

News from David & Jan

Gathering

Mission to the World missionaries on home ministry assignment gathered June 3-7 in southern Illinois for Refresh, a member care event. We gathered for worship, teaching, small group discussions, fun together, and to work through challenges around transitions, grief and loss, and self-care. Early in the week we heard that Heather, a missionary wife in West Africa had suddenly collapsed. She was evacuated for medical treatment but never regained consciousness and quickly passed away. Jan and I have known Heather and Ian and their three children for many years and have visited them in West Africa. Several missionaries at Refresh had recently been with Heather at an MTW Africa women's retreat. In God's providence our devotional time each day was centered on Lamentations. As the week began, we didn't know that we were also gathering to lament together.

Soon after, we traveled to another gathering in Bali, the area retreat for MTW missionaries in the Asia Pacific region. Area retreats happen in each region every four to five years; they're not work meetings, but times of encouragement and refreshment for missionary families. Missionary children bond with other missionary children. Adults enjoy colleagues who live in other countries. About 400 people gathered and we heard outstanding sermons from Dr. Julius Kim, were led in singing by Sandra McCracken and Tim Nicholson, and enjoyed pools and beaches. Jan and I spent many meals meeting with other missionaries, hearing their stories, answering questions, and praying for them. The 12-hour time difference from our home in Atlanta led to plenty of jet lag, especially afterward (and following a 30+ hour trip home). What a great privilege to gather with our workers in Asia!

The third big gathering of the summer happened the weekend after we returned from Bali. Joy of All Nations, the PCA church plant that we've been attending (joyofallnations.org), held their first weekend-away retreat. We've loved being part of a growing church community focused on reaching out to the South Asian community in northeast Atlanta, home of the fastest growing Indian-background population in the US. More than a third of our congregation are from Indian backgrounds. Beginning Friday evening and ending Sunday morning we had great times of worship and deepening relationships.

We've had a few other summer gatherings. In August we spent a week in Nashville to be with Ian and his children and with Ian's parents, David and Marcia, to mourn with them. David and Marcia are fellow MTW missionaries and longtime friends for nearly 40 years; David is suffering from pancreatic cancer. We lamented with them and talked about MTW's practical help for the family. We also gathered 21 people at our house in mid-August to celebrate Rich and Crissy Greete retiring from MTW after many years of service. Rich served faithfully for many years as a staff counselor helping care for missionaries around the world. They will be greatly missed.

Jan and I are thankful for our supporters' help in our serving and enjoying those gatherings, and we're thankful to God for these privileges.



Refresh Summer 2024



Asia Pacific Area Retreat



Joy of All Nations Retreat



Mission to the World

Mission to the World PCA, Inc.
1600 North Brown Road
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

David and Jan Thoma
MTW Member Care

All nations whom You have made,
shall come and worship before You,
O Lord. . .

Psalm 86:9

Toward Retirement

Member care opportunities often connect to the many transitions in missionary life: from home to a mission field, from field to home assignment and back, children and aging parent transitions, teammates coming and going, changes in assignment. We are now on the pathway to another major life transition for us: retirement. Jan is retiring at the end of September. I plan to end our service with Mission to the World at the end of June 2025.

When I began in the role of Director of Member Care for MTW, I said that I would continue until I turned 70, doing all I could to make sure that the department was thriving and that my successor was identified with a good transition plan in place. Since I began in the director role three and a half years ago we've seen development in member care in MTW with growing clarity about how care is given, the resources that are needed, and what it means for missionaries to thrive. Of course, much remains to be done, but member care is on a positive trajectory, I feel. Additionally, a succession plan is in place: Amy Newsome, who has led member care for our missionaries serving in Asia, has been appointed as the next director beginning in mid-2025. Amy will do a great job, bringing her years of experience, her training as a counselor, and her connections with MTW leaders to the member care director role.

Directing the Member Care Department and coordinating care across our missionary force of over 500 workers continues to be a fulltime job. Along with that, over the next 9 months, Jan and I will be visiting our supporting churches and many of our individual supporters. We've either seen or scheduled about half of our 20 supporting churches; pray that the rest of our visits can be nailed down soon.

We are so thankful for our faithful prayer and financial supporters. Many have been partners with us for 35 years since we began our mission service in Kenya in 1989.

We plan to stay in northeast Atlanta and are looking forward to having more time for Joy of All Nations church and exploring what God has for us in this next season.

Prayer & Praise

Praise God with us for

- fruitful missionary gatherings at Refresh in June and the area retreat in Asia in July
- the 1000+ people who have registered for the PCA Global Missions Conference this November (www.mtw.org/gmc)
- good family time together the week of Father's Day with Jordan and Nicole and Daniel, Kendra, and Sami with us at Pensacola Beach

Pray with us for

- the Global Missions Conference to spark growth of the PCA's mission vision; we hope to see 2000 attendees; David will be leading a session "Missionary Care Rooted in the Local Church"
- our supporting church visits to be scheduled easily, for our being able to express our great gratitude, and for mutual encouragement
- Jan's ongoing limitations with her shoulder; that her pain will diminish and range of motion and strength will continue to progress and that she will trust God in these challenges
- our hearts to rest in Christ and for fruitfulness and faithfulness during this season of transition to retirement from MTW