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This exciting, full-color magazine brings you testimonies from the front-lines of mission work, trends in global evangelism, real-life missionary stories and ideas for North American churches. Two times per year--winter and spring--*PROCLAIM* comes to you as an eight-page magazine, providing news about the results of mission work and the specific prayer needs of missionaries. Once each year--in late summer--you'll receive an expanded, annual-report edition of *PROCLAIM*.

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A good means of arresting attention, and conveying important facts. it was the only means of instruction I was ever...

**For more information, contact [Mark Volkers](#) (US) 616-224-0709  
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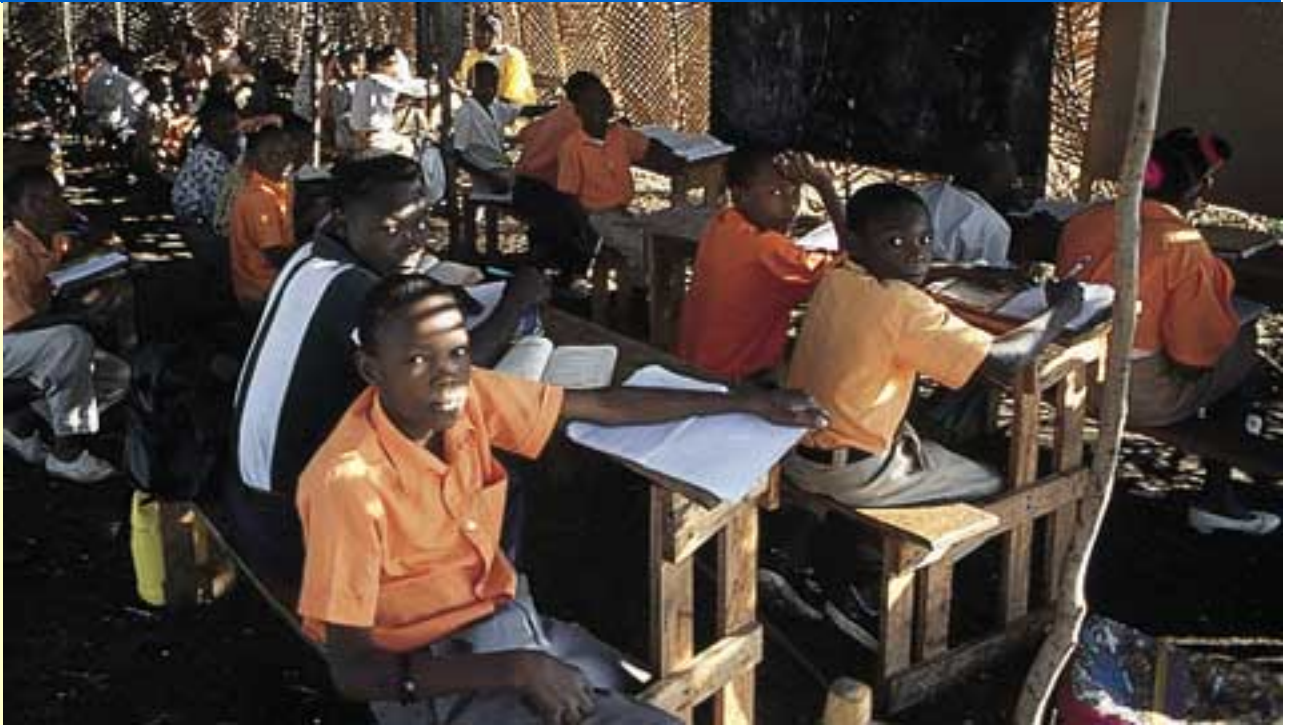
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## A Kresh Course in Education

*by Mark Volkers*

We have a reputation.

Christian Reformed missionaries, that is.

The strong suite of CRC missionaries is education. All over the world, missionaries with other missions see us doing a variety of missionary-type things, but more often than not, we're doing some teaching of one kind or another.

In China, universities actively recruit CRC people because they know they get a bang for their buck when "we" are in the classroom.

In seminaries and high schools from Honduras to Hungary, missionaries from the CRC are recognized for their background in education, and for many, their life-long exposure to Christian education.

That reputation is now being put to the test in Haiti.

Haiti is a hybrid of cultures and religions. People from all over West Africa were brought to Haiti in chains to work the land first for the Spaniards, then the French. This incredible mixture of culture and language was amalgamated into a new language, Creole, and a new

*(above) No matter what the setting of the Christian school in Haiti, they all have one thing in common: a need for excellent, Christ-centered teaching materials.*

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religion, Voodoo. There are also a lot of nominal Catholics on the island, and a significant percentage of Protestants. In that mix is an educational system in need of help.

CRWM missionary Mark Wiersma is part of a group of Christian people who are working hard to develop the island's first comprehensive Bible curriculum for elementary schools, grades 1-6.

CRECH (pronounced kresh) is the French acronym for the Consortium for the Reinforcement of Christian Education in Haiti. It is a group of people who run elementary schools that are connected with churches or missions. All total, we're talking close to 450,000 students.

CRECH wants to develop Christian teaching materials for the teachers and students; something that is sorely needed on this Caribbean island. In future, CRECH would like to produce Christ-centered materials for history/social studies, natural sciences and language arts.

A few reasons make the need for good materials rather dire: most of Haiti's teachers have not gone through more than eighth grade. Because of that, most teachers are extremely dependent on the books they hold in front of class. If the book isn't good, the education isn't good..

Wiersma, 45, said another reason is that many of Haiti's educational requirements aren't very practical. "Students spend a lot of time learning French, for example. French is not very useful for day-to-day living. School is somewhat irrelevant. We're trying to make school relevant to daily, and eternal, life."

Wiersma isn't working alone. Founded in 1997, CRECH membership includes Compassion International, the Federation of Protestant Schools in Haiti, three Haitian denominations that run Christian schools, Word and Deed (a Dutch organization), Worldwide Christian Schools, and Christian Reformed World Missions in the form of Mark Wiersma.

CRECH is now preparing elementary Bible courses for grades one through six in both French and Creole. They hope to have the materials ready for trial use in some schools next year. "We're not just translating



materials brought in from Canada and the U.S.," said Wiersma. "We're working hard to keep this a completely Haitian project."

Cooperation among all these groups has been excellent. "That in itself is a testimony," according to Wiersma. "In Haiti, the typical thing is that churches do not cooperate. For them to be cooperating at this depth, for this length of time, is very remarkable."

Wiersma said he's glad to be part of the group, glad to offer what he can from his Reformed, Christian background.

After all, we do have a reputation.

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## Shouting Quietly

*By Bruce And Nicki Kuiper.*

The apartment we moved into at the beginning of the semester is, simply put, wonderful. Our new abode is spacious, beautiful, and most importantly, clean. We like to say that we now have a place with scrolled molding instead of a place with ceiling mold.

At first we felt a bit self-conscious with just how nice the new pad is, but visits to our colleagues' apartments have shown us that living standards have greatly improved in the last few years. Although most students consider our apartment 'very nice,' it doesn't seem terribly different from others. So for this semester, we can enjoy the comfort without guilt and with enthusiasm for the extra space we now have for our students.

One of the key advantages of this new apartment is its location on campus. Last year we were housed in the largest boys' dormitory. The big difference this year is ... quietness.

For the first time in our six years in China, our surroundings are quiet. Chirping birds flutter around our windows instead of raucous college students thumping

*(above) Many of our neighbors practice Tai Qi, a graceful art that supposedly unites one's body and spirit.*

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basketballs overhead. Bicycles occasionally whiz past on the road instead of the usual continuous roar of traffic. Sleeping with the windows open is finally desirable.

And then, at 7:00 every morning, "WUHHH!!!"

Our downstairs neighbor lets loose with a battle cry that would rouse even the most lethargic of soldiers.

"WUHHH!!!"

The first time, of course, frightened us. The shouts were so out of place in this corner of the campus. Last year, such shouting from the boys' dormitory hardly would have raised an eyebrow, but now each "WUHHH!!!" shatters the neighborhood's usual calm. We've discovered from other neighbors that Mr. "Yawp" does this for his health. Yelling several times each morning evidently releases "bad air" and strengthens the diaphragm.

"WUHHH!!!"

We're not the only ones unsettled by Mr. Yawp's health practices. The other morning I saw a sixth-grade boy nearly crash his bicycle into our building when Mr. Yawp surprised him with a bellow. Other neighbors have gently tried to suggest that he reserve his health regimen for a time later in the day. So far, though, we continue our breakfasts accompanied by the melodious sounds of our friendly but loud neighbor downstairs.

Mr. Yawp's yelling is out of place here, but it does show the deep concern the Chinese have for health. Although not many practice shouting for health, they do empathize with Mr. Yawp's trying to maintain and increase his health. Many of our neighbors practice Tai Qi, a graceful (and quiet!) art that supposedly unites one's body and spirit.

In China, common greetings go beyond the basic "How are you?" into "Have you eaten yet?" or "How many layers of clothing are you wearing today?" or "How's your health holding up?"

It seems American health commercials typically reflect "symptom suppression": reduce your coughing, eliminate the headache, decrease your appetite, remove the rash.

In China, the commercials tend to be concerned more with "whole body health": increase your energy

level, quicken the blood flow, help all your organs work together in harmony.

This general concern with overall health presents a unique opportunity that may not be as readily available in America. Conversations often turn toward health. In such talks, presenting options for Ultimate health is natural and in many ways fits in with such a health-conscious culture. We know that this focus on health is yet another of the countless ways people realize their full Vitality, and we expect that many will want to know exactly how to follow this Program

And that's something worth shouting about.

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# Speed Bumps on the Jesus Way



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By *Brenda Vander Schuur.*

God began working in John's heart when he was a mere child. Every time his father read the Koran to him, the name of Jesus intrigued him. He asked so many questions about Jesus that his father became annoyed. After all, Jesus was just a minor character in Islam. Why didn't he ask more about Mohammed?

When John grew up he became a barber. He had pictures of Jesus hanging in his room. He still had that fascination with Jesus' name.

John met a Pullo Christian (Fulani people living in Guinea are called "Pullo"). That Christian was finally able to feed his hunger for knowing Jesus. John became a follower of Jesus and quickly grew in the Lord.

John's family forced him to get married. His wife, though not a Christian, was curious about his faith.

He returned to his village to cultivate his father's land and rebuild their fences. As missionaries, we were worried that he would lose his faith without the support and counsel of other believers. When we went to visit him, we were pleased to find him growing in the Lord and sharing his faith.

John and his wife had a son. On the seventh day, as is the custom, they had a big gathering to celebrate

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the baby's birth and to announce his name. At that gathering his family and his wife's family confronted him with his decision to follow Christ. They gave him the option of reverting to Islam or being "done away with." They locked him in a room while they decided what to do with him. God brought along another Christian who knew him and recognized his cries for help. This man took him to safety.

John fled to a nearby country. His intention was to study under a Pullo pastor there in order to grow in his faith and knowledge and understanding of Christianity so that he would be strong enough to come back home to his people and proclaim the risen Lord. He did just that. John returned early last year. He is on fire for the Lord and ready to spread that flame. He opened a barbershop where he also teaches literacy, English and the Bible. John is so full of the Lord that no matter what people come to John for, we know they are meeting Jesus in him. John is again under pressure from his family to revert to Islam. He has even received death threats from Muslim authorities. Praise God that he has been given a spirit of boldness and is standing firm.

John's life and testimony give us hope as we work among a people whose hearts, at times, seem hard and whose eyes are closed by fears of ostracism, persecution and even death. These are major speed bumps as Pullo Muslims break ranks to follow the Jesus Way. Speed bumps; not stop signs.

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## Team Work

*by Mark Volkers*

*People end up asking themselves, "What is my life's purpose?"*

*Students question whether they should study in order to make money, or serve the Lord.*

*Others realize that they can do much more good in their own communities.*

*Church members, fighting among themselves, resolve to work together for the good of the church, for the good of God's kingdom.*

A magic pill for spiritual growth? A seminar with dynamic speakers that compels people to change? A new church that people are flocking to?

Nope.

All the result of work teams.

For seven years now, Max and Kina van Til,

*(above) Getting the job done. Work teams generally accomplish a lot in a very short time.*

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missionaries with Christian Reformed World Missions, have been leading work teams in the Dominican Republic. And they have seen people changed.

"My ministry is as much to people from North America as it is to the Dominicans," said Max. "Maybe more."

Though Max builds buildings, he sees that only as a means to an end. "Construction is a means, not the goal, for the Lord to work in people's lives."

What Max sees when a North American team comes to the DR to work is a new appreciation for other cultures. He sees people shocked into the reality that the world is bigger than the U.S. and Canada. He sees people share the joy of a Haitian church service, of true peace despite poverty. He sees people realize--perhaps for the first time--that love of the Lord is what counts. Not money, goods and acquisition. "It is the Lord drawing people together. He doesn't care about color or status. Just people. I am witness to changed lives. I get to participate in it, am allowed to look at it. That," says Max, "is exciting for me."

Max and Kina van Til, from Stratford, Ontario, oversee most of the work teams that go to the DR. But it wasn't always that way.

Max started out as a cop in Groningen, The Netherlands. In 1979, he and Kina moved to Ontario.

Max and some partners started Ayr Saw and Tool for the purpose of providing jobs to people coming through the court/prison/half-way house cycle, to help them get back into society. The company took off.

Though Max received financial success, he did not receive the fulfillment he was looking for. In 1991, a work team from the Stratford, Ontario CRC went to the Dominican Republic. Max went along. It changed his life. He shared his excitement with his wife. They asked their business partners for a leave of absence so they could serve in the DR. The partners didn't agree, so the van Tils put the idea aside.

In 1993, Kina went to the DR with a Stratford CRC work team. She returned with the same enthusiasm Max had returned with two years earlier. They decided to break the economical ties they had with their partners and move to the DR.



"We knew it was the Lord telling us to make this decision," recalled Max. "We had this nice security blanket, this back pack to fall on. He (God) wanted us all, or not at all. We decided within two weeks to go into missions."

The van Tils sold their shares in the business in the spring of 1993. On September 22 of that year, they left for the DR as volunteers with World Missions. Later, missionaries on the Caribbean island asked them to stay on as long-term missionaries. "As a family, we were so convinced that the Lord wanted us to continue to serve in the DR that we applied for the position of Leadership Trainer." They were appointed on July 1, 1995.

In those years, the van Tils have learned a lot. "I hear a lot of arguments against work teams." Max's voice is kind, even when he's passionate about the subject matter.

"Money spent versus benefits received is usually the first argument people have against work teams," says Max. "It is quite possible that the ones that are receiving the most are the ones that are giving. This is one of the Lord's promises."

What about all the jobs the North Americans take away from the Dominicans?

Max explains that building a church or a school is a labor of love. The local Dominicans and Haitians can't afford these things. "Their brothers and sisters in a different part of the world are willing to do whatever it takes to come out and stand and work side by side with fellow believers from the DR and Haiti. It is not one rich guy funding the trip. The money for each work team is raised by effort. They organize car washes, pig roasts, slave auctions and garage sales to come up with the needed amount. Then they sacrifice their vacation time to come and share their gifts and talents with the members of the CRC in the Dominican Republic."

According to Max and Kina, one of the greatest benefits of work teams is the example of servant leadership. "In the DR, hot, sweaty work is looked down on. Most people would be reluctant to do it. So when they see a team of white people coming to help local Dominicans build something in the hot, Caribbean sun,

they see it as a real act of love. It's a testimony."

Jenette Groenewegen of Hamilton, Ontario, has gone to the DR twice with work teams. "I saw how the teams worked hard to raise \$20,000 in Canada to cover our costs. I saw how we worked hard and generated excitement in the church. And when you go there, you really depend on each other and grow spiritually because it's hard."

Jenette said her first trip there was such a life-changing experience, she organized the second one. Those two teams helped build a church school, a church, a pastor's house and a medical clinic. Even after all the blisters, Groenewegen says she'd go back "in a flash."

Mike Troyer of Highland CRC in Marion, Michigan, is another "graduate" of WorkTeam 101. "Why just send money down there?" asks Mike. "By doing that, you miss the contact with the people, the opportunity to share the love of God and to see how the Dominicans worship and love the Lord."

Mike has gone to the DR several times in a variety of capacities. He says he always comes back blessed. "I see throwing money at things as a big error. I think we need to get even more involved! If we just sent money, where would the blessing be? The people would miss seeing the love of the Lord in our hearts, and we would miss it in them too." So what keeps Max going through all this?

First, his wife. "I couldn't do what I'm doing without her being there. Kina's gift is hospitality and counseling. When team members are out of their league, she helps them." The other thing that keeps Max going is the people. "When I see changed lives--Dominican or North American--that's the best. The Lord is drawing people together. He does not look at the person; whether he is black, brown, white, wealthy, poor. He just cares about people." A lot of blessing; all the result of work teams.

Getting the job done. Work teams generally accomplish a lot in a very short time.



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# The Missionary's Magic Lantern

by Mark Volkers

Another missionary slideshow?

Let's face it. These shows have a reputation. Missionary slideshows have been around for so long they have a life-force of their own. The very term, "missionary slideshow" is almost a cliché for hackneyed presentations of the unprofessional kind.

In today's world of online streaming, DVD's, 3,000 lumen projectors and slick videos, many are tempted to relegate the missionary slideshow to the dustbin of presentation history.

Not so fast.

I want to rise up in defense of the venerable slideshow; to come to the aid of this story-assisting warrior and beat back the forces of high tech who claim that anything low tech must go.

Not that I'm a Luddite. I love hi-tech. And I love hi-tech presentations. But I also love what a well-crafted slideshow can do.

A slide is made from a positive, unlike a print which is made from a negative. The reason that positives, or slides, are so beautiful when viewed is because we view them with transmitted light, rather than reflected light. And a projected slide gives a brilliant, three-dimensional effect for the viewer.

This quality of picture, combined with story, passion from the missionary, and interest from the audience, is still--in my opinion--an excellent way to tell those in the churches about individual stories of world evangelization.

History shares my opinion.

Slide projectors used to be called "magic lanterns." Originally, color pictures were painted on glass slides. By the middle of the nineteenth century, photographs, chromolithographs or transfers were produced on 3-inch glass squares. Each slide consisted of two glass squares: one carried the image, the other was a plain

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piece of glass attached to the other to protect the image. Before the days of electricity, light was produced by an oil lamp; silent but smokey. In 1696, an English observer of a magic lantern show described the event: "A Magic Lanthorn, a certain small Optical Macheen, that shows by a gloomy Light upon a white Wall, Spectres and Monsters so hideous, that he who knows not the Secret, believes it to be performed by Magic Art."

David Livingstone had a magic lantern in Africa. He used it to show Old Testament scenes in Makololo and Balonda. It is, he said, "a good means of arresting attention, and conveying important facts ... it was the only means of instruction I was ever pressed to repeat."

One time Livingstone received unexpected results. In describing the scene of Abraham about to slaughter Isaac, Livingstone moved the magic lantern. The village women, thinking the knife on the screen was coming toward them "all shouted at once, and off they rushed helter-skelter, tumbling pell-mell over each other, and over the little idol-huts and tobacco-bushes: we could not get one of them back again."

With the sophistication of today's audiences, I'm not too worried about mass hysteria breaking out at the next missionary slideshow if he or she gets carried away. But now, like then, a good presentation has the ability to captivate an audience, convey truths from afar to the local crowd, and deepen a church's level of attachment to a ministry that may be half-way around the world.

Next time a missionary shows up at your church with a slideshow, don't roll your eyes. You're about to take part in an experience that goes back way before David Livingstone; you're about to be treated to a visual delight; and you're about to gain a new understanding of an exciting ministry far from your home town.

Another missionary slideshow?

Bring it on.

*Some of the information in this article comes from Donald Simpson's article, Missions and the Magic Lantern, published in the International Bulletin of Missionary Research, January 1997.*

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