

A SUMMARY OF OUR 35 YEARS ON THE MISSION FIELD 1975 - 2010

Our Calling

Sandy and I were saved at Calvary Baptist Church, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, now First Baptist Church of Coconut Creek, in May of 1971. Nine months later, at a mission's conference, we surrendered to be missionaries. When we surrendered I knew in my heart we would be working with the Turks, but did not know at that time how to announce my calling.

We thank God for Calvary Baptist Church, which was there for us when we needed to get right with God. We are still with them. They have faithfully supported us and helped meet our needs all these years. We count it a privilege to be sent out by them and to be a part of their ministry.

We want to also thank Central Missionary Clearinghouse for faithfully and diligently handling our funds for all these years. We have been with them since 1974.

We entered Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri, in the fall of 1972, and completed the four-year course in three years, graduating in 1975. By this time our calling to the Turks was evident. Immediately after graduation we went to Iran for three months. A missionary living and working there had invited us to come and work with him. We had planned to work among the Azeri Turks in Iran. Iran was open to missionaries at that time, but Turkey was not. Before returning to the States for deputation we spent a short time in Turkey. During this time we were impressed of the Lord not to return to Iran, but to go directly into Turkey.

The Early Years

*The work among the Turks in Turkey and Germany
1976 - 1990*

We returned to Turkey in the summer of 1976, and settled in Istanbul to study the language. After three years of language study and a short furlough, we moved to Germany, because of the situation in Turkey – inability to obtain visas and the presence of martial law. There are several million Turks living in Germany and other western European countries. For the next 12 years we worked among the Turks both in Turkey and Germany, traveling extensively in Turkey as carpet dealers. During these early years we had only three converts among the Turks. Although these years were frustrating, it was a time of preparation, and the Lord never let us leave our calling. One thing we can say we have done: We have stayed!

The Awakening Among The Millet Turks

*The work in Bulgaria and Romania
Since 1991*

Bulgaria opened up to us in 1991. We had returned to Istanbul in the spring of 1990, had requested and received a yearly visa, and had intended to continue our work there. Bro. Fred Potter, pastor of Brookside Baptist Church, Bristol, Tennessee, called in March of 1991. He asked if we would consider going into Russia, that maybe the Lord had a work for us there. The wall had fallen and Russia and Eastern Europe had opened up. We had become very close to Bro. Fred and it was evident later that the Lord had put us together for this work.

We got as far as Bulgaria. The Lord stopped us there. Shortly thereafter we moved from Istanbul to Varna. Bro. Potter immediately began to send other missionary families, through Charity Baptist Mission, to help in the work. He called us almost every day for the next fifteen years, asking us how the work was going and what we needed. Thus, this work among the Millet Turks was birthed. Bro. Fred Potter and Brookside Baptist Church took the burden upon themselves to see that the prayers

and funds we needed were supplied. They have diligently prayed for and supported this work from the beginning. Bro. Fred has now gone on to heaven and we certainly miss him. The new pastor, Bro. Mike Nixon, along with the church and Charity Baptist Mission, is still 100% behind the work.

The first year we preached to the Bulgarians through an interpreter, mostly on the street, but also in a building we had rented. A local church was established. During our second year in Bulgaria we began going to the Turks. These Millet Turks were very open to the Gospel and within the next two years we were able to establish 21 house churches among them. During this time we evangelized over 100 villages, with lots of street preaching in the summer and house meetings in the winter. Hundreds were saved and baptized and six national pastors were called. After three years we were no longer able to obtain visas and had to leave Bulgaria. We were impressed of the Lord to go to Constanza, Romania.

Our move to Romania was definitely of the Lord. We found the same Millet Turks there and several meetings were immediately established. We were able to obtain visas through the Baptist Union for the first couple of years and are now registered there as Charity East Association. We continued to go back and forth between Romania and Bulgaria for the next ten years. Hundreds more were saved and baptized and 60 more churches established. Five national pastors were called from among the new believers in Romania.

We were able to move back into Bulgaria in 2005, obtaining yearly visas and permission to preach the Gospel and establish churches. We registered in Sofia under the name of New Testament Baptist Church and now have the right to preach and establish churches throughout Bulgaria. Four other of our missionaries have registered their own churches in Sofia. The work continues to grow and we now have 105 local churches in Romania and Bulgaria. Most of these are Turkish house churches. In the summer of 2010 we received permanent visas for Bulgaria. What a blessing!

Feeding Centers

In 1996, the Lord put it on my heart to start feeding children. Thus, feeding centers were established. Bro. Fred Potter, pastor of Brookside Baptist Church, Bristol, Tennessee, began immediately to raise funds through Charity Baptist Mission for us to start these feeding centers. We started feeding children through the local churches we had established. We would bring the children into a house of one of the believers who had volunteered to cook for them, sing hymns, pray with them and then feed them a hot meal. This has turned out to be a real blessing and many new families have been brought to the Lord through feeding the children. We currently have 28 homes in Romania and Bulgaria where we feed children daily. We also have a daily bread ministry in Romania where we distribute bread to poor families. Each year in Bulgaria, flour and cooking oil is distributed to about 1500 families. Fifty kilograms of flour and five liters of cooking oil are given to each family. This helps them to get through the winter.

The feeding of the children, daily bread ministry, distribution of the flour and oil, and support for the national pastors is mostly funded by Charity Baptist Mission, Bristol, Tennessee. We thank all the churches and individuals who so generously give. We could not do it without you. All the believers also thank you.

Casa Julia

One Sunday morning in 2001 during our English-speaking meeting in Constanza, Romania, while we were praying, it came into my heart to start a home for children. Thus, Casa Julia was established. We immediately rented a house and started receiving children. We raise them as our own. We have had our own facilities since 2003. We lovingly call the home *The Father's House*. There are currently

11 children with us. Most of these children came to us as newborn babies.

Translation of the Turkish and Bulgarian Bibles

The Turkish Bible

1980 - 2010

When we first went to Turkey and after we had studied the language for three years, we realized the available Bible in Turkish was a revised version – not after the King James of 1611. In 1979 I was impressed to start preparing to do a translation according to the Authorized Version. In the summer of 1975 we had made a trip into Iran at the invitation of a missionary living and working there. At that time, he gave me an Azeri Turkish Bible. Azeri is the language of Azerbaijan. Since it was written in the Arabic script, I was not able to read it at that time. But now, since deciding to do a new translation in Turkish, I was anxious to see if this Azeri Bible agreed with my King James Version. I immediately taught myself the Arabic alphabet and began to read. First, I checked 1 John 5:7. It was there. Then, I checked several other verses that are missing in the revised and other modern versions. They were all there. I was excited. The next two years I worked from this Azeri Turkish Bible teaching myself the language, and trying to put the Gospel of John into modern Turkish. At that time we were living in Germany trying to work with the Turks there.

One day while laboring with this Azeri Bible, the Lord told me to go to Istanbul – that He had a Bible for me. It had not occurred to me until then that there must be older Turkish Bibles. I immediately left for Istanbul. I went to the Bible society and spoke with the young man working there. I explained to him that I was looking for an old Turkish Bible that was in use before the 1940 revised version was published. He told me the old Bibles were no longer in print, and not available at all; also that the old Bibles were in the Arabic (Ottoman Turkish) script and very few people could even read them. The Turkish alphabet was changed from Arabic to the modern Turkish alphabet, which is a Latin-based alphabet, in 1922 or shortly thereafter. I told him I was really interested in finding one of these old Bibles, was going on into central Turkey, but would be back in two to three weeks.

After three weeks I returned and asked him again about an old Bible. He replied: “The day after you left, a man from eastern Turkey brought me an old Bible he wants to sell. But in my opinion it is too old and no one understands it. Besides, he wants too much money for it. But if you like, I can bring it tomorrow, and you can look at it”. The next day I was there bright and early. He gave me the Bible. I began to look at it in amazement. The front page was missing, but the rest was intact. The date in the front was 1827. The Lord had provided me with the old Bible I needed. I paid him what the man had asked, thirty dollars, and went on my way back to Germany – rejoicing all the way. Later, I found another Ottoman Turkish Bible published in 1885. These three Bibles – the Ottoman Turkish of 1827, the Ottoman Turkish of 1885, and the Azeri Turkish of 1891– along with the English of 1611 and the original tongues have been the foundation for the new translation.

Shortly after starting the work on the translation, I prayed and asked the Lord where He would have me do this work. I had read that the church in Philadelphia had kept His word, so I asked if I should go to the old city of Philadelphia in Turkey, which is now called Alashehir. The Lord told me to base the work at Brookside Baptist Church in Bristol, Tennessee, because they had also kept His word. So, when I was at the church in Bristol, I told Bro. Potter what the Lord wanted me to do. Thus, Brookside Bible Society was established. For the next five years I worked on the new translation there at Brookside Baptist Church, Bristol, Tennessee. While there we made several trips into Turkey. We began using the New Testament of the new Turkish translation in 1998, the Old Testament in 2010.

The Bulgarian Bible

1994 - 2010

Shortly after moving from Istanbul to Varna, we met a young Bulgarian man who was in his last year of high school and had recently been saved. His name is Mitko Stevanov. He began working with us and, being fluent in English, became our interpreter for preaching to the Bulgarians. A couple of years later I asked him if he would start working on the translation of the Bulgarian Bible. There was no trustworthy Bible in Bulgarian. He began work immediately, and now, sixteen years later, has finished the translation of the Bible in Bulgarian.

This young man, now married, with two children, has been a blessing and a great help to all of the missionaries, and especially to the work. While translating the Bible, he has also learned Turkish, pastored five Turkish churches, done evangelistic work, and helped start several new churches, not to mention helping all of the missionaries with the bureaucracy in Bulgaria.

The Turkish Hymn Book

1991 - 2010

About a year after we arrived in Varna, we met a couple of Turkish believers. We began going to the villages, preaching the Gospel, with no one hindering. We saw there was an awakening among the Millet Turks and the Lord had begun giving hymns to the new believers in their own language. Until the fall of the communist government the Turkish language had been forbidden in Bulgaria. But now the Turks could speak Turkish openly. Since we went to them speaking their language, the Turks received us and believed the Gospel. They thought I was a Turk. They love the singing and preaching in their own native tongue. Our message to those who would like to work among the Turks is to *love them and learn their language*.

For the next several years we gathered all the new hymns and made a Turkish hymn book. They still prefer these local hymns over the ones from Turkey or those translated from English. Although they do love the translated *Amazing Grace*, and *Glory to His name*, among others. These hymns have been a great evangelistic tool, since most of the older Millet Turks can't read or write. They all have the Gospel message in song.

New hymns are still being given, but not as many as in the early years. We now have over 200 from the Varna region of Bulgaria, plus others from Turkey and Germany, and some translated from English. The hymn book is now basically complete. Many have been saved by listening to these Turkish hymns. Many have been drawn into the church as they passed by and heard these hymns being sung. They really have the power of God on them and have been a great blessing to everyone.

Evangelization

Our method is preaching. Our message is the Gospel of the grace of God. Our desire is to get them saved, baptized and established in local churches. We preach on the street, in homes, and especially in the churches we have established. The believers sing and testify, and we the missionaries and national pastors do the preaching.

One of our best evangelistic tools has been the distribution of DVDs of our church services. We have given them out by the thousands. They are in great demand; everyone wants them. The believers send them, along with hymnbooks and New Testaments, to their relatives all over Bulgaria, Romania, the rest of Europe and some into Turkey. The New Testament in Turkish and Bulgarian is in great demand. We give out all we can make. We assemble them by hand.

Just like the early church our believers sing hymns and testify everywhere they go. Now most of our new churches are started by invitation. Many have invited us to their villages and especially into their

homes to start a church, after they have been in one of our established church services.

Camp Meeting

We have camp meeting three times a year at our facilities in Constanza, Romania. All the missionary families meet together for five days (Wednesday through Sunday) of singing, praying, testifying and preaching. It is a wonderful time for us to all get together. We have morning and evening services in English, with a lot of fellowshipping in between. We thank the Lord for these wonderful facilities He has provided. We give Him all the glory for this great work of which He has allowed us to be a part.

Summation

To God Be The Glory, Great Things He Hath Done

Now we are at the end of 2010. We are getting older. I will be 72 this December, but have no intentions of retiring. We pray the Lord will grant us several more years in the work, which is strong and continues to grow. Currently we have nine missionary families and 15 national pastors working together as a team taking care of 105 local churches, 28 feeding centers, one children's home, evangelization and starting new churches, making and distributing hymn books, New Testaments and DVDs.

Most of our churches are Turkish house churches, but we do have seven self-standing buildings. We have one main church building in Bulgaria, where several times a year we bring in the believers, sometimes even from Romania, for a one-day meeting in Turkish. The meeting starts in the afternoon and goes on until the early hours of the morning. The believers are really helped and strengthened by these meetings. We also have services in Romanian, Bulgarian and one in English at our facilities in Romania for the missionaries and children. Often one of our missionary families from Bulgaria will go up to Romania for our Sunday morning English service. Most of our services are in Turkish, so it is a welcome break to be in an English service.

We thank every church and each individual who prays for and supports us in this work. The believers also thank you for sending us, so they could hear the Gospel and be saved. They often mention you in their testimonies and thank the Lord that you have sent us to them.

Truly, the Lord has done a work among the Turks in our day which is hard for us to believe. Thousands have been saved and over 100 churches have been established to date. We are looking for even greater things in the years to come. We give Him all the glory for all He has done!

In His Service

The Cheatwoods