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The 18.26 Network

A New Wave of Missions

Turning Your Vocation into Missions

February 2021

Missionaries Carl & Becky Chaplin, Jud & Jan Lamos and Stan & Connie Beasley

Email: info@1826network.com	Address:
Website: www.1826network.com	4630 Chattanooga Valley Rd.
Phone: 423-799-1515	Flintstone, GA 30725-6401

Dear Friend,

We feature T and E in this newsletter - a couple serving in a Middle Eastern country in partnership with an MTW family. They are one of five couples/families serving as vocational missionaries in restricted access countries through the 18.26 Network. A leader of a missionary organization predicts that fewer traditional missionaries will be able to get visas in more and more countries and that marketplace or vocational missionaries will be the primary way for people to go. That's why more people and churches are promoting the 18.26 Network as a sending agency and a mission organization they should support.

In Christ,

Carl, Debbi, Jan and Jud, Stan and Connie – The 18.26 Network Team

INTEREST and AWARENESS INCREASING

Mission to the World had its Virtual Missions Conference on February 19th and 20th. The 18.26 Network participated with our Virtual booth. We had over 160 people visit our booth to learn about our ministry and to ask questions. Most encouraging is that 33 people expressed an interest in learning more about the 18.26 Network and vocational ministry.

Jud had a unique opportunity to talk about the 18.26 Network on a Christian radio station program called "Point of View." Here is the link on YouTube to that interview: [Jud's interview on the radio](#). The interview starts at 1:29:25.

We are most thankful for these two avenues to increase the awareness of the 18.26 Network ministry!



T & E - A YOUNG COUPLE

Middle Eastern Restricted Access Country

(Not actual picture of T and E)

Tell us about your journey to become vocational missionaries.

Our journey to the Middle East came with a series of surprising twists. After graduating from college, we expected to settle down and have kids, with E staying home and T working an IT job. When we discovered that we couldn't have kids, we wondered what else God might have for us. E got her master's degree and then T went to seminary. At that point, we envisioned both becoming professors. But when we applied to PhD programs, we got accepted in different cities. We made the decision to go to E's program, and T started interning at a local fellowship. One day, we got an email from E's former co-worker, who invited us to consider joining his team in our current country.

At first, T was excited by the idea, while E thought "Nooooo way!" However, as we skyped with the team, learned about life here, and even visited the country, we realized how much it made sense. It would be easier to move overseas without children. E's PhD meant we could easily get visas for this closed country. T's IT background was put to work in starting a small business, and of course he uses his seminary degree in ministry. Looking back now, we are amazed to see how God used every plot twist to prepare us for His work.

Tell us why you want to live and work in your country.

As in many Middle Eastern cultures, the people here are astoundingly generous, hospitable, and good humored. We truly enjoy our local friendships. At the same time, we grieve as we see people gripped by darkness, working endlessly to earn points with God, unsure of salvation. And the gospel presence is a tiny pinprick of light: in our city, there is only 1 believer equipped to share the good news per 1,000,000 people. Imagine if you lived in a city of 1,000,000, and you were the only Xn who could share with people! After T graduated from seminary, he realized that pastoral positions in the US are flooded with applicants. Why not go where the need is so great and the workers are so few?

What is your work and how will it help the current ministry there?

T is working with some partners on a startup language center in hopes of increasing the number of people who can share in the local language. Many arrive here eager to share the good news, but they become discouraged when they find that there is no good way to learn the language—and we hope to change that. While our language center will also serve diplomats and business people, we hope that it will



be a landing spot for intentional workers like us. We hope to start our first sessions by March 2021.

E is a professor at a local university. Her job puts her in contact with hundreds of students and colleagues each year, and she thoroughly enjoys sharing her faith with them. A surprising aspect of life here is just how normal it is to bring up topics related to God and faith. In the US, it can be awkward to talk about religion, but here it is deeply interwoven with everyday life. She's able to freely talk about faith with her students, sowing seed widely.

What are some of your experiences of living and working in your country?



(From T): the most rewarding experience is often being the first believer these people have met. A few months ago, I was out on a walk and passed a group of men (three brothers) who were picnicking. When I said hello, they invited me to sit with them, offering me dessert and coffee. They quickly asked me if I was a member of the local majority religion. I said no, I follow Jesus. They peppered me with questions, since they had never met a believer before. Since then we've met multiple times, they've installed a Bible app in the local language on their phones, and we've done some studies through a few passages.

(From E) It's hard to beat sitting barefoot on the floor and eating roasted camel and rice with your hands! And if it's a women's party, then dinner is always followed by dancing, which is so much fun.

What are some difficult cross-cultural challenges of living/working there?

One challenge is that men and women live separate lives here. E and I often move in different circles. Even when we visit a local family's house together, we go through different entrances and sit in men's and women's rooms. Some weeks, when we've been busy with work and meeting local friends, we realize we haven't had much time to connect with each other. We have to be very intentional about carving out time.

Another significant cross-cultural challenge is the CRAZY driving here. We see people watching YouTube videos while driving, backing up down busy roads, making left turns across traffic from the far-right lane. T and E have each been in very minor accidents since arriving, and we anticipate more. When people ask "is it safe to live there?" we reply "not really...but not for the reasons you might think."

Who are some of the people you are developing relationships with in your current location?

For T, it is the three brothers mentioned above. One of the hopes we have in working here is reaching not just individuals, but family groups. Most of the persecution that happens comes from the family, not the government. However, it has been rare to work with three brothers at a time. We are praying that God would give them faith and that they would together reach the rest of their family.

E is working with a program where interested seekers respond to Internet advertisements. “Lana,” one girl she’s meeting with, has been through many traumatic experiences, but last year, Lana started searching online about Xty and got connected to E. As they studied the book of Mrk together, E asked Lana what she noticed about what Jesus was doing in the first chapter. She replied, “He is doing things that only God can do.” At the end of our study, when E asked her how she could pray for her, she replied, “Please ask that I would believe in Jesus.” E’s been so excited to see her growth in the gospel. E also has a number of local friends who have shown interest in spiritual things, and she’s been able to share the gospel with many of them.



NEW WEBSITE

[New website](#) is worth looking at. It has lots of pictures and an easy-to-navigate structure. Leave us comments or questions on the form on the bottom of the "[ABOUT](#)" page.



By the Numbers

Rejoice with us over those who have decided to serve Christ globally as they work.
33 people have been approved as vocational missionaries with the 18.26 Network,
15 people are working and serving in a country of their choice and they are in
9 countries around the world,
9 new people should move to their field of service this year,

5 people are looking for a job and place to serve in another country, and **33 people** contacted us wanting information about 18.26 Network at MTW's Virtual Missions Conf.

Numbers don't tell the real story. It's about people working and ministering in a country and the great stories they have of God's blessings and faithfulness to them.

Why Some Are Eager to Donate



We are very thankful and appreciative of the churches and individuals that give to the 18.26 Network operational fund. The money given goes to support, counsel, and care for our members, people looking to go, and people exploring being a vocational missionary. **It is not used for salaries or buildings.** Please consider donating to the 18.26 Network's ministry of sending people as vocational missionaries.

Most of our members don't raise support because they have a job in their host country. However, 9 members need support to live and work in a their host country because their salary does not suffice. [Go here to give to any of them.](#)



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Serving people who work, live and minister as vocational missionaries

Our Team: Debbi Beers, Carl

Chaplin, Jud & Jan Lamos, and

Stan & Connie Beasley

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Address:

4630 Chattanooga Valley Rd
Flintstone, GA 30725-6401

Phone: 1-423-799-1515

E-mail: info@1826network.com

Give: 1826network.com/give.html



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