

FROM REFRIGERATOR MAGNETS TO CHURCH PLANTS:

A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE JESUS FILM PROJECT

Sharyl France-Moran



“As a congregation, we felt that God wanted us to be involved in adopting an unreached people group in the 10/40 Window.”

Editor’s note: the following case study illustrates a good model for “adopting an unreached people,” namely, for one or more congregations to partner with a mission agency on behalf of that people. Related resources can be found at www.uscwm.org. (Click on “Adopt-a-People.”)

Nothing is too simple for God to use, or too complex for Him to complete.

The congregation at New Life Community Church in Peoria, Arizona, experienced this on a personal level as they asked God’s help in finding an unreached people group to adopt. “As a congregation, we felt that God wanted us to be involved in adopting an unreached people group in the 10/40 Window,” says Paul Madson, Senior Pastor of New Life Community Church for the past 14 years. “So we prayed.”

To focus their prayers, the church created refrigerator magnets that contained a world map and this simple phrase, “Lord, we want to plant your church among the—people group.”

“We gave them to our congregation in ’96 and told them to pray that God would fill in the blank for us,” Madson explains. “For a year we prayed

that God would lead us to the people group that he wanted us to adopt.”

God answered that prayer through a conversation with a staff member from The JESUS Film Project.

“We were told of a people group in Northeast India, the Borok, with a population of approximately 1 million. Funding was needed to translate the JESUS film into the Kok Borok language,” says Madson. “We were offered the opportunity to adopt the Borok people and partner with The JESUS Film Project (JFP) to translate the film into their language.”

The congregation at New Life talked and prayed, deciding this was God’s will for their church.

Madson says they had always felt God leading them to India, primarily because India has 1 billion people – one out of every six people on earth – in an area only one-third the size of the United States. Among these people, only two to three percent worship Christ.

New Life officially adopted the Borok people group in 1997. Within three months, the church – whose membership at that time numbered between 800 and 1000 people – had raised \$50,000 to pay for the translation of the JESUS film and to equip seven local teams to show the film to this unreached group!

Madson and a businessman from New Life flew to India for the premiere showing of the film in the Kok Borok language in November 1998. Posters had been distributed in one of the main cities of the area, and film teams had invited people to attend, telling them about the film and mentioning that two people from America would be there for the premiere.

When show time arrived, 1,200 people had responded, crowding inside an older, community-type concrete building with no windows. Among those attending were the mayor of the city, several government leaders and one Communist official seated on the front row, all watching the JESUS film together.

“The next day, we took the film to one of the villages, fifty miles out into the mountain jungle area,” says Madson. “About three in the afternoon, the teams began walking around, telling the people in nearby villages that the film would be shown at 6:00 p.m., inviting them to attend. By the time the film started at 6:00, there was a strong 2,000+ people sitting there in the dirt, in front of a 12x12 bedsheet thrown on an old tin shed to serve as a screen. For two to three hours all eyes were glued to that bedsheet – men, women and children. It was amazing – to see and experience it firsthand was phenomenal.”

From 1998 to 2003 JESUS film teams showed the film to approximately 750,000 Borok people, more than 15,000 of whom indicated decisions to trust Christ. They’ve started 30 new church plants. With the outreach continuing, Madson says the

next phase will be “to train and equip pastors and leaders to lead in these churches and to equip all these new believers so they can more effectively reach their own people with the gospel of Christ.”

Madson advises pastors wanting to take part in world evangelization to mobilize their congregations and to connect with The JESUS Film Project.

“That was one of the absolute best things we did. The JFP was able to do that first important wave of evangelism for us – there is no way we could have done that alone.”

“If you want enthusiasm within the pews of your church,” Madson concludes, “adopt an unreached people group. It will light a fire in your congregation like nothing else I’ve ever seen.”

For information on how your church might adopt an unreached people group in partnership with the JESUS Film Project, contact Dave Barry at (949) 361-6012 or dave.barry@jesusfilm.org. 🌐

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