

June / July 1994

WORLD VISION®

Peace,

peace will it ever come?
I fancy it will have to come.
A world full of violence
is no use to anyone.

I would like peace in this world.
All killing is only bringing sadness.
It really doesn't need to happen,
it is just for badness.

This violence is just going too far,
too far, yes too far.
If only it could stop, please stop,
violence too far.

—11-year-old girl from Northern Ireland

RECONCILIATION Issue

The Cold War is over, a fact that continues to produce some reminiscing and, ironically, a little nostalgia. The celebration of victory ended quickly as the full impact of the New World Order emerged. Superpower restraints were lifted. Ethnic conflict reared its ugly head. It was time to get even. Well-armed Somali warlords,

multiple antagonists in Bosnia, genocide in Southern Sudan—conflicts burning out of control. The black townships of South Africa, the racially mixed community of South Central Los Angeles, the ethnic diversities of the former Soviet Union, long ago seeded for conflict by Stalin himself, all proving the terrible truth that we have yet to learn how to live with our deepest differences.

The world is truly a more dangerous, chaotic, broken place than ever before. But this is a world that is to be penetrated by a gospel whose message is reconciliation. "For God so loved the world," in spite of its brokenness, "that He gave His only begotten Son," so that we might be eternally reconciled to a holy and righteous God.

This is a beautifully inviting message, but it is also one that carries with it awesome responsibility. We have been

called "agents of reconciliation." Our lives are to model, in effect, the reconciling love of God the Father and Jesus his Son. It is this gospel of reconciliation that we are to carry to the uttermost parts of a broken world.

Christianity was never meant to be a spectator sport. As I once heard during a particularly impassioned church service, "Standing on the promises means a whole lot more than sitting on the premises!" The call of a broken world is for Christians to be involved, modeling reconciliation in difficult places.

The words, however, are much easier than the actions. It took our "Christian" nation almost 20 years to lift an embargo, in an act of reconciliation, with Vietnam. Tragically, church members experience a divorce rate equal to those outside the church. Additionally, the potential power inherent in a unified

body of Christ is dissipated through ideological splits and theological spats. The smallest differences are reason for digging in heels, turning discourse into debate, declaring winners and, by extension, losers. Reconciliation at times seems to have less of a chance within the church than in society as a whole. Christians have met the enemy and, sadly, they are us!

The call continues to be clear, however. We are to be agents of reconciliation. We are to model a transcendent variety of love, God's love, in difficult places. Through that love, we are to demonstrate how people might live in spite of their deepest differences. Many principles have been advanced as to how this might occur, but allow me to present two that are absolutely essential if we are to be faithful to God's claim upon our lives.

The first is simple. Reconciliation ain't for sissies! This is hard work, diffi-

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MAKING *the* WORLD *a* SAFER PLACE

BY ROBERT A. SEIPLE

cult work, many times thankless work, and it might even require a vulnerability that flirts with death. Our best example, of course, is Christ himself. Gethsemane was the place. The path would lead to Golgotha. Christ, who was not above pain, knew the terrible truth of the immediate days ahead. A blood offering was expected. A covenant that would act as a covering of our sin was needed. No other sacrifice would do. The depths of our sin demanded innocent blood.

Calvary beckoned, but the first hard step of reconciliation took place in Gethsemane. Fear, reluctance, a petition that perhaps another way could be found—all dominated the prostrate and praying Jesus. Beads of sweat, like great drops of blood, bore testimony to the inner anguish he experienced. Ultimately it was faithfulness to God's will, "an obedience unto death," that allowed Jesus to take my sins and exchange them for his righteousness, thereby reconciling me with the Father.

Incomprehensibly beautiful! Wonderful beyond words! But an action that says, above anything else, that this exercise of reconciliation is hard and difficult work. The first step might be exceedingly painful. Emptying ourselves is a good place to begin. Maintaining a relationship with God will help immensely. A servant's heart will go a long way. But don't expect it to be easy. It required Christ's life. Again, reconciliation ain't for sissies!

Having said that, a second principle is equally obvious. All of us come equipped to play a role in this activity. Sure, it's difficult, but it's also required. God never gives us a task to do without the tools to do it. We are all "players," and each will have opportunities for positive impact.

This was never more clear to me than when I first revisited Vietnam as a civilian and World Vision president in the spring of 1988. The country was devastated! The infrastructure was in ruins. People were actually starving to death in certain areas of the north. Hanoi was a giant slum.

We came armed with a letter of introduction from President Ronald Reagan, unarguably the most powerful person in the world at that time. The Communist leaders of Vietnam were

unimpressed with our credentials. In fact, they were incensed. The letter proved to be a red flag waved in front of a charging bull. We were engaged in a final meeting, seeking to provide help, offering much-needed expertise to this broken land, and we were being ridiculed and scorned by the officials across the table.

The meeting was quickly disintegrating into disaster. Finally, the Communist leader paused in his diatribe to see if anyone else had something to say. Jesse, my 12-year-old son who accompanied me on this trip, raised his hand at the end of the table. His mother and I gulped. The official appeared amused, and encouraged our son to speak.

"I think you ought to listen to my dad. He only wants to help you. I know my dad. He can help you if you'll let him." The meeting ended immediately! Everyone ran over to my son. Each official wanted to be photographed with Jesse. The mood changed completely. Our work in Vietnam was allowed to begin. I put the president's letter back into my pocket and marveled how God could use a young boy to launch the process of reconciliation.

Each of us is an agent of reconciliation. Each has gifts to bring to this important table. The responsibility to participate belongs to each of us.

I think the Lord only wanted the best for us when he said, "Let not the sun go down upon our wrath." Reconciliation—painful, difficult, and potentially all-consuming—is good for us. The unity of the body provides opportunities more powerful than any government on earth. Reconciled personal relationships bring psychological wholeness to individuals and families. Nations experience healing and look to a more positive future. All of this is indeed good and cause for celebration. God leads the applause of heaven, and the one with the nail-pierced hands applauds the loudest.

If we persevere, we will see the applause of heaven through the eyes of Somali children. It can be visible in the faces of Sarajevo's survivors. A photo of a Vietnamese Communist standing next to a young boy will continue to bear testimony to its truth. Holy Communion will forever establish the worth of a model of reconciliation that, in turn, is worthy of our most obedient efforts. ☉



REVOLUTIONARY FAITH

Dr. Gustavo Parajon, founder of the Council of Evangelical Churches, believes that social justice is an integral part of the gospel. Parajon discusses his approach to reconciliation in war-torn Nicaragua.

BY BARBARA THOMPSON

BACKGROUND

The end of the war between the Contra and the Sandinista government of Nicaragua has not brought prosperity to this small Central American country. During the war, more than 50,000 people were killed. Many were the cream of Nicaragua's young adults: health workers, teachers, agriculturalists. Sixteen thousand children were orphaned, hundreds of thousands of villagers were displaced, and millions of dollars of damage hurt an already struggling economy.

Despite the signing of peace treaties, per capita income has dropped 30 percent in the past three years. Unemployment has reached 60 percent nationwide, and violence and banditry have risen to terrifying levels.

Today, one in four children in Nicaragua are suffering from malnutrition, and for the first time in recent memory, children are dying of starvation. With drastic cuts in health care and education, infant mortality has risen dramatically, and one in five primary age children never start school.

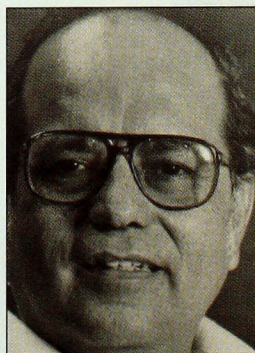
The country has also suffered from a freakish series of natural disasters. In 1992, a massive tidal wave and an erupting volcano left 300,000 homeless. In 1993, two hurricanes in quick succession left 90,000 without food or seeds to replant their crops.

In his native Nicaragua, Dr. Gustavo Parajon learned early that there was a price for following Jesus. "When my father became an evangelical, he was disowned by his family," Parajon recalls. "As a young boy, I experienced a great deal of discrimination and even persecution because I came from an evangelical family."

At 14, Parajon decided to study medicine. "I had a clear experience of being called by the Lord," he says. "I thought this would be my life contribution." After receiving medical degrees from Case Western University and Harvard Medical School, Parajon returned to Nicaragua to practice medicine. Here, in clinics for the rural poor, he saw firsthand the need for a comprehensive development program.

Today, Parajon's influence has extended far beyond the medical community in Nicaragua. He is the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Nicaragua and the founder of the Council of Evangelical Churches (CEPAD). Formed after the devastating 1972 earthquake, CEPAD provides funding and technical expertise for agricultural, medical, educational, and economic development in dozens of Nicaraguan communities.

Perhaps Parajon's most important role, however, has been that of prophet and peacemaker. He provided courageous leadership during the dictatorship of Gen. Anastasio Somoza, and served as a bridge between the Contras and the Sandinistas during Nicaragua's tragic civil war. With gentleness, firmness, and Christian conviction, he has been an agent of healing in one of Central America's poorest and most polarized countries.



Dr. Gustavo Parajon

BT: What did you learn about the life and the mission of the church during the years that Gen. Anastasio Somoza was in power?

PARAJON: It was from 1977 to 1979 that Somoza's repression became unbearable, and that's when CEPAD really came together as a council of churches. We began to talk about



CEPAD

The Council of Evangelical Churches of Nicaragua (CEPAD) was formed in 1972, after a devastating earthquake that destroyed downtown Managua and instantly killed more than 10,000 people. The formation of the council was the first time Protestant churches in the country had united to cope with a national tragedy.

Today, CEPAD works with more than 60 denominations. The council initiates and supervises relief and development projects for Nicaragua's poor and provides low-interest loans to farmers and small businessmen. It also acts as an impartial mediator for national reconciliation.

During Nicaragua's long war, CEPAD was a center for dialogue and reconciliation, promoting human rights and urging a nonviolent resolution to conflicts. CEPAD-sponsored Peace Commissions successfully negotiated between armed indigenous groups and the Sandinista government.

what it meant to be the church in an environment of repression.

By looking to Scripture, we learned that social justice was an integral part of the gospel. We also realized we had to act in a prophetic way.

BT: Was this a new realization for you?

PARAJON: It was new for me, in the sense that all of a sudden I realized I was going to be a public figure and possibly a target. I had some fears about that.

In 1978, Somoza's National Guard murdered 28 members of the Assemblies of God church in northern Nicaragua. That's when we really found out what was happening, and we made an official protest to Somoza. By then the whole country was in the midst of the insurrection that led to Somoza's ouster.

With the victory of the Sandinistas, we had to answer the question, "What is the life and ministry of the church in a revolutionary society?"

BT: What role did you see for the church?

PARAJON: As pastors, we wondered if we should pack up our belongings and leave Nicaragua, like so many pastors did in Cuba. We began to study the Bible together, to study the distinction between Marxism and socialism, and to consult with other pastors from socialist countries.

As we studied and talked together, for most of us it became obvious that we had to be a witness to the power of the gospel in whatever situation we found ourselves.

This led to attacks on CEPAD from both the left and the right. People in the revolutionary government called us

rightists and CIA lackeys; people on the right called us leftists and communists, because we were willing to engage the revolutionary government in dialogue. But we persisted, and here we are.

BT: In the aftermath of the war, it appears that Nicaraguan society has become highly polarized. What have you learned about the seeds of polarization?

PARAJON: In all of us there is a tendency to become separated from our sisters and brothers. Naturally, we try to look after our own interests. People who do things differently from us threaten our territory in such a way that we build walls of hostility.

In Nicaragua, we are deeply in need of reconciliation. When a community becomes polarized, it makes it difficult to work on any project, whether it is a church program or agricultural development. We have deep-seated problems, and unless the Nicaraguan people come together, we will not be able to solve them.

BT: What have you learned about reconciliation?

PARAJON: That it's very difficult. But it's not impossible. The church is the natural instrument for reconciliation, because all of us in the church are

aware of our own sinfulness. We are aware that God has forgiven us, despite our many sins. This makes it easier for us to approach a brother or sister in the spirit of forgiveness.

I am happy that here in Nicaragua the evangelical church has played an important role in reconciliation.

BT: For example?

PARAJON: This afternoon, I got a letter from a well-known Contra group asking CEPAD for food and loans for planting crops. It's interesting to me, because in the past they accused us of being Marxist and Sandinista. This is an opportunity for us to listen, to hear their needs and see how we can help.

BT: Did your own view of the Contras change during the war?

PARAJON: I was very angry at the Contras. Among other things, they murdered eight of our health workers.

But in 1988, when everyone was sick and tired of the war and wanted to do something to stop it, the Peace Commission in Juigalpa asked me to meet with the Contra commander in their region.

The Peace Commission was formed by local pastors and churches, and they wanted us to convey the Contras' demands to the Sandinista government, so they could begin a dialogue. By then many people in Juigalpa had been killed or maimed.

We met in the countryside. As 40 heavily armed Contras came down the hill and surrounded us, I had second thoughts about our meeting! Then I took a good look at them. The commander was the oldest, and he was only 25. The youngest was a 10-year-old carrying a rifle bigger than he was. All of a sudden, I saw the Contras for what they were: my brothers.

I knew then what Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians 5:16: "From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer."

My apparent foe was now my brother, and my motivation to stop the war was even more keenly felt.

Today, the Contra are just as much a victim of the war as anyone else. Politicians used them to achieve their political objectives, and once these objectives were accomplished, the Contra were discarded.

BT: What practical steps help bring reconciliation between enemies?

PARAJON: First there has to be a common felt need. In Nicaragua, it's obvious that people's biggest concern is

where to find their next meal. People in rural areas want to plant and harvest, so you find ex-Contras and ex-Sandinistas working fields together.

The plight of *campesinos* (small farmers) is the same no matter which side they were on during the war, so both parties have been affected by the same disillusionment. They are asking for loans, not gifts, to plant their crops, but the government has not given them one penny.

WORLD VISION IN NICARAGUA

1972: On December 23, a 6.2 earthquake killed or injured more than 10,000 people and left more than 300,000 homeless. World Vision provided relief funds to help ease the suffering.

1974: Organized a Pastors' Conference.

1976: Special grants provided a school bus for a poor community.

1977: Drought relief.

1979: Aided victims of the country's civil war by providing food and small loans to increase food production and revitalize small businesses.

1980: Provided emergency aid to communities affected by heavy flooding.

1982: Again aided communities affected by heavy flooding. Started two development projects assisting prison inmates and their families. Helped 700 evangelical pastors form an interdenominational association. Provided 50,000 Bibles to prisoners and the newly literate.

1983: Helped 2,000 families displaced by fighting between the Contras and Sandinistas.

1988: After Hurricane Joan struck Nicaragua in November 1988, World Vision provided poor farmers with agricultural tools, seeds, fertilizers, kitchen utensils, and construction materials to rebuild their homes. Also supplied basic food staples until first crops could be harvested.

TODAY: World Vision sponsorship is helping more than 10,700 children with educational and medical needs, and providing their communities with nutrition and sanitation education, job skills training, home improvements, and Christian nurture.

BT: Although there is a great deal of talk about polarization in Nicaragua, it sounds like many former adversaries are coming together.

PARAJON: The polarization is in a different direction now. During the revolution, it was ideological. Now, after the signing of peace treaties, it is more of an economic polarization between the wealthy and the poor.

People are disillusioned with traditional politics. With the exception of politicians, you don't see a lot of ideological commitments. But the politicians are still discussing things that are altogether secondary for people who are hungry and need jobs.

BT: The U.S. government has sent millions of dollars to Nicaragua. What has happened to these funds?

PARAJON: The money from the U.S. is used largely to pay the interest on our national debt. So the middle-sized and small farmers have not received the loans they need to plant the beans and rice and corn that could feed the whole country. As a result, the economy is not being reactivated, and we are importing food that we could easily grow here. People are very discouraged.

BT: What can Christians in the United States do to help Nicaraguans in this difficult period?

PARAJON: It's important to understand what is happening here and in all poor countries of the South. Tremendous poverty is being created by "structural adjustments" forced on us by international monetary groups.

For instance, at the price of enormous suffering, Nicaragua is being forced to balance its budget immediately. This is something that even an affluent country like the United States cannot do.

Second, U.S. Christians and churches can team up with local congregations and denominations or church councils like CEPAD. This provides a personal link and helps people know what is really going on.

Third, we need appropriate technology and, in some cases, sophisticated technology.

Finally, Christians in the U.S. and the South should be aware that they are the bearers of hope. We are living in a very hopeless world, full of disillusionment, not only here, but in the United States. The church can provide hope where many people know only despair. ☉

Barbara Thompson is a free-lance writer in Decatur, Ga.

It was like a rolling party for our staff, a weekend of fun, fellowship, and feasting on some of the most inspiring urban teaching anywhere. I had chartered a 47-passenger travel coach to take all our ministry associates in Atlanta to the Christian Community Development Conference in Jackson, Miss., for three days of rekindling. The conference theme was racial reconcilia-

I assumed the relationships we had built over the years were strong enough to fortify us against the River of Racial Separation. I had underestimated its power.

A BREAK *in the* LEVEE



tion—important reinforcement for our diverse staff. Bus rides of racially mixed groups in Mississippi can evoke some powerful memories. On this ground some very costly sacrifices were made to secure racial equality. It seemed very good indeed for a group as racially and economically diverse as ours to revisit these roots, and enjoy great fellowship, food, and worship together. I pictured us as a snapshot of the reconciled body of Christ—a reflection of the way the kingdom is designed to function.

Somewhere along the road in Alabama, I slipped to the front of the bus and keyed the mike for a few “presidential” remarks—the significance of our journey, the inspiring sessions in store for us in Jackson, that sort of thing. Sharon, my administrative assistant, followed up my speech with some logistical details. Some of us, she announced, would be staying at the Holiday Inn where the conference was being held; others would stay in the overflow hotel a block away. Disappointing, I thought. It would be nicer if we could all stay together, but no big deal. As she read the list of those who would be staying in the Holiday Inn, however, a silence spread over the bus. All those with reservations in the Holiday Inn were white!

It was an innocent oversight, anything but intentionally racist. I knew exactly how it had happened. Conference planners had assigned accommodations in the order registrations were received. It just happened that the first of our staff to register were white. None of us noticed this until Sharon read the list. But by then it was too late.

Sharon went on with her announcements, but many of our black staff had difficulty listening. A sensitive nerve had

This unintentional inequity found a weak spot in the levee of our relationships.

been struck that unleashed a torrent of troubling emotions. This unintentional inequity found a weak spot in the levee of our relationships. “Here they go again” comments appeared. Motives were questioned. Suspicions soon surfaced. In a remarkably short time, hurt and anger broke through with Mississippi River force, tearing open an ugly racial breach in our relationships. Distrust swirled in among us.

Explanations, like sandbags, did little to contain the flow. Once the fortification of trust had broken, they were

washed away as flimsy excuses. By the time the conference was over, we were swamped by a flood of accusations and counter-accusations. Inequities in compensatory time for the weekend, child-care coverage, meal reimbursements, and a number of other “we-they” issues contaminated our relationships. We were anything but reconciled as we headed back to Atlanta.

I had assumed the relationships we had built over the years were strong enough to fortify us against the River of Racial Separation. I had underestimated the power of that great divide that forever erodes foundations of trust and breaks apart the family of faith. Again it proved itself too strong, too persistent, too thorough for our imperfect fortifications to withstand. One small, overlooked breach was all it took for the murky waters to pour in.

But all is not lost. We immediately set to work cleaning up the damage and restoring the levee. Dialogue was required before side-by-side work could continue. In this painstaking process, we began to understand better the nature of the force that would divide us. We identified weak spots in our ways of relating. Our sensitivities have been sharpened and our commitment to candor deepened—essential reinforcements for the integrity of the ministry we have built.

There is still a contaminated well or two to purify. But on the whole, our restored relationships are stronger and deeper than they were before the break. Our Mississippi bus ride may well be remembered as the trip that taught us the importance of vigilance to the art of kingdom levee building. 🌐

Bob Lupton is director of Atlanta-based FCS Ministries.



**In economically and
racially divided Zimbabwe,
Sithembiso Nyoni is helping
reconcile her country**

From the ROOTS UP

Soon after Zimbabwe won its independence from the white-controlled government of Rhodesia and the United Kingdom in 1980, Sithembiso Nyoni dedicated her life to reconciliation and community development. Her country was badly torn. Ninety years of racial discrimination and exploitation had divided people along racial and

class lines. And more than 10 years of guerrilla war had displaced thousands of people, destroyed homes, and shattered trust.

To reconcile people across racial, ethnic, and social barriers, Nyoni founded the Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP), which today has more than 1 million members. In addition to reconciliation, the organization aids and empowers people through grass-roots development.

WV: How important is reconciliation to what you do?

NYONI: Reconciliation is a cornerstone of ORAP's work. We are trying to address history. History fragmented our people, it divided our people into classes, into different races. We're fighting each other, because our history formulated systems and structures that marginalized and excluded the majority of our people.

ORAP tries to empower rural people so they can become a part of the nation. We are trying to bridge the gap between classes, rich and poor, black and white, and across ethnic boundaries; between urban and rural people; and between the very poor and those who dominate the economic, cultural, and political structures.

We do this by helping people articulate the reasons they occupy the positions they occupy: "If you are poor, why are you poor? What role have you played in your poverty?" In many cases, people contribute to their oppression without knowing it.

We help rural people recognize who they are so they can stop perpetuating the process. We also bring awareness to the rich so they don't perpetuate the gap between rich and poor.

WV: Zimbabwe was divided racially much like South Africa. Is racial reconciliation your primary concern?

NYONI: Racism is not the only thing we should fight. Now that the war is over, we have to go further and say what was wrong, what was at war. Our war was also psychological, especially in the ways people related to one another. There was a lot of exploitation between the classes. We also have to deal with the economic, political, social, and cultural war.

Reconciliation means that we have to look at what went wrong in society, and try to create new values; try to build bridges; try to set right what went wrong; and try to create new relationships between people.

WV: You are an elite, middle-class woman—not exactly one of the grass-roots people. You have some bridging to do. How do you do that?

NYONI: It is true that I am elite, in that my education and family background is different from the people I work with in the villages. But we are reconciling elites with the oppressed. History has divided the elites, the educated, those with money, those with power, from the poor in the villages, who don't have power.

Reconciliation involves individuals questioning themselves: "What is at stake here? What is wrong in our



Sithembiso Nyoni

society? Am I part of what is wrong? What part am I playing to reinforce what has gone wrong, and what part can I play to correct the situation?"

In my case, yes, I am part of what is wrong. As an elite, the first thing I need to do is ask myself: What are the tendencies in myself that marginalize others? What is the power in myself that oppresses others? How do my resources and the way I use them contribute to what is wrong?

After answering these questions, I need to disempower myself. I mean, I have to recognize that there is power, strength, and positive things in others, particularly in the village people.

When I go to a village, I don't go there with my education, money, or background in front of me. I go there with my spirit and my person, my acceptance of the situation, and my responsibility to correct it. And I help others do the same.

Then when we tackle poverty, it's not me helping the poor get out of poverty, nor is it only the poor doing the work. We are all taking the responsibility. So the role of elites is not to do things for the people. It is to recognize how they are reinforcing, perpetuating, and maintaining the system.

If you see me working in a village, I am totally accepted because I have made myself part of the people. And together we keep each other on track, in terms of the values that we have defined together, the values that make a better world: caring and sharing, hard work, honesty, participation, and openness.

WV: You said things start with individuals owning up to the ways they contribute to dividing people. That must be one of your hardest tasks, and must make development difficult.

NYONI: The individual is important, but we don't end there. Individuals are part of a family, a community, and a nation. Every evil begins in an individual's mind and heart, and then it leads to actions. And every good work begins in an individual's mind and heart—and in his or her relationship with others.

A lot of development has been



superficial because it has not helped individuals examine themselves and ask, "Who am I? What can I do? What have I contributed to this? What relationships do I have that help or hinder development?" These questions are important because individuals can work against themselves and others.

ORAP helps individuals rediscover themselves in the whole process of development: "Do you want to develop or don't you? If you choose to develop,

Reconciliation is about bridging gaps, about putting right the wrongs.

you have to take responsibility for it." But people won't take responsibility for it if they don't understand what's happening around them and what's happening inside them. If development is to truly work and be truly African, then we must discover who we are as Africans and ask, "Who am I? What makes me tick as an African?"

When we answer those questions, we will connect with people who think like us. If we can then become a family, or a group of families, who share the same vision of our collective future, and also share the same values, we become a strong network, and we will resist oppression and all the things working against us.

WV: You are not popular with feminists in the West. Why?

NYONI: My approach to women's issues is to contextualize the woman. In the villages, women are central to their families. They are the ones who take care of children, the family, the old, the sick. If we preached women's lib—bend-the-rules, get out, be liberated—we would break the family that makes the woman.

Our approach is to educate the people who should be the woman's support system, so the woman doesn't become the beast of burden; so she can be part of a group of people who are all taking responsibility for improving their lives: children taking their own responsibility within the family; men taking their own responsibility; grandparents taking their responsibility.

In Africa, you can't correct women's issues by being militant, because you whip up enmity and resistance. You can't reconcile the wrongs by fighting, by creating bitterness. Instead, you must speak to all sides. You can't make men do more by whipping them, by forcing them, by fighting them. You make them do more by having better strategies, by negotiation, by talking with them. In the end, you win.

WV: You said the poor often participate in their own oppression and marginalization. What do you mean?

NYONI: The poor participate in their own marginalization and oppression, and also perpetuate their own poverty, when they don't understand what is happening to them; when they don't create alternative ways of dealing with their situation; when they passively allow things to happen.

We try to make them aware of these things. Rural people must articulate what has gone wrong, and then build alternatives to help them resist. They must build alternatives that give them the power to make decisions and to be a part of developing themselves.

WV: What did you mean when you said that individuals need to humble and disempower themselves before they can help others?

NYONI: It is important for people who work with the poor to disempower themselves, because reconciliation is about bringing two parties together. It's about equality, and you don't have equality where there are the powerful and the powerless.

If we are to work effectively—especially those of us who are rich, those of

us who have some kind of power—we need to disempower ourselves so we can empower others. We do this by recognizing the power in us that causes the marginalization of others and then dealing with it. We must own up to these problems, then discuss these tendencies with the poor.

WV: How do these ideas apply internationally?

NYONI: Reconciliation is about bridging gaps, about putting right the wrongs. But big institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, and some governments sponsor programs and restructure economies in ways that the poor don't benefit. They don't correct the relationships that caused the poor to be poor. In another words, they are reinforcing the relationships causing poverty. Then when poverty gets too extreme, they come back and give us some poverty alleviation programs.

I think the starting point should be to debate the issues, and to strengthen and restructure with the poor. The poor solve problems daily. But many people see them as problem-causers instead of problem-solvers.

Take the environment, for example: Some say the poor cause environmental hazards. They cut trees, they overstock, they're the reason for overpopulation. But that's the wrong way of looking at it. The poor are overburdened by the heavy structures acting against them, and those are the systems that they're struggling against.

The process of reconciliation really should begin with the big institutions, as well as the small institutions like the family. Don't just throw money at problems, but listen. Listen to how the rural people feel. Listen to their feelings, their voices, and the pains they go through. Listen to their joy, their experiences of success, small as they are. Listen to who they are. Then support the poor from their point of view. ☉

Sithembiso Nyoni was interviewed by John Schenk, a World Vision journalist living in Nairobi, Kenya.

When an Irish Republican Army bomb killed Gordon Wilson's daughter in 1987, he could have fallen into bitterness and hate. Instead, he reached out to the IRA in love and forgiveness.

BY GORDON WILSON

When LOVE MEETS *a* BRICK WALL

BACKGROUND

For several hundred years, Great Britain ruled Ireland. In the early 1900s, following several years of violent conflict, Ireland was granted independence. Northern Ireland, consisting of six counties and a majority Protestant population, remained part of Great Britain.

Catholics in Northern Ireland faced difficulties, including job discrimination and exclusion from many key government positions. After 1960, a civil rights movement for Catholics resulted in growing sectarian strife, including the revival of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which used terrorism to push for reunion with the Irish Republic.

Since 1969, Northern Ireland has suffered violence from both the IRA and Protestant terrorists, resulting in more than 3,100 deaths.

In December 1993, Britain and Ireland invited Sinn Féin, the IRA's political representatives, to negotiate a peaceful settlement, but the violence continues and no agreement has been reached.

Before those talks, Gordon Wilson, a Protestant and a retired draper in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, also met with the IRA to appeal for peace.

"People are scared in Northern Ireland," Wilson says. "Catholics are scared of being killed. Protestants are scared of being killed. The answer is that we—two communities as we are, with different loyalties, traditions, and heritages—must learn to live together without killing each other; live together sharing the many things that we have in common—not least our Maker. We must listen to those things which we do not have in common, respecting the other's point of view, and learning to trust each other."

"There are many good people involved in reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Together, they must begin to count, to make an impression, not only on the terrorists but on the government."

On Remembrance Sunday, Nov. 8, 1987, my 20-year-old daughter, Marie, and I went to watch the parade at the war memorial in our town of Enniskillen, Northern Ireland. There were perhaps 200 of us waiting to see the army, British Legion men, and police in the parade.



Just as we took our position against a brick wall, I asked Marie, "Are you all right? Can you see?" She said, "Yes." Then bang. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) had placed a bomb just on the other side of the wall behind us. At once, the wall collapsed and fell on top of us. We were thrown forward, and I finished up lying on top of whoever was in front of me, under 4 to 6 feet of rubble. Five or six people around us were already dead. My shoulder and arm were injured.

Then Marie took my hand. "Is that you, Dad?" she asked.

"Yes, Marie," I said. And I thought, *Thank God Marie's all right*. Then there was deathly silence around us, followed by screaming—raw, naked terror.

I asked Marie, "Are you all right?"

She said, "Yes"—then *she* screamed. I couldn't understand why she was screaming when she told me she was all right. Five or six times I asked her if she was all right, and each time she assured me she was—all the while holding my hand.

I asked her one more time, "Marie, are you all right?"

"Daddy, I love you very much," she said. Those were her last words—words that changed my life. She had to know that she was close to death. She had severe spinal and brain injuries, and she died four hours later in the hospital.

Later that evening a BBC radio reporter asked to interview me. Marie's words of love prompted me to agree. I told him everything that happened that morning, and about my daughter. Then he asked, "How do you feel about the guys who planted the bomb?"

"I bear them no ill will," I said. "I bear them no grudge. Bitter talk is not going to bring Marie Wilson back to

life. I shall pray, tonight and every night, that God will forgive them." And I did—and I still do.

After that interview, people asked me, "How could you say such a thing? How could you?" Some said, "The man's mad. He's batty. How could he?"

But I meant what I said, because the words came from my heart. Yes, I was hurt, I had just lost my daughter. But I wasn't angry. Marie's last words to me, words of love, had put me on a plane of love. I received God's grace, through the strength of his love for me, to forgive.

It wasn't enough, however. After retiring two years ago, the question kept popping up in my mind: What could I do to bring us a little nearer to peace? The answer was, "Go and talk to the IRA." I thought that Marie's death might become worthwhile if it led us a little nearer to peace.

It was hard to find the courage to do it. After all, they killed my daughter. It took me two years to find sufficient strength and courage to meet them. Finally, I publically asked to do so.

I went to them simply as Marie Wilson's dad. I said, "I know that you've lost loved ones, just like me. Therefore, on the grounds of common humanity and for the love of God, is there not a better way for you to achieve your goals? Surely, enough is enough. Enough blood has been spilled."

I have to say I met a brick wall. They said they were only out to kill "the British forces of aggression."

"But you killed 11 civilians in Enniskillen," I said. "And you recently killed two little boys in Warrington, where there were no security forces, no army. More than 3,100 people have been killed since 1969—Protestants and Catholics. I just don't believe you when you tell me you're not out to kill civilians. Are you telling me that you are prepared

to keep on killing people, including civilians for another 25 years?"

I asked them to abandon their armed struggle. They said, "No." I wasn't naive enough to think that just because I asked them to stop that they would. But I thought they might change their direction. I got nothing.

Finally, I said, "I won't ask to see you again. But if you want to see me, or if you think it will serve any purpose, I will certainly come. But this time it will be at your request."

I left sad and disappointed, and I wept as I drove home. Before the meeting, thousands of people worldwide wrote to me, "You can do it. If anybody can do it, if anybody can get through to these guys, you can." I cried because I felt I'd let those people down. But after I reported my brick wall answer, most of those people wrote again, and said, "Don't be disappointed, don't be sad. Something got through. It may not show for a week. It may not show for years. But something got through."

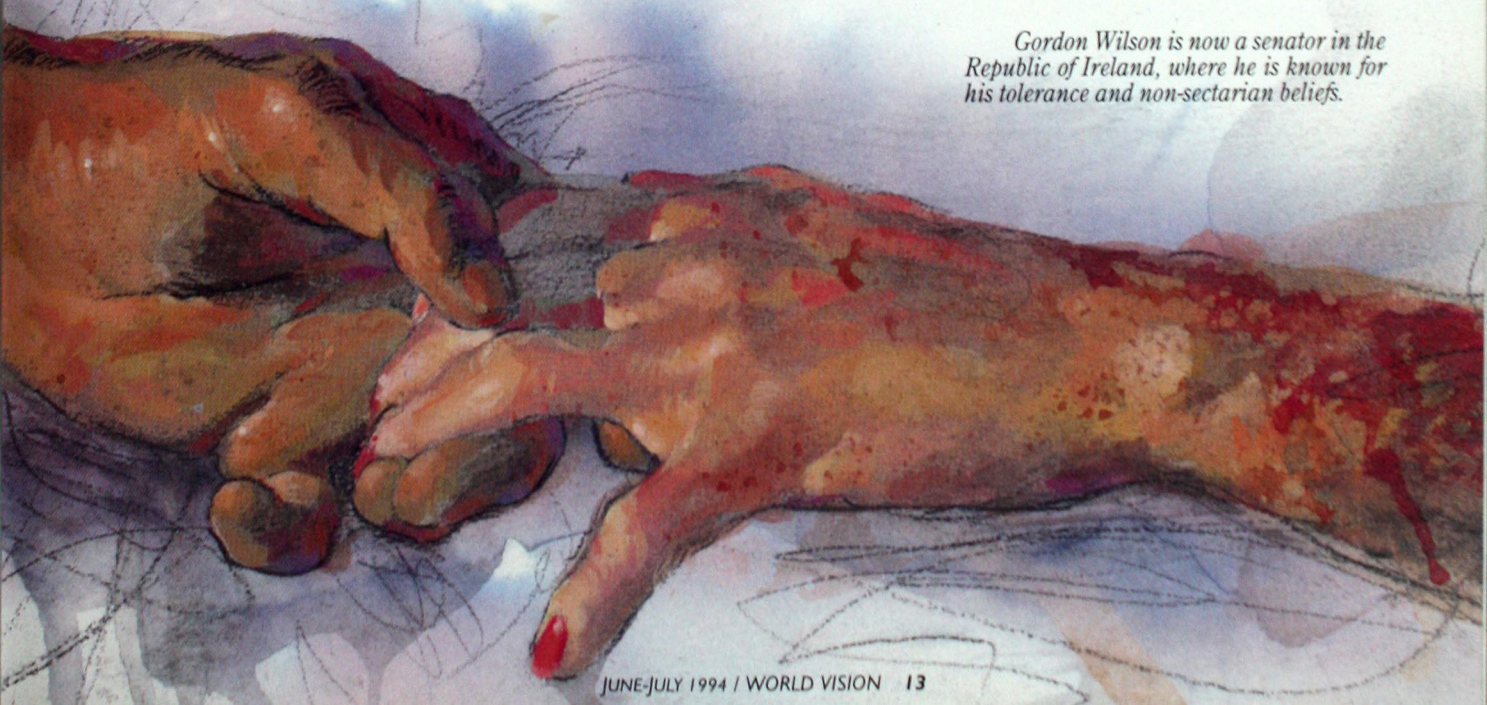
I don't have any evidence to show that my talking to them has moved them at all. But I tried. My conscience is clear. I did what I had to do. And I sleep better at night because I did.

My bottom line is love. I believe in God's two commandments, "Love God and love your neighbor." And because I believe those two commandments, I have to ask myself, "Who is my neighbor?" And the answer I get is that my neighbor is not just the lady next door, and it's not just my Protestant neighbor, and it's not just my Catholic neighbor. I must also love my terrorist neighbor—because he's there, and Christ died for him, too.

That doesn't mean I have to like him. I *cannot* like him. I cannot like the person who murdered my daughter. But I have to love him. And love is more than not hating.

Thankfully, I still have the grace to go on loving. ☸

Gordon Wilson is now a senator in the Republic of Ireland, where he is known for his tolerance and non-sectarian beliefs.



S I G N S O F H O P E I N S O M A L I A

Chief Sheikh Siad Ali Sharif joyfully pretends to eat raw sorghum he has plucked from Rowlo Village's healthy green fields. He remembers two painful years ago when that same land was barren because of drought and civil war. Troops armed with machine guns stole most of the villagers' food and their abundant supply of camels. The animal's meat and milk is a crucial part of Somalis' diet. Unable to plant food for two years because of fighting, the villagers ate camel skin, sorghum covers, weeds, and grass to survive. In late October 1992, hundreds of villagers trekked more than 18 miles to Baidoa after bandits brutally attacked and looted their village, killing about 100 residents. Many received help at a World Vision feeding center. They were thankful for life-sustaining food rations. But life was difficult in Baidoa, where water sources were far away and mosquitoes plagued unsheltered camp residents. At least one member of every Rowlo family starved to death during the famine.

When World Vision closed the Baidoa feeding center on March 25, 1993, 432 of the village's original 3,000 men, women, and children

were repatriated to Rowlo. They arrived home to bare land. Armed with World Vision-provided supplemental food, resettlement supplies, and farming tools, the villagers began rebuilding their huts and planting new seeds. Xaaway Ibrahim, 30, arrived with her husband of 10 years and their two children, then 3 and 8. They had nothing but five plastic cups, two plastic plates, a long kitchen knife, two blankets, a plastic sheet, and three cloth parcels for clothing. Xaaway's mother, father, and eldest brother had died in Baidoa.

Now healthy fields of corn, sorghum, and vegetables grow along the dirt road to Rowlo. Xaaway's husband helps work communal sorghum fields, and she tends her own garden in front of her family's hut. Her daughter has been immunized against diseases that have killed many Somali children: diptheria, tetanus, polio, measles, and whooping cough, which killed her 3-year-old daughter in Baidoa.

"Now I am happy; my children are healthy," Xaaway says. 🌍

Written by Tamera Marko. Photo and report by Reverie Greenburg, World Vision journalist in South Africa.





SAMARITAN SAMPLER

RESOURCES FOR
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ANNUAL REPORT

For a copy of World Vision's 1993 Annual Report, contact Donor Relations, World Vision, P.O. Box 1131, Pasadena, CA 91131; (800) 777-5777 or (800) 777-1760 for a Spanish version.

GROWING MUSTARD SEEDS

Applications are available for the 1994 Mustard Seed Awards honoring innovative, church-sponsored volunteer ministries serving the poor. Award recipients receive national recognition and grants for as much as \$5,000.

For more information, contact Michele Espinal, Mustard Seed Awards VI, World Vision, 919 W. Huntington Drive, Monrovia, CA 91016; (818) 357-1111, ext. 2162. Applications are due Oct. 3, 1994.

1993 MUSTARD SEED AWARD WINNERS:

URBAN CONCERN INC.
Columbus, Ohio

Provides community leadership training, emergency relief, after-school tutoring and mentoring, summer camp, children's Bible study, and holiday programs.

**FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP WITH THE
MENTALLY ILL**, Oak Park, Ill.

Offers pastoral care to people with

severe mental illness. Encourages participation in the worship and social life of their churches and use of their skills and talents within the church. Educates churches to be sensitive to the mentally ill and their families.

ACTS (Active Compassion Through Service) Ministries, Philadelphia

Provides support for the poor, the homeless, and divorced, separated, or widowed parents. Hosts community dinners and Bible study. Provides food, clothing, a nursing home ministry, and student tutoring. Also provides help for single parents/divorce recovery programs, and an addiction recovery ministry.

IMPACT (Individuals Ministering and Providing According to Christ's Teachings) Ministries, Evansville, Ind.

Supports the Christian Health Center, tutoring for grades K through 12, a 4-H

club, a fitness center, and weekend recreation. Emphasizes building a personal relationship with Christ.

RAMOTH HOUSE, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Provides 30 days of shelter for abused women and their children. Ramoth works with a YMCA domestic crisis

center to provide food, clothing, and housing. Staff and volunteers help women improve their skills at finding financial and legal assistance and permanent housing.

ACCESS (All County Churches Emergency Support System), Grand Rapids, Mich.

Works to meet the needs of local people through individuals, community resources, and 200 churches. Provides

food pantry assistance, holiday baskets, disaster response, and case-worker assistance for churches. Offers a Christian 12-step program; nutrition, cooking and budgeting classes; and one-to-one mentoring.



Compiled, written, and illustrated
by Stephanie Stevenson

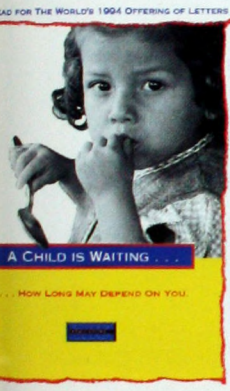
STAMP LICKING ANYONE?

Without writing checks—just letters to Congress—Christians can help win nearly \$1 billion for vital nutrition and health-related services,” says David Beckmann, Bread for the World president. “The \$1 billion would help 3.5 million at-risk women and children who do not now receive assistance.”

You can write your first letter on behalf of the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Concerned citizens have been urging Congress to

fully fund WIC since the program began providing medical care, food, and education to low-income pregnant women, their infants, and children 20 years ago. This summer and fall Congress will decide on full funding for WIC.

For more information or to order an Offering of Letters kit, send \$5 plus \$3 for handling to Bread for the World, 1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1000, Silver Spring, MD 20910; (301) 608-2400.



“He who gives when he is asked has waited too long.—Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Roman philosopher**”**

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☐ **YES, I want to help starving children with the 30 Hour Famine! Please send me materials for participant(s).**

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Casa de Passagem is one of the few places in Recife, Brazil, where street girls ages 7 to 18 can receive help. For these girls—who often prostitute to survive—progress is measured in

BY TAMERA MARKO
PHOTOS BY TERRI OWENS

GLIMMERS



At 13 years of age, Maria's life was brutal. She survived as a prostitute in the red-light district of Recife, the coastal capital of Pernambuco state in northeast Brazil. The police beat her and raped some of her friends. She watched girls sniff glue until stoned numb, slash themselves with razor blades, and run screaming through the streets. Her pregnant friends would sometimes ask her to help with abortions. Illegal in Brazil, abortion for street girls means plunging a metal

of **TRUST**

bar inside themselves, slamming their bellies against a wall, or asking a friend to kick them in the stom-

ach. To cope, Maria* took drugs and wrote poetry. A woman who brought street girls food asked Maria to write something. "I didn't know how to write properly," says Maria. So she recited one of her poems verbatim. The woman encouraged Maria to visit Casa de Passagem, a small, one-story building, where she could shower, eat, hang out with other girls, and even learn to read and write if she wanted. Maria finally showed up at the Casa with swollen, bloodshot eyes, matted long, black hair—and pregnant. "I got scared because many people said, 'Don't take drugs anymore,'" she says. "I didn't know what to do."

After six years of counseling, medical help, and learning how to read and write, today Maria is a bundle of personality who gestures passionately with her hands while telling stories and throws her head back when she laughs. She and her 5-year-old daughter live with Maria's mother. She has typed 36 of her poems into a computer at the Casa and wants to publish them in a book "so that people can't think that a street girl can't do what people from higher societies can do," Maria says proudly.

WORLD VISION FIGHTS CHILD PROSTITUTION IN BRAZIL

World Vision is participating in a nationwide campaign to eliminate child prostitution in Brazil, which ranks second in the world in the number of underage sex workers. In addition to distributing thousands of stickers, posters, and T-shirts denouncing child abuse, the campaign includes a toll-free telephone number for reporting cases of sexual abuse of children. Also, a video denouncing child prostitution has been shown on several television stations.

World Vision is running the campaign with the Brazilian Center for Information and Orientation on Social Health. It began in October 1993 during a national congress against child prostitution.

More than 500,000 Brazilian children sell their bodies on the city streets, in nightclubs, or in mining communities. The situation has been aggravated by foreign tourists who seek out Brazilian girls as young as 8.

Reported by Ricardo C. Siqueira, a World Vision communications advisor in Brazil.

According to a 1991 Casa de Passagem census, the most recent statistics, more than 1,000 homeless girls ages 6 to 20 live on Recife's streets. Half of these said they survived by prostitution. Since January 1989, Casa de Passagem, open weekdays until about 5 p.m., has provided 250 girls like Maria with friendship, counseling, food, education, health care, and vocational training. The Casa, funded by World Vision and other corporate and individual donors, is one of the few places in Recife where the girls can receive help. Last year, the Casa's job training program moved into a spacious, white house with an industrial kitchen where the girls earn income cooking meals for local businesses. Upstairs in a sunny work room, girls design and produce colorfully embroidered greeting cards and learn to use new, modern sewing machines.

LIFE IN THE FAVELAS

Most of the girls come from the *favelas* (slums). More than 810,000 of Recife's 2 million residents live in the city's 500 favelas, where homes are cardboard or wood slats crudely nailed together. Tourism is the big business in Recife, where splashy brochures promise tourists "the sun shines 13 months a year." Four-star hotels, lavish apartments, and ritzy restaurants line the strip along Recife's white sandy beaches. Many locals haul huge mounds of suntan lotion, towels, straw hats, and fresh coconuts to sell to tourists on the beach.

At least 70 percent of favela residents work as maids, street vendors, and laborers for minimum wage: \$60 a month. This will not buy a month's worth of food for a family of four. And with Brazil's wildly fluctuating inflation rate, which in 1993 was about 2,500 percent, \$60 buys less and less.

An increasing number of youths seek a better life on the streets. Of the 7 million to 12 million street children in Brazil, 20,000 live in Recife. According to the Brazilian government, 500,000 girls younger than 19 work as prostitutes in Brazil. After unsuccessful or humiliating stints at street-corner begging or slaving as low-paid maids in wealthy homes, many of the girls, some as young as 11, find their last chance at survival is donning a short, skin-tight dress, smearing rouge on their cheeks, and selling their bodies.

For most, that means never being able to return home. "Street girls give the family a bad name," says Cristina Vasconcelos Demendonca, a psychoanalyst and Casa co-founder. "If a family has a retarded child, they can send her to an institution. If they have a girl who has become sexually involved or is a prostitute, they will kick her out onto the streets."

On the streets, she faces devastating prejudice and violence. Women clutch their purses fearfully when passing street children. And business owners, who consider street children bad for business, hire former or off-duty policemen—"death squads"—to murder youths, usually boys. Girls are routinely beaten and raped.

"What actually prevents [these girls] from going totally crazy is being a part of a gang of street girls," Cristina says. The bonds among these girls are so strong, some of the older girls will even turn an extra trick to buy food for the younger ones not yet prostituting.

Despite the violence, most street girls believe they have few alternatives. "People always ask why these girls don't work as maids instead," says Ana Vasconcelos, the project's co-founder and president. Ana, a lawyer and former vice president for the "Legiao Asistencial de Recife," a social service agency, does not hide her frustration at this simplistic approach to helping street girls. Many girls are beaten, raped, and emotionally abused in homes where they work as maids. "They are told that being a maid is socially acceptable and not the sin that prostitution is. After being raped by her employer a girl asks, 'What's the big difference?'"

For some girls, the big difference is freedom. On the streets, they say when they will work, at what price, and for how long. They can make \$50 in 10 minutes from a *gringo* (white man); as a maid they will earn \$60 a month (60 hours a week). And there are occasional good times. "When a girl goes around with a man, there is a kind of dignity. They become friends for 15 days," Ana says. "There is someone to protect them. It's like a dream."

Ideally, Casa de Passagem staff help the girls learn a vocational skill, get a job, and move into a community home with three other Casa "graduates." But this final process is slow and painful. The handful now living in community houses are often too emotionally or economically unstable to pay for their living expenses.

Maria, after almost six years at the Casa still has not learned a vocation, though she is considered one of the program's success stories. At Casa de Passagem, progress is measured in glimmers of trust and self-esteem.

When the Casa first opened, girls came sporadically, showing up for a day and then disappearing for weeks. Eventually a core group began to emerge. "They started to get angry with girls who would come and fall asleep and who were on drugs," says Cristina, who introduced the

**Name changed upon her request*



Casa de Passagem has provided more than 250 street girls with food, friendship, health care, education, and job training. Since Casa staff helped Maria (far right) learn how to read and write, she has typed 36 of her poems into a computer and wants to publish them in a book.

grupo operativo in which the girls and the staff together decide house rules and how to enforce them. This approach, chaotic to newcomers, is a necessity for girls used to Recife's unstructured streets and homes, where attention and love are sporadic at best.

The girls have decided that this Friday is beach day at Casa de Passagem. At 10 a.m., the Casa's small front room is already heavy with September humidity and packed with girls, ages 7 to 19, getting ready for the beach. Girls throwing on bikini tops and shorts; girls talking and laughing louder than the music blaring from a radio; girls dancing the samba in front of a wall-length mirror.

Maria, however, works on her poetry. She's especially proud of *Quem Somos Nós?* (Who Are We?), a poem about her struggle on the streets and how "only God can help out." She wrote it after aborting her second child. Almost all of the Casa girls have had at least one abortion. Some have aborted six times.

WE ARE TOMORROW

Every Saturday morning Casa "educators" work in the favelas to encourage girls still living at home to stay in school, off drugs, and off the streets. In a building in Skylab, one of Recife's most violent communities, a few teen-age girls sit on straw mats on the cement floor. On the walls hang collages the girls made about

sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), love, education, and a poster with everyone's birthday written on paper hearts.

One-by-one the girls trickle in, announcing themselves with a hearty, "*Bom dia!*" (Good morning!) This program began almost two years ago when three girls from Casa de Passagem helped with a survey to find the most "needy" girls in the community. There are now five well-respected groups.

Skylab's group is called *Nós somos a Amanha* (We are Tomorrow). The girls have learned a lot. One girl says, "When I was pregnant I didn't know what liquid was growing inside of me." Another girl

says she showed her mother visual aids about menstruation, child birth, and STDs. "My mother said, 'My goodness, I've had 11 children and I didn't know any of this.'"

During their two-hour sessions, groups learn about drugs, sexuality, pregnancy, menstruation, and their "rights" as citizens. Once the girls have dealt with these topics, they are trained to be "agents" of information. They take what they've learned to their schools, homes, neighbors, friends, and streets. A few have spoken to the Brazilian Congress.

Today three girls give a "lesson" about sexually transmitted diseases using graphic color posters. One girl says because their city has one of the world's highest syphilis rates, some people call it "Recifilis". They hold up a poster of diseased flesh. A quiet girl squirms on her mat and says with a grimace, "That disease is *disgusting*."

The last subject is AIDS. The educator asks, "Can someone die of AIDS?" A girl with a peach bow in her ponytail calmly lists the ways AIDS is contracted and says "yes," you can die of AIDS.

STREET CHILDREN LAW

In 1985, social workers and educators helped street children in Brazil form the National Movement of Street Children, which spread to almost all of

the country's urban centers. The organization fought to change the legal codes in which a distinction was made between "minors" (poor people's children) and "children" (rich people's children). A newspaper headline from the early '80s in Belem proclaimed "Minor Attacks Child."

In 1988, the Brazilian Congress rewrote the constitution's description of children's rights. When new words didn't translate into more help, the youth pressed for more change. In 1990, Congress adopted the Statute on Children and Adolescents. The 100-page document guarantees children's rights to housing, education, health care, and "special protection." But these changes must slowly trickle through bureaucratic paperwork and review committees before children receive much benefit.

When asked about the reality of the Statute of the Child and Adolescents, Ana says, "This *institute* is reality. The government doesn't care. The government *counts* the dead and records it. "Then," Ana slaps her hand on her desk, "[for the government], it is done."

The street children's effort is slowly moving higher on Brazil's political agenda, however. Children's groups routinely call Ana asking for a girl to come with them to speak at Congressional meetings. A few years ago, Maria, "excited but scared stiff," read the following poem for the National Congress in Brasilia, the country's capital.

WOMAN

*I could be a man
or maybe a child
but I am a woman
that symbolizes hope.
I could be a god
adored by man
but I am a woman
and just loved.
I could be a bird
with wings to fly away
but I am a woman
and I don't tire of dreaming.
I could be a model
and win the world
but I am a woman
I conquered myself first.
I could be a heroine
and conquer 1,000 heroically
but I am a woman
and have planted my seed.
I could be an animal
and therefore have to suffer
but I am a woman
and I don't tire of living.
I could be a verse
and live in the mouths of poets
but I am a woman
here at the right time.*



WORLD VISION TO MOVE TO PACIFIC NORTHWEST THE TENT AND THE ALTAR

The first breakthrough in the long relocation exercise was both exciting and a bit scary. I had just gotten off the phone with our chief financial officer who informed me that the savings for operating the World Vision U.S. offices someplace other than Southern California might be as large as \$5 million to \$7 million per year.

Every protracted exercise needs a compelling reason to keep it going. The exercise of relocation is no exception. Periodically, out of a sense of prudence and good management, we would look at the issue of corporate location. World Vision is an international partnership. We serve an entire world. Our ministry in the United States has grown to the place where it is truly national. In terms of location, we should always be primarily concerned with how we can best serve and—with this new information—where we could best be stewards of the resources that energize our serving.

As much as \$5 million to \$7 million! When your call is to the poorest of the poor, that is simply too much money to leave on the table. The exercise now had a compelling reason. This information required that we be specific with our board of directors and open with our employees. "Going public" would be disruptive, distracting, and, if not properly done, terribly harmful to our ministry. The news I received over the phone was indeed exciting and scary!

The financial numbers quickly transfer into ministry figures. The figures that come to mind are the faces of children: For \$5 million, we can care for 25,000 additional children around the world. Such projected savings immediately translate into hope and a better future for a whole host of kids who have been forced to live on the edge of survival.

Properly leveraged, with matching grants in the United States and greater field capacity around the world, these savings could generate an additional \$25 million. Work in new countries could be opened. A holistic presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ could be presented, modeled, incarnated, and brought home to people who desperately need to hear and see the love of Jesus Christ. This was no mere pebble dropping into a lake. Properly done, we could create a tidal wave of effective ministry to those whom

we have been called to serve.

It has always been helpful to me to put an opportunity such as this into a biblical context. Parables and personalities come to mind. The parable of the talents, and the one who buried his. He felt he was given something to secure. He had to make it safe. The talent was buried in a known spot, a secure position, a no-risk venture, a maintenance of the status quo. Ultimately, we are clearly told, this was not good stewardship. Better to have taken some risk and to have done more, accomplishing greater things, than to bury the talent and lose the opportunity.

I think of Jonah, with his great call and opportunity, running away from his mission, his ministry. Poor stewardship. A three-day encounter with a large fish was necessary to get Jonah thinking straight again.

Moses' 12 spies provide another perspective. Sent to the land of great promise, a land of massive opportunities, a land flowing with milk and honey, the potential for stewardship in their relocation carried with it tremendous possibilities. "But there were giants in the land...." Fear destroyed the Israelites' focus. The opportunities evaporated. The mission was abandoned. A stubborn and stiff-necked people—it took another 40 years to get it straight.

But a more positive biblical example that comes to mind as I think of a proper stewardship of mission is the life and personality of Abraham. Late in life he was asked to leave his home, his friends, his rootedness in a place that was quite comfortable.

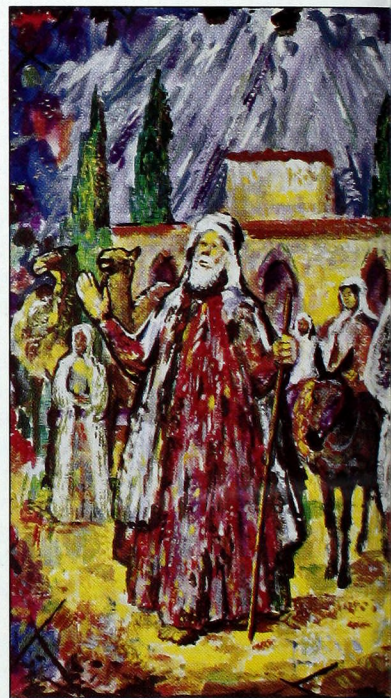
Abraham was yanked out of the familiar and challenged to "go to a place that I will show you." The norm was replaced by the ambiguous. The sure thing gave way to the confused and seemingly contradictory message of personally seeding a new nation. A wake-up call came late in life, a new mission emerged, and Abraham, out of faithfulness to God,

did one of the scariest things that any of us could ever contemplate: move away from that which had been established to that which had yet to be defined.

There are two images that dominate Abraham's life from this point on: the tent and the altar. The altar is foundational. It speaks of Abraham's faithfulness to the God he served, as well as God's faithfulness as he leads Abraham into an expanded ministry. The altar speaks of spiritual identity, a transcendent rootedness, a relationship that is both rock solid and enduring.

The tent, on the other hand, is a beautiful symbol of Abraham's willingness to move. Abraham held on lightly.

Abraham did one of the scariest things that any of us could ever contemplate: move away from that which had been established to that which had yet to be defined.



God was in control of his life, and he was always willing to move on, to fold his tent, when God required that of him.

Obviously there was something larger than this life that carried Abraham from place to place. Very few personalities in Scripture manifest the length, depth, and breadth of faith as does Abraham. When God called, Abraham was ready. When God said, "Go," the tent came down, the journey went on, and Abraham "relocated" on God's command.

Stewardship of mission. The altar was firm; the tent could be folded. Presence with God meant a great deal more to

Our cover story on "reconciliation" is not our first, nor our last. In his editorial in the Dec/Jan '88 issue, then just-installed-President Robert Seiple said: "As God gives us courage, and as he gives us truth, we commit this magazine to 'go, stand, and speak,' and to inform, educate, prod, and promote the church to its task of reconciliation." Since then, the magazine has tried to do just that.

This year, World Vision's annual Washington Forum focuses on reconciliation. In future issues, we'll bring you reconciliation reflections by Forum speakers James Baker, Os Guinness, Chuck Colson, and Father Elias Chacour.

But World Vision does more than talk about reconciliation; we try to practice what we preach. In our ministry offices, "Reconciliation" is a budget item, along with "Christian Witness" and "Spiritual Nurture." In word and deed, we seek to be a catalyst to promote unity in the Body of Christ, and between ethnic groups and nationalities.

—Terry Madison

WORLD VISION

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FROM THE PRESIDENT:
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Your church can perform a modern-day miracle!



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.

Today, with 40,000 children
dying every day of hunger, *we need
another miracle.* Our churches can
be the place where miracles begin.

Last year, more than 2,000
churches like yours used these loaves
and raised over \$600,000 to feed
hungry children. That money helped
thousands of families survive. It
helped to change their future.

Through participating in World
Vision's Love Loaf program your

church will care
for the hungry, as Jesus
taught. In the process, the

lives of your congregation will also be
changed. Members will experience
God's joy in sharing. Children will
learn compassion. All will share the
fellowship of caring together for those
who suffer.

Part of the money raised can also
go to your own church projects. World
Vision provides the Love Loaves at no
cost to you.

Call or write today to order
your Love Loaves or ask for more
information.

Miracles can begin here!

Yes! I want to begin the Love Loaf program in my church.

- ☐ Please send us _____ loaves (one per household).
- ☐ We plan to distribute them on (date) _____.
- ☐ Please send me a sample Love Loaf and more information.
- ☐ Please call me.

Name _____

Position _____

Church _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____

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WORLD VISION

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June / July 1994

WORLD VISION®



Peace,

peace will it ever come?
I fancy it will have to come.
A world full of violence
is no use to anyone.

I would like peace in this world.
All killing is only bringing sadness.
It really doesn't need to happen,
it is just for badness.

This violence is just going too far,
too far, yes too far.
If only it could stop, please stop,
violence too far.

—11-year-old girl from Northern Ireland

RECONCILIATION Issue

The Cold War is over, a fact that continues to produce some reminiscing and, ironically, a little nostalgia. The celebration of victory ended quickly as the full impact of the New World Order emerged. Superpower restraints were lifted. Ethnic conflict reared its ugly head. It was time to get even. Well-armed Somali warlords,

multiple antagonists in Bosnia, genocide in Southern Sudan—conflicts burning out of control. The black townships of South Africa, the racially mixed community of South Central Los Angeles, the ethnic diversities of the former Soviet Union, long ago seeded for conflict by Stalin himself, all proving the terrible truth that we have yet to learn how to live with our deepest differences.

The world is truly a more dangerous, chaotic, broken place than ever before. But this is a world that is to be penetrated by a gospel whose message is reconciliation. "For God so loved the world," in spite of its brokenness, "that He gave His only begotten Son," so that we might be eternally reconciled to a holy and righteous God.

This is a beautifully inviting message, but it is also one that carries with it awesome responsibility. We have been

called "agents of reconciliation." Our lives are to model, in effect, the reconciling love of God the Father and Jesus his Son. It is this gospel of reconciliation that we are to carry to the uttermost parts of a broken world.

Christianity was never meant to be a spectator sport. As I once heard during a particularly impassioned church service, "Standing on the promises means a whole lot more than sitting on the premises!" The call of a broken world is for Christians to be involved, modeling reconciliation in difficult places.

The words, however, are much easier than the actions. It took our "Christian" nation almost 20 years to lift an embargo, in an act of reconciliation, with Vietnam. Tragically, church members experience a divorce rate equal to those outside the church. Additionally, the potential power inherent in a unified

body of Christ is dissipated through ideological splits and theological spats. The smallest differences are reason for digging in heels, turning discourse into debate, declaring winners and, by extension, losers. Reconciliation at times seems to have less of a chance within the church than in society as a whole. Christians have met the enemy and, sadly, they are us!

The call continues to be clear, however. We are to be agents of reconciliation. We are to model a transcendent variety of love, God's love, in difficult places. Through that love, we are to demonstrate how people might live in spite of their deepest differences. Many principles have been advanced as to how this might occur, but allow me to present two that are absolutely essential if we are to be faithful to God's claim upon our lives.

The first is simple. Reconciliation ain't for sissies! This is hard work, diffi-

The world is truly a more dangerous, chaotic, broken place than ever before. But this is a world that is to be penetrated by a gospel whose message is reconciliation.

MAKING *the* WORLD *a* SAFER PLACE

BY ROBERT A. SEIPLE

cult work, many times thankless work, and it might even require a vulnerability that flirts with death. Our best example, of course, is Christ himself. Gethsemane was the place. The path would lead to Golgotha. Christ, who was not above pain, knew the terrible truth of the immediate days ahead. A blood offering was expected. A covenant that would act as a covering of our sin was needed. No other sacrifice would do. The depths of our sin demanded innocent blood.

Calvary beckoned, but the first hard step of reconciliation took place in Gethsemane. Fear, reluctance, a petition that perhaps another way could be found—all dominated the prostrate and praying Jesus. Beads of sweat, like great drops of blood, bore testimony to the inner anguish he experienced. Ultimately it was faithfulness to God's will, "an obedience unto death," that allowed Jesus to take my sins and exchange them for his righteousness, thereby reconciling me with the Father.

Incomprehensibly beautiful! Wonderful beyond words! But an action that says, above anything else, that this exercise of reconciliation is hard and difficult work. The first step might be exceedingly painful. Emptying ourselves is a good place to begin. Maintaining a relationship with God will help immensely. A servant's heart will go a long way. But don't expect it to be easy. It required Christ's life. Again, reconciliation ain't for sissies!

Having said that, a second principle is equally obvious. All of us come equipped to play a role in this activity. Sure, it's difficult, but it's also required. God never gives us a task to do without the tools to do it. We are all "players," and each will have opportunities for positive impact.

This was never more clear to me than when I first revisited Vietnam as a civilian and World Vision president in the spring of 1988. The country was devastated! The infrastructure was in ruins. People were actually starving to death in certain areas of the north. Hanoi was a giant slum.

We came armed with a letter of introduction from President Ronald Reagan, unarguably the most powerful person in the world at that time. The Communist leaders of Vietnam were

unimpressed with our credentials. In fact, they were incensed. The letter proved to be a red flag waved in front of a charging bull. We were engaged in a final meeting, seeking to provide help, offering much-needed expertise to this broken land, and we were being ridiculed and scorned by the officials across the table.

The meeting was quickly disintegrating into disaster. Finally, the Communist leader paused in his diatribe to see if anyone else had something to say. Jesse, my 12-year-old son who accompanied me on this trip, raised his hand at the end of the table. His mother and I gulped. The official appeared amused, and encouraged our son to speak.

"I think you ought to listen to my dad. He only wants to help you. I know my dad. He can help you if you'll let him." The meeting ended immediately! Everyone ran over to my son. Each official wanted to be photographed with Jesse. The mood changed completely. Our work in Vietnam was allowed to begin. I put the president's letter back into my pocket and marveled how God could use a young boy to launch the process of reconciliation.

Each of us is an agent of reconciliation. Each has gifts to bring to this important table. The responsibility to participate belongs to each of us.

I think the Lord only wanted the best for us when he said, "Let not the sun go down upon our wrath." Reconciliation—painful, difficult, and potentially all-consuming—is good for us. The unity of the body provides opportunities more powerful than any government on earth. Reconciled personal relationships bring psychological wholeness to individuals and families. Nations experience healing and look to a more positive future. All of this is indeed good and cause for celebration. God leads the applause of heaven, and the one with the nail-pierced hands applauds the loudest.

If we persevere, we will see the applause of heaven through the eyes of Somali children. It can be visible in the faces of Sarajevo's survivors. A photo of a Vietnamese Communist standing next to a young boy will continue to bear testimony to its truth. Holy Communion will forever establish the worth of a model of reconciliation that, in turn, is worthy of our most obedient efforts. ☉



REVOLUTIONARY FAITH

Dr. Gustavo Parajon, founder of the Council of Evangelical Churches, believes that social justice is an integral part of the gospel. Parajon discusses his approach to reconciliation in war-torn Nicaragua.

BY BARBARA THOMPSON

BACKGROUND

The end of the war between the Contra and the Sandinista government of Nicaragua has not brought prosperity to this small Central American country. During the war, more than 50,000 people were killed. Many were the cream of Nicaragua's young adults: health workers, teachers, agriculturalists. Sixteen thousand children were orphaned, hundreds of thousands of villagers were displaced, and millions of dollars of damage hurt an already struggling economy.

Despite the signing of peace treaties, per capita income has dropped 30 percent in the past three years. Unemployment has reached 60 percent nationwide, and violence and banditry have risen to terrifying levels.

Today, one in four children in Nicaragua are suffering from malnutrition, and for the first time in recent memory, children are dying of starvation. With drastic cuts in health care and education, infant mortality has risen dramatically, and one in five primary age children never start school.

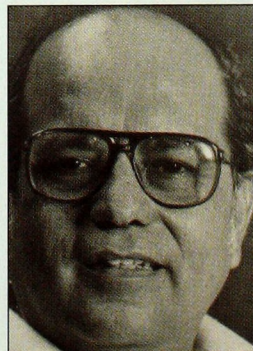
The country has also suffered from a freakish series of natural disasters. In 1992, a massive tidal wave and an erupting volcano left 300,000 homeless. In 1993, two hurricanes in quick succession left 90,000 without food or seeds to replant their crops.

In his native Nicaragua, Dr. Gustavo Parajon learned early that there was a price for following Jesus. "When my father became an evangelical, he was disowned by his family," Parajon recalls. "As a young boy, I experienced a great deal of discrimination and even persecution because I came from an evangelical family."

At 14, Parajon decided to study medicine. "I had a clear experience of being called by the Lord," he says. "I thought this would be my life contribution." After receiving medical degrees from Case Western University and Harvard Medical School, Parajon returned to Nicaragua to practice medicine. Here, in clinics for the rural poor, he saw firsthand the need for a comprehensive development program.

Today, Parajon's influence has extended far beyond the medical community in Nicaragua. He is the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Nicaragua and the founder of the Council of Evangelical Churches (CEPAD). Formed after the devastating 1972 earthquake, CEPAD provides funding and technical expertise for agricultural, medical, educational, and economic development in dozens of Nicaraguan communities.

Perhaps Parajon's most important role, however, has been that of prophet and peacemaker. He provided courageous leadership during the dictatorship of Gen. Anastasio Somoza, and served as a bridge between the Contras and the Sandinistas during Nicaragua's tragic civil war. With gentleness, firmness, and Christian conviction, he has been an agent of healing in one of Central America's poorest and most polarized countries.



Dr. Gustavo Parajon

BT: What did you learn about the life and the mission of the church during the years that Gen. Anastasio Somoza was in power?

PARAJON: It was from 1977 to 1979 that Somoza's repression became unbearable, and that's when CEPAD really came together as a council of churches. We began to talk about



CEPAD

The Council of Evangelical Churches of Nicaragua (CEPAD) was formed in 1972, after a devastating earthquake that destroyed downtown Managua and instantly killed more than 10,000 people. The formation of the council was the first time Protestant churches in the country had united to cope with a national tragedy.

Today, CEPAD works with more than 60 denominations. The council initiates and supervises relief and development projects for Nicaragua's poor and provides low-interest loans to farmers and small businessmen. It also acts as an impartial mediator for national reconciliation.

During Nicaragua's long war, CEPAD was a center for dialogue and reconciliation, promoting human rights and urging a nonviolent resolution to conflicts. CEPAD-sponsored Peace Commissions successfully negotiated between armed indigenous groups and the Sandinista government.

what it meant to be the church in an environment of repression.

By looking to Scripture, we learned that social justice was an integral part of the gospel. We also realized we had to act in a prophetic way.

BT: Was this a new realization for you?

PARAJON: It was new for me, in the sense that all of a sudden I realized I was going to be a public figure and possibly a target. I had some fears about that.

In 1978, Somoza's National Guard murdered 28 members of the Assemblies of God church in northern Nicaragua. That's when we really found out what was happening, and we made an official protest to Somoza. By then the whole country was in the midst of the insurrection that led to Somoza's ouster.

With the victory of the Sandinistas, we had to answer the question, "What is the life and ministry of the church in a revolutionary society?"

BT: What role did you see for the church?

PARAJON: As pastors, we wondered if we should pack up our belongings and leave Nicaragua, like so many pastors did in Cuba. We began to study the Bible together, to study the distinction between Marxism and socialism, and to consult with other pastors from socialist countries.

As we studied and talked together, for most of us it became obvious that we had to be a witness to the power of the gospel in whatever situation we found ourselves.

This led to attacks on CEPAD from both the left and the right. People in the revolutionary government called us

rightists and CIA lackeys; people on the right called us leftists and communists, because we were willing to engage the revolutionary government in dialogue. But we persisted, and here we are.

BT: In the aftermath of the war, it appears that Nicaraguan society has become highly polarized. What have you learned about the seeds of polarization?

PARAJON: In all of us there is a tendency to become separated from our sisters and brothers. Naturally, we try to look after our own interests. People who do things differently from us threaten our territory in such a way that we build walls of hostility.

In Nicaragua, we are deeply in need of reconciliation. When a community becomes polarized, it makes it difficult to work on any project, whether it is a church program or agricultural development. We have deep-seated problems, and unless the Nicaraguan people come together, we will not be able to solve them.

BT: What have you learned about reconciliation?

PARAJON: That it's very difficult. But it's not impossible. The church is the natural instrument for reconciliation, because all of us in the church are

aware of our own sinfulness. We are aware that God has forgiven us, despite our many sins. This makes it easier for us to approach a brother or sister in the spirit of forgiveness.

I am happy that here in Nicaragua the evangelical church has played an important role in reconciliation.

BT: For example?

PARAJON: This afternoon, I got a letter from a well-known Contra group asking CEPAD for food and loans for planting crops. It's interesting to me, because in the past they accused us of being Marxist and Sandinista. This is an opportunity for us to listen, to hear their needs and see how we can help.

BT: Did your own view of the Contras change during the war?

PARAJON: I was very angry at the Contras. Among other things, they murdered eight of our health workers.

But in 1988, when everyone was sick and tired of the war and wanted to do something to stop it, the Peace Commission in Juigalpa asked me to meet with the Contra commander in their region.

The Peace Commission was formed by local pastors and churches, and they wanted us to convey the Contras' demands to the Sandinista government, so they could begin a dialogue. By then many people in Juigalpa had been killed or maimed.

We met in the countryside. As 40 heavily armed Contras came down the hill and surrounded us, I had second thoughts about our meeting! Then I took a good look at them. The commander was the oldest, and he was only 25. The youngest was a 10-year-old carrying a rifle bigger than he was. All of a sudden, I saw the Contras for what they were: my brothers.

I knew then what Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians 5:16: "From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer."

My apparent foe was now my brother, and my motivation to stop the war was even more keenly felt.

Today, the Contra are just as much a victim of the war as anyone else. Politicians used them to achieve their political objectives, and once these objectives were accomplished, the Contra were discarded.

BT: What practical steps help bring reconciliation between enemies?

PARAJON: First there has to be a common felt need. In Nicaragua, it's obvious that people's biggest concern is

where to find their next meal. People in rural areas want to plant and harvest, so you find ex-Contras and ex-Sandinistas working fields together.

The plight of *campesinos* (small farmers) is the same no matter which side they were on during the war, so both parties have been affected by the same disillusionment. They are asking for loans, not gifts, to plant their crops, but the government has not given them one penny.

WORLD VISION IN NICARAGUA

1972: On December 23, a 6.2 earthquake killed or injured more than 10,000 people and left more than 300,000 homeless. World Vision provided relief funds to help ease the suffering.

1974: Organized a Pastors' Conference.

1976: Special grants provided a school bus for a poor community.

1977: Drought relief.

1979: Aided victims of the country's civil war by providing food and small loans to increase food production and revitalize small businesses.

1980: Provided emergency aid to communities affected by heavy flooding.

1982: Again aided communities affected by heavy flooding. Started two development projects assisting prison inmates and their families. Helped 700 evangelical pastors form an interdenominational association. Provided 50,000 Bibles to prisoners and the newly literate.

1983: Helped 2,000 families displaced by fighting between the Contras and Sandinistas.

1988: After Hurricane Joan struck Nicaragua in November 1988, World Vision provided poor farmers with agricultural tools, seeds, fertilizers, kitchen utensils, and construction materials to rebuild their homes. Also supplied basic food staples until first crops could be harvested.

TODAY: World Vision sponsorship is helping more than 10,700 children with educational and medical needs, and providing their communities with nutrition and sanitation education, job skills training, home improvements, and Christian nurture.

BT: Although there is a great deal of talk about polarization in Nicaragua, it sounds like many former adversaries are coming together.

PARAJON: The polarization is in a different direction now. During the revolution, it was ideological. Now, after the signing of peace treaties, it is more of an economic polarization between the wealthy and the poor.

People are disillusioned with traditional politics. With the exception of politicians, you don't see a lot of ideological commitments. But the politicians are still discussing things that are altogether secondary for people who are hungry and need jobs.

BT: The U.S. government has sent millions of dollars to Nicaragua. What has happened to these funds?

PARAJON: The money from the U.S. is used largely to pay the interest on our national debt. So the middle-sized and small farmers have not received the loans they need to plant the beans and rice and corn that could feed the whole country. As a result, the economy is not being reactivated, and we are importing food that we could easily grow here. People are very discouraged.

BT: What can Christians in the United States do to help Nicaraguans in this difficult period?

PARAJON: It's important to understand what is happening here and in all poor countries of the South. Tremendous poverty is being created by "structural adjustments" forced on us by international monetary groups.

For instance, at the price of enormous suffering, Nicaragua is being forced to balance its budget immediately. This is something that even an affluent country like the United States cannot do.

Second, U.S. Christians and churches can team up with local congregations and denominations or church councils like CEPAD. This provides a personal link and helps people know what is really going on.

Third, we need appropriate technology and, in some cases, sophisticated technology.

Finally, Christians in the U.S. and the South should be aware that they are the bearers of hope. We are living in a very hopeless world, full of disillusionment, not only here, but in the United States. The church can provide hope where many people know only despair. ☉

Barbara Thompson is a free-lance writer in Decatur, Ga.

It was like a rolling party for our staff, a weekend of fun, fellowship, and feasting on some of the most inspiring urban teaching anywhere. I had chartered a 47-passenger travel coach to take all our ministry associates in Atlanta to the Christian Community Development Conference in Jackson, Miss., for three days of rekindling. The conference theme was racial reconcilia-

I assumed the relationships we had built over the years were strong enough to fortify us against the River of Racial Separation. I had underestimated its power.

A BREAK *in the* LEVEE



tion—important reinforcement for our diverse staff. Bus rides of racially mixed groups in Mississippi can evoke some powerful memories. On this ground some very costly sacrifices were made to secure racial equality. It seemed very good indeed for a group as racially and economically diverse as ours to revisit these roots, and enjoy great fellowship, food, and worship together. I pictured us as a snapshot of the reconciled body of Christ—a reflection of the way the kingdom is designed to function.

Somewhere along the road in Alabama, I slipped to the front of the bus and keyed the mike for a few “presidential” remarks—the significance of our journey, the inspiring sessions in store for us in Jackson, that sort of thing. Sharon, my administrative assistant, followed up my speech with some logistical details. Some of us, she announced, would be staying at the Holiday Inn where the conference was being held; others would stay in the overflow hotel a block away. Disappointing, I thought. It would be nicer if we could all stay together, but no big deal. As she read the list of those who would be staying in the Holiday Inn, however, a silence spread over the bus. All those with reservations in the Holiday Inn were white!

It was an innocent oversight, anything but intentionally racist. I knew exactly how it had happened. Conference planners had assigned accommodations in the order registrations were received. It just happened that the first of our staff to register were white. None of us noticed this until Sharon read the list. But by then it was too late.

Sharon went on with her announcements, but many of our black staff had difficulty listening. A sensitive nerve had

This unintentional inequity found a weak spot in the levee of our relationships.

been struck that unleashed a torrent of troubling emotions. This unintentional inequity found a weak spot in the levee of our relationships. “Here they go again” comments appeared. Motives were questioned. Suspicions soon surfaced. In a remarkably short time, hurt and anger broke through with Mississippi River force, tearing open an ugly racial breach in our relationships. Distrust swirled in among us.

Explanations, like sandbags, did little to contain the flow. Once the fortification of trust had broken, they were

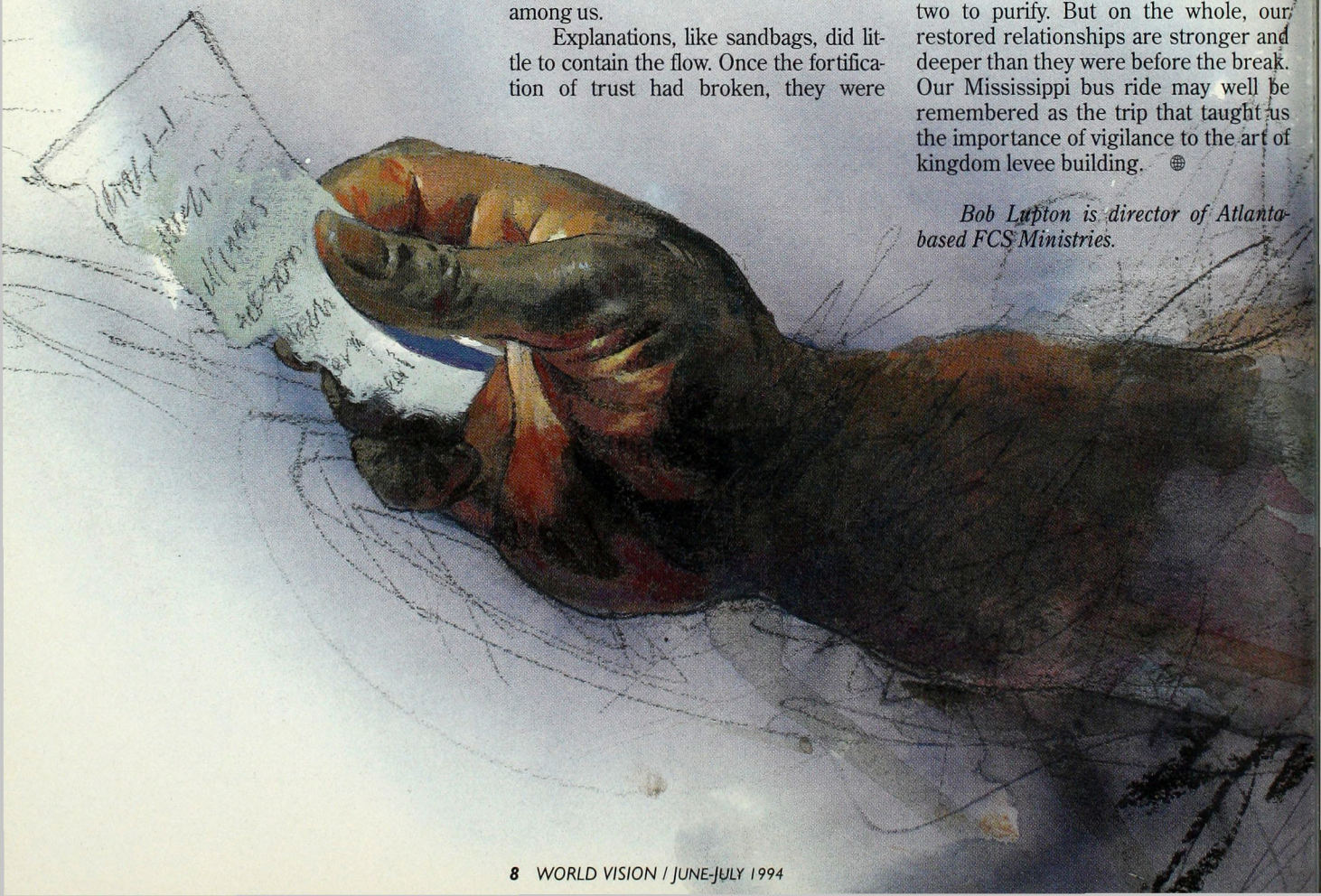
washed away as flimsy excuses. By the time the conference was over, we were swamped by a flood of accusations and counter-accusations. Inequities in compensatory time for the weekend, child-care coverage, meal reimbursements, and a number of other “we-they” issues contaminated our relationships. We were anything but reconciled as we headed back to Atlanta.

I had assumed the relationships we had built over the years were strong enough to fortify us against the River of Racial Separation. I had underestimated the power of that great divide that forever erodes foundations of trust and breaks apart the family of faith. Again it proved itself too strong, too persistent, too thorough for our imperfect fortifications to withstand. One small, overlooked breach was all it took for the murky waters to pour in.

But all is not lost. We immediately set to work cleaning up the damage and restoring the levee. Dialogue was required before side-by-side work could continue. In this painstaking process, we began to understand better the nature of the force that would divide us. We identified weak spots in our ways of relating. Our sensitivities have been sharpened and our commitment to candor deepened—essential reinforcements for the integrity of the ministry we have built.

There is still a contaminated well or two to purify. But on the whole, our restored relationships are stronger and deeper than they were before the break. Our Mississippi bus ride may well be remembered as the trip that taught us the importance of vigilance to the art of kingdom levee building. ☉

Bob Lupton is director of Atlanta-based FCS Ministries.



**In economically and
racially divided Zimbabwe,
Sithembiso Nyoni is helping
reconcile her country**

From the ROOTS UP

Soon after Zimbabwe won its independence from the white-controlled government of Rhodesia and the United Kingdom in 1980, Sithembiso Nyoni dedicated her life to reconciliation and community development. Her country was badly torn. Ninety years of racial discrimination and exploitation had divided people along racial and

class lines. And more than 10 years of guerrilla war had displaced thousands of people, destroyed homes, and shattered trust.

To reconcile people across racial, ethnic, and social barriers, Nyoni founded the Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP), which today has more than 1 million members. In addition to reconciliation, the organization aids and empowers people through grass-roots development.

WV: How important is reconciliation to what you do?

NYONI: Reconciliation is a cornerstone of ORAP's work. We are trying to address history. History fragmented our people, it divided our people into classes, into different races. We're fighting each other, because our history formulated systems and structures that marginalized and excluded the majority of our people.

ORAP tries to empower rural people so they can become a part of the nation. We are trying to bridge the gap between classes, rich and poor, black and white, and across ethnic boundaries; between urban and rural people; and between the very poor and those who dominate the economic, cultural, and political structures.

We do this by helping people articulate the reasons they occupy the positions they occupy: "If you are poor, why are you poor? What role have you played in your poverty?" In many cases, people contribute to their oppression without knowing it.

We help rural people recognize who they are so they can stop perpetuating the process. We also bring awareness to the rich so they don't perpetuate the gap between rich and poor.

WV: Zimbabwe was divided racially much like South Africa. Is racial reconciliation your primary concern?

NYONI: Racism is not the only thing we should fight. Now that the war is over, we have to go further and say what was wrong, what was at war. Our war was also psychological, especially in the ways people related to one another. There was a lot of exploitation between the classes. We also have to deal with the economic, political, social, and cultural war.

Reconciliation means that we have to look at what went wrong in society, and try to create new values; try to build bridges; try to set right what went wrong; and try to create new relationships between people.

WV: You are an elite, middle-class woman—not exactly one of the grass-roots people. You have some bridging to do. How do you do that?

NYONI: It is true that I am elite, in that my education and family background is different from the people I work with in the villages. But we are reconciling elites with the oppressed. History has divided the elites, the educated, those with money, those with power, from the poor in the villages, who don't have power.

Reconciliation involves individuals questioning themselves: "What is at stake here? What is wrong in our



Sithembiso Nyoni

society? Am I part of what is wrong? What part am I playing to reinforce what has gone wrong, and what part can I play to correct the situation?"

In my case, yes, I am part of what is wrong. As an elite, the first thing I need to do is ask myself: What are the tendencies in myself that marginalize others? What is the power in myself that oppresses others? How do my resources and the way I use them contribute to what is wrong?

After answering these questions, I need to disempower myself. I mean, I have to recognize that there is power, strength, and positive things in others, particularly in the village people.

When I go to a village, I don't go there with my education, money, or background in front of me. I go there with my spirit and my person, my acceptance of the situation, and my responsibility to correct it. And I help others do the same.

Then when we tackle poverty, it's not me helping the poor get out of poverty, nor is it only the poor doing the work. We are all taking the responsibility. So the role of elites is not to do things for the people. It is to recognize how they are reinforcing, perpetuating, and maintaining the system.

If you see me working in a village, I am totally accepted because I have made myself part of the people. And together we keep each other on track, in terms of the values that we have defined together, the values that make a better world: caring and sharing, hard work, honesty, participation, and openness.

WV: You said things start with individuals owning up to the ways they contribute to dividing people. That must be one of your hardest tasks, and must make development difficult.

NYONI: The individual is important, but we don't end there. Individuals are part of a family, a community, and a nation. Every evil begins in an individual's mind and heart, and then it leads to actions. And every good work begins in an individual's mind and heart—and in his or her relationship with others.

A lot of development has been



superficial because it has not helped individuals examine themselves and ask, "Who am I? What can I do? What have I contributed to this? What relationships do I have that help or hinder development?" These questions are important because individuals can work against themselves and others.

ORAP helps individuals rediscover themselves in the whole process of development: "Do you want to develop or don't you? If you choose to develop,

Reconciliation is about bridging gaps, about putting right the wrongs.

you have to take responsibility for it." But people won't take responsibility for it if they don't understand what's happening around them and what's happening inside them. If development is to truly work and be truly African, then we must discover who we are as Africans and ask, "Who am I? What makes me tick as an African?"

When we answer those questions, we will connect with people who think like us. If we can then become a family, or a group of families, who share the same vision of our collective future, and also share the same values, we become a strong network, and we will resist oppression and all the things working against us.

WV: You are not popular with feminists in the West. Why?

NYONI: My approach to women's issues is to contextualize the woman. In the villages, women are central to their families. They are the ones who take care of children, the family, the old, the sick. If we preached women's lib—bend-the-rules, get out, be liberated—we would break the family that makes the woman.

Our approach is to educate the people who should be the woman's support system, so the woman doesn't become the beast of burden; so she can be part of a group of people who are all taking responsibility for improving their lives: children taking their own responsibility within the family; men taking their own responsibility; grandparents taking their responsibility.

In Africa, you can't correct women's issues by being militant, because you whip up enmity and resistance. You can't reconcile the wrongs by fighting, by creating bitterness. Instead, you must speak to all sides. You can't make men do more by whipping them, by forcing them, by fighting them. You make them do more by having better strategies, by negotiation, by talking with them. In the end, you win.

WV: You said the poor often participate in their own oppression and marginalization. What do you mean?

NYONI: The poor participate in their own marginalization and oppression, and also perpetuate their own poverty, when they don't understand what is happening to them; when they don't create alternative ways of dealing with their situation; when they passively allow things to happen.

We try to make them aware of these things. Rural people must articulate what has gone wrong, and then build alternatives to help them resist. They must build alternatives that give them the power to make decisions and to be a part of developing themselves.

WV: What did you mean when you said that individuals need to humble and disempower themselves before they can help others?

NYONI: It is important for people who work with the poor to disempower themselves, because reconciliation is about bringing two parties together. It's about equality, and you don't have equality where there are the powerful and the powerless.

If we are to work effectively—especially those of us who are rich, those of

us who have some kind of power—we need to disempower ourselves so we can empower others. We do this by recognizing the power in us that causes the marginalization of others and then dealing with it. We must own up to these problems, then discuss these tendencies with the poor.

WV: How do these ideas apply internationally?

NYONI: Reconciliation is about bridging gaps, about putting right the wrongs. But big institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, and some governments sponsor programs and restructure economies in ways that the poor don't benefit. They don't correct the relationships that caused the poor to be poor. In another words, they are reinforcing the relationships causing poverty. Then when poverty gets too extreme, they come back and give us some poverty alleviation programs.

I think the starting point should be to debate the issues, and to strengthen and restructure with the poor. The poor solve problems daily. But many people see them as problem-causers instead of problem-solvers.

Take the environment, for example: Some say the poor cause environmental hazards. They cut trees, they overstock, they're the reason for overpopulation. But that's the wrong way of looking at it. The poor are overburdened by the heavy structures acting against them, and those are the systems that they're struggling against.

The process of reconciliation really should begin with the big institutions, as well as the small institutions like the family. Don't just throw money at problems, but listen. Listen to how the rural people feel. Listen to their feelings, their voices, and the pains they go through. Listen to their joy, their experiences of success, small as they are. Listen to who they are. Then support the poor from their point of view. ☪

Sithembiso Nyoni was interviewed by John Schenk, a World Vision journalist living in Nairobi, Kenya.

When an Irish Republican Army bomb killed Gordon Wilson's daughter in 1987, he could have fallen into bitterness and hate. Instead, he reached out to the IRA in love and forgiveness.

BY GORDON WILSON

When LOVE MEETS *a* BRICK WALL

BACKGROUND

For several hundred years, Great Britain ruled Ireland. In the early 1900s, following several years of violent conflict, Ireland was granted independence. Northern Ireland, consisting of six counties and a majority Protestant population, remained part of Great Britain.

Catholics in Northern Ireland faced difficulties, including job discrimination and exclusion from many key government positions. After 1960, a civil rights movement for Catholics resulted in growing sectarian strife, including the revival of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which used terrorism to push for reunification with the Irish Republic.

Since 1969, Northern Ireland has suffered violence from both the IRA and Protestant terrorists, resulting in more than 3,100 deaths.

In December 1993, Britain and Ireland invited Sinn Féin, the IRA's political representatives, to negotiate a peaceful settlement, but the violence continues and no agreement has been reached.

Before those talks, Gordon Wilson, a Protestant and a retired draper in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, also met with the IRA to appeal for peace.

"People are scared in Northern Ireland," Wilson says. "Catholics are scared of being killed. Protestants are scared of being killed. The answer is that we—two communities as we are, with different loyalties, traditions, and heritages—must learn to live together without killing each other; live together sharing the many things that we have in common—not least our Maker. We must listen to those things which we do not have in common, respecting the other's point of view, and learning to trust each other."

"There are many good people involved in reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Together, they must begin to count, to make an impression, not only on the terrorists but on the government."

O

n Remembrance Sunday, Nov. 8, 1987, my 20-year-old daughter, Marie, and I went to watch the parade at the war memorial in our town of Enniskillen, Northern Ireland. There were perhaps 200 of us waiting to see the army, British Legion men, and police in the parade.

Just as we took our position against a brick wall, I asked Marie, "Are you all right? Can you see?" She said, "Yes." Then bang. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) had placed a bomb just on the other side of the wall behind us. At once, the wall collapsed and fell on top of us. We were thrown forward, and I finished up lying on top of whoever was in front of me, under 4 to 6 feet of rubble. Five or six people around us were already dead. My shoulder and arm were injured.

Then Marie took my hand. "Is that you, Dad?" she asked.

"Yes, Marie," I said. And I thought, *Thank God Marie's all right*. Then there was deathly silence around us, followed by screaming—raw, naked terror.

I asked Marie, "Are you all right?"

She said, "Yes"—then she screamed. I couldn't understand why she was screaming when she told me she was all right. Five or six times I asked her if she was all right, and each time she assured me she was—all the while holding my hand.

I asked her one more time, "Marie, are you all right?"

"Daddy, I love you very much," she said. Those were her last words—words that changed my life. She had to know that she was close to death. She had severe spinal and brain injuries, and she died four hours later in the hospital.

Later that evening a BBC radio reporter asked to interview me. Marie's words of love prompted me to agree. I told him everything that happened that morning, and about my daughter. Then he asked, "How do you feel about the guys who planted the bomb?"

"I bear them no ill will," I said. "I bear them no grudge. Bitter talk is not going to bring Marie Wilson back to

life. I shall pray, tonight and every night, that God will forgive them." And I did—and I still do.

After that interview, people asked me, "How could you say such a thing? How could you?" Some said, "The man's mad. He's batty. How could he?"

But I meant what I said, because the words came from my heart. Yes, I was hurt, I had just lost my daughter. But I wasn't angry. Marie's last words to me, words of love, had put me on a plane of love. I received God's grace, through the strength of his love for me, to forgive.

It wasn't enough, however. After retiring two years ago, the question kept popping up in my mind: What could I do to bring us a little nearer to peace? The answer was, "Go and talk to the IRA." I thought that Marie's death might become worthwhile if it led us a little nearer to peace.

It was hard to find the courage to do it. After all, they killed my daughter. It took me two years to find sufficient strength and courage to meet them. Finally, I publically asked to do so.

I went to them simply as Marie Wilson's dad. I said, "I know that you've lost loved ones, just like me. Therefore, on the grounds of common humanity and for the love of God, is there not a better way for you to achieve your goals? Surely, enough is enough. Enough blood has been spilled."

I have to say I met a brick wall. They said they were only out to kill "the British forces of aggression."

"But you killed 11 civilians in Enniskillen," I said. "And you recently killed two little boys in Warrington, where there were no security forces, no army. More than 3,100 people have been killed since 1969—Protestants and Catholics. I just don't believe you when you tell me you're not out to kill civilians. Are you telling me that you are prepared

to keep on killing people, including civilians for another 25 years?"

I asked them to abandon their armed struggle. They said, "No." I wasn't naive enough to think that just because I asked them to stop that they would. But I thought they might change their direction. I got nothing.

Finally, I said, "I won't ask to see you again. But if you want to see me, or if you think it will serve any purpose, I will certainly come. But this time it will be at your request."

I left sad and disappointed, and I wept as I drove home. Before the meeting, thousands of people worldwide wrote to me, "You can do it. If anybody can do it, if anybody can get through to these guys, you can." I cried because I felt I'd let those people down. But after I reported my brick wall answer, most of those people wrote again, and said, "Don't be disappointed, don't be sad. Something got through. It may not show for a week. It may not show for years. But something got through."

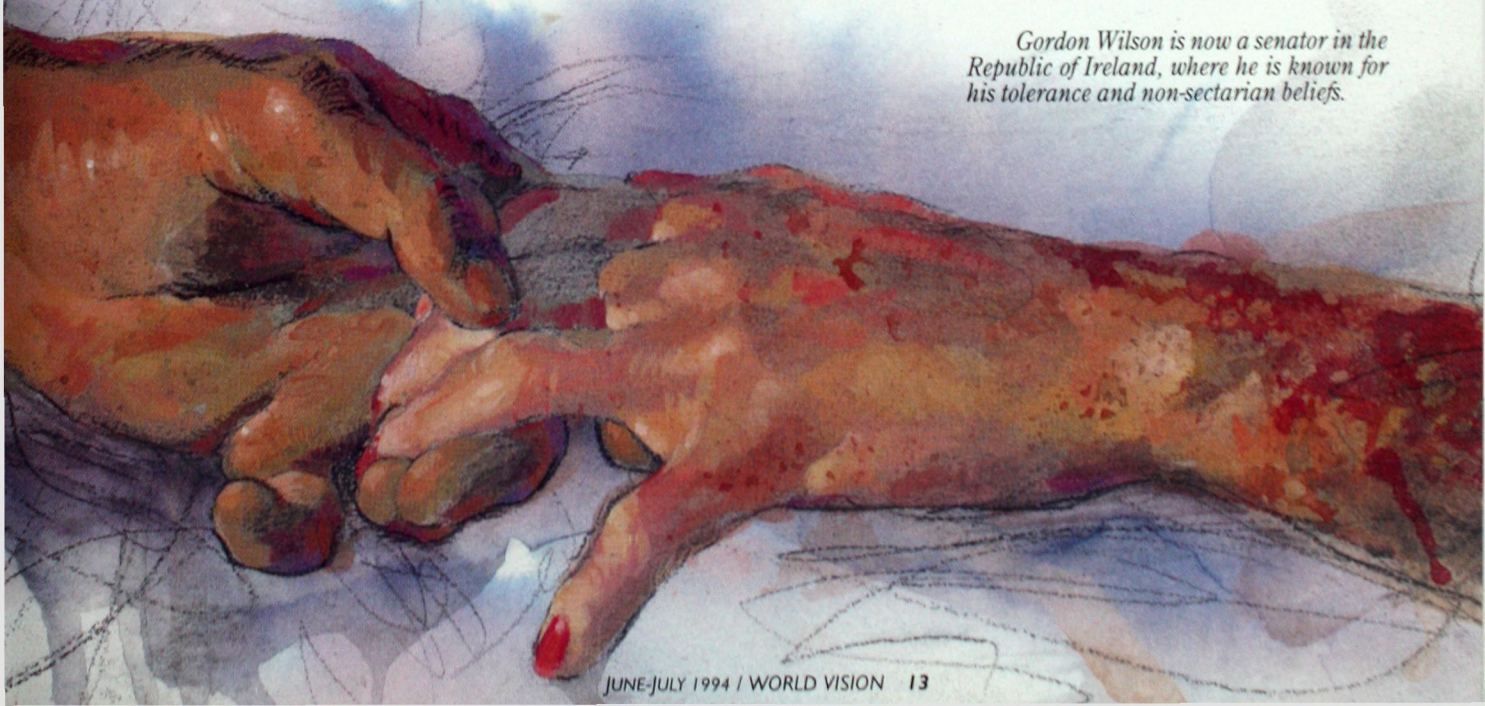
I don't have any evidence to show that my talking to them has moved them at all. But I tried. My conscience is clear. I did what I had to do. And I sleep better at night because I did.

My bottom line is love. I believe in God's two commandments, "Love God and love your neighbor." And because I believe those two commandments, I have to ask myself, "Who is my neighbor?" And the answer I get is that my neighbor is not just the lady next door, and it's not just my Protestant neighbor, and it's not just my Catholic neighbor. I must also love my terrorist neighbor—because he's there, and Christ died for him, too.

That doesn't mean I have to like him. I *cannot* like him. I cannot like the person who murdered my daughter. But I have to love him. And love is more than not hating.

Thankfully, I still have the grace to go on loving. ☸

Gordon Wilson is now a senator in the Republic of Ireland, where he is known for his tolerance and non-sectarian beliefs.



Chief Sheikh Siad Ali Sharif joyfully pretends to eat raw sorghum he has plucked from Rowlo Village's healthy green fields. He remembers two painful years ago when that same land was barren because of drought and civil war. Troops armed with machine guns stole most of the villagers' food and their abundant supply of camels. The animal's meat and milk is a crucial part of Somalis' diet. Unable to plant food for two years because of fighting, the villagers ate camel skin, sorghum covers, weeds, and grass to survive. In late October 1992, hundreds of villagers trekked more than 18 miles to Baidoa after bandits brutally attacked and looted their village, killing about 100 residents. Many received help at a World Vision feeding center. They were thankful for life-sustaining food rations. But life was difficult in Baidoa, where water sources were far away and mosquitoes plagued unsheltered camp residents. At least one member of every Rowlo family starved to death during the famine.

When World Vision closed the Baidoa feeding center on March 25, 1993, 432 of the village's original 3,000 men, women, and children

were repatriated to Rowlo. They arrived home to bare land. Armed with World Vision-provided supplemental food, resettlement supplies, and farming tools, the villagers began rebuilding their huts and planting new seeds. Xaaway Ibrahim, 30, arrived with her husband of 10 years and their two children, then 3 and 8. They had nothing but five plastic cups, two plastic plates, a long kitchen knife, two blankets, a plastic sheet, and three cloth parcels for clothing. Xaaway's mother, father, and eldest brother had died in Baidoa.

Now healthy fields of corn, sorghum, and vegetables grow along the dirt road to Rowlo. Xaaway's husband helps work communal sorghum fields, and she tends her own garden in front of her family's hut. Her daughter has been immunized against diseases that have killed many Somali children: diptheria, tetanus, polio, measles, and whooping cough, which killed her 3-year-old daughter in Baidoa.

"Now I am happy; my children are healthy," Xaaway says. 🌍

Written by Tamera Marko. Photo and report by Reverie Greenburg, World Vision journalist in South Africa.





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ANNUAL REPORT

For a copy of World Vision's 1993 Annual Report, contact Donor Relations, World Vision, P.O. Box 1131, Pasadena, CA 91131; (800) 777-5777 or (800) 777-1760 for a Spanish version.

GROWING MUSTARD SEEDS

Applications are available for the 1994 Mustard Seed Awards honoring innovative, church-sponsored volunteer ministries serving the poor. Award recipients receive national recognition and grants for as much as \$5,000.

For more information, contact Michele Espinal, Mustard Seed Awards VI, World Vision, 919 W. Huntington Drive, Monrovia, CA 91016; (818) 357-1111, ext. 2162. Applications are due Oct. 3, 1994.

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URBAN CONCERN INC.
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Provides community leadership training, emergency relief, after-school tutoring and mentoring, summer camp, children's Bible study, and holiday programs.

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Offers pastoral care to people with

severe mental illness. Encourages participation in the worship and social life of their churches and use of their skills and talents within the church. Educates churches to be sensitive to the mentally ill and their families.

ACTS (Active Compassion Through Service) Ministries, Philadelphia

Provides support for the poor, the homeless, and divorced, separated, or widowed parents. Hosts community dinners and Bible study. Provides food, clothing, a nursing home ministry, and student tutoring. Also provides help for single parents/divorce recovery programs, and an addiction recovery ministry.

IMPACT (Individuals Ministering and Providing According to Christ's Teachings) Ministries, Evansville, Ind.

Supports the Christian Health Center, tutoring for grades K through 12, a 4-H

club, a fitness center, and weekend recreation. Emphasizes building a personal relationship with Christ.

RAMOTH HOUSE, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Provides 30 days of shelter for abused women and their children. Ramoth works with a YMCA domestic crisis center to provide food, clothing, and housing. Staff and volunteers help women improve their skills at finding financial and legal assistance and permanent housing.

ACCESS (All County Churches Emergency Support System), Grand Rapids, Mich.

Works to meet the needs of local people through individuals, community resources, and 200 churches. Provides

food pantry assistance, holiday baskets, disaster response, and case-worker assistance for churches. Offers a Christian 12-step program; nutrition, cooking and budgeting classes; and one-to-one mentoring.



Compiled, written, and illustrated
by Stephanie Stevenson

STAMP LICKING ANYONE?

Without writing checks—just letters to Congress—Christians can help win nearly \$1 billion for vital nutrition and health-related services,” says David Beckmann, Bread for the World president. “The \$1 billion would help 3.5 million at-risk women and children who do not now receive assistance.”

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For more information or to order an Offering of Letters kit, send \$5 plus \$3 for handling to Bread for the World, 1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1000, Silver Spring, MD 20910; (301) 608-2400.

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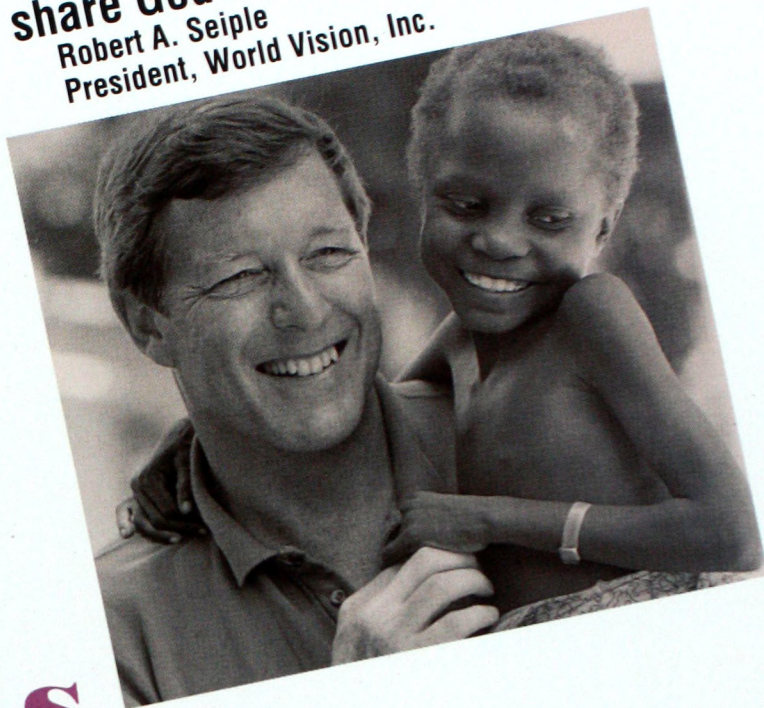
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FVV/S94



Casa de Passagem is one of the few places in Recife, Brazil, where street girls ages 7 to 18 can receive help. For these girls—who often prostitute to survive—progress is measured in

BY TAMERA MARKO
PHOTOS BY TERRI OWENS

GLIMMERS



At 13 years of age, Maria's life was brutal. She survived as a prostitute in the red-light district of Recife, the coastal capital of Pernambuco state in northeast Brazil. The police beat her and raped some of her friends. She watched girls sniff glue until stoned numb, slash themselves with razor blades, and run screaming through the streets. Her pregnant friends would sometimes ask her to help with abortions. Illegal in Brazil, abortion for street girls means plunging a metal

of TRUST

bar inside themselves, slamming their bellies against a wall, or asking a friend to kick them in the stom-

ach. To cope, Maria* took drugs and wrote poetry. A woman who brought street girls food asked Maria to write something. "I didn't know how to write properly," says Maria. So she recited one of her poems verbatim. The woman encouraged Maria to visit Casa de Passagem, a small, one-story building, where she could shower, eat, hang out with other girls, and even learn to read and write if she wanted. Maria finally showed up at the Casa with swollen, bloodshot eyes, matted long, black hair—and pregnant. "I got scared because many people said, 'Don't take drugs anymore,'" she says. "I didn't know what to do."

After six years of counseling, medical help, and learning how to read and write, today Maria is a bundle of personality who gestures passionately with her hands while telling stories and throws her head back when she laughs. She and her 5-year-old daughter live with Maria's mother. She has typed 36 of her poems into a computer at the Casa and wants to publish them in a book "so that people can't think that a street girl can't do what people from higher societies can do," Maria says proudly.

WORLD VISION FIGHTS CHILD PROSTITUTION IN BRAZIL

World Vision is participating in a nationwide campaign to eliminate child prostitution in Brazil, which ranks second in the world in the number of underage sex workers. In addition to distributing thousands of stickers, posters, and T-shirts denouncing child abuse, the campaign includes a toll-free telephone number for reporting cases of sexual abuse of children. Also, a video denouncing child prostitution has been shown on several television stations.

World Vision is running the campaign with the Brazilian Center for Information and Orientation on Social Health. It began in October 1993 during a national congress against child prostitution.

More than 500,000 Brazilian children sell their bodies on the city streets, in nightclubs, or in mining communities. The situation has been aggravated by foreign tourists who seek out Brazilian girls as young as 8.

*Reported by Ricardo C. Siqueira,
a World Vision communications
advisor in Brazil.*

According to a 1991 Casa de Passagem census, the most recent statistics, more than 1,000 homeless girls ages 6 to 20 live on Recife's streets. Half of these said they survived by prostitution. Since January 1989, Casa de Passagem, open weekdays until about 5 p.m., has provided 250 girls like Maria with friendship, counseling, food, education, health care, and vocational training. The Casa, funded by World Vision and other corporate and individual donors, is one of the few places in Recife where the girls can receive help. Last year, the Casa's job training program moved into a spacious, white house with an industrial kitchen where the girls earn income cooking meals for local businesses. Upstairs in a sunny work room, girls design and produce colorfully embroidered greeting cards and learn to use new, modern sewing machines.

LIFE IN THE FAVELAS

Most of the girls come from the *favelas* (slums). More than 810,000 of Recife's 2 million residents live in the city's 500 favelas, where homes are cardboard or wood slats crudely nailed together. Tourism is the big business in Recife, where splashy brochures promise tourists "the sun shines 13 months a year." Four-star hotels, lavish apartments, and ritzy restaurants line the strip along Recife's white sandy beaches. Many locals haul huge mounds of suntan lotion, towels, straw hats, and fresh coconuts to sell to tourists on the beach.

At least 70 percent of favela residents work as maids, street vendors, and laborers for minimum wage: \$60 a month. This will not buy a month's worth of food for a family of four. And with Brazil's wildly fluctuating inflation rate, which in 1993 was about 2,500 percent, \$60 buys less and less.

An increasing number of youths seek a better life on the streets. Of the 7 million to 12 million street children in Brazil, 20,000 live in Recife. According to the Brazilian government, 500,000 girls younger than 19 work as prostitutes in Brazil. After unsuccessful or humiliating stints at street-corner begging or slaving as low-paid maids in wealthy homes, many of the girls, some as young as 11, find their last chance at survival is donning a short, skin-tight dress, smearing rouge on their cheeks, and selling their bodies.

For most, that means never being able to return home. "Street girls give the family a bad name," says Cristina Vasconcelos Demendonca, a psychoanalyst and Casa co-founder. "If a family has a retarded child, they can send her to an institution. If they have a girl who has become sexually involved or is a prostitute, they will kick her out onto the streets."

On the streets, she faces devastating prejudice and violence. Women clutch their purses fearfully when passing street children. And business owners, who consider street children bad for business, hire former or off-duty policemen—"death squads"—to murder youths, usually boys. Girls are routinely beaten and raped.

"What actually prevents [these girls] from going totally crazy is being a part of a gang of street girls," Cristina says. The bonds among these girls are so strong, some of the older girls will even turn an extra trick to buy food for the younger ones not yet prostituting.

Despite the violence, most street girls believe they have few alternatives. "People always ask why these girls don't work as maids instead," says Ana Vasconcelos, the project's co-founder and president. Ana, a lawyer and former vice president for the "Legiao Asistencial de Recife," a social service agency, does not hide her frustration at this simplistic approach to helping street girls. Many girls are beaten, raped, and emotionally abused in homes where they work as maids. "They are told that being a maid is socially acceptable and not the sin that prostitution is. After being raped by her employer a girl asks, 'What's the big difference?'"

For some girls, the big difference is freedom. On the streets, they say when they will work, at what price, and for how long. They can make \$50 in 10 minutes from a *gringo* (white man); as a maid they will earn \$60 a month (60 hours a week). And there are occasional good times. "When a girl goes around with a man, there is a kind of dignity. They become friends for 15 days," Ana says. "There is someone to protect them. It's like a dream."

Ideally, Casa de Passagem staff help the girls learn a vocational skill, get a job, and move into a community home with three other Casa "graduates." But this final process is slow and painful. The handful now living in community houses are often too emotionally or economically unstable to pay for their living expenses.

Maria, after almost six years at the Casa still has not learned a vocation, though she is considered one of the program's success stories. At Casa de Passagem, progress is measured in glimmers of trust and self-esteem.

When the Casa first opened, girls came sporadically, showing up for a day and then disappearing for weeks. Eventually a core group began to emerge. "They started to get angry with girls who would come and fall asleep and who were on drugs," says Cristina, who introduced the

**Name changed upon her request*



Casa de Passagem has provided more than 250 street girls with food, friendship, health care, education, and job training. Since Casa staff helped Maria (far right) learn how to read and write, she has typed 36 of her poems into a computer and wants to publish them in a book.

grupo operativo in which the girls and the staff together decide house rules and how to enforce them. This approach, chaotic to newcomers, is a necessity for girls used to Recife's unstructured streets and homes, where attention and love are sporadic at best.

The girls have decided that this Friday is beach day at Casa de Passagem. At 10 a.m., the Casa's small front room is already heavy with September humidity and packed with girls, ages 7 to 19, getting ready for the beach. Girls throwing on bikini tops and shorts; girls talking and laughing louder than the music blaring from a radio; girls dancing the samba in front of a wall-length mirror.

Maria, however, works on her poetry. She's especially proud of *Quem Somos Nós?* (Who Are We?), a poem about her struggle on the streets and how "only God can help out." She wrote it after aborting her second child. Almost all of the Casa girls have had at least one abortion. Some have aborted six times.

WE ARE TOMORROW

Every Saturday morning Casa "educators" work in the favelas to encourage girls still living at home to stay in school, off drugs, and off the streets. In a building in Skylab, one of Recife's most violent communities, a few teen-age girls sit on straw mats on the cement floor. On the walls hang collages the girls made about

sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), love, education, and a poster with everyone's birthday written on paper hearts.

One-by-one the girls trickle in, announcing themselves with a hearty, "*Bom dia!*" (Good morning!) This program began almost two years ago when three girls from Casa de Passagem helped with a survey to find the most "needy" girls in the community. There are now five well-respected groups.

Skylab's group is called *Nós somos a Amanha* (We are Tomorrow). The girls have learned a lot. One girl says, "When I was pregnant I didn't know what liquid was growing inside of me." Another girl

says she showed her mother visual aids about menstruation, child birth, and STDs. "My mother said, 'My goodness, I've had 11 children and I didn't know any of this.'"

During their two-hour sessions, groups learn about drugs, sexuality, pregnancy, menstruation, and their "rights" as citizens. Once the girls have dealt with these topics, they are trained to be "agents" of information. They take what they've learned to their schools, homes, neighbors, friends, and streets. A few have spoken to the Brazilian Congress.

Today three girls give a "lesson" about sexually transmitted diseases using graphic color posters. One girl says because their city has one of the world's highest syphilis rates, some people call it "Recifilis". They hold up a poster of diseased flesh. A quiet girl squirms on her mat and says with a grimace, "That disease is *disgusting*."

The last subject is AIDS. The educator asks, "Can someone die of AIDS?" A girl with a peach bow in her ponytail calmly lists the ways AIDS is contracted and says "yes," you can die of AIDS.

STREET CHILDREN LAW

In 1985, social workers and educators helped street children in Brazil form the National Movement of Street Children, which spread to almost all of

the country's urban centers. The organization fought to change the legal codes in which a distinction was made between "minors" (poor people's children) and "children" (rich people's children). A newspaper headline from the early '80s in Belem proclaimed "Minor Attacks Child."

In 1988, the Brazilian Congress rewrote the constitution's description of children's rights. When new words didn't translate into more help, the youth pressed for more change. In 1990, Congress adopted the Statute on Children and Adolescents. The 100-page document guarantees children's rights to housing, education, health care, and "special protection." But these changes must slowly trickle through bureaucratic paperwork and review committees before children receive much benefit.

When asked about the reality of the Statute of the Child and Adolescents, Ana says, "This *institute* is reality. The government doesn't care. The government *counts* the dead and records it. "Then," Ana slaps her hand on her desk, "[for the government], it is done."

The street children's effort is slowly moving higher on Brazil's political agenda, however. Children's groups routinely call Ana asking for a girl to come with them to speak at Congressional meetings. A few years ago, Maria, "excited but scared stiff," read the following poem for the National Congress in Brasilia, the country's capital.

WOMAN

*I could be a man
or maybe a child
but I am a woman
that symbolizes hope.
I could be a god
adored by man
but I am a woman
and just loved.
I could be a bird
with wings to fly away
but I am a woman
and I don't tire of dreaming.
I could be a model
and win the world
but I am a woman
I conquered myself first.
I could be a heroine
and conquer 1,000 heroically
but I am a woman
and have planted my seed.
I could be an animal
and therefore have to suffer
but I am a woman
and I don't tire of living.
I could be a verse
and live in the mouths of poets
but I am a woman
here at the right time.*





WORLD VISION TO MOVE TO PACIFIC NORTHWEST THE TENT AND THE ALTAR

The first breakthrough in the long relocation exercise was both exciting and a bit scary. I had just gotten off the phone with our chief financial officer who informed me that the savings for operating the World Vision U.S. offices someplace other than Southern California might be as large as \$5 million to \$7 million per year.

Every protracted exercise needs a compelling reason to keep it going. The exercise of relocation is no exception. Periodically, out of a sense of prudence and good management, we would look at the issue of corporate location. World Vision is an international partnership. We serve an entire world. Our ministry in the United States has grown to the place where it is truly national. In terms of location, we should always be primarily concerned with how we can best serve and—with this new information—*where* we could best be stewards of the resources that energize our serving.

As much as \$5 million to \$7 million! When your call is to the poorest of the poor, that is simply too much money to leave on the table. The exercise now had a compelling reason. This information required that we be specific with our board of directors and open with our employees. "Going public" would be disruptive, distracting, and, if not properly done, terribly harmful to our ministry. The news I received over the phone was indeed exciting and scary!

The financial numbers quickly transfer into ministry figures. The figures that come to mind are the faces of children: For \$5 million, we can care for 25,000 additional children around the world. Such projected savings immediately translate into hope and a better future for a whole host of kids who have been forced to live on the edge of survival.

Properly leveraged, with matching grants in the United States and greater field capacity around the world, these savings could generate an additional \$25 million. Work in new countries could be opened. A holistic presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ could be presented, modeled, incarnated, and brought home to people who desperately need to hear and see the love of Jesus Christ. This was no mere pebble dropping into a lake. Properly done, we could create a tidal wave of effective ministry to those whom

we have been called to serve.

It has always been helpful to me to put an opportunity such as this into a biblical context. Parables and personalities come to mind. The parable of the talents, and the one who buried his. He felt he was given something to secure. He had to make it safe. The talent was buried in a known spot, a secure position, a no-risk venture, a maintenance of the status quo. Ultimately, we are clearly told, this was not good stewardship. Better to have taken some risk and to have done more, accomplishing greater things, than to bury the talent and lose the opportunity.

I think of Jonah, with his great call and opportunity, running away from his mission, his ministry. Poor stewardship. A three-day encounter with a large fish was necessary to get Jonah thinking straight again.

Moses' 12 spies provide another perspective. Sent to the land of great promise, a land of massive opportunities, a land flowing with milk and honey, the potential for stewardship in their relocation carried with it tremendous possibilities. "But there were giants in the land...." Fear destroyed the Israelites' focus. The opportunities evaporated. The mission was abandoned. A stubborn and stiff-necked people—it took another 40 years to get it straight.

But a more positive biblical example that comes to mind as I think of a proper stewardship of mission is the life and personality of Abraham. Late in life he was asked to leave his home, his friends, his rootedness in a place that was quite comfortable.

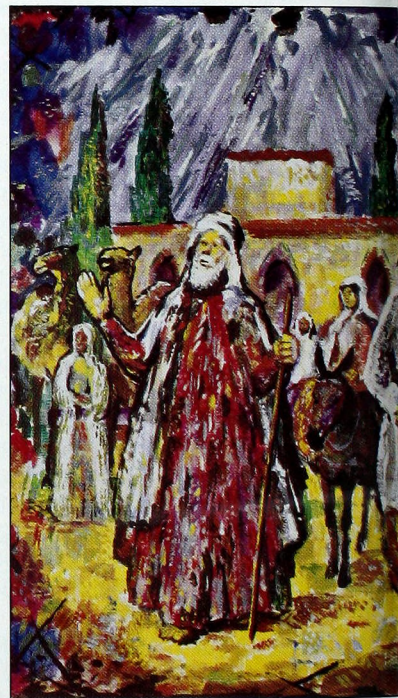
Abraham was yanked out of the familiar and challenged to "go to a place that I will show you." The norm was replaced by the ambiguous. The sure thing gave way to the confused and seemingly contradictory message of personally seeding a new nation. A wake-up call came late in life, a new mission emerged, and Abraham, out of faithfulness to God,

did one of the scariest things that any of us could ever contemplate: move away from that which had been established to that which had yet to be defined.

There are two images that dominate Abraham's life from this point on: the tent and the altar. The altar is foundational. It speaks of Abraham's faithfulness to the God he served, as well as God's faithfulness as he leads Abraham into an expanded ministry. The altar speaks of spiritual identity, a transcendent rootedness, a relationship that is both rock solid and enduring.

The tent, on the other hand, is a beautiful symbol of Abraham's willingness to move. Abraham held on lightly.

Abraham did one of the scariest things that any of us could ever contemplate: move away from that which had been established to that which had yet to be defined.



God was in control of his life, and he was always willing to move on, to fold his tent, when God required that of him.

Obviously there was something larger than this life that carried Abraham from place to place. Very few personalities in Scripture manifest the length, depth, and breadth of faith as does Abraham. When God called, Abraham was ready. When God said, "Go," the tent came down, the journey went on, and Abraham "relocated" on God's command.

Stewardship of mission. The altar was firm; the tent could be folded. Presence with God meant a great deal more to

Abraham than physical location. The address was not permanent, only the altar; and a move was simply another act of obedience to the God he loved.

I find myself thinking a lot about Abraham these days. Ultimately, our programmatic presence is much more important than our corporate address. Our "presence" in Southern California will always be felt. There are great needs here. We are committed to a ministry that will meet those needs. Indeed, we will leave a staff behind that will continue the work in this great city of Los Angeles—because that work is also part of our stewardship, part of our ministry, part of our mission.

In a larger sense, we will keep faith with our donors in Los Angeles and the United States by being accountable to them for their gifts, ensuring that we are doing everything possible to leverage those gifts so that a maximum amount of good ministry can take place, both in Los Angeles and throughout this chaotic and broken world.

Stan Mooneyham, World Vision's second president, gave a final sermon to the World Vision staff shortly before he died. It was titled *Marching Off the Map*. I'm delighted to say, and I'm sure that Stan would agree, that World Vision is literally all over the map. More importantly, we continue to march. The international office will stay in Southern California. The programmatic staff for Los Angeles will remain. World Vision U.S. will march off to the Pacific Northwest.

In the past year, World Vision U.S. sent staff to Baidoa, Somalia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, two of the most difficult places we have ever worked. The individuals involved went out of a sense of call and obedience because they firmly believe in the stewardship of mission.

That mission, quite simply, is to remove stumbling blocks from vulnerable children. That mission is to bring hope where there has been no hope, healing where there has been brokenness, and the love of Christ where there has only been destructive inhumanity. The staff of World Vision literally risks its life, every day, in places like this.

How can we do our part to affirm such dedication? By being good stewards. Maximizing resources. Turning resources into ministry. Putting ourselves on a common altar, dedicating our lives to the God we serve. Even if it means pulling up stakes, folding the tent, and moving on. ☸

NEXT TO THE LAST WORD

Our cover story on "reconciliation" is not our first, nor our last. In his editorial in the Dec/Jan '88 issue, then just-installed President Robert Seiple said: "As God gives us courage, and as he gives us truth, we commit this magazine to 'go, stand, and speak,' and to inform, educate, prod, and promote the church to its task of reconciliation." Since then, the magazine has tried to do just that.

This year, World Vision's annual Washington Forum focuses on reconciliation. In future issues, we'll bring you reconciliation reflections by Forum speakers James Baker, Os Guinness, Chuck Colson, and Father Elias Chacour.

But World Vision does more than talk about reconciliation; we try to practice what we preach. In our ministry offices, "Reconciliation" is a budget item, along with "Christian Witness" and "Spiritual Nurture." In word and deed, we seek to be a catalyst to promote unity in the Body of Christ, and between ethnic groups and nationalities.

—Terry Madison

WORLD VISION

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How Helping A Poor Child Helps Your Child, Too



Dick and Jinny Fox know their life will never be the same after their family visited their sponsored child, Daniel, in Ecuador.

Of course, the Foxes have made all the difference for Daniel, providing nutritious meals and medical care—and the opportunity to know about Christ's love.

But their own child, Jonathan, has also benefited through Sponsorship. "I wanted our son to discover that Christ-like giving has a value and satisfaction far beyond having the most toys or clothes," says Dick.

Jinny agrees: "There is no greater gift than seeing one's own child gain a new perspective. It's very difficult to teach young ones the concepts of giving, but Sponsorship makes it possible."

To discover the rewards of Childcare Sponsorship, just complete and mail the coupon below.

But please don't delay. One needy child awaits your love.

YES, I WANT TO HELP!

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☐ Africa ☐ Asia ☐ Latin America
☐ where most needed.

☐ I can't sponsor a child right now, but here's a gift of \$_____ to help needy children. 1700

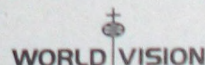
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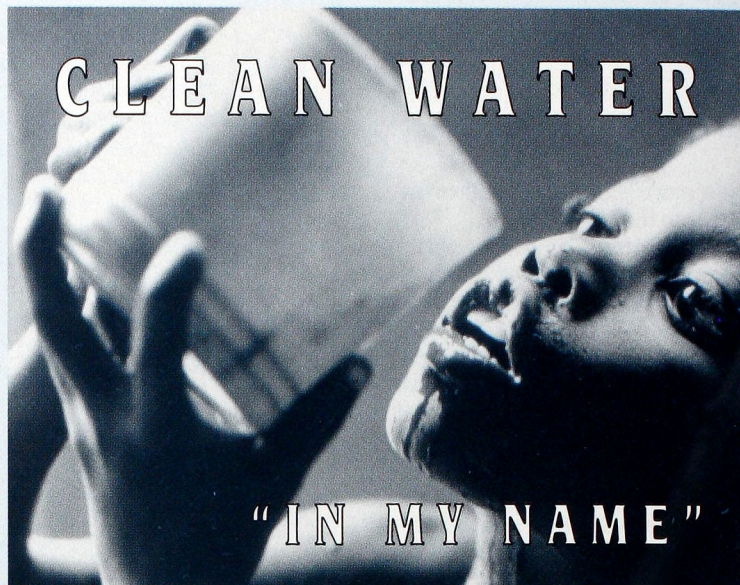
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"I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of cold water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward." Mark 9:41 (NIV)

Up to 50 percent of childhood diseases can be traced to unclean water. It is also a breeding ground for guinea worm, a painful parasite which drains both strength and morale. Yet people continue to wash in this water, to cook with it, to drink it. Their only other choice is death by dehydration.

Because water is vital to survival, many World Vision projects are based upon clean water. Such projects involve building rainfall-collecting tanks, dams and catchment basins, or digging shallow and deep wells—whatever is needed in each location. But health conditions won't improve just by installing a new water system. An all-encompassing program must teach villagers to maintain the water system, and to practice good personal hygiene and sanitation. Village health promoters lead people in this process of preserving and protecting their own health.

Please help us offer hope and opportunity in His name to suffering children and families who need pure, clean water. Your support is vital.

Yes, I want to help!

I am enclosing: ☐ \$175 ☐ \$400 ☐ \$900 ☐ Other _____

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