



# Reaching and Serving the Persecuted Church **IN TOUCH MONTHLY**

1 November 2008

God said, “*The LORD, Who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you Satan!* Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?” Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.” Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.” Zech 3:2-4  
The Scriptures also say: “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.” Isa 64:6

## Recycling Souls For Christ

### POLAND

Sitting at a table with his wife Darlene and Project Partners **Kris and Megi Sielicki**, ITMI Director **Steve Evers** held his breath when this man approached the table. It was a late August afternoon, pleasantly warm and breezy after a stifling summer heat the day before. Poznan’s town square was dotted with big umbrellas spread over the tables of stylish downtown cafés and restaurants. People who had already finished work were now enjoying a glass of frosty beer or a hearty dinner in the company of friends. Some were strolling down the square’s cobblestone, past sculptured fountains and stone figures, admiring the colorful Renaissance architecture.

This cheerful, relaxed ambience made the *bindle stiff* stooping over the table seem outlandish. His flea-bitten outfit was tattered, caked with splotches of mud and blood. The stench of uncleanness overpowered the



Poznan Town Square

pleasant aroma of café entrees at the table and made one inwardly wince. He was asking for money. You could see on the palm of his outstretched hand where the dirt had settled in the lines. He was a *persona non grata*, dogged by hostile stares and, at the same time, turned away from in disgust by this carefree crowd.

However Kris, Steve’s companion at the table, was able to see through the swollen, tight-lipped face to the hobo’s heart. Kris didn’t dismiss him with a bunch of loose change, buying himself some fresh air and a disturbance-free evening. He spoke to him a good while, with love and respect as one would do with a peer, and invited him to the Friday meetings at **Bread of Life’s Holy Start**. In Kris’ own words, “Every one of these people, apart from food, clothes, and a shower, needs love. And that’s what we’re trying to show them.”

Kris Sielicki has been working with the homeless of Poznan, Poland, for two years now. At first simply a moderator of Bread of Life’s Holy Start meetings, this summer he was promoted to the position of director when **Dawid Karel**, the previous director, relocated to Belgium with his wife.

Now Kris is responsible for overseeing a ministry that so far has



Kris & Megi Sielicki with Hania

extended into three other Polish cities. **Bread of Life**, founded by ITMI’s **Richard Nungesser** in 2001, reaches out to the homeless in many ways. Holy Start is where they can come each Friday morning to get a hot meal and clean clothes, as well as spiritual nourishment. Those who are sufficiently motivated are sent to the **New Life Center**, a transitional home that provides basic life-skills training, therapy, and discipleship to amply equip its residents for their re-entry into society.

“I’m aware Poznan has other places where the homeless can get a ladleful of hot stew,” says Kris. “But at Bread of Life, we think bigger. We want to transform the entire person, so that he or she will no longer need our help but rather volunteer to help others.” New arrivals at Holy Start usually only fish for what they can get. Sometimes this means getting an extra loaf of bread to last a few more

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# Persecution – it comes with the territory

This is the month we remember our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters around the world and across the ages ever since our Lord Jesus said, *“I will build My Church.”* In keeping with Hebrews 13:3, many churches across America will observe International Day of Prayer (IDOP) to remember persecuted Christians. What does it all mean?

By the 8<sup>th</sup> Century so many Christians had been martyred for their faith the Church established All Hallows (All Saints) Day on November 1<sup>st</sup> to remember those who had died for Him. It was like a Christian “Memorial Day.” The night before All Saints Day became a Hallowed Eve – a night to prepare for the coming Holy Day.

During the Dark Ages in Europe, Ireland, Scotland and England, pagan Druids honored their dead on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Celtic settlers held festivals and ceremonies designed to drive off oppressive evil spirits. Autumn, the time of falling leaves and prelude to winter, symbolized the death of nature. Bonfires were lighted to fend off the coming winter spirits. Treats were given to appease their wicked tricks.

By the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century true Christianity was virtually unrecognizable. The Church had moved away from its original message of salvation by grace through faith as the gift of God. Almost any office or rank in the Catholic Church could be bought, and Church positions became dominated by corrupt and materialistic Humanists who ruthlessly persecuted genuine Believers. Meanwhile Muslim hordes with their sights on Europe had invaded Hungary and laid siege to Budapest.

Muslims had been fighting Christians for 900 years when the Protestant Reformation took place. Against the background of every great move of God, Islamic terrorists were creating havoc in the background. Islam is Satan’s thorn in the side of the LORD’s great work. Our Lord Jesus, Who promised to build His Church and not allow the gates of hell to prevail against it, raised up a succession of godly men to bring the ship of faith back onto God’s intended course.

In 1517 Johann Tetzel, an itinerate Dominican monk, toured Europe selling “indulgences” (which could only be cashed in Heaven – to which they claimed to hold the keys), to pay for the Pope’s excesses and to build the new cathedral in Rome. His visit to Saxony prompted Luther to protest the unethical fund-raising tactics of an apostate Church. Luther argued that only God could forgive sins – and it was better to help the poor than to buy indulgences.

On October 31, 1517 Dr. Martin Luther nailed his **“95 Theses against Indulgences”** to the door of the *Schloss Kirsche* (Castle Church) in the university city of Wittenberg, Germany. The hammer blows were felt all the way to Rome. The theological fire thus ignited spread across Europe and changed their culture and work ethic for generations to come.

Luther’s challenge was in Latin, but some enterprising printer translated it into German and began to print and sell copies of it. Soon the *95 Theses* were available in French, Spanish, Flemish, Dutch and Italian. Luther’s dramatic challenge against the unbiblical corruption of “indulgences” was being read in the marketplaces and palaces of Europe. Even the Pope was handed a copy to read.

In the 55 years of our missionary lifetime, my wife and I have worked in restricted-access countries where our work was vigorously opposed by Communists and Muslims. We must not lose track of the fact that our ultimate enemy is not a political or religious system, but Satan himself.

Last month right across America, the Garden Intruder distracted our attention on October 31 from Reformation to Halloween. Millions in the USA were preoccupied with costumes, candy, and “ghoulies and ghosties and long-legged beasties and things that go ‘bump’ in the night” rather than the seriousness of our Reformation heritage.

Are we simply “playing church” here in America?

In India, beginning in August this year, there was

**“Are we simply  
‘playing church’ here  
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major civil unrest in the eastern state of Orissa, where a Hindu militant and four of his followers were gunned down by Maoists (communist) insurgents. (This Hindu leader had been heading up a campaign to systematically wipe out

Christian believers in Orissa.) The Maoists, in a bid to kill two enemies with one stone, blamed the Christians for his murder. The victim’s followers lashed out in murderous revenge against the Christians, with widespread killing and burning of homes and churches. Many fled for survival to the jungles. Response from the government, due in part to international pressure, was slow and inadequate.

This area has a long history of violence against Christians. In 1999 an Australian man and his two sons were burned to death in his car because of his work among the lepers. At Christmas last year others were killed and property destroyed in similar attacks.

As we go to press with this issue of ITM, reports are coming in of intense persecution of Christians in Mosul, Iraq – the last stronghold for Al Qaida – with Believers being shot on the doorstep of their homes and churches burned. More than half of the Christians have fled Mosul. Jesus said, *“The time is coming that whoever kills you will think he offers God a service.”* John 16:2

In Muslim lands that time is now.

November 2008

Dear Team,

This month Harriett and I begin our 55th year of missionary work. After 22 years in Europe, during the Cold War, the Lord expanded our ministry as the Communist world expanded. We transferred our base of operations from Austria to Arizona and reached out to Latin America, Africa and Asia as the Red tide surged. During those 25 years the Lord led us to found IN TOUCH MISSION INTERNATIONAL.

In 2001, we followed the “nod from God” and moved to South Africa. The Lord provided **Steve Evers** to lead and grow ITMI into a stronger mission with an enlarged outreach. Now, after 7 wonderful and fruitful years in Africa, the Lord has shown us very specifically over the past year that we are to relocate to the mission field of America.

This is not retirement. We are still missionaries under ITMI. I plan to die with my missionary boots on. However, with advancing years and accompanying medical needs that can only be addressed in the USA we have reassessed our priorities and prayerfully focused on realistic and achievable goals – preaching the Word of God, winning souls to Christ and writing. These are the things that will be paramount in my life.

As the last few grains of sand passed through the hour-glass of his life, the Apostle Paul looked back and wrote this testimony to Timothy: *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”* <sup>2 Timothy 4:7</sup> The race is not over until you cross the finish line. You don’t have to be the first one over to be a winner, but you must be faithful – “well done thou good and faithful servant.”

Some of you reading this (in South Carolina) have been with us for all of those 55 years. Others have been with us for 20, 30 and 40+ years. We praise God for your faithfulness. Please, stay with us now. The battle is not over, but the victory is in view and is assured through Jesus Christ.

Yours in His grip,



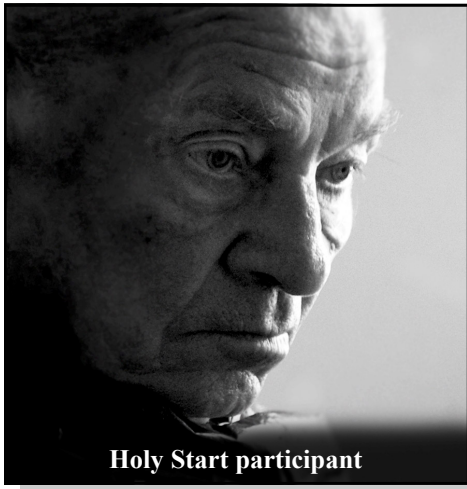
Bill Bathman



ITMI Founders: Bill & Harriett Bathman

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Holy Start participant

days or exchanging the sweat-drenched, dirt-stiff T-shirts off their backs for clean clothing.

But once they have felt the loving atmosphere of the Holy Start meetings, they return because they want to. It is an oasis of peace in a life fraught with the ruckus and tension of the streets, a place where the homeless are respected. Kris can relate to them because he's had similar experiences to their predicament. "I also come from the same place," he shares. "Before I met God, I was raised by the streets. I rubbed elbows with the likes of them. I know many of them ended up in this place because they didn't have much choice."

"You can always say there is a choice," admits Kris, "but this is sometimes out of their reach. Take me, for instance. I used to dream about going to college. But I would never have actually done it if it hadn't been for my church. Nobody from my environment encouraged me, spurred me on, or blazed a trail for me. Good advice was in short supply

and the fear of failure nearly paralyzed me. I was certain that my sights were set too high. So I look at these people here and know that most of them are on bad footing right from the start. They need someone to encourage them to do what's right and excel in life. They need someone to show them the way out."

Paradoxically, the greatest challenge is in making the homeless understand they need help at all. Kris observes, "For the most part, they live in denial, believing that their present lifestyle is only temporary. *'I'm fine, I can take care of myself,'* is how they'd shrug me off. Some, who've gotten comfortable with what we provide at Holy Start, are a problem. Our goal is not to help them along in their poverty and addictions, but to change their lives for the better. Then again, the process of reforming one's life and repairing broken relationships takes time. We have a gentleman here who's been coming to the meetings since the first year of Holy Start. He finally surrendered his life to God just last week. Praise God! *That's* what this ministry is all about."

ITMI's Dr. Piotr Zaremba calls Bread of Life's ministry to the homeless "the business of people-recycling". He writes, "We collect the used, the misfits, the unwanted, and the thrown away. And by the blood of Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we see them transformed into productive citizens."

With our Project Partners in Poznan, we continue to invite you to share in this beautiful enterprise of *recycling souls for Christ*. **Your prayers and financial support are making an eternal impact!**

Kris enthuses, "There's no greater encouragement to me than seeing God at work in the destitute people who enter through our doors barely hanging on to life – and in God's own time, some of them leave our services *joyfully* clinging to Christ as their only hope. They've recycled their old, filthy clothes for new ones in Christ – bright and clean. It's amazing to watch this unfold before us and absolutely beautiful to see in the end!"

--Carolyn Zaremba  
Poznan, Poland



Dr. Zaremba counseling with a homeless gentleman at the New Life Center

**For Praise . . .**

1. Praise for God's blessing during Steve's trip to the Huichol Indians in Southern Mexico!
2. Praise that 700,000 copies of NT books translated into modern Polish are in the hands of thirsty souls!
3. Praise for God's continued faithfulness to ITMI in the lives and through the gifts of all our supporters!

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**For Prayer . . .**

1. Prayer for our country during this election that each of us may accept our responsibility before God.
2. Prayer for Bill & Harriett as they move forward with God's plan from a new base of operations.
3. Prayer for all our ITMI partners, in the US and abroad, for greater faith & hope in these trying financial times.

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