

We Were There

Looking Back 50 Years Ago!

By BRUCE AND CHRISTY GRAHAM



Bruce and Christy Graham have served with Frontier Ventures as Senior Associate General Director and within the Personnel Department, respectively. Bruce currently focuses on the biblical story with Frontier Ventures' 2HC collaborative in India. Christy assists the Pasadena School of Supernatural Ministry in developing satellite courses in churches and ministries outside of Pasadena, including in other nations.

Our experience in the early years of the Perspectives movement germinated several new initiatives. These were the fruit of the vision, inspiration, and commitment planted in us through the 1970s and 1980s. We were a group of young people, hungry to know how to fulfill God's purpose in our generation. Ralph Winter, his family, and an older generation of mission leaders inspired us, believed in us, and gave us a vision for various projects and initiatives.

The year was 1974. I had just finished a master's degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics at MIT in Boston. Park Street Church's mission program inspired me to consider taking a year after graduation to attend Gordon-Conwell Seminary. During that year, Winter led a one-month course at Gordon-Conwell on the world Christian movement. Our common background in engineering quickly connected us.

Shortly after he returned home to Pasadena, California, I began receiving phone calls from him and his daughter Beth. They encouraged us to attend the first Summer Institute of International Studies (SIIS) to be held that summer (1974) at Wheaton College in Illinois. Winter saw a significant jump in response to the commitment cards distributed at the 1973 Urbana Convention. College students signed a card at the end of Urbana '73 in much higher numbers than in previous years, saying they were "willing and desirous to learn more about world missions" or to "become foreign missionaries." So, he created a new program to help students make an informed decision about their future involvement in missions. Having been stimulated by Park Street Church's strong mission focus, we decided to attend that first class at Wheaton College.

That summer, we learned from seasoned missionaries. Each speaker spent a week with us. We had class in the morning, studied in the afternoons, prayed, and heard stories as we sat together in the evenings. That communal experience and the teaching content week after week greatly inspired us. Many of us in that first class were convinced that we ought to pursue world missions as a life calling.

In 1975, Christy and I returned to Park Street Church. We shared much of what we learned that summer with others in the college group. This led to recruiting 22 from Park Street Church to return with us to Wheaton the next summer for the second SIIS program. By then, Winter added to the content of the first course so that a second-year module was available for returning students.



SIIS 1975 led by Charlie Mellis

The coordinator of the program that year was Charlie Mellis, who studied at the Fuller Seminary School of World Mission under Winter. He had recently written a book called *Committed Communities: Fresh Streams for World Mission*. The idea of communities engaging in mission together captivated our hearts during that summer.

Multiple new initiatives grew out of the program that summer. The first was a trip to Guatemala to visit the communities among whom the Winter family had worked for 10 years. Twenty-two SIIS students piled into seven old cars and drove non-stop from Wheaton to Guatemala. Along the way, we visited a “committed community” somewhere near the Mexican border.



Car caravan to Guatemala

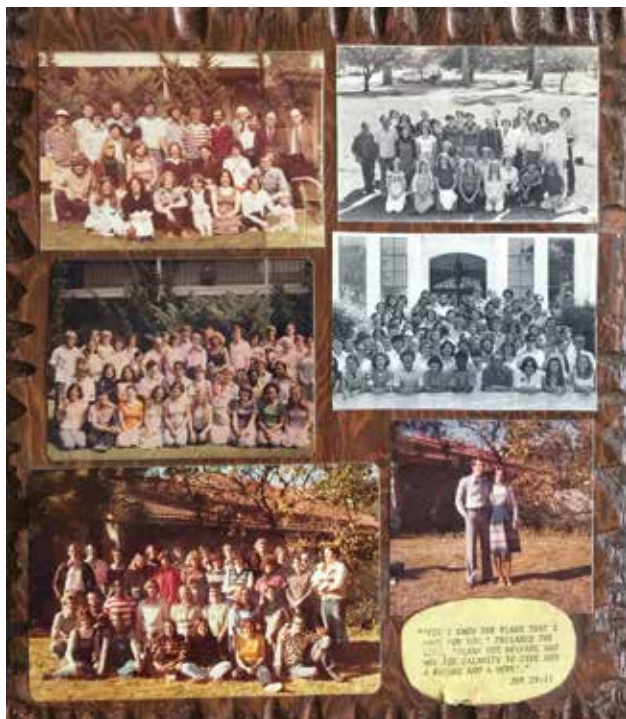
During this time, Winter contemplated leaving his position at the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary to start a committed community. That dream would become a reality a year later when he established the US Center for World Mission (USCWM). Several of us SIIS alumni joined him in that effort. That year, we moved to Pasadena to attend the School of World Mission at Fuller while continuing to recruit for and help plan the next year’s SIIS at Wheaton. We started the Fellowship of World Christians and what we called the Haggai community (a committed community with 12 of us living at one point in a large house near what became the US Center campus).



Haggai community retreat

We returned to Wheaton for the third class in 1976. David Bryant was the coordinator that year, and the class increased in size every year. Students were involved with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade, and Navigators. The movement was growing! During this time, the USCWM was being launched. It was a place where our growing “World Christian” vision and commitment found

many avenues of expression. We set up a Perspectives desk at the center and continued to mobilize global-minded Christians.



Early PSP classes at USCWM

During January of 1978, Winter held a concentrated course at the US Center office building. We called it the Institute of International Studies. Christy and I became coordinators of that class for the next two years as it continued to develop at the USCWM.

During that 1978 January class, we invited Sam Kamaleson (an Indian and vice-president at World Vision International) to teach one of the lessons. We were greatly stimulated by his mission initiatives in India and decided to launch the Advanced Institute of International Studies. Over the next two years, we took SIIS/IIS alumni to India, giving them first-hand exposure to cross-cultural ministries among unreached peoples. Many who went were launched into the nations, even as it launched our family into missions in India.

Looking back, we can see how significant it was that an older generation invested in us, a younger generation impacted by spiritual vitality across the USA in the early 1970s. We found a way to study world missions in community for concentrated periods.



Haggai community India team



First Advanced Institute of International Studies



Advanced Institute of International Studies 2

We had avenues for starting projects and participating in them. The projects gave us ways to express the commitment and vision we had received. Among the most significant of them was the continuation of IIS, which soon became the Perspectives Study Program. The USCWM (now Frontier Ventures) sustained the program through a committed community, rooted in frontier mission vision, based in Pasadena. It was a very significant part of our and many other lives. MF