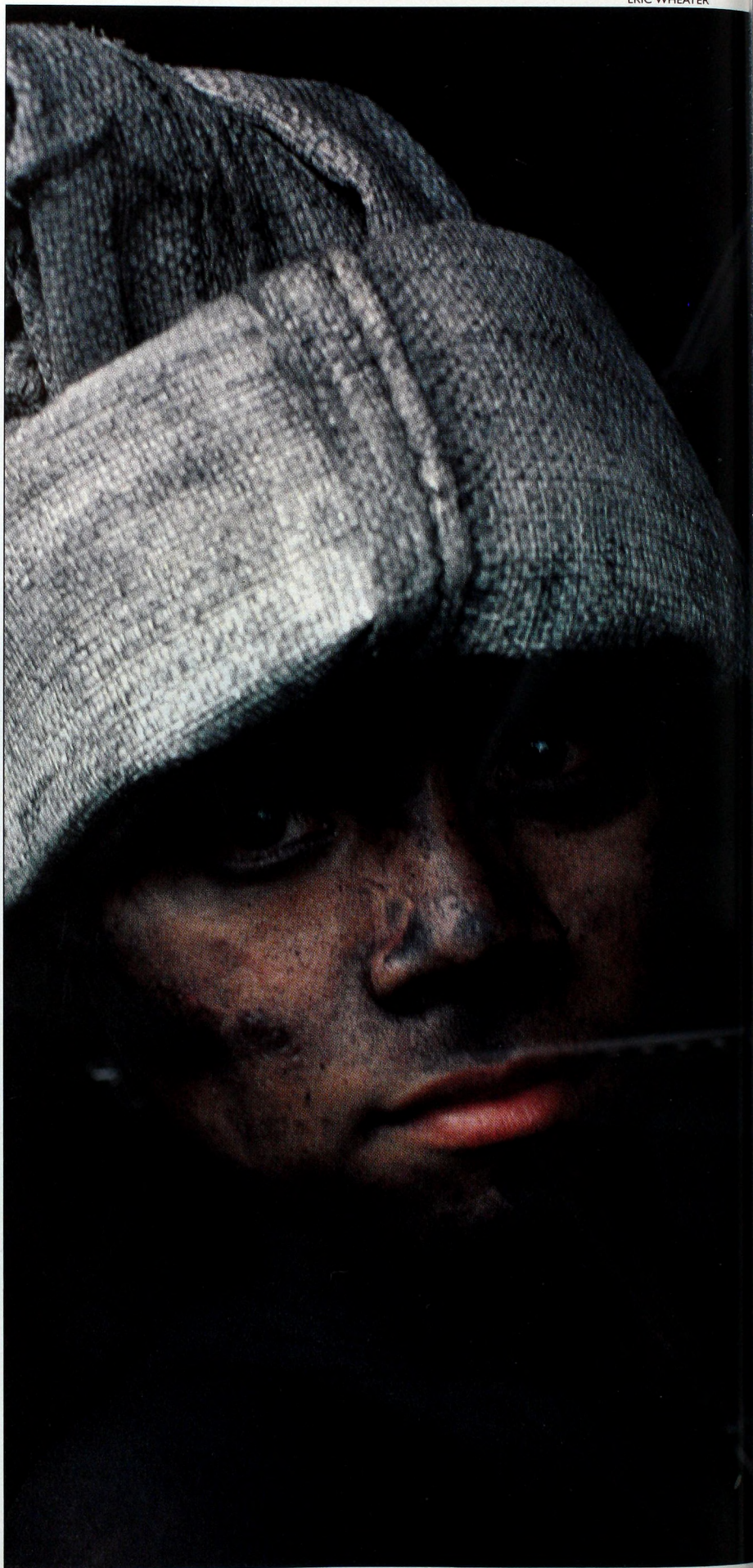
Children **W** at Work

In the Third World, more than 250 million children, some as young as 6, spend their childhood years laboring for pennies. Usually under unsanitary and unsafe conditions, these children may work up to 14-hour days in households, factories, farms, and shops. Others peddle gum, candy, fruit, hand-made toys, clothes, blankets, and other wares on the streets.

To many of the poor, working children are necessary to feed and house the family. In some cultures, people believe child labor teaches children responsibility.

But the work is often back-breaking, the consequences heartbreaking. Children, more susceptible than adults to disease and abuse, suffer low wages, severe injuries, and even death. Factory pollutants may stunt children's growth or cause lung disease. Hours of picking tea leaves from thorny vines can leave little fingers scarred and deformed.

This work also deprives children of education, giving them little chance to climb out of their poverty. Time for play is scarce. The 1990 UNICEF-sponsored World Summit for Children has called for developing nations to create or revise child labor laws that protect children's right to health, education, and a childhood. World Summit leaders, however, emphasize that the only way to eliminate child labor is to reduce or eliminate poverty. □



FAMILY LIFE
EDUCATION
HEALTH
ARMED CONFLICT
SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Top concerns for the world's children,
as identified by UNICEF

CHILD LABOR

In developing countries, vehicles and draft animals are not widely available. Children carry some of the burden of getting goods to market. A Kenyan boy (below) carries bananas and a Nepalese child (left) hauls oranges.



ERIC WHEATER



ERIC WHEATER



BRUCE STRONG / WORLD VISION

Long hours spent working in factories and farms, and selling or begging in city streets keep children from school. Without an education, few children will escape poverty.

SAMARITAN SAMPLER

RESOURCES FOR
HELPING OTHERS
IN THE NAME
OF CHRIST

Compiled and written
by Karen E. Klein



PLAYING FAIR?

You may not have played "Plan-tation" or "The Hunger Cycle" at your last youth gathering, but you might want to give them a try next month. They are two of the board

games included in a new educational resource packet addressing the issue of world hunger from World Vision's Development Education Department.

Aimed at teenagers and young adults, the "Playing Fair?" packet includes five handouts brimming with illustrations, charts, games, real-life examples, and practical ideas on hunger topics including land use, international debt, trade, and the forests.

For example, your students may be surprised to learn how the profits from an average cup of coffee are divided so that the growers get the short end of the bean. Or how the local hamburger stand may be related to the loss of the rain forest in Latin America. The basic packet, containing one teacher's guide and five student handouts, is available free of charge. To order, contact: World Vision, Development Education Department, 919 W. Huntington Dr., Monrovia, Calif. 91016; (818)357-7979

PASS THE PEPPERONI

An uninvited crowd of high school students spent lunch time and breaks on the steps of the Lee Street Christian Reformed Church—skateboarding, smoking cigarettes, and generally hanging out. The church posted "No Loitering" signs, but they didn't work. So Pastor Jim Boer decided to try a different approach. One day about a year and a half ago, he picked up some pizzas and joined the teenagers for lunch. "I thought if I called my congregation to evangelism, I'd better be actively engaged in it myself," he says.

Pretty soon, the church started a regular Friday afternoon "pizza ministry," including Bible study and discipleship, and then began hosting monthly parties and Christian concerts for about 30 teenagers that have no church back-ground.

"We get a flood of questions on spiritual issues and I think we've destereotyped the church for them," Boer says. The teenagers have gotten help from Boer and volunteer church counselors in issues ranging from substance abuse to attempted suicide and pregnancy. Two of the kids' mothers, both non-Christians, are beginning to get involved with the program. For more information on the pizza ministry, contact Boer at Lee Street Christian Reformed Church, 1271 Lee St. SW, Wyoming, Mich. 49509; (616) 245-9307.



O FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES

When the congregation gathers at the Jacksonville Cross-Cultural Center, the result might be likened to the scene at the Tower of Babel. The church, in Jacksonville, Fla., includes four separate congregations that all speak different languages. "We're a truly international community and we're committed to meeting the needs of this community," says Joffre Vivoni, the Puerto Rican dentist-turned-pastor who founded the first Spanish-speaking Church of God congregation in 1981.

Since then, the multi-cultural

church has added three additional congregations, one ministering in English, one in Tagalog (Filipino), and one in French Creole (Haitian). A total of 14 services and prayer meetings are held each week and a radio program, "Jesus Speaks Your Language," is broadcast on Sunday nights in Tagalog, French, Korean, Spanish, and Italian. During international services, which include all 250 church members, hymns are sung in four languages simultaneously, Vivoni said. The various youth groups rely heavily on pantomime skits. "There's no talking, but you can see the message loud and clear," Vivoni says.

For more information on multi-cultural outreach, contact: The Jacksonville Cross-Cultural Center, P.O. Box 8068, Jacksonville, Fla. 32239; (904) 744-8263.



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Business Opportunity

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For a personal consultation, please call (800) 426-5753. Inside California, please call (800) 451-8024. Or write to:



WORLD VISION

Gift Planning Office
919 W. Huntington Drive
Monrovia, CA 91016

ILLUSTRATION BY STAN SAKAI

SUCH A DEAL!

When people in Langley, British Columbia pick up a bargain at the local thrift shop, they're also helping put the Bible into the hands of Romanians. The Bibles for Missions thrift store raises funds for the World Home Bible League in Ontario, Canada.

Staffed by volunteers and fueled by donations of clothing, furniture,



housewares, books, appliances, and other usable discards, the store funnels all its proceeds into sending Bibles to Romania.

If you're interested in more information on the Bibles for Missions stores, contact Ben De Regt, 46651 Hope River road, Chilliwack, B.C. V2P 7L5; (604) 792-1421.

“Development is every biblically based activity of the Body of Christ, his church, which assists in bringing men toward the place of complete reconciliation with God and complete reconciliation with their fellow men and their environment.”

—Bob Moffit,
for World Evangelical
Fellowship

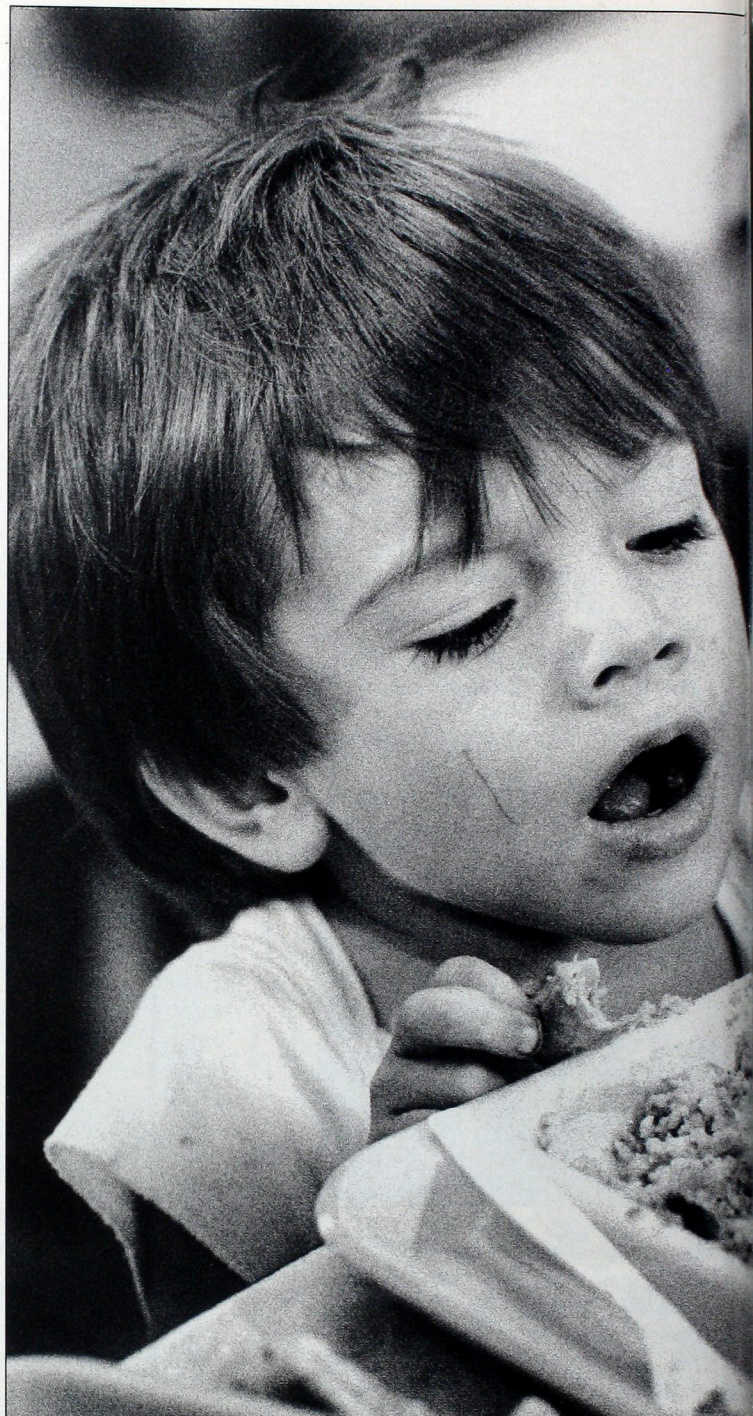


Three years ago in rural Polk County, North Carolina, a medium-sized church held an offering for hungry people. The largest contribution was a mere 25 cents. A small number of other churches across the nation—less than a thousand—joined Tryon Congregational Church in holding similar offerings. Not a single person in any of these churches donated more than a quarter.

Yet their modest donations were multiplied a thousand-fold. Because of enough 25-cent contributions—the cost of a postage stamp at the time—a small group of Christians concerned about hunger raised \$118 million to pay for nutritional food for undernourished children in the United States.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus performed a similar miracle, feeding hungry people by multiplying two fish and five loaves of bread. Today he is still working miracles for hungry people through another kind of bread, Bread for the World, a Christian citizens' movement against hunger. Through its annual Offering of Letters campaign, in which letters are sent to Congress to support important measures that help hungry people, Bread for the World multi-

DESPITE OUR WEALTH AS A NATION, NEARLY 12 MILLION CHILDREN ARE HUNGRY OR AT RISK OF HUNGER.



EVERY FIFTH CHILD

BY DAVID BECKMANN

THIS IS THE STORY OF WHAT ONE CHURCH AND BREAD FOR THE WORLD ARE DOING ABOUT HUNGER.



plies gifts Christians make—gifts as small as a 25-cent stamp.

The Offering of Letters service in 1989 was the first ever held by the Tryon Congregational Church. Church members wrote 80 letters to their senators and representatives urging them to support a bill to increase funding for the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children. WIC is an exceptionally successful program that provides vital nutrients to pregnant women and their children. The program is very cost-effective and improves the lives of children by directing care during critical stages of development.

The church collected the letters in the offering plate and offered them to God as a celebration of faith and citizenship. Six months after the church sent the letters, Congress increased WIC funding by \$118 million. This increase helped more than 200,000 additional high-risk, expectant mothers and babies obtain nutritional food during the most crucial period of their lives. Each letter represented the equivalent of a \$500 donation of food and nutritional counseling to a hungry person.

The 500-member Tryon Congregational Church has been active in hunger concerns for several years. Ever since

the 1984-85 Ethiopian famine, the church's 10-member Hunger Concern and Action Group has met monthly to discuss ways they can respond to famine and to needs in their own community. They have also given to the local food pantry; sent tools and agricultural supplies to developing countries; and provided support for a 10-year-old Indian boy's education.

"We've learned that if we really want to make an impact on hunger, we need to go beyond handouts and charity," says Skip Morse, a member of the church's hunger group. "Bread for the World's Offering of Letters campaign gives us an excellent way to not only help hungry people by feeding them, but to support programs that give them nutritional education and job training so they can be permanently removed from the ranks of the hungry."

Elaine, a 36-year-old mother of three from Tryon, is one of the people the church helped. Elaine was left with two young boys to care for when her husband went to prison. Her 3-year-old son, Jason, was anemic and her newborn baby, David, was terribly underweight (only 4 pounds 12 ounces at birth).

Without her husband's income, Elaine couldn't afford the nutritious foods that her two small boys needed. Desperate and needing help, Elaine went to the nearby Saluda Medical Center and filled out an application for the WIC program.

Through WIC, Elaine received vouchers for foods high in vitamin C, calcium, and iron—the very nutrients that people with little money for food don't get. The clinic helped Elaine improve her sons' diets, increasing iron to build up their red blood cells. They showed her how to stretch her money to feed her family and provided her with recipes for the new nutritious foods. Elaine was encouraged to have a doctor examine her sons and was referred to other needed health services.

Two years later, Jason graduated at age 5 from the WIC program with a normal, healthy hemoglobin level. David was also in the program to the age of 5, after which he was no longer anemic and had an above average height and weight. Elaine became pregnant with a third child during this time and entered the WIC program as a pregnant mother. She gave birth to a normal weight girl, Ieshia, whom she was able to breast-feed as a result of WIC counseling and food vouchers.

Elaine and her family are a WIC success story, in part because of the advocacy efforts of the Tryon Congregational Church. Unfortunately not all mothers

and children are so lucky. Numerous studies have praised the WIC program for effectively combating hunger; for every dollar spent on the prenatal aspect of the program \$3 are saved in medical costs. Despite this, the program only serves 55 percent of eligible people. Federal funding for WIC is too low to reach the additional 4 million low-income women and children who are at risk of hunger.

The 1980s were not a good decade for children. In one of the richest nations in the world, 11.5 million children under 12 are hungry or at risk of hunger. This sobering figure comes from a recent study by the Food Research and Action Center, which defined hunger as the recurring lack of nutrients and calories necessary to fuel the body, due to a family's insufficient economic resources.

In other words, every fifth child in the United States faces hunger.

America's hungry children don't have bloated bellies or resemble emaciated skeletons. But in contrast to other

children, hungry children are more than four times as likely to suffer from fatigue, more than three times as likely to suffer from unwanted weight loss, irritability, and concentration problems, and twice as likely to have frequent headaches and colds. When children are hungry they can't concentrate in school, and when they're ill they miss school.

Most poor and hungry children aren't in families on welfare, but in families whose parents work or want to work, and do not have enough income to meet their needs. Falling wages for unskilled labor and the current recession are forcing more families to choose between paying for rent or food, heat or health care. An increasing number of Americans must turn to state and federal programs for help.

Thanks to the Tryon Congregational Church and others who call on Congress to increase funding for hunger-combating programs, Elaine received help when she needed it.

The Tryon Congregational Church went further than most in learning about

hunger in America. Members of the Congregational Church's Hunger Group decided to put a human face to their 1989 letter-writing efforts. Two members of the group, Skip Morse and Dave Wells, visited the Saluda WIC office. There they sat through an application interview with a woman applying for WIC. That woman was Elaine.

Morse recalls, "We were so impressed with Elaine. She has shattered a lot of stereotypes of what it means to be hungry in America. For example, she received extra WIC vouchers when she became pregnant last year. After she lost that child due to a miscarriage, she promptly returned the extra vouchers she received. We knew immediately she was a person we had to latch on to!"

Since that first meeting, the hunger group began to develop a relationship with Elaine and her family. They supported her through the birth of her daughter Ieshia and offered help during that period. The past two years, the group provided Christmas dinner, as well as gifts for Elaine and the children. The group has offered further help to Elaine, but as Morse says, "Elaine is a proud woman and hasn't asked for help or handouts."

The Tryon Congregational Church is also taking part in the latest Bread for the World's Offering of Letters campaign; the Every Fifth Child campaign to reduce hunger among children in America. The campaign seeks to pass legislation to increase funding for three cost-effective and proven U.S. government programs—WIC, Head Start, and Job Corps—that address the causes of childhood hunger in the United States.

At least 1,000 churches and more than 100,000 Christians are needed to write letters to Congress for there to be additional increases for these programs. "God is alive and working among all of us, calling us to take care of his little ones," Morse says. "We are planning to do everything in our power to help, so that five out of five children in our nation are fed."

While the cost of a postage stamp has increased since the Tryon Congregational Church held their first Offering of Letters, the benefits that a stamp and a letter can provide for hungry people remain priceless. If you or your church are interested in Bread for the World's Every Fifth Child Faces Hunger in the U.S. campaign, please contact Bread for the World, Offering of Letters, 802 Rhode Island Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20018 or call (202) 269-0200. □

David Beckmann is president of Bread for the World in Washington, D.C.

A young child receives loving care at the Saluda Medical Center. It participates in the government's Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, which has proved to be exceptionally successful for pregnant women and their children.



MORE THAN A PUPPET SHOW

BY EMILY KROESE

As the sky-blue “puppet-mobile” turned off the main road and onto the dirt one, I prayed that we were nowhere near our destination.

“How much farther, Pastor Tom?” I asked.

“Oh, not too far. We’re in Poncho Villa now.”

“Oh.” I tried to sound as though that were good news. I looked out the window of the motor home we would use as the base for our Christian puppet show for the next two days. As far as I could see, there was a single color—a dull, dusty shade of desolation, filling me with a shocked hopelessness.

The Mexican sun beat down, making the dilapidated shanties look like they had merged with the barren mountain that rose behind the town. The shanties had neither doors nor windows; instead, they had gaping holes in their plywood walls. The only visual variations were the electric poles, which gave the town a gridlike appearance. I couldn’t see anything green or beautiful. “This looks like ground zero,” I thought.

Pastor Tom said that when he had started coming to Poncho Villa, the town filled one small valley. “But about 10 years ago, people just started pouring into Poncho Villa. They built homes with whatever they could, wherever they could find room.”

When we found the church, my heart sank. Although it was in better shape than the rest of the village, it was not the oasis I had hoped it would be. We pulled through the gate and parked. The building itself was concrete and sturdy, but it had neither doors nor windows, offering no relief from the gritty dust everywhere.

The other building in the church

Reprinted with permission from The Banner.

complex appeared to be in better condition. It was made partially of brick and had doors and windows. Inside, carpeting covered a portion of the cement floor. The walls were also partly paneled.

Our puppetry group had come down to Poncho Villa to give two puppet shows. As we walked from shanty to hut to tell people about the shows, I felt I had stepped back in time. A young woman bent over a washboard, the hot sun blazing on her back. Some children, one of whom was naked, played in the dirt yard, while others jumped over ditches used for waste disposal—both human and otherwise. Mangy dogs lapped at the water

over the curtain, hoping to grasp just one of those magical puppets. Even after the show was over, the searching hands did not rest. What seemed like hundreds of children crowded around us, seeking to touch us, to somehow relate to us.

While I did not understand much of what they said to me, the friendship in the eyes and smiles of these children was clear. So was their desperate poverty. I was disgusted that all I could give them was a second-rate puppet show in broken Spanish.

After a night of rest in the church, we had to go out and canvass again. Another woman and I walked along with our Mex-

THE BANNER



I was disgusted that all I could give them was a second-rate puppet show.

that spilled from the woman’s basin. I failed to see how our two little puppet shows could mean anything to people who lived under such conditions.

Yet people came out in droves Friday night to see what these blond-haired, blue-eyed gringos were up to. Groping, dirty hands reached under, around, and

ican partner. We did not speak. We simply absorbed the sights around us. Our guide left us to cover another area.

As we walked up a hill, a young Mexican man strode toward us. He looked rough and had a scar on his neck. Uneasiness swept over me.

“Good morning!” he said to us.



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"Every child should be touched, loved... and should wake up each morning with the hope that his or her dreams can come true. That's why I love World Vision! Sponsorship gives people like you and me the chance to give dignity—and a future—to needy children."

—Larnelle Harris

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NEXT TO THE LAST WORD

Most people don't read mastheads regularly but I hope you read ours occasionally. This issue's masthead gives away our age—we just turned 36. It also tells you who World Vision is, what we do, where to write us, and how to notify us when your address changes.

I hope you notice the men and women who make up our recently formed Magazine Advisory Board. They are respected Christian leaders in their fields—education, journalism, and business. We're indebted to them for critiquing the magazine and discussing future issues.

We welcome Chris Redner, former editor of World Vision Canada's **Childview** magazine, as our senior editor, and Tamera Marko, a graduating journalism student at Pepperdine University, as assistant editor.

Two distinctive logos identify our commitment to financial integrity and the environment. We also gladly list our lengthy ties with two Christian press associations.

Who ever said mastheads make dull reading?—*Terry Madison*

WORLD VISION

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World Vision is a nonprofit, Christian humanitarian agency dedicated to serving God by helping people care for those in need. It ministers to children and families, provides emergency aid, fosters self-reliance, furthers evangelism, strengthens Christian leadership, and increases public awareness of poverty around the world.

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World Vision, Inc.

"How are you girls doing?"

"You speak English?" we asked, surprised.

He did. We told the young man about the puppet show. I did not expect him to be interested.

"You are Christians?" he asked us.

We nodded.

"How long have you been Christians?"

"Ah ... all our lives," we said.

"Born into the faith. That is wonderful! I am a Christian, too."

"That's great!" my friend replied.

"Praise God!" I said. Our responses seemed shallow and forced.

"I have not always been a Christian," he said. "I have only been a Christian one year. Before that, I was into drugs." My eyes focused on the large scar on his neck. "When I first became a Christian, my family laughed at me. They thought I had lost my mind because of the drugs. But you see, I believe the promises of Jesus. I believe when it says in the Bible, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household.' I believed, and it came true. In this one year, 15 of my family members have become Christians—my wife, my two children, and many others."

"Praise the Lord," we said, deeply moved this time.

"You see, my family and I, we are poor, but we are Christians."

"That's what really matters, isn't it?" I replied.

The man glanced at his watch and told us he had to go to work. We exchanged parting blessings and went our separate ways.

Later that day we retraced our steps and headed out of Poncho Villa, back to paved roads, back to the States. As the last of the shanties faded into the barren landscape, I remembered Paul's words from Romans 8: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." I began to realize that life was not so hopeless for the people of Poncho Villa. There was a greater future in store for them. Maybe, just maybe, that was why we were down here, to help a few—maybe just one—find that future.

As we turned onto the main road, back toward what seemed like civilization, I thought of my own people, middle-class Americans. How would the comfortable, with all their substitutes for happiness and peace, realize their desperate hopelessness? The young Mexican's voice echoed in my ears, "We may be poor ..." There was no doubt about that. He was poor, but he was so rich. □

Emily Kroese is a student at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa.

WITH HELP COMES HOPE

This was my third trip into Mathare Valley, Nairobi's largest and fastest growing slum. It doesn't get easier. There are 350,000 people living many steps below the poverty level. Their common tin roofs stretch as far as one can see, as flat as the common dirt floors on which they scratch out their meager lives.

When it rains, the slum is an instant quagmire. When epidemics hit, there is widespread death. If the piped-in water were to be interrupted, the slum would die within a week.

The pathetic little shops that front each home and the dirty streets themselves are crawling with people. The slum has all the activity of worms working a dump. Adult men seem preoccupied, sullen. They look at us, and their eyes express the anger of unrewarded labor. Materially, we represent what they now know they can never achieve. The women are more forgiving, more open and receptive. They see our fascination with their children, the touch of hands, and they nod in silent acceptance.

It is the children, however, who destroy all barriers. Just as curious as we are, they follow us everywhere, practicing their limited English, wanting to shake our hands, touch our blond hair. They are not afraid. Indeed, we represent a grateful break in the tedium of slum life—a life where play and games are foreign.

Still, we feel exactly what we are: intruders. This is an intrusion. White Americans, sensitive and pragmatically frightened enough to remove all our flashy jewelry before entering. Wise enough to wait for the three police escorts. Curious enough to risk our valuable cameras (this is something we don't often see, something very different, and it needs to be recorded). So we invade where we don't belong and won't stay. The heat and odors, as much as the threatening males, will make our visit brief.

I'm uncomfortable. I feel guilty that the visit itself is so patronizing. *Guilt isn't good*, I tell myself, it's simply a paralytic emotion that won't accomplish anything. But what could I accomplish? My American fix-it mentality is humbled. This is unfixable! Spiritual warfare is going on, and the bad guys are winning. Even Mother Teresa's words, "God has called us to be obedient, not successful," provide little comfort. I find myself looking for our van, our transportation out of the slum, back to the hotel, air conditioning, and a hot shower to cleanse my body, if not my memory.

Just ahead our group is gathering around a young mother. She is smiling, and her personality is engaging. Her children gather around her, and we are told that one of them has been sponsored by an American family. The mother appreciates the help.

She needs a great deal of it, since she has recently been widowed.

Help has come from outside the slum. Someone cares. Someone has responded. Someone this mother has never met cares for and has compassion on her most precious possessions—her children. With help comes hope. Hope is sustaining. The widowed mother in the middle of this slum can smile!

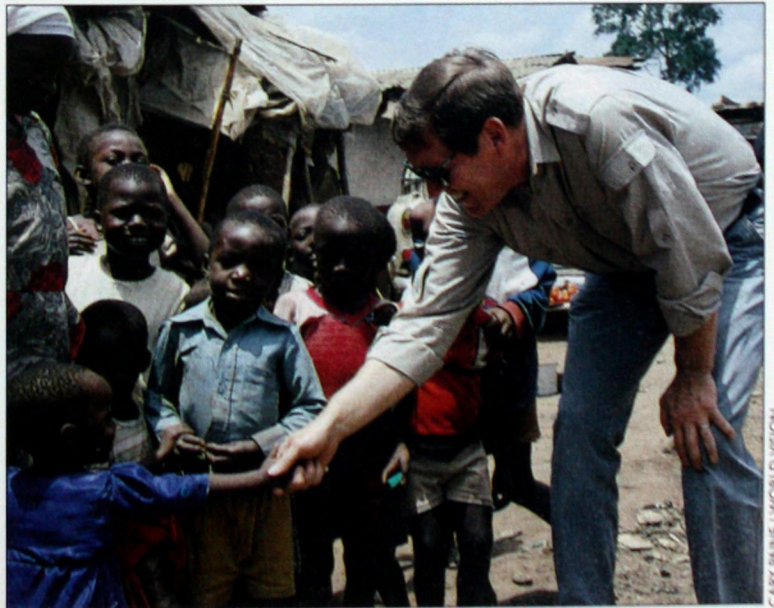
But she also gives *us* hope. She operates a small vegetable stand in front of her dilapidated house. Carrots, lettuce, broccoli, and onions are neatly positioned on a simple wooden stand. One of our group comments on how neat the vegetables are. "I try to make them look like flowers," the woman says.

Amazing. The woman looks at what we would imagine to be the bleakest of circumstances, and she sees flowers where we see vegetables. We see a shack, she a home. We see dirty kids and runny noses. She sees pearls of great price. We imagine disaster at what we see and know. She harbors hope because of someone she has yet to meet.

This woman understands the inherent promise of "walking through the valley." It's in the word "through." We won't stay there forever. There is hope. The time frame may be different for each of us, but the reality of the promise is that we will emerge from our present circumstances, whether it be this side of Glory or the other.

We think of Jesus. Help has arrived! Hope is a reality. The comfort of the Transcendent One carries us through. □

We feel exactly what we are: intruders.



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