



**I ONCE WAS
BLIND BUT
NOW I SEE**

FOLLOWING CHRIST THROUGH A CRISIS

*Senior Area Director and Area Director for Europe, the Middle East, and Liberia
Charles Jones reflects on how Christians can respond in times of crisis.*

There is a sense in which a follower of Jesus Christ need not change her or his response when confronted with a crisis, because we should always be about fulfilling God's call upon our lives, in the power of the Holy Spirit. This should be as true of me in a conflict-ridden country with civil protests and curfews as it is if I am sipping a cup of hot chocolate while listening to cool jazz music in my living room.

I grew up in Liberia, hearing a theology preached that was overly spiritualized and accepting of all the crisis-inducing things that were being done to us—never learning about our

agency and responsibility to transform evil, to join others in working to improve our circumstances. I now believe, and try to encourage others who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ to recognize, that we must seek to live out what it means to be salt of the earth and light of the world—to work for transformation—before, during, and after crises. We are to pursue and make peace! We are not objects upon which life happens, nor are we mere spectators. Instead, we are invited and empowered by God to be agents of transformation.

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Dear IM Family,

Greetings in the name of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

With our new theme for the year (“I once was blind, but now I see”), I’ve been spending time reflecting on Jesus’ healing of the blind man in Mark 8:22-25. In this story, Jesus spits on the man’s eyes and puts his hands on him, asking him, “Do you see anything?” When the man replies that he sees people who look like trees walking around, Jesus touches the man’s eyes again, and his sight is fully restored.

This story begs the question—why was the healing in two stages?

I wonder if perhaps Jesus sometimes wants to take us on slow journeys of healing, so that we can experience the full journey with him.

Like the blind man, we could never see Jesus apart from his touch on our lives, from an encounter that begins a lifelong journey of opening our eyes to know him better.

But our God doesn’t stop there. Jesus rescues us out of darkness not only so we can see him, but also so he can use us to help open the eyes of others.

We are so thankful for our many global servants, who have made themselves available to serve as Christ’s hands and feet around the world. In this newsletter, you will read stories and reflections from those serving Christ in parts of the world facing ongoing violence and crisis. We are currently also working to help those at the forefront of the coronavirus outbreak and responding to urgent needs in the Bahamas and Haiti.

“ Jesus rescues us out of darkness not only so we can see him, but also so he can use us to help open the eyes of others. ”

At the same time, it’s important to remember that being used by God isn’t only about being available to those in crisis. It’s first and foremost about being faithful to be wherever God asks us to be—whether serving as a peace warrior in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or as a teacher ready with lessons for a classroom of students.

We are also always thankful for you, for your partnership, and for the ways in which God uses your faithful giving to enable our global servants to go wherever God leads.

Gratefully,

Sharon Koh
Executive Director / CEO



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For more information, contact zdripps@internationalministries.org





Following Christ through a crisis

Continued from cover

In times like this, I think of Acts 1:8, when Jesus promises his followers that they will receive the Holy Spirit—the power that will enable them to be his witnesses. I think of God’s faithfulness to Daniel in the lions’ den (Daniel 6:1-28), and of John telling us, “greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). When Jesus teaches us how to pray, he reminds us that God has the power to feed, free, and lead us (Matthew 6:9).

Elie Haddad, president of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut, recently wrote, “Our lens for decision-making is not security and safety. Rather, it is spiritual discernment. We try to discern what God is calling us to do at the moment and we strive to do it faithfully and relentlessly... So, our only option is to trust him fully. And we continue to experience his providence and his provisions no matter what the circumstances are.”

In the midst of a crisis, we often have more immediate anxieties. Our first impulse might be to try to de-escalate the situation or find a way out of it. But if the crisis persists in spite of our best efforts, and if we take the time to step back and re-evaluate, we may come to the liberating realization that God’s presence, power, protection, and provision are as assured in a crisis as out of one!

When we are not the ones directly affected by a crisis, we might be more cautious and careful to analyze the situation before taking action. Depending on the nature of the crisis, we may take the time to discuss and strategize how best

to mobilize resources for relief. This sort of measured response is certainly not bad, but we should remember that the ability to take such a cautious approach to a troubling situation is a luxury often reserved for those on the outside looking in. If we spend enough of our lives relatively unaffected by major crises, we might be tempted to worship at the feet of the gods of safety and security.

“ The appropriate response to any time of intense difficulty—whether personal, communal, regional, or global—is obedience to God’s call, in full dependence on God. ”

Whether we find ourselves within or on the outskirts of a crisis, the appropriate response to any time of intense difficulty—whether personal, communal, regional, or global—is obedience to God’s call, in full dependence on God. Remember, “it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13). The God who calls and assigns us is faithful and able!



WHEN CECILIA'S WORLD ENDED

IM Global Consultant for Immigrants and Refugees Ray Schellinger has listened to the stories of thousands of the world's refugees. Here he shares one of them.

Right now, more than 65 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes, and the nations of the world will help resettle fewer than 80,000 this year. Most of them will live their whole lives in the “in between,” with no way to go forward and no way to go back.

In the last four years, I've had the opportunity to visit refugees in more than a dozen countries. I have been encouraged by Christians offering radical hospitality, just as I've had my spirit weighed down by endless stories of suffering.

Cecilia's story is one of thousands I have been entrusted to carry.

It was 4 a.m. when Cecilia's world ended. Several men forced their way into her rural home in Honduras, raped her, and executed her husband because her family could not pay the fees the local gangs demanded.

Cecilia fled, traumatized and terrified, with her three young daughters. She joined several thousand other people who were all fleeing this sort of violence, traveling by foot out of Honduras, across Guatemala and Mexico, and then to the U.S. border.

After weeks of walking, the group reached Mexico. I had the opportunity to join them as part of a pastoral care team organized by our Mexican Baptist partners. We spent a week moving through the large tents, each one housing several hundred migrants. It was at this camp that I first met Cecilia.

When the group reached Tijuana, one of the major border crossings into the U.S., Cecilia and her children took

shelter in a tent on a baseball infield. It was cold and rainy, and the children were sick most of the time.

For four months, each morning Cecilia traveled ninety minutes by bus to arrive at the border by 7 a.m. in case her number might be called for an appointment to enter the asylum process. She missed her chance, however, when her youngest daughter became very ill. In desperation, with help, she and her daughters crossed the high fence and turned themselves in to the U.S. border patrol.

Cecilia was granted permission to enter the asylum process, but her family was returned to Mexico to await results that could take years, during which time she couldn't legally work.

When Cecilia was finally called for her court appointment, due to a government error, her name was not listed correctly. She was turned away by Mexican authorities, then automatically found inadmissible in absentia by U.S. authorities. She could not legally try again for ten years.

Cecilia gave up hope. She returned to Honduras, saying, “It will be better to die where there will be somebody to bury me.”

What can we as Christians do for people like Cecilia? Through IM, we are partnering with several Tijuana-based shelters and with ministries that provide legal aid (the single most important factor in being granted asylum), health care, trauma care, and educational opportunities.

These groups are doing the best they can to shine Christ's light. We hope that this light will indeed shine in the darkness, and that the darkness will not overcome it.

HEALING TRAUMA WITH ART

In 2018, Congolese and Burundian peace activists were trained in using the arts to bring healing to their communities.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a beautiful country with rich natural resources. But the people of the DRC have suffered greatly due to ongoing conflicts, civil war, and economic instability.

"There are serious inequalities and oppression," says Lance Muteyo, "[yet] the best music in Africa—the rumba and ndombolo—come from the DRC. Therefore, the use of arts and experiential education is a good way to equip local peace activists and community leaders with skills in conflict transformation, trauma healing, and resilience."

Lance and his wife, Christina, serve with IM as international associate missionaries and describe themselves as "Zimbabwean peace warriors." Working with the Trees of Peace ministry in Zimbabwe, they conduct trainings in conflict transformation across Africa, utilizing the methodologies they learned from their mentors, Dan and Sharon Buttry, IM global consultants in peace and justice. Lance participated in Dan's training sessions in Zimbabwe and Kenya, and he will lead upcoming sessions with Dan in Nigeria and Ukraine.

In 2018, IM Global Consultant Mylinda Baits invited Lance and Sango Shila, a Congolese social activist based in Burundi, to learn how to lead a restorative arts training program called First Aid Arts. The course teaches counselors and community leaders how traumatized people can find healing through guided arts activities.

Sango wanted to use First Aid Arts to empower peace activists in the DRC, so he and Lance began to plan an event, funded with the help of Mylinda and Dan, that would

serve as an opportunity not only to equip the participants, but also for Sango to practice, with Lance's mentorship, acting as a leader and trainer for his community.

Though Sango and Lance planned the training to take place in the DRC, when the national elections began to incite violence throughout the country, the event was moved to Bujumbura, Burundi.

In November 2018, fourteen Congolese and six Burundian activists—all from different organizations that deal with counseling, health, arts, peace, and human rights—attended the three-day training. They experimented with the use of dance, scribble chase, community drawing, singing, and role-plays as tools for healing.

"The participants were so passionate and full of energy," says Lance, "and there were an equal number of men and women. We had a talented translator who managed to translate English into four other languages. However, most art- and adventure-based activities managed to bridge the language barrier."

The participants have now formed a Committee for Peace and Justice. Sango is working in the Congo villages of Fizi and Uvira, training community leaders in peacemaking and trauma healing, as well as organizing training sessions for the Congolese and Burundians in Bujumbura.

"Peace is a cornerstone of human development," Lance explains. "We want to train community leaders to be implementers of conflict transformation—to be trauma healers."

“ We want to train community leaders as implementers of conflict transformation—to be trauma healers. ”





MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL STEWARDSHIP

By Marc Kirchoff

As a member of the staff of International Ministries, I really like my title: donor advisor. I often tell people that my role is to assist people (I like to use the term “partners in ministry”) in fulfilling all that God is calling them to achieve in their personal stewardship and philanthropy.

My goal is always two-fold: First, to fulfill our donors’ intentions in regard to their personal support of God’s work around the world and to help them become the best possible stewards of God’s resources. Second, to grow the impact of International Ministries. If a gift does not fulfill both goals, then we need to explore other options.

To fulfill the first goal, I strive to help our donors:

- Decrease their tax liability
- Increase their retirement income
- Increase their estates in order to increase the amount passed on to heirs and ministry
- Decrease the inheritance and income taxes of their estates

When we help our donors practice good stewardship, I believe that we fulfill Jesus’ teaching in the Parable of the Talents—we help people make the most of what the Master entrusts to them.

If you have not met the donor advisor who serves in your area, I encourage you to get in touch. This is a great team of professionals with whom I am blessed to serve. I pray that, together, we can do great things for the kingdom of God!

Donor Advisors

Thinking about how you could increase the impact of your giving? Contact one of our donor advisors listed below, and we will connect you with the advisor serving your geographical area.



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Did you know that the IM website has giving information for you and your financial advisor?

Visit internationalministries.org/giving-and-development to learn more about how you can support global mission through stock gifts, IRA charitable rollover, employer gift matching, and AmazonSmile. You can also learn how to include IM in your will, establish a charitable gift annuity, and download useful information in planning your charitable giving. IM donor advisors would be happy to answer any additional questions you may have.



Haiti: Scholarships for Elementary and College Students

Despite a great desire among Haitian children to go to school, fifty percent of children in Haiti lack the resources to get an education. Sixty percent drop out of school after sixth grade. These funds will help students gain a future of hope. **Project goal:** \$5,000 per year for the next three years to provide scholarships to elementary and college students in Haiti. A gift of \$555 will provide a semester of tuition and program support for one student.



Congo: BHIMA Hospital Information Management

The Basic Hospital Management Application (BHIMA, developed by IM partner IMA World Health) is a hospital management computer application. This new software will help hospital administrators in four Baptist hospitals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo gain easy access to accurate logistical, financial, and medical information. This will increase efficiency and financial transparency and also reduce fraud and theft. **Project goal:** \$52,000. A gift of \$1,000 will purchase the IT equipment needed for one department in one hospital.

Nicaragua: Parenting with Love

The ongoing conflict in Nicaragua has serious implications for the health of pregnant women, mothers, and children. This program seeks to decrease some of the long-term impacts of the crisis by empowering local volunteers to facilitate breastfeeding, respond to maternal depression, and encourage parent-child bonding and early childhood stimulation. **Project goal:** \$541,622. A gift of \$1,000 will provide early childhood development kits for mothers.

Mexico: School Uniforms and Books

The grade school ministry outreach of Mount Horeb Baptist Church in Tijuana provides a loving Christian environment where children who live in barrios rife with poverty, drugs, gangs, and violence can feel safe, and learn. **Project goal:** \$8,000 each year to help one hundred children with special needs receive school uniforms and books. \$80 will provide one child with a school uniform and the books needed for classes.

Malaysia: Sabah Theological Seminary (STS) Endowed Scholarship Fund

Four hundred students currently attend this seminary, which is located in an impoverished area where sixteen percent of people live on less than \$2 a day. Even with low tuition costs, students must rely on financial support from their local churches. This endowment fund will allow 3 to 5 students to attend STS on full scholarships. Graduates from the program go on to serve their local churches and to disciple others in spiritual formation. **Project goal:** \$23,000 annually. \$1,000 will cover the tuition for one bachelor's degree student for one year.

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Registrar online at

www.internationalministries.org/events

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www.internationalministries.org/events

April 6, 2020

Dear Friends,

The cover story, "Following Christ in a Crisis," was written months before COVID-19 became a part of our current reality. We could not have predicted then how timely and relevant this cover story would be for us today. It describes IM's sense of how God's people are called to respond to crisis—as agents of help and transformation and not merely as seekers of safety and security. As followers of Christ, we are able to be such agents because we ultimately look to God to be our peace, protection and provision.

On a practical level, IM is able to offer practical help on behalf of Jesus Christ's church during crises around the world because of your faithful and continued support. In 2019, your gifts enabled IM to address needs that arose during political unrest in Haiti, Bolivia, and Lebanon. Your generosity also helped to contain the spread of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Your giving in January and February of this year helped with the global fight against the coronavirus by providing essential medical supplies to China and Hong Kong during the early stages of the pandemic. After that, your giving made it possible to ensure that all of our global servants are in locations where they could safely "shelter in place" for an

extended period of time. Around the world, IM global servants stand ready to address the needs—be they material, physical, or spiritual—that will continue to arise in the months ahead.

If you are feeling shut in and helpless right now, please know that your continued support of IM is physically and spiritually life-giving and has a lasting impact. Your donations—to the general fund, World Mission Offering and especially monthly giving for IM global servants—allow IM home office staff and missionaries to stay in the fray and continue to be the hands and feet and presence of Christ. Even in the middle of a pandemic, God is using and will use your gift for good.

“God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble . . . The Lord of Heaven’s Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress.” (Psalm 46:1,7)

Sharon
Koh

P.S. If you would like to give, please send checks payable to “International Ministries” using the reply envelope or give online at <https://portal.internationalministries.org/give>. We also recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic is causing economic hardship all around us. Please know that your prayer support is invaluable and the IM family is praying for you as well.