



Photo by Josh Carter

GLOBAL TRAINING NETWORK

# Mushrooms vs. Redwoods

From the desk of Paul R. Madson / August 2019

*A healthy body, a cared for flock, a beloved bride* – all are familiar metaphors describing the Church in Scripture. But sadly, in some parts of the world, the Church more closely resembles a briefly growing fungus than a healthily functioning organism.

Reflecting on his experience growing up in India, Southern Seminary student Raj Karan recently made the following observation:

“People are trying to plant churches in India, but the churches are like mushrooms: They grow quickly but after three days they die” (*The Gospel Coalition, “While Growing, India’s Churches Need Healthier Roots” by Patti Richter*).

As a ministry, our goal is to equip pastors with the needed tools and biblical understanding to both plant and pastor healthy churches. At a time when many church plants are “mushrooms,” our desire is to see churches growing like trees, deeply rooted and lasting for years into the future.

Our hope is not only for longevity, but for healthy multiplication of *disciples and new congregations as they grow in the “grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 3:18).



GTN is built on the foundational belief that one of the most effective ways to see a nation reached and disciplined with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to train indigenous national leaders who already know the language and cultural context.

As an example of this, allow me to relay the story of Pastor Daniel. GTN staff member Miles Fagerlie was asked to preach at his church in Uganda two weeks ago. Miles described it this way:



Staff member Miles Fagerlie is pictured above with Pastor Daniel and his wife at a GTN training.

“As I visited with Pastor Daniel and his wife, I learned that he grew up in the church that he now pastors.

“About six years ago, the church pastor died, and Daniel was asked to become the pastor even though he had no formal Bible training (he was in the banking industry).

“He spoke about how he had floundered for years, doing his best, but not really knowing how to lead the church forward.

“Then, about a year ago, he was blessed to receive some pastoral training and it has begun a transformation of his ministry.

“Now his church has grown to two services and he has just begun small cell groups focused on reaching the community.

“He encouraged me by emphatically saying that what GTN is doing is very greatly needed throughout Africa... as there are many, many others like himself.”

## Introducing Christopher and Heather Schwarzen

Christopher and Heather have been involved in international and domestic ministry since 2004. Their family now calls eastern Tennessee home, following life in the Pacific Northwest and Kathmandu, Nepal.

Internationally, Christopher has a heart for indigenous pastors and works extensively training local church planters and leaders, mostly across Asia but also in Africa. He believes the key to a strong church is a firm foundation in the Bible that is being used to raise up strong families in Christ.

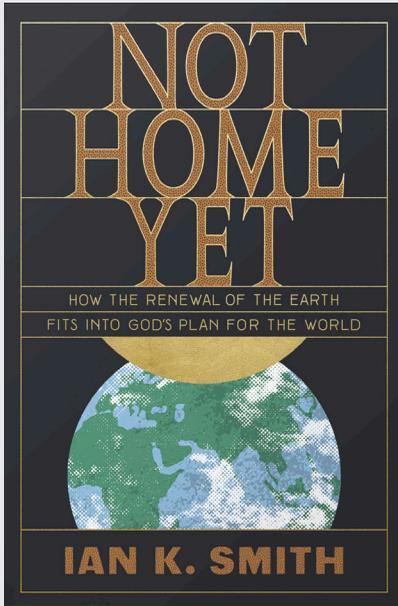
Domestically, Christopher and Heather are involved in family ministry through their “To Sow A Seed” blog and other endeavors, with a goal toward developing Christ-centered families who have a strong community focus.

They believe wholeheartedly in adoption and have made that an active part of their lives. They also operate a small family farm.



---

## Recommended Reading



### **Not Home Yet:**

**How the Renewal of the Earth Fits Into God's Plan for the World**  
(Crossway Publishing)

**By Ian K. Smith**

From the book description: “Beginning with the creation of the heavens and earth and ending with the New Jerusalem, the storyline of Scripture reveals God’s commitment to the physical world that he created. Our final destiny is not some disembodied, heavenly existence but rather life with God on a renewed earth. How does this understanding of our future home affect our lives today? What role should Christians play in meeting physical needs? Are spiritual realities more significant than physical?”

“This book will help us understand God’s eternal vision for the renewal of this earth and discover purpose in all of our daily, real-world endeavors, such as work, the arts, social justice, ecology, medicine, and more.”

*“Home must surely be one of the most emotion-filled words in the English language. It is where we belong. But where is home for the Christian? Are we living in a far country here on earth, just waiting for a better day when we can leave the earth and simply enjoy heaven? Think of Ian Smith as your friendly theological realtor. He knows about the home God has created for us. With theological skill and deft simplicity, he can explain its long history. He understands where we fit into its story. He is also sensitive to the responsibility Christians have to our ‘home,’ even though we have not yet seen its final reconstruction. Brief as Not Home Yet may be, you will find it instructive and challenging beyond its size.”*

—Sinclair B. Ferguson

Chancellor’s Professor of Systematic Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary;  
Teaching Fellow, Ligonier Ministries

---

## Key Scripture

*“These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.”*

- Hebrews 11:13-16

---

## Quotable Quote

*“The cross declares for all time and eternity that we are bankrupt and have no currency to buy the favor of heaven.”*

- John Stott

---

---

## Update from the President

Thank you again for your faithful partnership. It is helping the “Pastor Daniel’s” around the world to be better equipped to lead their churches to glorify God and expand His Kingdom!

Lastly, I hope you and your family have had an enjoyable and productive Summer season.

Lisa and I were able to have all of our kids, their spouses and grandkids together for a few days – in a much cooler place than Phoenix – the mountains of eastern Arizona (9,000 ft.+ elevation).

By God’s Grace and for His Glory,



**Paul R. Madson**  
Founder and President  
2 Timothy 2:2