



July 3, 1986

*a letter from John and Jackie Matthews*

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Dear

Greetings once again in the wonderful name of Jesus! The last time we wrote, we were still at Pacific Asia Christian University in Kona, Hawaii, preparing to return to Minnesota. We did that, stopping in California to visit Jackie's family who are in various parts of that state. Jeff stayed on in Kona several days longer than Jackie, Jennifer and myself; this was so that he could finish the outreach tour with King's Kids. He then met us in Los Angeles, and we flew home together on April 4.

It was a grand experience to come home; our dear friends had prepared our home so graciously for our arrival. They cleaned, and filled the cupboards and refrigerator with food! And even several beautiful floral arrangements were set out! Thank you Ed and Pat, Vern and Judy, Dave and Pauline and others for your kindness.

Jackie and I arrived home with a clear call and burden from the Lord. We knew that He was releasing us from the pastoral ministry at Church Upon The Rock. (Gordy Steck was set in formally as Senior Pastor on June 21) It had become clear within me that He was calling us to serve the body of Christ in the Midwest, especially for the cause of world missions. This became sealed in my heart when I visited the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, while we were visiting family.

While there, I began to understand why we were carrying a dual burden -- both for the churches in our own area of the Midwest, and for people in other nations who do not have the church, the gospel, or the name of Jesus among them. The Spirit of the Lord made it clear to me that we were to to mobilizers and facilitators for world missions in the Midwest, especially among the charismatic or Spirit-filled community of believers.

Of course, I had no idea how this was to happen; but upon arriving home, I spent several weeks studying and praying concerning

world mission vision and the local church. Then I was impressed to begin to share this burden with some of the pastors in the Twin Cities with whom we have been in fellowship. There seemed to be a common desire that a neutral organization be raised up that could be a communications network, a resource center, a basis of fellowship, etc. for the cause of world missions in the charismatic churches.

Almost by "accident" (actually the providential leading of the Lord!) we discovered a national ministry which has been developed within the last two years; this ministry was formed to accomplish the very purposes that God had put in my heart, and which were being verbalized by other pastors! This ministry is called "AIMS" -- The Association of International Mission Services, with headquarters at CBN University in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

To make a long story short, I am now the Midwest Regional Coordinator for AIMS! The Lord has moved so quickly in the last month in our lives, it has been trully amazing! We have had one "divine appointment" after another! God has released me into a servant's role with a wonderful group of people who have been called to the same ministry as we have, and who have a national and worldwide vision! Praise God!

This is a full-time faith ministry. No one in AIMS recieves a salary; each one must raise his or her own support. Our salary at Church Upon the Rock ended on June 30; the Church is graciously supporting us for the time being from the mission fund in an amount which covers a portion of our expenses; the majority of our support must come in addition to this from friends or churches who desire to be partners with us in this ministry.

There is much work ahead; I will be away from home for part of July -- first in Wheaton, Illinois for a training conference sponsored by the Association of Church Mission Committees. Then I will be in Pasadena,

California for a training course at the U.S. Center for World Mission. This is preparation to lead a college-level course on missions called "Perspectives on the World Christian Movement". I will be teaching this 22 week course in several locations during the school year under the banner of the Twin Cities School of Ministry. This new school of ministry is a cooperative effort of more than twenty spirit-filled churches around the Twin Cities.

Later in the school year, the Lord willing, I plan to coordinate a discipleship course for those interested in short-term mission encounters during the summer of 1987. I believe that the Lord wants to release many singles, couples, and whole families into cross-cultural experiences in ministry; during the year we will be compiling a list of opportunities available next year; then those interested can plan their vacation time around missions; it will be the best vacation they ever had!

We have initiated a task force of pastors and leaders in our area to coordinate the vision and direction for missions mobilization in the midwest. We are also forming a special group to develop world mission awareness and training for children and youth. Did you know that most missionaries presently on the field were called by God to be missionaries before the age of twelve?

We will be involved in certain mission conferences that individual churches have scheduled for this fall. We also are planning certain key AIMS events for the midwest, for the fall, winter and spring. We also want to bring the Holy Spirit's message of world mission mobilization to as many churches as possible in the next year.

I believe that God is forming a cooperative network of spirit-filled leaders, churches, mission agencies, and schools; out of this relational network of fellowship will arise a mighty end-time army of missionaries and mobilizers who are committed to the completion of the Great Commission! In Matthew 24:14, Jesus said,

"AND THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM SHALL BE PREACHED IN THE WHOLE WORLD AS A TESTIMONY TO ALL NATIONS, AND THEN THE END WILL COME."

The Bible word for nation is "ethnos". It does not mean a country, it is not a political term. It is a cultural and linguistic term, with a familial or tribal sense. In Biblical terms, there are about 22,000

"nations" in the world. Almost 17,000 of these nations or "people groups" have no church or permanent gospel witness! This is more than half of the world's population. Is it not the responsibility of those of us who have experienced "Pentecost", the power and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, to respond to the directive of Jesus in Acts 1:8? He said,

"BUT YOU SHALL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES ON YOU; AND YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH."

The "ends of the earth" represent those who are furthest removed from the gospel, whether by language, culture, economics, geography, etc. God's justice cries out to us who have so much here in the midwest USA to spread the blessing to the ends of the earth. Will you become part of this exciting task? I personally believe that the fulfillment of the Great Commission can be finished in our generation; this belief is held by many who are most knowledgeable about missions and the needs of the world. I also believe that the return of Jesus waits for the planting of a gospel witness in nearly 17,000 unreached people groups in the world. The 2.5 million believing churches in the world have the capacity to reach all of them in a very short time, if they work as a coordinated army. I desire to be part of that army. How about you??

Jackie and I are looking to the Lord for our financial support. If He puts it on your heart to be a partner in this support, either through a one-time gift or by a monthly "faith pledge", please write all checks to "Church Upon The Rock"; enclose a note "Mission fund -- Matthews".

Beyond our personal support, the ministry of AIMS is in need of many resources, both at the national headquarters in Virginia Beach, and our Midwest office, which for the time being is located at Church Upon The Rock. Both offices are believing God for a computer system, essential for the vast amount of information which AIMS will be accumulating. If God speaks to you about supporting AIMS expenses, please write these checks to "AIMS". All gifts to AIMS are fully tax-deductible.

The grace of God be with you.

Yours in Christ.

John and Jackie