

A New Season

By Bill Moberly

From the Editor, June 2024

Global Missions in Retirement Years

As Sally and I have both arrived at age 70 in 2024, we have thought and read more about what the upcoming years can include. With the recent arrival of our 23rd grandchild, we want to build relationships with each one as we are able, even as they are living collectively in five states from California to Florida, and in an RV traveling full-time across the U.S.!



Sally and Bill Moberly

We have traveled extensively over the last 20+ years of global mission ministry, but Israel is still on our bucket list. We have researched Social Security, and have applied, and learned about Required Minimum Distributions, which must begin in a few years. But central to our focus for the next 5+ years is the perspective summarized well by this quote:

*“Rather than seeing retirement as a never-ending vacation, the Bible paints a picture of our later years as a *laying down of past work-identities and entering a new season of rest, renewal, and reengagement as elders filled with wisdom and blessing for the coming generation(s)*. (Source 1)*

While Sally and I don’t plan to fully retire anytime soon, these years are an opportunity to take a path that leaves room for the Lord to intervene in our plans with His call to something new or unexpected to assist in making disciples of all the nations (*ethne*)! My thoughts certainly aren’t original here; 26 years ago, in 1998, the Finishers Project (now Mission Next) was born. This was a lay-driven response to the first wave of baby boomer retirees with this very purpose in mind. The U.S. Center for World Missions (now Frontier Ventures) described the Finishers Project this way at that time:

The church faces an unprecedented opportunity to harness this pool of healthy, educated, dedicated, and life-qualified personnel in pursuit of the Great Commission...They are restless, willing to change careers, frequently able to support

themselves through early retirement, if someone will just show them a way or place where they can make a meaningful contribution.... One purpose of Finishers Project is to intentionally repackage mission opportunities by knocking down barriers and building bridges to facilitate the movement of talented, accomplished, mature people into a second career in effective places of service in the cause of Jesus Christ.

Another goal of the Finishers Project is to provide information and challenge for mature people in the pews to enter somewhere in the missions infrastructure as a second career. (Source 2)

Impact of Retirees on Short-Term Mission Trips

I don't know the official impact of the Finishers Project; however, I **have** seen firsthand what retired people with a willingness to make time for a short-term mission trip annually have done to impact the Kingdom!

I served as Director of East European Mission Network (EEMN, now SONetwork) from 2004 – 2015. Over those years we organized English Bible Camps in Russia, Latvia, Slovakia, Estonia, and Ukraine every summer, involving 75-100 volunteer short-term mission team members every summer as we traveled across the region for 10-12 weeks from country to country. The core each summer were retirees who built their schedules, whenever possible, to include time serving on a team.

I think of our good friends **Paul & Carol Anderson** from Duluth, MN, who in retirement founded **Vision Petrozavodsk!** Vision Petro has made a profound impact on Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Petrozavodsk, as well as the ministries of Pastor Alex & Nadia Krongholm, and her ministry developing youth leaders starting in 2004. It's an amazing story of perseverance and faithfulness, and only in heaven will we know the full impact.



Holy Spirit Lutheran in Petrozavodsk, Russia



Rev. Alex and Nadia Krongholm,
Petrozavodsk Russia

Paul Anderson in Russia,
2006



I think of our friends **Jim & Connie Morrison** from central California. Jim served each year for nearly a decade, starting soon after retiring from a career with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Jim's life and teaching has impacted hundreds of students with the Gospel in many of those countries! More than once, he determined that three weeks in Russia wasn't enough, so he traveled everywhere we went from country to country! Connie helped him prepare lessons and materials throughout the year, praying faithfully as he traveled each summer.



Jim Morrison and his class, Koltushe, Russia 2009

I think of our friends **Dr. Fred and Sandra Hall**, a retired pastor and seminary president (Fred) and retired educator (Sandy), who served at the first Lutheran Friendship English Language Camp in Russia with Paul & Carol Anderson in 2004. They traveled with us to Poland in 2005, and went several places to minister on their own on behalf of EEMN, too. At its peak in 2005, EEMN had two weeks of these English Bible Camps held simultaneously at three different locations – requiring many volunteers and experienced administrators like Sandy to help organize and lead. When we faced the need to improve our curriculum in content and add a new series, she stepped up with another retired educator, Judy Macbeth, to develop year one. This became four full years of curriculum that has been used in many countries! Even after leaving EEMN, ALWM used these excellent resources in Hong Kong in 2017, and will again in Cambodia in 2025, Lord willing!



Dr. Fred & Sandra Hall

I think of our good friends **Wayne & Diane Peterson**. Wayne is retired meteorologist, and Diane retired records archivist. Diane came to Russia in 2005, and served two terms on the EEMN board. Wayne traveled annually to Russia from 2005 for many years as teacher and photographer, then to Hong Kong at our invitation in 2017, and has also been to Malawi with another ministry.



Wayne Peterson and class in Hong Kong 2017

I think of a retired administrator from Hennepin County in Minnesota, who turned his love of clowning into a ministry as Turnip the Clown that communicated the Gospel in many countries, and also trained young people to organize clown ministry teams that carried on through the year even when he was stateside!

Bill & Turnip the Clown, 2006



Other Ways Retirees Serve

It's not only in short term mission trips that retirees can impact the Kingdom, but in other ways as well! However, if you have never served on a global mission short-term mission team, find a good one and go. Our first trip in 1990 forever changed the trajectory of our lives!

I think of **Marcia Fears**, a retired nurse from Milbank, SD, who has volunteered in ALWM's E-Learning Friendship English Conversation Ministry (EFEC), teaching Conversational English to nurses in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Other retirees have taken part as well, including a few who prefer anonymity!

Marcia Fears Cambodia, 2018



I think of our dear friends Paul & **Lea Eldred**, retired EEMN missionaries to Turkey who call on churches in the Midwest for ALWM. Lea also finds time to babysit grandkids, volunteer at her church, serve nationally with the Women of Life in her denomination, and sew glass cases for our ALWM reading glass ministry in Vietnam this summer (she finds others to sew some as well).



Paul and Lea Eldred

I think of **Vicki Strege**, a retired teacher from Milbank, SD, who wonderfully serves as our EFEC Coordinator, and served on our Vietnam Short Term team in 2019 and will again this year. I think of **Marcia Heinje**, our dear friend, a retired public health nurse, who serves on our ALWM Board of Trustees and consults frequently on our work in Southeast Asia. She has traveled several times to Vietnam, and to Cambodia in 2018 with her husband John (retired hospital administrator) for our first Youth Conference with Pastor Sam.



Sue, Vicki Strege and Marcia Heinje, EFEC volunteers

I have tremendous respect for my good friend **Rev. David Lerseth**, retired pastor and global mission leader who founded Friends of Madagascar Mission (FOMM) and has grown it into an amazing ministry of partnership with the Malagasy Lutheran Church, all during his retirement years.



Rev. David Lerseth with FOMM display

I could list many more we know and love personally, as these are but a few examples of people who have found ways to make an eternal difference in reaching the nations while in retirement!

Pacing Ourselves

In our case, Sally and I are deferring full retirement for a season because of the incredible doors opening before ALWM. Yes, we are pacing ourselves and no longer spend 11+ weeks living out of a suitcase traveling from country to country. Yes, we are building in time to see our seven grown children and our 23 grandchildren across the country. We just returned from a ministry trip to Texas that also included some quality time with 10 of our grandchildren. We will go camping for a few weeks at the end of August, and maybe take a last-minute cruise cheaply since living in Florida makes that possible.

I am thankful that our retirement “planning” was not done with permanent marker or indelible ink. Why? None of our ministry “call” that is unfolding now at age 70 was on our radar screen at all at age 60. Even at 67, just three years ago, seven of the countries we now work in were not on the horizon either! To God be the Glory!!

Serendipitous Interruptions

The point of this article is to urge you, if you are in “these years” or if they are getting close: leave room in all the plans you make for the Lord to intervene with something new and unexpected that will grow the Kingdom! It’s still true that *“the harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few.”* Don’t put yourself on the “unavailable for call” list just yet. We have an amazing God who is still at work in our lives, even when we start to reach the season that our culture calls “retirement”! Please leave room in your plans for serendipitous “interruptions” from the Lord who still wants to reach the nations. He has a place for “retired folks” to help too.

To God be the Glory,
Pastor Bill Moberly, Founder and Director of ALWM
Co-Founder and Editor of Celebrating Global Mission



Rev. Bill Moberly, director of Awakening Lives to World Missions (ALWM), helps churches with global mission outreach. He authored *Igniting a Passion for Missions: A Guide for Church Leaders*. He and wife Sally have 7 children, 23 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren, and have traveled to 23 countries to share the Gospel and equip leaders.

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Links:

Israel: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Israel>

Mission Next: <https://missionnext.org/>

Frontier Ventures: <https://www.frontierventures.org/>

short-term: <https://www.alwm.org/missiontrips>

EEMN: <https://sonetwork.org/learn/who-we-are/>

SONetwork: <https://sonetwork.org/>

English Bible Camps: <https://sonetwork.org/serve/opportunities/>

Russia: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Russia>

Latvia: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Latvia>

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Estonia: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Estonia>

Ukraine: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine>

Vision: <https://nemnsynod.org/companion-synod-relationships/what-is-vision-petrozavodsk/>

Petrozavodsk: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Petrozavodsk>

BLM: <https://www.blm.gov/>

Poland: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland>

ALWM: <https://www.alwm.org/>

Hong Kong: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Hong-Kong>

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EFEC: <https://www.alwm.org/efec>

Ho Chi Minh City: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ho-Chi-Minh-City>

Vietnam: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Vietnam>

Turkey: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Turkey>

Women of Life: <https://www.womenoflife.org/>

Pastor Sam: <https://www.alwm.org/cambodia>

FOMM: <https://madagascarmission.org/>

Malagasy Lutheran Church:

<https://www.cgmmag.com/historyofmission/malagasy-lutheran-church/>

PDF: <https://www.cgmmag.com/fromeditor/a-new-season/>

