

# Decades of Faithful Service

An Interview with Dot Everett and Mission Frontiers magazine

**Dorothy (Dot) Everett** grew up in New Jersey and met her husband Arthur while at Houghton College. They spent their first 20 years in ministry with native peoples in Colorado and South Dakota and worked for the next 20 years with international students in New York and Colorado. They then returned to their heart work and spent the last 22 years focusing on ministry with natives in California and Colorado. Dot is spending her widow years in Colorado Springs with children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren nearby.

**MF—How did it all start? Share a macro view of your story, who you are and how you and Art started in missions.**

**Dot—**Art and I were both students at Houghton College when we married during the summer between our sophomore and junior years. We both were praying for God's will as to what our life work should be and how to best prepare for it. During our junior year God directed us separately and directly to look into Native American missions. We finished our college studies with a major in Bible for Dot and a major in religion for Art. Seminary was next for Art.

During seminary, Art delivered milk. Art was signing up a couple for milk delivery and noticed Indian rugs and artifacts in their home. This was the home of Tom and Alfreda Claus, directors of the American Indian Crusade. We applied to this mission board, were accepted and started our ministry under them.

Our first assignment (during seminary) was establishing an Indian Hospitality Center in Denver, which through the years became Indian Bible Church. After seminary we went to White River, South Dakota on the Lakota Sioux Rosebud Reservation. We lived there for six years. While visiting native people at the Indian Health Hospital in Rosebud, Art discovered that one of our active women at Lakota Chapel had just delivered twins.



Since she lived in primitive conditions and felt she could not care for them, she asked if we would like to adopt them. We did. (They are now 56.)

Adopting the twins became the reason we changed the direction of our ministry. Their mother would show up at our door asking for rides, money or food, often after midnight. If she saw us with the twins in our tiny town, she would drunkenly lean over their stroller and slur "Why did I ever give my babies up?" Not wanting the twins dealing with this forever, Art and I searched in other locations for native ministry opportunities. God directed to International Students Inc (ISI) and we worked with them and the Association of Christian Ministries to Internationals (ACMI) for 20 years. Wanting to get back to native ministry, we have spent the last 22 years working under the American Indian Crusade, the US Center for World Mission and AmeriTribes until it merged with Pioneers. I have continued with Pioneers as a Retired Staff even after Art passed 15 years ago.

**MF—What training did you receive on support raising?**

**Dot—**Our introduction to support raising came as a shock. We were not aware that we were responsible for our own support raising. The training amounted

to “Go do it.” The church we attended while in seminary was our original supporting church. Since Art was tenacious, we began to make more contacts and had enough support to go to the reservation. While there, we both taught school to complete our financial needs.

**MF—Share a story of a partnering church doing it well.**

**Dot**—Calvary Baptist Church in New York City (CBCNYC) has been a great partnering church. For many, many years they paid our transportation costs to attend their annual mission conference. They also paid for our hotel and provided meals during the conference. During the conference we were expected to go out and visit different members of the mission board in addition to the morning and evening schedule of meetings. There was little time for rest during the conference. Any personal care was provided by a member of the mission board asking “what” or “how” we were doing.

**MF—Discuss “personal care.”**

**Dot**—I am guessing that all entities involved in our lives thought “the other one,” i.e. sending board, churches, mission conference, were providing “care” for us. In fact, through 66 years of being on support, *No* church has done this for us. If we needed pastoral or professional care, we sought it locally and paid for it ourselves. Acting individually was always expected to be our personal responsibility.

In fact, if there were very important needs or large needs (professional counseling, hospitalized mental care, or teen problems) it was best to keep this information from supporting churches to avoid losing financial support.

**MF—Is there a story of a supporting church that was disappointing or hard for you?**

**Dot**—In our work with Native Americans, we tried to contextualize whenever we could. We happily reported in a prayer letter that we had communion out in the country (not in a church) with native friends. Instead of grape juice, we used iced tea. Instead of cut and squared white bread we used fry

bread. No one else responded with a comment except for a church that withdrew their monthly support because of this episode. We realized we had to teach our resistant supporters about contextualization.

**MF—Did you and Art ever serve on a church’s mission board as members? What are some specific ways you lead the team to care for other workers the church partnered with?**

**Dot**—At different times, both Art and I were members on a church’s mission board. We were able to teach other members of the board that difficult happenings in a missionary’s life should not be the occasion to discontinue support but rather to support with phone calls, letters and perhaps an additional amount of financial support.

We also did a lot of teaching about adapting and learning culture. When a missionary reported something “odd” we assured the board they were fitting in with the culture but not compromising their faith.

**MF—Speak to churches today as to some best practices they should consider employing when it comes to their workers and caring well for them.**

**Dot**—Instead of a missionary breezing through their town and giving them one time to speak, provide a place for them to stay for two or three nights and let them simply *rest* during the day. This would be contrary to a supporting church using the missionary as much as they could, scheduling a women’s meeting, men’s meeting or congregational meeting all within one or two days.

Encourage the missionary with how their prayer letter was used: pinned to bulletin boards, read it in a meeting (or by a reporting individual), prayed about at a large church meeting. Also, a person should be assigned to follow up with a call or letter.

Ask questions about practices that are not understood to educate the local church about culture differences, about contextualization, about language learning difficulty, about family problems.

*Never* discontinue support abruptly for some suspected reason but get information about the situation first.

Provide a car for the missionary to use temporarily as they travel doing reporting and deputation.

Provide child-care so that the parents can go to a couples' retreat or a little vacation without the children.

**MF—What advice do you have for church leadership in establishing a priority grid for deciding who to support.**

**Dot**—Churches should carefully vet those whom they decide to support or invite to speak at worship. Many churches are attracted to the most charismatic or good-looking couples and not to those doing the most important or strategic work among the least reached peoples. Having a written down policy to prioritize work among those unreached peoples with the least access to the gospel would be very helpful in deciding who to support.

**MF—Talk about the mission board. Is it important to have a team versus just the senior pastor deciding who to partner with or not?**

**Dot**—Of course! Nepotism and favoritism can be rampant if only one person gets to decide. With the combined opinions of the mission board wiser decisions can be made.

**MF—How would you suggest a pastor build his team for a mission board?**

**Dot**—S/he should be aware of people who are mission minded in his congregation. He could have conversations, see who reads the missionary prayer letters, ask who individually supports a missionary, be aware of who reads mission books/magazines, know who attends the various interest groups on missions.

People who are ignorant about missions and missionary needs should never be appointed to a mission commission.

**MF—What is your advice to churches when they consider stopping their support of a certain worker? What questions should they ask?**

**Dot**—Too often when a church decides to stop support, they do it suddenly without any advanced notice. They just stop it. Period! The missionary is left with questions and often unpaid bills. It would not only be kind to let the missionary know the decision of the church, but it is an imperative. A letter of explanation should be sent to the missionary.

**MF—What about their senior workers? Should there be a time they stop their partnership with them?**

**Dot**—This should be decided in a policy session by the church. None of my supporters have stated a year or time when they would discontinue support. Those who have stopped have just floated away with no notice to me. Those who continue to do so are a pleasant surprise to me at this time. I do not know how long any of my supporters will continue my partnership with them. This makes it difficult to make long range plans.

**MF—Compare how churches care for their pastors versus their missionaries.**

**Dot**—I do not see a favorable comparison here. Large churches lavish large salaries and provisions on their pastor. I have not seen this with their care of missionaries. The missionary receives a set amount and gets a check. I would be very surprised if it ever happens that bonuses or gifts be lavished on me as a missionary. Two of my supporting churches send Christmas or Valentine gifts.

**MF—If churches could do one thing today, what would you encourage them to do that would care well/biblically for their workers?**

**Dot**—It would be an absolute boost if a pastor would call me to encourage me. Not just someone on the mission committee contact me to find out if I am doing enough.

**MF—What advice would you give missionaries that are just starting to raise their prayer and financial support as they are sharing with potential churches, mission boards etc.?**

**Dot**—Establish a relationship with someone on the mission committee. Make a good contact. Keep current so that “someone” knows what you face and is able to pray sincerely. Rather than just “bless our missionary,” be real in your dealings with the church. Sometimes public prayer letters can be too general and not touch the heart of a matter. Meet with the church or mission committee whenever you can by Zoom.

Although living under support has been trying and difficult at times, my family has never been without food, we have never lost our home and we have never been without necessities. I really thank and praise God for his care.

**MF—What advice do you have for including your children in your mission?**

**Dot**—Of course the children are “there” and can be involved in the day-to-day part of your ministry. I asked my adult son about when he was aware that we were on “support.” He said he was always aware. As parents we let our children know what “support” meant. We shared both low and adequate amounts with them. When three of our children went on mission trips with Teen Mission, they had to raise their own support. This did not shock them because they had been aware before the event. When the support was complete and they left for their trips, they were assured of both financial and prayer support. They also reported and thanked their supporters after the trip. Children need to be aware that God is providing for them whether it is through support from churches or their parents’ jobs. ❏

## How Churches Have Blessed Missionaries

*Our church prays for us often. They have sent encouraging emails in times they prayed for us, even with pics of the prayer meetings. They meet as congregations and even the staff prays for us.*

—DH, Middle East

*Our church has a faithful prayer group that meets every Sunday am. to lift us up by name. They gather needs from us and print it off for each person to pray during the week.*

—KE, Sub-Saharan Africa

*Our church uses money from their Advent giving to support projects in our ministry.*

—TN, North Africa

*When we first went to the field, we felt like we were just a part of what churches did; that we were sent so they could put our picture on the wall. Over the years, the missions department has grown and now we feel like family with someone checking on us periodically. Two of our pastors even visited us on the field!*

—MV, Southeast Asia

*A good friend on the mission board and his wife were proactive in scheduling a video call with us every month to check in on how we were doing.*

—RP, South Asia

*We feel so cared for and truly valued when churches send unexpected cards and little cash gifts.*

—LE North America  
unreached diaspora

*Our church gave us a space on their campus to self-isolate when we needed a home with no people in it.*

—SH, South Asia