

Spring, 2006
PMI Ministry Update
J. Nelson Jennings, President

"Behold, I am making all things new" (Rev. 21:5). This stirring declaration is God's further guarantee that he will complete his work of saving the world through Jesus Christ. We who are Jesus' followers can take heart in God's full and sure commitment to finish his mission.

All of us involved with Presbyterian Mission International -- supporters, board, and missionaries alike -- are privileged to play our small but important parts in God's work through PMI. This brief ministry update is meant to supplement what is regularly published through our PMI brochure, our website, missionary prayer letters and emails, and contribution receipts.

Since PMI's founding in the late 1980s, evangelism and church-planting have been particular emphases of PMI missionaries. Even so, theological education and mercy ministry have been important ministries as well. With our gradual expansion from Manipur, NE India, to many other parts of the world, PMI missionaries and the PMI board have sought to maintain these basic emphases while adapting to different ministry settings and the various missionaries' particular gifts.

To help us stay focused on what God has called PMI to do, as well as to allow for the wide range of ministries and people God brings our way, about two years ago our board formulated the following vision statement:

Enhance worldwide Reformed and Presbyterian gospel ministry through
Relationships with Nationals who labor in
Evangelism and Church-planting,
Leadership training,
Holistic ministries and
Connecting churches internationally

Allow me to comment on some key words and phrases in this vision statement in order to update you on PMI's ever-expanding ministries.

- *Worldwide* -- View our home page to see PMI's places of ministry in South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, the Pacific Rim, and North America. (Peter and Margaret Reynolds in New Zealand are our latest approved missionaries.)
- *Reformed and Presbyterian gospel ministry* -- Like Covenant Theological Seminary, from which all PMI missionaries have graduated, PMI gladly cooperates with all sorts of Christians while remaining distinctively Reformed and Presbyterian.
- *Relationships with Nationals* -- All PMI missionaries are "nationals": they (or at least one of the spouses) originated in settings outside the United States. PMI missionaries are able to return to their home countries because of the financial and prayer support of U.S. Christians they have come to know during their years at Covenant Theological Seminary. PMI's goal is that the relationships between PMI missionaries and their supporters will be personally meaningful and rewarding to both. In addition to the vital financial and prayer support, the board encourages regular correspondence, visits to the U.S. by PMI missionaries, and visits by supporters to where PMI missionaries serve.
- *Evangelism and Church-planting* -- These remain PMI's primary twin points of focus.
- *Leadership training* -- Evangelism and church-planting need leaders for sustained growth. Training leaders can involve formal theological education (hence some PMI missionaries teach -- which sometimes requires pursuing further education), and in some settings cultural study centers

(e.g., Brazil, France), family ministry (e.g., Hungary), or translation work (e.g., Manipur, Italy) can be particularly appropriate and strategic.

- *Holistic ministries* -- PMI missionaries often serve in socio-economically deprived settings (e.g., Manipur, Nairobi slums, Cagayan de Oro City environs in Mindanao, southern Philippines). Orphanages, famine relief, children's schools, medical ministry, and micro-enterprise startups are among the vital "deed" ministries in which PMI missionaries are involved. Of particular note right now is how Paul Billy Arnold and the Bangalore Presbyterian Church are helping to administer a large home-building, tsunami-relief project in southern India; cf. www.covenantseminary.edu/pmi/pba.asp.
- *Connecting churches* internationally -- PMI missionaries are not simply national leaders who get U.S. financial support until they have sufficient indigenous support to wean themselves away from U.S.-based funding. That model is certainly a valid one, but PMI takes a slightly different tack by trying to cultivate two-way relationships between U.S. churches and churches-organizations in other parts of the world. PMI missionaries are the ongoing links in these relationships. Quite honestly we as a board wrestle with some of the implications of this effort, e.g., what PMI missionary ministry equipment needs and international travel requirements should therefore be, or when reducing scales of support (something that generally the PMI board would like to see happen) might be appropriate. Even so, we believe that the contemporary need for the worldwide Christian Church to be interdependent is worth playing our part to help you cultivate meaningful relationships with churches and organizations outside the United States. One of the main reasons PMI missionaries visit supporters in the U.S. is to encourage these very relationships.

I should comment as well on why PMI missionaries are called "missionaries." On the one hand, that term is a misnomer insofar as they are serving back home as national church leaders. However, the designation "missionary" fits in that they re-enter their former settings after having been away from home for several years -- usually four at Covenant Theological Seminary, and sometimes even more due to God's providential leading of their pre-Covenant Seminary lives (e.g., Koji Esaki, Natee Tanchanpongs). That time away from their original cultural context gives perspective and insight for gospel ministry back home that those who have never left there cannot have. Because, then, of being sent back into their former settings -- along with the deep sense of being "sent by God" into their ministry settings (the most basic theological meaning of the term "missionary") -- we call PMI missionaries "missionaries."

I hope this updates you in a timely fashion as to how God is shaping, leading, and using PMI. Please know that you and all supporters are vital parts of the PMI network. Your financial and prayer partnership helps to enable PMI missionaries to minister the gospel in their settings. Your involvement encourages us as the PMI board to ensure accountability before God and others, part of which is to have PMI missionaries financially and otherwise accountable to indigenous church or equivalent structures. Your relationship with PMI missionaries enables them to minister to you through their lives and ministries, as well as to connect you with Christian churches and organizations elsewhere in the world.

Please do not ever hesitate to contact me or others on our board with comments, questions, suggestions, encouragements, or concerns you might have. The PMI board and missionaries are responsible to keep you informed, especially if any changes take place. If you find that we somehow unintentionally overlook something that any of us should have communicated, by all means let me or others on the board know.

PMI is a "work-in-progress," and by God's grace it is a work that continues to see much fruit. We on the board want to do our part in nurturing and pruning this network of ministries, so that PMI bears fruit that is lasting and honoring to God. Your involvement is a wonderful blessing, for which we are most grateful.

Yours in Christ,

J. Nelson Jennings
President