

HISTORY of CWI (N. America) Inc.

The Story & The Strategy

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THE STORY

As the North American branch of **Christian Witness to Israel**, CWI (N America) was incorporated on 30th April 2010. In celebration and thanksgiving for our 10 year anniversary this is a personal summary of the story and the strategy, the burden and the vision, both prior to, and through the past 10 years. As I look back over the Lord's guidance and provision in these 10-15 years, and in particular as I write this up during COVID-19 lockdown, I can testify that 'thus far He has led us' and so I look ahead with much hope in the divinely ordained ministry to the Jewish people under a new normal, during and post-COVID=19.

INTRODUCTION

This story is largely about the actual 'incorporated' CWI (N America) though I must also here acknowledge the many factors that led up to the establishing this distinct CWI witness in the USA. Among other things, of note would be several ministry forays to the States by former CWI (UK) CEOs and missionaries and the establishment of a registered non-profit, CWI(USA), in Virginia in 1997. In addition it is not my intention here to comment much on other Jewish ministries and their own respective histories but it should be noted that CWI has always had an active role in the Lausanne Consultation for Jewish Evangelism (LCJE), both worldwide and in North America, even when there was not an active on the ground CWI ministry in the USA.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CWI(USA)

As with many ministries, especially new ones, much depends on the divinely ordained time and the suitable candidate. CWI (UK Head Office) believed that to be the case with a former employee of CWI (Israel) – HaGefen Publishing. Michael Craddick had worked for HaGefen as a graphic designer but health issues caused him to return to his native USA in the late 1980's. In 1997 Michael was appointed by CWI (UK Head Office), for specifically evangelistic labors in the USA. This was the beginning of CWI(USA).

A CWI(USA) Advisory Council was set up to oversee the new operations in the United States. It was a rich encouragement to the global CWI family to have the following men endorse CWI in this way: Dr John D Armstrong, Dr George W Knight, Dr Sam T Logan, Rev John Ross, Rev Albert J Tricario, and Mr Christopher Whitlock. Additionally a Council of Reference for CWI(USA) included Dr Rich Ganz, Dr J I Packer, and Mr David K Straub. In its early documents, and brochures, CWI (USA) declared itself committed to: An Evangelistic Ministry, A Church Based ministry, a Reformed Theology, Co-operation in Ministry, and Financial Accountability.

Unfortunately, the great desires and hopes suffered a major setback when Michael Craddick's health issues returned and prevented him from more active labor. Nonetheless he engaged in writing and developing resources to be used in outreach and supporter development. One such item was the production of R M M'Cheyne's 'Our Duty to Israel', in modern English.

Interestingly, this was one of the first resources I used in CWI (Ireland) for stimulating church interest and also was one of the first reprints done by CWI (N America) when I moved over in 2012. Thank you, Michael!

Writing in the CWI Herald (Winter 1999), Michael commented, 'In recent months my health problems have been particularly intense and troublesome. The frequent pain and the side effects of the medication ... beats us down at times... We are continuing with efforts to raise support for the ministry here in the United States. This can often be discouraging. The Lord's people here have many different groups and organizations seeking their funds... Nevertheless we look not to the problems but to the Lord.'

All through this, CWI Head Office retained a longing for an active and growing base of operations in the USA. But it appeared that in the Lord's perfect will, things were put on hold.

AN ULSTERMAN AND AN ENGLISHMAN

Why should a 44 year old preacher/pastor get a phone call out of the blue asking if he might be interested in becoming CWI's Ireland representative? Well, that would take another long chapter in itself. But when I left regular pastoral ministry and joined CWI in 2004 I found myself very much at home among a collegiality of ministry and mission outreach. I also found an outlet for my burdened optimism for missions; particularly the mission declared in Romans 9-11.

So began the peripatetic preaching of this burden around many churches in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, thanks to the many colleagues in pulpit ministry that the Lord had brought me into contact with in almost 20 years of full-time labor. I unashamedly requested opportunities and it was a delight not only to get them, but to get invited back! At the same time, in a different, but soon to be connected providence, my eldest daughter started university at Texas A&M, College Station, TX. The story of that providence also demands a chapter or more, but here we must simply note that it was a 'God thang'!

But now let me fast forward to the Spring of 2005, and a meeting in the UK Head Office with the CWI General Secretary, Mike Moore. 'We are considering visiting my daughter in the States at Christmas. Would you be interested in my going out a couple of weeks early and endeavoring to renew American interest in CWI?' 'Absolutely!', was the welcome response, 'Let's do some planning for that.' And thus began some baby steps of a renewed effort and networking with US churches with a view to a regular and ultimately permanent CWI presence in the USA.

Some of the churches that were visited in November and December 2005 are still churches on my regular schedule, and still supporting our ministry faithfully, such as Roundtop Christian Church TX, 2nd Presbyterian Church, Yazoo City MS, and the Spurgeon Baptist Association churches and Reformed Presbyterians in Kansas and Oklahoma. Their faithfulness and encouragement 'from the first day until now', is humbling and heart-warming.

During that first visit, there was also some brain-storming with pastors and friends in the USA, both during and after the ministry road-trip. Thoughts and suggestions were given and connections were made even at this early stage with some seminaries, including Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson MS, and the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, in Pittsburgh PA. These seminaries and others would come up again in our 'story' as things developed in the Lord's perfect providence.

This initial 'foot in the water' visit received such an encouraging response from US churches and was also so positively received by (CEO) Mike Moore, that future visits began to be planned. So I began to engage in an annual and eventually twice annual ministry trip to an increasing number of states, growing into an increasing length of ministry 'road-trip' year on year. Further fanning the flame came from visits within Northern Ireland to CWI's 90 year old patriarch Ernest Lloyd, who in his earlier life had had blessed visits to churches within Texas and Pennsylvania. Additionally a meeting in Northern Ireland with Rich Ganz - RPCNA pastor in Canada and Board member of the now dormant CWI(USA), gave insight into the opportunities and indeed the challenges of developing CWI afresh in N. America.

NETWORKING A NATION

One of the difficulties and challenges that Michael Craddick had identified was growing the supporter base. He recognized that many different ministries were already vying for a piece of the evangelical resource cake and that his own health issues prevented such necessary activity.

In response to this wisdom and insight, my plan was to utilize the same strategy as proved successful within Ireland, namely to take those providential connections within denominations and within personal friendships and seek to intentionally grow the opportunities for speaking and growing support. Reflecting on the challenges earlier, I believed strongly that widely growing the supporter base stirred by a biblical and theological burden would be necessary prior to the raising up of missionaries. In my mind this simply mirrored the pattern of the early days of our ministry back in 1840s Scotland, when meetings, lectures and printed resources were used to build a burden, that would lead to a particular mission station in London in 1843.

I also took note of the declared commitments of CWI(USA) to - *An Evangelistic Ministry, A Church Based Ministry, a Reformed Theology, Co-operation in Ministry, and Financial Accountability*. These similarly mirrored my own determination, and thus by emphasizing CWI's historical and theological roots and developing church-based partnerships, we moved ahead endeavoring to ultimately both assist the church in its own evangelism and raise up gifted frontline missionaries.

On my trip in the summer of 2006 I was introduced to a new contact, Rev Roger Collins, the clerk of the Mississippi Valley Presbytery (PCA), and pastor of Grace Presbyterian Byram, MS. Roger Collins would later serve on the CWI (N America) Board as Secretary and ultimately become Board Chairman as he is presently! Here I simply want to stress the divine providential

nature of those initial contacts, and how they have shaped CWI (N America) into what it is today.

Also on this early trip I was introduced to Dr Ligon Duncan at 1st Presbyterian Church Jackson, MS. Ligon would later agree to serve on CWI(N. America)'s Advisory Board and indeed be so kind as to ask his dear friend Dr Al Mohler of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville KY, to also endorse our ministry by joining Ligon on our Advisory Board. To quote Dr Mohler's response, 'Well, Lig, I suppose if you ask me to do something I gotta do it.' I personally was thrilled to get such men of theological substance give their imprimatur to a fledgling ministry as I endeavored to 'network a nation', for CWI.

This second ministry trip in 2006 took me from Texas, to Mississippi and up to Kansas to do a week-end of meetings for the Spurgeon Baptist Association. Several of the churches in this Association are small but have been faithful in support over the many years, including New Hope Baptist Church, Seneca KS, and Fellowship Baptist Church, Onaga, KS. The pastor of Trinity Baptist Church Wamego, Tony Mattia, would prove to be an active 'connector' within Southern Baptist circles and later would also serve on the CWI(N America) Board. His church similarly has been long standing in financial support and remains so to this day.

In the 'networking' of these long road-trips I tried as much as possible to stay in homes of church members, not only to keep expenses to a minimum, but also to have the opportunity to visit with individuals. This has continued to be my practice and remains part of my strategy of personal partnership with churches and individual Christians. But such personal interaction can lead to hard probing questions. In 2006 I was directly asked by one of my hosts, 'So why are you here? Is it because half the world's Jewish population are here, or is it because of the dollar?' After giving my ably prepared speech concerning our burden for Jewish mission in the USA, he simply replied – 'So it's the dollar. OK. I understand.' I could not contain an inner smile.

The 2006 visit also included 1st Christian Brenham, TX where we would find our first 'CWI banker', Rich Forst, and a supporting church that continues to this day. Rich passed away just last year and he desired gifts to be given 'in memoriam' for CWI. Also an elderly gentleman from the Jackson area, started supporting the work with his widow's mite in 2006 – and remains so today. These early prayer warriors and long-standing supporters are humbling to me. Their labors, friendships, and partnership in mission are priceless and energizing.

REVIVING THE NON-PROFIT

The original CWI(USA) 501c3 status had largely lain dormant for a decade, but my colleague David Zadok (CWI-Israel) had connections in San Diego and this led to the 'reboot' of CWI(USA). David & I engaged in ministry together in the US during this period, often sharing a booth at the PCA General Assembly. Our memorable first year of this was in Memphis, TN in 2007.

Having this charitable status rebooted enabled me to leave our small but growing gathered funds in the USA and for some supporters to have their gifts tax deductible. However as we

were beginning to see growth in the nationwide network, there was increasingly a need for an over-arching strategy for CWI in the USA. It is fair to say that the strategy was still in its infancy and some actions were more scatter-gun than targeted. There was nonetheless intentionality, but I and UK Head Office, and even my US friends, had much to learn concerning how to develop an actual mission and ministry in the USA with 'boots on the ground'.

By 2008, I was travelling for a month, covering 6,000 miles and 25 meetings, including two conferences (PCA-General Assembly & Banner of Truth). In addition to those regular 'home-base' states of TX, MS & KS, my travels now took me as far east to Virginia Beach, and north into Maryland. A supporting church there (Christ Reformed Church, Laurel MD) would, ten years later, become the local church of my daughter, studying for a Masters Degree in Opera! Providence indeed.

While I must unashamedly admit that some of my reason for ministry trips to the USA was, as my host had observed, 'for the dollar', yet increasingly, year on year, I was being persuaded that the American church 'needed' CWI, rather than the other way around! Writing in my report to Head Office at the conclusion of that 2008 trip, 'The well-meaning but naive understanding of the importance of Israel and the large financial support "to bless Israel" among many good American church folk needs to be re-directed to supporting evangelism, rather than a pre-occupation with prophecy or politics. Many pastors have shared with me that they wish their people to support "better missions"'.

Due to certain challenges at Head Office, my 2009 trip was in danger of being cancelled. However at the last minute a generous gift from a Northern Ireland donor and a frugal approach to the trip (only one night of 17 was a hotel expense!), made it happen, and again made it spiritually profitable. This providence of 'provision' from an unexpected source is a repeated part of our 'story'. This also was the year of my first meeting in the state of Arkansas, at the home of Mr Ken Hargis, who I had met the previous year at the PCA General Assembly. I noted in my report to Head Office after the trip, 'This could be strategic'. And who knew...?

A STRANGE AND HEAVY PROVIDENCE

In 2009, as the Irish Deputation Secretary for CWI, I was ministering and visiting all over Ireland, and occasionally doing trips to Scotland, England and Wales, in addition to trying to develop things in the USA! In June of 2009, I was engaged in a ministry road-trip in Scotland with my English missionary colleague Richard Gibson. We had had a busy evening schedule throughout the week and decided like two schoolboys to go to the movies one afternoon. Ten minutes into the movie, his phone rang, telling him to get me to call CWI CEO Mike Moore immediately. I did so, with Mike then telling me to call home. Wendy broke the news. My mother had died suddenly of heart failure.

My mother had cared for my father (a stroke victim) for over 9 years, before he passed away in 2000. She said she never wanted to be cared for, but rather simply be taken. Ready to go, she got her wish aged 76, in relatively good health otherwise. This brought some comfort to me, her

only child, but did nothing to lessen the shock of the moment. Two weeks later I was crossing the Atlantic again for my 2009 ministry trip – emotionally drained, but ready to do the Lord's bidding. The alone times along the road and the fellowship times with many now very dear friends, pressed home the divine reason for this strange providence. Now is the time to consider a move...

I returned home again mightily encouraged, but now even more deeply burdened that CWI should establish a physical presence in the USA. I sought a meeting with (CEO) Mike Moore, and the Office Manager, as well as a couple of UK Board members, to discuss the future in the light of the strange providence. (Wendy & I now had no 'seniors' dependent on us and thus were more free to consider, 'Here am I, send me.')

REBOOT, REBRAND AND SEND

I mentioned earlier that at this time there was no real over-arching strategy for CWI in the USA. It was still somewhat ad-hoc and scatter gun. Here we need to add that the 501c3 CWI(USA) in San Diego with its own functioning Board, decided not to be in full harmony with CWI in the UK but instead simply wanted to be a funding base for CWI's operations in Israel and the labors of HaGefen Publishing. It was therefore necessary that the CWI UK Council of Management begin to consider a fresh start, a fresh name, and a distinct strategy to send me and family to set up **CWI (N America)**.

Somewhere close to Dallas-metro was considered a suitable location; nearby to many supporters (TX, MS, KS, AR), and also a center of a sizeable Jewish population. My dear friend and VP of Brenham National Bank, Rich Forst was the obvious choice for where we would open a new CWI(N America) bank account. A visit in May/June 2010 would be made with a desire to re-locate later that year. Little did we know how little we did know - about US red tape and in particular US Immigration law. I think it is fair to say that my many American friends were often just as ignorant as my UK colleagues, on the intricacies and the seeming irrationalities of US systems. We had much to learn and even much to learn from the Lord in what would prove to be a longer than expected 'waiting time'.

CWI Head Office in the UK did their best to set things up and with Articles of Incorporation, and necessary paperwork. And thus **CWI (N America) Inc. was incorporated on 30th April 2010**. The Board members were: Dick Haffenden (Chair), Jane Harper, Sam Logan, Roger Collins, Steven Curry, Gil Alon, Alex Cowie (5 UK members / 2 USA members). It may be of interest to note our Bank balance in April 2010, in Brenham National Bank stood at \$3,880. Also in the summer of 2010 we had our first expression of interest of someone desiring to become a missionary with CWI (N America) from a member of one of the Spurgeon Baptist Association churches in Kansas.

But the best laid plans of men may not always be the Lord's way. Having submitted our Visa application and even put a deposit on a house in Dallas, we waited expecting things to take a few months. We even paid extra dollar to fast track the application. Months passed, many months, and we eventually had to cancel our house purchase and lose a portion of our deposit.

We were learning that Visa applications take time; a long time. We also soon learned that they can be something of a lottery. In November 2010, our application was 'Denied'. The reasons for the Denial seemed to us to be nonsensical but our attorney advised that while we were able to challenge the 'Denial', it would take another year, more dollar and possibly end up the same. Such was our introduction into the strange world of American Immigration.

All of this meant that our plans for CWI (N America) were now on hold. But our vision and determination was not deterred. Another ministry road-trip was planned for January 2011. Included alongside my several regular visits (TX, KS etc.) was another trip to NW Arkansas. There I would have meetings with what I later call 'my Arkansas ladies', and a meeting at the home of Ken Hargis. Ken also planned to introduce me to a new pastor, Paul Sagan, of Covenant Church, Fayetteville AR. A 'Subway lunch' meal a few blocks from the church was scheduled for the Friday.

TAKE TWO R1

'I'm sorry you got turned down. This is an important ministry. Is there any way we can help? We can't pay you! But perhaps we can sponsor you?' Well, the Subway meal just turned a little more interesting! I replied, 'Our attorney did say that if a church can be the sponsoring body for a Religious Workers Visa – R1 (rather than a 'business-type' Visa, previously applied for), that might be a better route to proceed. Let me take that back to UK and see how CWI and our attorney wishes to proceed.'

Following further conversations by phone and email I was invited back to Covenant Church, Fayetteville in early April 2011, to preach with a view to a 'call' as Assistant Pastor. This Call was signed by Pastor Paul Sagan and Session Clerk Lee House, on April 19th 2011. This enabled the work to begin on the application for a Religious Worker's Visa (R1). The terms of the Visa were for a 3 year period, but this would be renewable and could be the means towards obtaining a Green Card and permanent residency.

CWI (N America) Inc. and Covenant Church Fayetteville now entered into a 'Cooperative Agreement' concerning the ministry, remuneration and governance. This was a partnership in mission, (i) financially subsidized by CWI (Head Office) in the UK, (ii) spiritually overseen by Covenant's elders, and (iii) practically directed by the Board of CWI (N America).

Experience with US systems and developing of relationships and partnerships with churches local and nationwide were continuing to improve. It was a steep learning curve but progress was being made. The challenges of Michael Craddick and CWI(USA) seemed small in a sense, compared to the major challenges of Visa, Immigration, relocation and mission engagement. However, the waiting time was yet further a learning time, and we know all that timing, and even location, is perfect in the Lord's will.

A third trans-Atlantic trip would be done in the summer of 2011 for further development of ties with Fayetteville AR and investigation into housing, schooling and other family practicalities.

Returning home to Northern Ireland we found ourselves slightly wiser, perhaps more patient, and certainly not as naively confident as last time, as we awaited the outcome of this new Visa application.

We regularly checked our application status online and watched the status bar proceed from 'received' to 'pending'. We now had a better sense of the length of processing time and so we waited until early in 2012 before we started checking every day, sometimes twice! January, February, March... same... same... same... 'Approved'. What? I checked my Application number, didn't cut and paste, carefully retyped... and yes, 'Approved'. It was 12.30am UK time and all my family were in bed. So all were wakened – 'We're going to live in Arkansas!'

CWI (N America) SETS UP IN ARKANSAS

In addition to many conversations with CWI Head Office, I spent a couple of days at the home of (retired CWI missionary) Paul Morris to glean how things operated in another CWI. Paul was the missionary in Sydney Australia for 10 years and was most helpful in giving guidance as to the running of a local CWI thousands of miles away from CWI Head Office in the UK. We spoke together of growing the deputation work around the churches, of swiftly employing frontline missionaries, of local prayer and support groups, and the development of the Board structure of management. Of particular note was his advice on having an Advisory Board largely to endorse the ministry, and an Executive Board to operate as the main oversight and management. (More on that in a subsequent section of this narrative.)

While I moved over mid-May 2012, it was the first week of July before the rest of the family arrived, and it was mid-July before we moved into our new home in Rogers AR, which would be the base of CWI(NA) operations up to the present. When friends of my Texas Aggie daughter heard of our move State-side, they rejoiced, but then with some confusion added - 'Your parents are living in Arkansas? Why??'

It may be a question that has been raised in the minds of some. So let me answer – 'It's a God-thang!' Apart from the providence of a local church being willing to sponsor for Visa purposes, I can honestly testify that there have been reasons a-plenty for the assurance, if necessary, that this is right in the will of the Lord.

In the light of the challenges, facing the first CWI(USA) in Virginia and the difficulties of growing initial interest and support, I want to affirm that NW Arkansas is exactly where we received the most 'initial' encouragement. I could relate many details of the 'a-plenty' but let me confine my thoughts to two – a local support group, that I might term 'the Arkansas ladies', and several local donors of substance, in Arkansas and Kansas.

At the first Arkansas meeting in the home of Ken Hargis, I was introduced to two 'Arkansas ladies', who in turn would not only be mighty in encouragement, active in evangelism, but also pro-active in connecting. Jan Shaddox and Julia Robinson both encouraged me before and after my arrival and connected with several 'enablers' by their intentional and unashamed 'bugging'!

I remember vividly some back and forth emails pertaining to our slightly differing theologies. They had visited the Land of Israel at least 20 times and had an obvious love for the location. I pressed however, on the necessity of evangelism, and that the people of Israel need the Lord more than the Land. And one email then came through. 'Stephen, I finally get it! It's about the Gospel!' Amen, sister, yes it is!

These two worthies later took part in the annual CWI Outreach (- this time during the London Olympics). The following year, with further connections from myself, they joined (the late) Tony Simon on his street outreach in Jerusalem. They totally got it! It's about the gospel. And so did those they connected me with. It is important to report that there were 4 major donors in Arkansas and Kansas without whom we would simply not have continued financially, and without whom we would not have been able to develop our Missionary Development Fund – a 'Reserve' fund, for the recruitment, training and development of new missionaries.

FRONTLINE MISSION – SOUTH FLORIDA

By the Spring of 2013, with a promise of 3 years of subsidy from CWI UK and growing encouragements of support in the USA, the Board of CWI (N America) intentionally sought applications for frontline evangelistic labor in a strategic location of the USA. A candidate was brought to our attention, Rev Michael Saunders, who had ministered in South Florida, but was currently unemployed and living in Maine. Michael applied, was interviewed and approved in June 2013 and started his labors in the Fall, endeavoring to raise a necessary initial 25% support. (At this point we had no machinery of subsidy from our Development Fund and had simply promised the necessary subsidy from our overall funding, from the USA and the UK.) Unfortunately, within a few weeks of employment Michael took seriously ill, even close to death. This strange and extremely heavy providence upon him, also had obvious serious consequences to our ministry. His support raising would be slow, and his recovery would also require grace and patience from CWI (N America).

With some continued health challenges, we moved Michael to S Florida in the Spring of 2014, and he entered into partnership with St Andrews Church (PCA), Hollywood FL. Michael engaged in outreach events from the church, in terms of beach evangelism, and lectures on the Temple within the church. We are grateful to St Andrews Church, Hollywood for the support and the opportunity to use their facilities for such CWI labors. Unfortunately, the health issues remained, and prevented a more active ministry and it needs to be reported that just as with the Craddicks (above), the failure to develop, grow and retain support, ultimately led to the closure of the South Florida ministry in August 2015.

I may comment further at a later point, but two things need to be said. It was the immediate desire of CWI(N America) to employ frontline missionaries. The charge of 'laying hands too swiftly' may be legitimate but at such time we believed this was the Lord's will and way forward. In addition we considered S Florida to be an excellent and strategic area in which to minister evangelistically. It is home to the second largest Jewish community in the USA; 660,000 Jewish people. Both in terms of intentional missionary outreach and church assistance and challenge,

this is an area of the country where CWI needs to be ministering, either individually, with missionary labor, or corporately, with church resourcing, equipping and challenging. Just as the desire for CWI in the USA was not deterred by a Visa Denial, so our desire for ministry in S. Florida was not to be deterred by the challenges of support. Watch this space!

REBOOT REDEVELOP REDEPLOY

In continuing 'the story', I need to say personally that this was one of the lowest points of my, up till now, greatly encouraging labors in CWI (N America). I even wrote up for my Board a 'Florida Post-Mortem' asking serious questions about what we did wrong and what we did right! But 'God is within her, she will not fall. God will help her at break of day.' Yes, I know that. I know that theologically. But I was soon to know it, practically.

Our financial crisis of support in August 2015 not only led to the laying off of our South Florida missionary, it also led to our whole operations being in danger of closure. At the end of August we literally had about 7 weeks of operational funds remaining. ('God will help her at break of day...') And at break of day mid-September a check came in the mail - \$20,000...

Words fail. And faith rises.

Early into 2016 then, there was a picking up and rebooting. I began to have some further brain-storming conversations with Board members and in particular with a new Board member, Ben Shaddox (son of Jan, above). As he operated in the world of Finance, he assisted me in drawing up a 'Vision Proposal' to be sent out to some potential major donors that I already had personal contact with and that had already shown signs of serious interest and love for CWI (N America).

Part of the Vision Proposal was the setting up of a 'Development Fund' for the recruitment, training and subsidizing of new missionaries. No longer were we satisfied to limp through with just enough to sustain the general operations. We wanted to grow the frontline missionary presence - in the Lord's will, of course. The Vision Proposal explained our goals and our desires and was sent out to a select few 'resourceful' friends suggesting how they might partner with us. We were open and honest about the nature of our frugal financial operations and made simple request that we might obtain sufficient major donor income for this Development Fund to subsidize two new missionaries in the next 1-3 years.

While retaining anonymity I report before God and men, this glorious part of the story. Yes, 'God will help her at break of day'. My appeal letter had gone out mid-June. I got an email a week later. 'I know it's short notice, but can you come and visit us in our home next week and present this proposal?' Can I what?! I would be there in a heart-beat. So next week I went and presented my 'Proposal' to this very successful businessman. After I gave my 'spiel', he then shared his own ministry. 'The reason I asked you to come so soon was that we have our family reunion around this time every year. After we do our family devotions, we then decide as a family where to spend the money.' I was humbled, tearful, and blessed. I had shared of my

ministry, but he shared of his, which opened my eyes to the greater ministry of the Lord's provision of His people as they resource kingdom ministries globally. And yes, we received a large donation for our Development Fund. One other major donor, whose friendship I had developed over 10 years, simply said, 'Thank you Stephen for informing us of your needs. How can we know what they are unless you ask?' This was not the way we do things in Northern Ireland, but it was a new way I was needing to learn in the USA.

A CHICAGO CONNECTION

So with renewed subsidy funds, we looked intentionally at developing frontline evangelistic stations in strategic locations in the USA. At this same time, Eugene Tsai (Taiwan), expressed an interest to CWI Head Office for missionary labor. Eugene had studied in Chicago some 10 years previously and expressed a desire to return and work for CWI there. Eugene was approved by our Board and we started processes for obtaining a Religious Workers Visa, and placing him in Chicago, home to around 200,000 Jewish people.

Eugene already had numerous connections within Chinese churches due to his former time in the USA and it was decided to begin support raising by a summer ministry trip in 2017. Our new Development Fund also enabled Eugene to attend training with our European missionaries and street outreach in CWI's annual European two week witness. With all paperwork in hand with his attorney, the application was submitted to the Immigration authorities at the end of 2017.

During this time we also made connections with Jews for Jesus, Chicago and drew up a Co-operative Agreement with them, to assist Eugene in local training and local engagement with the Jewish community. Support was growing, Development Fund subsidy was now wonderfully available and local training and management seemed to be setting up nicely.

'The heart of a man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.' (Prov 16:9) We saw the truth of this through 2018 and early into 2019. In January 2019 we received the news from US Immigration that our application had been denied. The reasons again seemed petty to us and could have been challenged. But in consultation with Eugene and the CWI (N America) Board, we decided not to challenge but simply see this as a divine determination. We further acknowledged this to be the will of the Lord as CWI-Australia started to grow through 2019 with new staff and CWI Head Office suggested that Eugene might serve there instead. Towards the end of 2019, Eugene received word that he had obtained a Visa to move to Australia. DV this will happen later this year, somewhat dependent upon post-Covid international travel. Our Development Fund and our desires for new staff, were rather to help the global CWI, while we waited for our own 'boots on the ground'. In the Lord's providence that was not to be too long.

A PROVIDENCE IN PITTSBURGH

From early days, as related above, CWI has had strong historic and theological links with the Reformed Presbyterians in Ireland and also in the USA. It was thus a joy for me to be asked to give four lectures on Jewish Evangelism at the denominational seminary, in Pittsburgh –

Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary. I have now been doing that annually since 2016, and as I write, am planning to do an online version of these lectures next week (in our COVID lockdown!) In the first of these lectures in 2016 I met an enthusiastic student of youthful exuberance, attending seminary in his late fifties (as you do!). By a generous scholarship from RPTS, Mitch Tepper, a Jewish believer living in north Pittsburgh was enrolled in their MDiv program and had hopes to go into church planting.

Mitch's enthusiasm for a reformed approach to Jewish mission and intentional evangelism was obvious from the beginning of my lectures. From a theological perspective, but even more from a personal perspective, my teaching resonated with him. Mitch had come to faith in His Messiah Jesus back in the 70s in California. He was a 'Jew for Jesus', or as I occasionally call him, 'A Brooklyn Jew, born anew'. But so much of what he had seen throughout his life was a distracted approach to the subject of 'Israel' rather than a theological imperative to bring the gospel back to the ancient people. Needless to say we became instant friends, common in a biblical burden for the fulfillment of Romans 9-11 and common in passion that Mitch's own people would hear the gospel.

After graduation Mitch went into part time pulpit ministry but never achieved his planned church planting desires. Year on year as I visited Pittsburgh for my annual seminary lectures, I would make sure to meet up for a coffee, for more introductions to new pastors, and for mutual encouragement. In January 2018 I was invited to do a series of seminars in a Pittsburgh church (City Reformed Church, PCA), and once again included in those few days a meeting with Mitch and wife Mia. Seeing that Mitch's church planting desires were still unfulfilled, I suggested he consider CWI missionary labor. He said he would. A month later we were in serious conversation about that possibility.

April 2018, I again visited Pittsburgh and did my lecture series. I had dinner with RPTS president Jerry O'Neill and spoke to him about Mitch and his suitability for CWI. 'I always thought he would end up with you,' was the response. So began not only further intense conversations, but the CWI application process. One further providence, similar to my own related above, was that Mitch's (Jewish) mother died on Mother's Day 2018. Mitch would openly say that this brought intentionality into his life in a major way. No longer would he neglectful in telling his own Jewish family about Jesus. It now would become the driving force of his life.

Mitch was approved as a CWI Missionary Candidate and as our procedures outline, he would have to raise 25% of salary in 'pledges and actuals', before coming on board. By the generous promise of his home church, Intersection Community Church, Butler PA, and a few other smaller support checks, he began his full-time evangelistic labors with CWI (N America) on 1st October 2018. Little did we know what lay ahead later that month.

I had had hopes for a missionary in S. Florida (660,000 Jewish people), or Chicago (200,000 Jewish people), and instead he gave me a missionary in Pittsburgh (30,000). On the morning of October 27th I was preaching in one of the Spurgeon Baptist churches in Kansas when one of the members passed me his phone with the headlines, 'Synagogue shooting in Squirrel Hill,

Pittsburgh'. I phoned Mitch and we soon realized, that in the midst of this wicked act, the deadliest anti-semitic attack on US soil in US history, we in CWI had boots on the ground.

Mitch was later able to go into that synagogue community and pray with the people. He has been doing weekly street outreach in Squirrel Hill for a year now, praying with people in the Jewish deli. He even met one of the shooting's widows in the street; sharing his testimony with her, praying for her, and giving her his personal details. On a negative note, he has also been thrown out of one of the synagogues in Squirrel Hill for handing out a New Testament, but that is another story. Of course, he is not the first Jewish believer to get put out of the synagogue!

In addition to intentional evangelistic ministry to Pittsburgh's 30,000 Jewish people, we have endeavored to begin some less regular outreach to Cleveland's 90,000 Jewish people, in conjunction with Grace Presbyterian Church, Hudson OH. Additionally, due to Mitch's own Jewish family connections we also have a limited, though regular ministry in South Florida.

BACK TO BEFORE – S FLORIDA

Mitch's dad is a 95 year old Jewish atheist living in Delray Beach FL. Mitch suggested he go down to S Florida 4 times a year to visit his dad and the Jewish community he is among, with a view to seeing what opportunities the Lord would open up. Cheap airfares and family accommodation meant that these mini-mission trips would be able to be done frugally also. Mitch was, and is, still growing his support, being subsidized by our ever-decreasing Development Fund. While we wanted to again engage in ministry in S Florida, we had to keep everything within strict budgets.

The first of these trips was December 2018 and I chose to drive and meet up, engaging in some church ministry along the way. Mitch was now actively making new Jewish friendships within his dad's synagogue and even the apartment complex gym! I joined them all for a meal at the Jewish deli in Delray beach on the last night of Hanukah, 2018. Surrounded by Brooklyn accents, I think I was the only 'goy' in the restaurant! Now this is truly 'Christian Witness to Israel' – here is a major mission field. Mitch would later engage in street ministry and even join with a new Jewish friend in a Purim celebration at a local reform synagogue. It became very peculiar indeed when the liberal rabbi led the congregational singing of John Lennon's 'Imagine', arm in arm with the local muslim imam, a priest, and a universalist. Mitch, and his orthodox Jewish friend were appalled. But it certainly led to some interesting conversations!

On my trip in December 2018 I was taking a meeting in Covenant Church Naples and after the meeting was approached by Mr William Donohue interested in becoming a candidate for missionary service. With a disciplined military background, William expressed much confidence in his ability to both raise support and engage in Jewish evangelism. With much expectation his application was approved and his ministry began in July 2019. Unfortunately the reality of serious lack of support and other complex issues proved the mistake of this hire, with William resigning just a few weeks into his ministry. Were there lessons to be learned here also? Yes, but in the realm of ministry we often take people and situations on in hopeful trust. The reality doesn't always work out.

Needless to say this disappointment further made us seriously question our procedures and recruitment. While there may have been things lacking there, a dear brother from a supporting church brought encouraging words by saying, 'As one who has hired a lot of people in my career, I know that despite all good intentions, mistakes can be made.' And extra support was given to back up those words. In some ways, that encouragement was worth more than the financial help. Though having again suffered some financial losses through this, to know the Lord's people have our back, enables us to get back on the horse... The Mission Secretary wrote to me - 'I wanted to let you know that ... Presbyterian Church appreciates the work that you do for our Lord and Savior. In light of this we are sympathetic about the recent financial set back that CWI suffered due to the new hire mistake. The Session of ... Presbyterian Church voted last night to send you a one-time gift of \$5,000 to help offset some of the loss. (Yes, God is in the midst of her...)

So with hopes for 3 missionaries in 2019, we ended the year with one. Pittsburgh strong!

One other happy note to end the year was that in October 2019, my wife and I became US citizens! Having arrived by means of an R1 Visa, moving to permanent resident Green Card status in 2014, the path to citizenship is being a responsible resident for 5 years! So it was that our application went in in 2019 and by Fall I was learning my civics and proving that I can read and write English! Now as citizens there was a greater sense of permanency to the mission.

2020 VISION – INTO THE UNKNOWN

While we may sing at Christmastime 'The hopes and fears of all the years...', we truly did not know, or could know, what 2020 would bring. In God's sovereign purpose, it brought COVID-19.

Early in the year I was making new contacts and renewing connections with old friends, scheduling an abundance of meetings for the Spring and Summer. Our Pittsburgh missionary Mitch Tepper was engaging in active ministry and even travelled to our UK Training week in January. He had planned a March trip to Florida. I had planned 1,000s of miles of ministry road-trips and several missions conferences. But the 'Covid corntine' as my Texas friends dubbed it, brought a change to the world as we know it, and changes to our ministry such as we had never experienced. As I write, we are still endeavoring to adjust and adapt.

(See Appendix 1: 'Adjusting and Adapting')

Currently we are seeking to be intentional in reaching out to our regular Jewish friends and contacts and endeavoring to make new ones. In the current situation this obviously has to be done through social media. CWI (N America) is finding new ways to engage the Jewish community with phone calls, texts, and social media interaction. Encouragingly, we are finding an openness as never before. We are also engaging in support networking through digital means and producing a weekly e-newsletter to keep our supporters informed and even to stimulate both the burden and the blessings of our important ministry.

We do not know how long this will continue though there are some signs of relaxing the very strict measures. But we know our socially interactive world will not be the same for a very long time, if ever. Social distance has become the new norm. Will we ever huddle to pray again; will we ever enjoy a holy hug? Will we weep on the shoulders of those who weep? Will we preach to packed assemblies of the Lord's people? Will people ever be willing to chat to us in our street outreach – even through a mask? Writing in April 2020, I have no answer to those questions.

In addition to this forced re-think of mission practice and support, CWI International has been considering a rebrand of its ministry over the past couple of years with consultants working with the UK Council of Management. This also will have an effect upon CWI in its various locations around the world. So in a sense we already planned a 'rebrand 2021'. We didn't know that the thoughts pertaining to that would now include the world's new normal - living with, and living post-COVID-19. While neither a prophet, nor a son of, I offer a few thoughts at the close of this 'History' as to how we may press on in our ministry through the present COVID restrictions and beyond.

The Men of Issachar were noted as those who could speak to the times. We pray that the men and women of CWI may be similarly graced by God and be faithful to the task.

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As we move from the simple details of the story, I want to fill in a few blanks in the narrative, and comment upon several important aspects of the strategy and philosophy of our operations these last 10 years.

EVANGELISTIC ENGAGEMENT

INTENTIONAL CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO ISRAEL

From the story above it is clear that our intentions have been unashamedly evangelistic and desirous of multiple frontline ministries and mission stations. From the story above also it is clear that there have been significant hurdles along the way. As we briefly note our strategic desires here, we do also want to clarify some terminology, lest our good intentions be misunderstood!

The nature of the 'gospel' that is presented across the country is not uniform. We are infected by an entitled culture, a health and wealth seeking idolatry and an individualistic pioneer spirit that is prone to self-deification rather than self-abasement. Add into that dangerous mix, our very 'instant age' driven by decisions and numbers and we in CWI (N America) need great care to present a biblical gospel. We are surrounded by defective gospel presentations that dishonor Christ and lead to false assurances regarding eternal matters.

Similarly, if there is confusion on the subject of what is the gospel, then multiply that in our missional context with the widespread confusion on the subject of 'Israel' and we are presented with a further dangerous mix. The pro-Israel mindset that abounds is largely towards a geo-political entity rather than a biblical ethnic people group. Our intentionality is directed towards bringing the biblical gospel to an ethnic ancient people group – in short, 'Telling Jewish People about Jesus'.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Also from the story, we have noted our desire to recruit suitable candidates for frontline missionary service. This has been a challenge and there have been crises of support but our processes have been deliberate and even demanding. Once a person expresses an interest in service, an initial Skype call is made with several of our experienced personnel. Unbeknown to the 'hopeful' this is an initial vetting! Following a positive assessment of the interested person's potential, they are encouraged to further communicate with myself with a view to making application and filling in necessary forms.

The interest is then brought to the CWI (N America) Board, whose Candidates Committee will consider the application, and again if positive, an interview is set up. The report of this interview is then brought to the whole Board for a decision. If approved the interested person becomes a 'CWI Missionary Candidate', permitted to engage in support raising under the auspices of CWI (N America), and is given Support Raising assistance and promotional materials.

Once 'pledges and actuals' of an approved percentage of support is raised, the person become a full-time paid employee of CWI. The Missionary Development Fund is used to subsidize the

support shortfall for a predetermined time, as approved by the Board. Thus the missionary labor begins, yet at the same time, support growth is necessary.

The new recruit also is expected to fulfil an 18 month training program. The CWI Missionary Training Program is Board approved and led by the (UK Head Office) Director of Ministry, Richard Gibson. Richard is seconded by CWI (N America) to assist in the Training of new missionaries and has already given sterling service to us in the training of Mitch Tepper.

LOCATION AND DEPLOYMENT

Personal (and providential) circumstances sometime may dictate the location of our mission stations. As related above, it was thought that Texas was a suitable initial location but the Lord instead made it to be Arkansas. It may be our desire to see boots on the ground in some of the largest Jewish populations in the US but the Lord may bring us to somewhere less populated.

So it was with Pittsburgh, but we still have longings for a more permanent South Florida ministry, even though we at least are engaging in some part-time ministry there. It is also important for us to note that while NYC has 2 million Jewish people and S Florida has 660,000, every major city in the US has a sizeable Jewish community. For example, Atlanta, 200,000, Chicago, 300,000, Dallas, 60,000, and even Kansas City, 10,000! When I consider the missionaries that we have in CWI international, and the size of the Jewish communities they work among, I long for 10, 20 30, missionaries here, deployed in strategic locations all across the USA! But until then, we may need to think strategically of raising up and utilizing a more ad-hoc and volunteer missionary taskforce.

VOLUNTEERS AND ASSISTANCE

We are always looking for volunteers for the street outreaches in Squirrel Hill, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Ohio, or South Florida and also for our international outreach with our worldwide missionary team. We work with local churches both to recruit suitable volunteers and have a base for bringing 'seekers' into contact with local believers.

It has always been a regular part of CWI ministry worldwide to engage with churches and individuals with a view to training them in their own Christian Witness to their Jewish friends. Part of our Mission Statement includes our challenging, assisting and equipping the church. With 6 million Jewish people living side by side with tens of millions of evangelical Christians, the resourcing and equipping a church in its own Jewish evangelism is key to our ministry in the USA. We have occasionally done seminars in local churches for this purpose – 'Connecting with the Cohens'. This has been developed differently in differing places and is run appropriate to the church situation.

The longer-term visionary goal would be to have a permanent 'Center for Jewish Mission', where we could host week-end seminars, Retreats, and be a base for training both volunteers, and even prospective future full-time missionaries. Please God may it happen soon.

THE STRATEGY OF SUPPORT

THE BACKGROUND AND THE BURDEN

CWI (N America) Inc recognizes that we enter a mission field and support base that is already in existence. Good ministries, and in particular good Jewish mission ministries, already exist in the USA. It is important for us to be aware of the common goals of our sister ministries, particularly those within our 'group', namely, The Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism – lcje.net. CWI (Head Office) was a founder member of the LCJE and CWI (N America) wishes to play its role in both mutual partnership and mutual encouragement of such sister organizations.

Having said that, I am aware that CWI holds to a distinctive theological position and engages in a strategy which is rather unique in the world of Jewish mission. While there are other localized reformed evangelistic missions to the Jewish people, it has often been noted that CWI is the only International Jewish mission holding to a reformed and non-dispensational theological position. Thus our support base and constituency of 'partners' is largely (though not exclusively) drawn from the 'reformed' camp of American evangelicalism.

In addition, as we recognize that theology drives missiology, we wish to lay before our supporters the necessity of having a solid theology behind our ministry. In the midst of many distractions (of eschatological star-gazing), and divergent theologies (whether 'replacement' or dual covenant'), it is vital that we nail our colors to the mast, both for the reassurance of our supporting partners and even the engagement of new ones!

I do not believe it is unfair to say that American evangelicalism has largely been pro-Israel for many wrong reasons and in many wrong directions. It is necessary therefore that we do battle theologically against the distractions and divergencies that oppose real active intentional Jewish evangelism. We have and will produce resources and media that instruct and assist the church to think clearly on these matters. This drove the initial support and impetus in 1842 and in 2010, and will continue in 2020 and beyond DV.

POSITIVELY HOPEFUL

Whether we openly declare ourselves 'Post-millennial' optimists, I would hope we would always be kingdom hopeful! How can we ever pray "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth" if we have a pessimism about that will being done on earth? Further, I believe in our present context of 21st century life in the USA (however challenged by COVID-19!) there are a number of things that are providential realities giving us much cause for being positive.

In the United States today there is a Jewish community and a Christian community living side by side, of such magnitude without parallel in human history. We should prayerfully pause over that fact. Though the numbers are approximations, 6 million Jewish people live side by side with

possibly tens of millions of Bible believing evangelical Christians. We are gifted by God with the merciful opportunity of reaching 42% of the world's 'Israel' without getting on an airplane. In 1654, 23 Jewish souls got off a boat in New Amsterdam harbor. Ten years later it would be called New York and the 23 would become 2 million today in NYC and 6 million nationwide. That is no accident of history.

To whom much is given, much will be required and the Christian church in the USA has been given an opportunity and a divinely ordained responsibility. As a largely pro-Israel country, with a puritan hopefulness at our societal foundation, even our Founders, we must be positively hopeful about our commissioned calling. Add into this mix, a resourceful, make it happen mentality, and a particular generosity within the Christian community and we potentially have the means under God for the evangelization of this mission-field on our doorstep.

DONOR DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

As someone who loves 'the ancient paths' and has a deep appreciation for history (church history, missions' history...), I am usually reluctant to change but I am also aware we are working within a fast changing world. We in CWI must acknowledge such changes and operate within this ever-changing context, without diminishing our biblical principles.

The somewhat colonialist mindset of missionary societies of the more distant past and the 'leave it to the experts' approach of the more recent past will simply not work within 21st century evangelicalism. It has been said that in the 18th century, givers saw themselves as doing 'charity'. In the 19th century, it was 'benevolence'. In the 20th, the buzzword was 'stewardship'. But in the 21st, it is 'partnership'.

'New donors see giving as an investment and not a gift, so pandering and flattery won't work. Instead, a clear vision with a well thought out plan is more compelling... It appears that just telling a story, or presenting impressive numbers alone is losing its credibility... these days they need to be backed up with qualitative insights'. (Giles Gravelle – 'The Age of Global Giving'.)

It is not enough for us to give our stories, though important; we are to give the full story. In the past ministries were presented by 'experts' and everything was glowingly represented. The church just needed to realize that and pay for it. But that is not the way of donor development in the 21st century. Our ministries are not perfect and everything rosy. Instead we need to be prepared to give the whole story, of disappointments and failures, not just 'how wonderful we are'. Our supporters can see through exaggerated stories, and perfect newsletters!

Honesty, will build up trust, while exaggeration will lead to distrust. If relating our 'Story' above has taught me anything, it is the reality that the supporters of CWI (N America) have trusted us, even when we have openly and honestly shown our mistakes, failures and disappointments. Proving the worthiness of the ministry and the faithfulness of our personal labors is key in retaining support. I strongly believe a relatively new ministry such as ours needs to develop a reputation across the USA of being 'worthy'. In a world of fake news and increasing cynicism and

suspicion, we need to create a 'trust-worthy' environment for donors to invest in, showing that we are theologically and missiologically 'kosher'.

3John 1:12 'Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself.' When we present ourselves and CWI in a godly manner, faithfully displaying the biblical imperative and relating our present evangelistic labors, we seek to receive a 'good testimony'. The old apostle then commends the church to send the ministry on its way with much support. *'You would do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God'.* (3John 6)

ACCOUNTABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

In order to show ourselves different from missionary societies of the past and even different from some of the present, it is vital that we have regular accountability with our supporters. I make that a key part of the CWI ministry, both at desk and on the road. 'Thank you' letters are essential and non-negotiable. Regular newsletters to our supporters will continue to 'tell the story' and display our accountability. Some missionary societies abuse the opportunity of 'thank you letters' to almost arrogantly ask for more. While I always grant such opportunity (with a reply envelope!) I need to stress that such correspondence is not simply more 'asking', but is a real word of thanks. There is a time to ask and a time to be silent and truly appreciative.

Furthermore, we seek to make an annual visit to supporting churches for the purpose of personally thanking the congregation and giving them opportunity to question us on our labors, and 'prove' our worthiness. The age of 'experts' and endless support for a good cause, is past. Today we need to engage, continue and prove ourselves worthy and accountable.

Both in our historic beginnings and in our present-day activities, we operate in some measure as a para-church organization yet seeking the closest possible relationship with the local Body of Christ. We seek to assist the Church in its own Christian witness to the Jewish people on its doorstep and seek to be the arm of the local church reaching into the Jewish world in the USA. *'Christian Witness to Israel believes in the importance of the local church and the local churches are God's appointed instruments of evangelism'.* (CWI Head Office document: 'What we are, what we do, and what we believe' 2010.) We also affirm that the local church fellowship is the primary place of discipleship and growth of new Jewish believers.

The initial funding for 'The British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Jews' came from a grant of £500 from the Church of Scotland in 1842 for the specific purpose of beginning ministry labors in London. I am told that this sum is roughly equivalent to \$150,000 in today's value. This is akin to a denomination making a significant donation to begin a new interdenominational ministry. In those days as now, reputable Pastors and Churchmen of various denominations were on the initial Board. Currently the CWI (N America) Board has pastors and elders from the following denominations: Presbyterian Church in America, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Reformed Baptist, Anglican, and Free Church of Scotland.

Integral to our labors is a vital connection with the local church and individual Christians.

THE OFFICE AND OVERSIGHT

It is fair to say that no-one gets excited about paper clips but they are a necessary part of office life. While the functioning of a 'CWI(NA) office' may not be the most glamorous part of the ministry, both the labors of Head Office and the local labors of our 'home office', are an absolute essential to the smooth running of all other aspects of our ministry and therefore it is right and even beneficial to make some comment on how things have developed, office-wise.

Similarly, the oversight and drive of the whole mission in the USA, both in the initial period from CWI's UK Council of Management, and then locally with the CWI (N America) Executive Board – this too needs to be recorded and appreciated.

THE CWI (N AMERICA) OFFICE

When I was at seminary my (Proverbs 31) wife labored in a local bank. Numbers and typewriting (yes, on the old manual typewriters) was her thing. I was once in a discussion with a group of students in seminary, some of whom were single (I was married). They considered qualities suitable in a bride. 'It would be good if she could type'! I smiled inwardly and knew I had the best! Mine typed up all my hand-written essays, and also types up all my underlining in every book I read – to this day! And she continues to type up my hand-written notes on every church I visit. My hand-writing hasn't gotten any better. Her interpretation has.

CWI (N America) needed an office administrator from day one. And in the Lord's provision, we had one – and unpaid one – in my competent wife, who had been Finance Manager in Belfast for a non-profit, handling millions of pounds. Being on an R2 Visa, meant that Wendy could not work. So instead she used her competence to assist me and indeed save money for CWI (N America), doing everything pro-bono. 18 months later, when we both had received our Green Card, the CWI (N America) Board was very happy to employ Wendy as Finance and Administration Officer for CWI (N America), part-time, ten hours per week.

She will often say I get my money's worth out of her and truthfully, she is worth more than rubies! She ably takes care of everything administrative, and everything financial, permitting me to engage in the ministry knowing all is well at the 'home-office'. She is the 'essential' to the smooth operations of all things. More than a paper clip, she truly holds the files in place.

OVERSIGHT AND ENDORSEMENT

In addition to my knowledge of the operations of the UK Council of Management, as previously commented, retired Australian missionary Paul Morris had given me some thoughts on the worth of both an Executive Board and an Advisory Board. One would oversee and fulfil the 'trust' of our Articles of Incorporation, and the other would be sought simply to endorse. So we quickly developed this structure, with its current make-up:

ADVISORY BOARD:

Dr Joel Beeke
Dr Ligon Duncan
Dr Albert Mohler
Dr David Strain
Dr Derek Thomas

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Rev Roger Collins (Chairman)
Dr Rhett Dodson
Mr Richard Haffenden
Pastor Tony Mattia
Rev Doug Nystrom
Rev Joseph Steinberg
Dr Iain Wright (Secretary)

Some of the present Board members are relatively new to our Board, but all have had a long-standing relationship with CWI (N America) and many with CWI (Head Office) UK. However, just as with all our learning curve with American systems, so our Board would value prayer as together it grows in an understanding of our calling, of each other, and the vital importance of this ministry developing across the nation.

Since we began in 2010, we have had to develop our policy documents. Again, these may not be as exciting as other aspects of the work, but necessary for the oversight, and continuance. This is a continued process, and we have a long way to go yet in covering every aspect of policy, but we are thankful to CWI UK for giving us 100s of pages of their documents for adjustment into the American context!

The CWI (N America) Board meets every 3 months through Zoom and once a year has a two day 'in person' Board meeting, for larger strategic planning and decision-making. In addition to overseeing the local operations, the CWI (N America) Board is engaged with CWI Head Office in developing our relationships internationally. As CWI in its international operations considers how we can all work together as a Federation, and as CWI Head Office is engaging in a Rebrand for 2021, the Board of CWI (N America) will be playing our part in assisting and supporting those bigger decisions for a global CWI ministry in 2021.

It has been a personal delight of mine to see men of standing in the evangelical world endorse this somewhat fledgling ministry in the USA. Our Advisory Board has men of the highest caliber, and I have sought from them and from many others, a word of endorsement. Such quotes, phrases, or simply having their 'name', cuts through the clutter of much evangelical confusion over 'Israel' and our ministry to the Jewish people. Just as in 1842 no doubt it was a blessing to say that 'R M M'Cheyne prayed the opening prayer at the first meeting' so for me to name-drop when seeking new connections it truly opens doors and saves an hour of saying what we're not! 'Oh, Dr ... is on your Advisory Board? Yes, we'd love to have you come explain your ministry!'

RESET 2021:

As I write we live in extremely uncertain times and so any thought of our ministry in the remainder of 2020 and any thinking ahead to 2021 is all subject (under God) to the progress made in countering the global effects of this pandemic and living in the new normal after the re-opening of society. It is also right to state that this 'unknown' to us is fully and sovereignly known to God. As someone once said, there is not one maverick molecule in the cosmos.

Concurrently, both pre and post Covid, as I've said above, CWI in its international operations is working towards a unity of global ministry with a measure of regional diversity – something like a federation of CWIs. CWI Head Office UK is currently employing consultants with a view to a 'Reset 2021' with possibly a new name and branding. We in CWI (N America) will want to play the fullest role in this and yet we will still retain regional semi-independency.

Whatever shape it looks like, we will go forward as before with biblical principles, seeking faithfulness in ministry, and the Lord's good hand of blessing and fruitfulness in a church stirred and Jewish people coming to faith, as the natural branches are grafted in again.

A three-fold cord is not easily broken. Our Strategy (Reset) has the three cords as follows:

- (i) **A Biblical Mandate** - **preach it!**
- (ii) **A Historical Burden** - **teach it!**
- (iii) **A Present Imperative** - **reach it!**

PREACH: The mandate for Jewish mission is scripturally clear. We will preach this Scripture, in person and online. The root of mission is the biblical commission. Failure to appreciate this leads to all kinds of aberrations of ministry. Scriptural preaching must undergird CWI (N America)'s labors.

TEACH: The historical narrative of our mission, both in the 1842 beginnings and in CWI (N America) 2010 is indicative of a theological burden; from the reformed theology of the 1600s, and indeed the Christian theology of the 1st century. We will teach this history, in person and online. Failing to remember history, we are destined to repeat it – and there are aspects to Church History that we do not want to repeat! Instead we will teach the 'good history' pertaining to Jewish mission and remind the church of the 'heroes' and their burden.

REACH: The present context of CWI's ministry in 21st century USA is possibly unique in the world and in time. The church in the USA and CWI (N America)'s challenging and assisting ministry as a para church organization, has a present divinely providential imperative. The mission field of 6 million Jewish people is on our doorstep. We are to 'reach it!'. With recruited missionaries, and equipped volunteers and DV, an intentional Center of operations for training and resourcing, we must engage in this 'reaching' with even great intentionality and optimism.

This unusual and very heavy providential plague has been a wake-up call to the world. There will be traumas we will pastorally address. There will be social uncertainties we will need to meet with a word in season. There will be depression, and anger, and fear and failure. The government may help and the grocery store may be stacked, and the stocks rebound, and savings may grow. But there will remain in everyone's lifetime forever after a remembrance of the world of COVID-19: this reality of a world without its godless fun; a world without reasonable certainty, a world... without God's order? Where was God in COVID-19?

'While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest... shall not cease.' (Genesis 8:22)

The world has been rocked to its core with empty New York streets and closed Sports stadiums. The world as we had known it for decades, a lifetime, is different. And it will be different in the 'Reset'. How ready are we to fulfil the Great Commission to Jew and Greek?

PROPHETIC POST PANDEMIC

Age gives perspective. 60 years of life on this planet grants me with some ability to 'prophecy'. Every morning I check my phone: news, weather, Facebook, emails. Scrolling, endless scrolling. I email, text, comment. I suffer from online overload. I live with digital but I want things physical.

Post Covid-19, shall not read more physically and listen to things more personally? Shall we not more deeply enjoy the fellowship of the saints? Either with or without some social distancing, maybe we will be more willing to talk to strangers just to have human interaction? Shall we have a greater sense of our mortality? Shall we boldly speak of ultimate realities?

What really is important? Are bathroom policies really essential items on the President's desk? Will there be greater honesty and humility in DC? Will there be greater unity across the country; maybe not. Will there be greater unity in the Body of Christ? I certainly hope so.

During the COVID lockdown I have been reading 'Finding God in Lord of the Rings' by Kurt Bruner and Jim Ware (2001), and with their 'prophetic' words, I close.

'Tolkien's Middle-earth, to borrow Yeats' famous phrase, is a place of 'terrible beauty', a realm of breath-taking splendor, suffused with a sense of ever-present peril.

We know that the world in which we live is a perilous place. We forget this at times, of course. But there are moments when we wake suddenly in the middle of the night and remember that we are after all, surrounded by terrors...

It is no accident that the real heroes of Tolkien's dangerous epic-proportioned world are hobbits, halflings, to the men of Rohan and Gondor...

'Often the scenes we least desire are those most important to the story being told.'

Reading this last quote in April 2020 - **that** is prophetic. History (even COVID-19) is His Story!

APPENDIX 1:

‘Adjusting and Adapting’

March 2020 - during the COVID-19 period of forced digital interaction (and maybe beyond!)

PRINCIPLES

With our Jewish contacts

Our Jewish friends and contacts are rightly anxious, in a state of shock, with little or no idea where this has come from, why it is here, and how and when it will end. They have no unshakeable foundation; no eternal hope. At such a time as this it is vital that we use our trusted relationships to the full, for the gospel. I remember vividly the story that Richard Gibson told me concerning a young homosexual man in Leeds, who got into great difficulty in a gay bar (- think spiked drink, and rape attempt). Very late at night he called – who? - his rabbi? No, he called Richard. The trust and friendship made him realize at such a time, my missionary friend (or more simply my friend) will help, and has an answer. And yes, the young man came to faith.

In short be,

- (a) Actively Pastoral – care for your ‘caseload’. Many are lonely, in lockdown.
- (b) Opportunely Prophetic – speak to the current situation. (Everyone else is!)
- (c) Sensitively Persistent – we do have the answer, his name is Jesus.

With our Church supporters

We are a para-church ministry. My understanding of this is that we get alongside the church. We are not ‘the church’ and should not be ‘preaching’ online on Sundays. For whatever time period is needed, the Sunday morning (and evening) slot should be reserved for the local pastor and the Lord’s people gathering (digitally) for corporate worship.

However, in our getting alongside, we are as much as possible to join them in their pain and abnormal dispersion. The synagogue was the result of a divine dispersion. The church ‘online’ will remain the church and we in CWI(NA) are to support her; even as she supports us. Where we are able to preach for her, or simply assist in whatever way – this should be sought. Regular communication should be made with individual pastors, church members and supporters. Our communication should be as iron sharpening iron; as pastors to pastors, and Christian friends to Christian friends.

In short, our ministry within the church is:

- (a) Supportive – perhaps even in new ways of assisting those who have assisted us.
- (b) Secondary – even while we still believe in the priority of Jewish mission!

PROBLEMS

Online Overload

This new fascination for the digital sermon, or digital church, or digital comment, will soon grow wearisome; if not already. Be aware that your hoped for 1,000 views will soon dissipate and even those ‘views’ are probably simply a scanning, skimming, brief glance at your long worked over video, sermon, or screed.

In the world controlled by our swiping, and clicking – **(a) Be brief, simple, minimalistic.**

Content or Cosmetics?

My wife rarely wears makeup. It has always been that way. I love her with makeup (which obviously enhances her looks), and I love her without. She – the content – is what matters. In our digital ‘show’ (– which truthfully is what it is!) we must display content over cosmetic. We must be the best at declaring truth, not just the best at declaring. I hope we understand the difference.

In a world where the best technology grabs the eye – **(b) Be engagingly, yes provocatively, truthful.**

Good to Great?

A pastor friend recently posted, ‘I hope my time as a tele-evangelist will be short’. Now I need to say that he is good online; but some are not. A post went ‘viral’ of a vicar who set his clothes on fire while delivering his sermon beside the church candles.

If we are not good at something; don’t try. We are not all tele-evangelists now. We are not all experts in technology. The church is now ‘TV Church’. People have been watching TV for years, and they will be asking of ‘Church TV’ – does it fulfill my TV desires? Is it dynamic? Has it got action? Does it grip me? Being good and bringing it to being great at such a time, demands our recognition of who we are, and who we are not. Gospel presentation in whatever form, demands reality, sincerity and truth.

In a world which is trying to sell its message – **(c) Know your limits – and as gifted by God, use those gifts He has endowed you with. Be faithful and be content.**

POSSIBILITIES

Finally, just a simple word concerning the opportunities of this ‘kairos’. People are complaining. People are panicking. People are fearful. People are confused: Jewish people and Gentiles, both. A friend sent me this, this morning: *In three short months, just like He did with the plagues of Egypt, God has taken away everything we worship. God said, "you want to worship athletes, I will shut down the stadiums. You want to worship musicians, I will shut down Civic Centers. You want to worship actors, I will shut down theaters. You want to worship money, I will shut down the economy and collapse the stock market. You don't want to go to church and worship Me, I will make it where you can't go to church"*

I am tempted to say, Joel Osteen, where is my best life, now? Last Sunday I did ‘church online’ with my son and family in Louisville, KY. The pastor presented a wonderful message from Numbers 11, on the sin of complaining. We have a complaining pandemic now and it may get worse as supplies of certain necessities run a little short, or as life as we expect it and are entitled to, just doesn’t happen. The government may be the object of people’s complaints, or the grocery store, or simply – God. Ah... now He’s got our attention.

Now is the time for us who know Him, to speak of Him, and declare ‘prophetically’, as I was reminded last Sunday. The Lord’s response to grumbling was a burning fire and the intercession of a Mediator. May we be those watchmen on the walls, those who intercede for the people, who pray the Lord’s mercy. And when He delivers, may it not be a return to the idols of Egypt, but a bringing a fulfillment of promises for Jew and Greek and a revival of people asking us – ‘What must I do to be saved?’