

# THE ALLIANCE CALL to PRAYER

JULY 2011

## New Life Emerges from Murky Waters

A lone white dove hovered over 14 believers as they were immersed into the murky waters of the Jordan River recently, following Jesus in baptism. "What was amazing," says Pastor Richard Mirpuri from the Word of Grace (Alliance) Church in Chicago, Illinois, who led the group on a tour in Israel, "is that they were not believers before the tour."

This is not the first Israel tour that Rev. Mirpuri has led. In 2005, Word of Grace, a Filipino-American ministry in



the Midwest District, joined a global, grassroots movement, focusing prayer and attention on the Middle East—specifically Jerusalem. Since then, Rev. Mirpuri has led several groups to the Holy Land for a prayer pilgrimage and Bible tour, initially among members of the church. This year, there were 27 participants, including people from Canada, the Philippines, New York, and California.

Several of the participants were from Chicago's Filipino community

who are not members of the Word of Grace but learned about the trip from an article by Rev. Mirpuri that was published in a local Filipino community newspaper, in which he pens a regular column.

"I met the participants, the majority of whom were unbelievers, during the 2011 Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem, when they signed up for the tour," says Mirpuri, who uses the tours as an evangelistic tool. Before visiting the Jordan River, he explains the gospel message and challenges the participants to consider a relationship with Jesus Christ.

"During this last trip, almost all of the unbelievers in the group surrendered their lives to Jesus and went through the waters of baptism for the very first time at the Jordan River," says Rev. Mirpuri.

"What is so cool is that during this occasion, the white dove came out of nowhere after the people emerged from the water. The dove hovered over the Word of Grace group, even while there were other groups in the water for baptism at the same time. This left such an impression upon the new believers that many of them openly wept through the whole event."

One participant, a business executive from the Philippines, e-mailed Rev. Mirpuri after the trip, saying, "The Bible is so alive to me. As I read, especially the gospels, my mind brings me back to the very places we visited during our trip. Christianity will never be the same to me again."

### Alliance—100 Years in Vietnam

The Tin Lanh ("Good News") Church of Vietnam celebrated 100 years of ministry in June. The festivities took place June 14-16 in Da Nang City, Vietnam, with U.S. C&MA President Dr. Gary Benedict speaking at the event. Dr. Tom Stebbins, a former international worker to Vietnam—whose sister Ruth Thompson and her husband, Ed, were killed in the Tet Offensive—also spoke.

In 1968, Communist forces invaded the Banmethuot Leprosy Center, killing five Alliance workers and a volunteer layman. When Vietnam fell to Communist control in 1975, The Alliance had established a national church with a membership of 53,000. At that time, the Vietnamese government took possession of the buildings and land belonging to the Tourane Bible School/seminary.

For the next 28 years, believers were not permitted to train for ministry. Yet God continued to multiply and build His church, sustaining it supernaturally. Alliance workers, Vietnamese nationals, and laypeople who gave up their lives for the gospel during the 1960s did not die in vain. Because of their sacrifice, the church in Vietnam has grown to more than 800,000 believers.

In April 2001, the government of Vietnam officially recognized the Tin Lanh Church as a legal entity. Today, the Tin Lanh Church is the largest Alliance-related Body in the world.

### Extreme Challenges

Awa was desperate. Fourteen-year-old Fatoumata, her only child, was gravely ill. When Awa brought her to the hospital, the teenager was wasting away. Despite constantly eating and drinking, she didn't have any strength to get out of bed. Thankfully, we were able to identify Fatoumata's illness. She is the first juvenile (insulin-dependent) diabetic that we've diagnosed here.

We asked the family to pay the first \$100 as an investment in Fatoumata's care, and then we offered to cover the rest of her future expenses through our work fund. Within a few days of starting insulin, life returned to Fatoumata's countenance.

Childhood-onset diabetes is an illness that requires extreme exactitude—a controlled diet, precise quantities of refrigerated insulin injected at least twice a day, and blood sugars analyzed and interpreted to make necessary insulin dosage adjustments. Now imagine that scenario taking place in one of the poorest countries of the world, where patients and their relatives are mostly illiterate, electricity is rare, and food availability depends upon the time of the year in relation to the harvest.

During the past four months, Fatoumata has learned to read; she's also been trained to give herself insulin shots, and check her blood sugar levels. She now desires to follow Christ, and even wants to change her name to Elizabeth—an outward sign of her inward change.

*Thank you for praying for Alliance workers and for the people with whom they share the gospel.*

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