

Passing the Torch

Missionary becomes Missions Pastor

Story by Stephanie Ornelas
Photos by Steve Shambeck

Pastor John Chubik led the 2015 CC Missions Conference in January. “I was humbled being in the presence of over 650 missionaries and missions-minded believers. I remember the early 1990s when there were just a few of us serving in Austria,” he recalled. “It’s amazing to be here so many years later, serving as the missions pastor for Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa.”



Missions pastor John Chubik, left, talks with missionary Steve Braselton, who serves in Malawi, Africa, with his wife, Nora.

John remembered being in Baja, Hungary, in 1991 when he attended his first major outreach. “There were 16 Hungarian soldiers and one huge language barrier,” he shared. “I spoke some German, but these men needed to know about the Lord.” As he prayed and asked God to help him through this obstacle, a German-speaking soldier came forward. “He knew I spoke German and offered to interpret into Hungarian. So I shared the Gospel with the young soldiers that night—they had never heard it in their lives,” John recollected.

After serving overseas for nearly 20 years in Austria, Hungary, Poland, and Ukraine, John and his family returned to CC Costa Mesa (CCCM), CA, several years ago. Since then, John has worked closely with Phil Twente, whose role as missions pastor he is taking over. Phil, at age 77, felt that it was time to step back. Phil commented, “John is extremely qualified. He is a man of prayer and a man who serves the Lord with his whole heart. It’s been a joy to minister with John and my prayers are with him as he goes forward. I have complete confidence in the Lord.” John explained how the missions department expanded dramatically under Phil’s leadership: “Phil has been a tremendous friend and mentor. I have some big shoes to fill.”

John hopes to reach people who have never heard the Gospel, particularly in Asia and the Middle East. “There

is unprecedented opportunity to reach the Muslim world,” he said. “In every continent, help is needed. There’s a lot of chaos in the world, and yet in that, there’s tremendous opportunity for us to reach out.” As CCCM’s missions pastor, he will lead nearly 200 missionaries in 53 nations.

Humble Beginnings

After attending CCCM for the first time in February of 1978, John surrendered his life to Jesus as Lord and Savior. “I had a believing, praying mother who told me, ‘If you ever want to understand this “Christianity” thing, there’s a church called Calvary Chapel, and it’s filled with young people,’” John related. “So I went and I got right with the Lord.” Shortly after, John saw a notice at church about an outreach team going to Israel. Though he desperately wanted to go, he assumed the trip would be filled. *Besides, I haven’t been a Christian for long—there’s no way I can go,* he thought. To his surprise, there was plenty of space.

Twenty-two-year-old John left for Israel in 1980. “I was surrounded by so many different types of people, many

of whom did not know anything about Jesus Christ,” he said. People were curious about Christianity and wanted to know why he was there, giving John many opportunities to tell others about Jesus. “That was truly the first lesson I learned about missions. If you feel God’s calling toward missions, you need to follow it. God’s heart is for the world,” John counseled.

A Growing Passion

John returned from his trip and enrolled at CC Bible College in Twin Peaks, CA. He also attended Cal State Long Beach and obtained his bachelor’s degree in English. Working his way through school as a carpenter, John frequently pleaded with God to give him direction. “I remember telling God that I felt like I was stuck here,” he admitted. But when CCCM purchased Schloss Heroldeck, an old castle in Millstatt, Austria, with hopes to renovate it and use it as a conference center, John felt that he finally had his answer from God—he eagerly signed up to use his construction skills to help renovate the castle. John knew that the Lord was going to use it to reach many people for the Kingdom.

Ildi Bacskó was a young woman who didn’t believe God existed but attended a conference at the castle with a group from CC Subotica, Yugoslavia. “She was raised atheist, like many young people were. She had never heard the Gospel before in her life, but she was hungry to know about Christ. One night she broke down sobbing, and I knew she had given her life to the Lord,” John shared. Ildi eventually became a missionary to Hungary, serving as an interpreter for CC Budapest and is currently the women’s ministry director.

The Great Work

When the Iron Curtain fell in 1989, John and the team at the castle were amazed. “Our generation remembers watching their televisions in shock, as so many people crossed the border into Austria,” said John. “God had positioned Calvary Chapel right there in Austria, a very strategic place.” Soon after, John and other believers dispersed into Eastern Europe to share the hope of Christ. “The people were hungry for the Word,” he noted. Many people were very open to hearing God’s truth. He added, “In any conversation you have with someone about God, it is the Holy Spirit who holds the key to their heart.”

As Christianity spread behind the former Iron Curtain, more leaders were needed to share the Gospel. In 1992, John and his friend Tim Anderson, who is now the pastor of CC Burbank, CA, helped launch a Bible school at



Above: Left to right, Pastors John Chubik, Chizuo Sakurai, Brian McDaniel, Jeff Fadness, and Bill Welsh respond to questions during a panel discussion.

the same castle in Austria. “Our vision was to provide a place where Americans could be trained to work and the Europeans could get a jumpstart on their Christian lives,” he shared. Students learned the Bible and practiced servanthood and then returned to their home countries to evangelize. The Bible college moved to Hungary for one year in 1994 before permanently moving there in 2002. “There were definitely some challenges. Many of these kids were raised in atheistic homes, yet God had gotten through to them,” he shared. “It was a miracle; many of the students not only gained a relationship with God, but went on to be church leaders,” John said.

A New Venture

John later ministered in Poland and Hungary. Then in 1995, he returned to CCCM for a visit. “Pastor Chuck Smith asked what I was going to do next,” said John. Pastor Chuck suggested that he move to Ukraine. “I was kind of shocked. I really needed to pray about it,” stated John. Pastor Chuck connected John with another missionary, George Markey Sr., who was already serving in Ukraine with his wife, Pam, and their eight children.

“I could tell from hearing what was on George’s heart that he was a guy I wanted to work with,” John expressed. One of the most important things to consider when going to the mission field, he explained, doesn’t necessarily have to do with the circumstances you will be in, but the people you will be working with. “I just loved George from the first minute. He was a bigger-than-life kind of guy,” he added. Enthused by George’s passion for the people of Ukraine, John planned to run a school of ministry in the capital, Kyiv, for one year. “Little did I know, I would end up being there for 11 years,” he laughed.

In Ukraine, John and George’s oldest son, George Markey Jr., worked with college students in the city of Zaporizhia. Despite the 12-hour train ride and many schedule conflicts, George and John took turns traveling to minister to the young people there. “It was grueling, but we saw amazing things,” said John. “We came across so many interesting people on the train—including a group of men on their way to a pigeon convention. There were pigeons and feathers everywhere. It was so loud and unusual, but they wanted to hear the Gospel,” he laughed.

John met a missionary named Karen, and they were married in 1999. The couple moved to Zaporizhia and began a Calvary Chapel there in 2001. “The Lord brought us together in order to serve him,” he said. The Chubiks faithfully taught God’s Word and had two children, Johnny and Esther. Then in 2007, they moved to Vajta, Hungary, where John taught classes at the Bible college before returning to the U.S. Brian Brodersen, then assistant pastor of CCCM, invited him to join the pastoral staff there in the summer of 2008.

Missions Conference 2015

As John led this year’s CC Missions Conference, he had time to reflect: “Standing at the podium, looking over the crowd of over 650 believers gathered from all corners of the globe, I thought back to the early missionary conferences in Austria in the early 1990s and all that the Lord has done since then.” As John noticed Phil and Peggy Twente sitting in the conference, John remembered their friendship and support through the years. “When I was single, Phil and Peggy faithfully prayed for a wife for me and the Lord answered with Karen. When our children went through difficult health issues, the prayers of Phil

Right: John, left, prays for a missionary at the conference.



Below: Phil Twente, left, prays with Jim Hall, who coordinates CC Magazine’s missionary praise and prayer requests.



and Peggy often refreshed and encouraged us,” John acknowledged. “In fact, it is hard to remember a time when their prayers did not cover our lives. I know they have done that for many other missionaries over the years as well.”