



The CHALLENGE

MOVING EARTH TO SHARE HEAVEN **MARCH 2023**

Surrendering to His Calling

An International
Worker's Story

Called to Mission at Home & Abroad

A Message From The
Chief Operations Officer

Volunteer Reflections

From a Work Team
in West Africa



CALLED TO MISSION AT HOME & ABROAD

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER, ANDY BACHERT



Romans 10:15 (KJV)

“And how shall they preach, except they be sent?”

When I was a child, I used to think that to be a missionary, you had to be “old,” a Biblical scholar, and you would have to move into a tribal setting where you would live the rest of your life. I thought “evangelists” or “church planters” were the only ones qualified to be missionaries.

When I started traveling with Friends in Action in 2002, I began to understand that being a missionary included much more. Case in point, I’m writing this article onsite with mission partners in Uganda on a two-week construction trip to support their infrastructure development needs. I just came inside after a long, late-night conversation with our mission partner and a group of men from the village, building relationships. God is using us hammer-pounders to bring people into Jesus-centered relationships.

As Chief Operations Officer (COO), the Lord has helped me understand the importance of being “on mission” with Him at headquarters. Meeting with missionaries and partners serving abroad, it is clear the struggle they would have if they had to do the work God called them to without having a strong team at home, without the administrative, logistical, and care support of organizations sending them out.

I see it like this; if the activity of sharing the Gospel is the “heart” of the mission for our field teams and deployed missionaries, then our

home staff and support team is the “vascular system,” supporting the work of the heart by whatever means necessary to supply every organ, every appendage, every inch of skin to accomplish its purpose. A beating heart means nothing without the rest of the vascular system. I reflect on what **Romans 10:14-15** says, “**How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?**”

Some may think less of those who sit behind the desk, who make sure the numbers add up, write the articles, or stuff the letters. But each person has been equally called to the mission of sharing the Gospel, to use their gifts here to support those serving out there. Their role in the mission is to help send, which is why operations at FIA headquarters are so essential. Our administrative team understands the importance of a support system—support is why we do what we do.

Our ministry partners greatly benefit when they have an effective administrative team at their backs, praying, logistically coordinating, raising awareness and financial support, and spotlighting their work in the field. We do what is needed to help them get the job done. Knowing that God has placed each of us here gives us the ability to execute our purpose. **We do what we love, and we do it for Jesus. ■**



▲ Betty Nissley, Administrative Assistant



▲ Barry Johnson, Shipping Manager



▲ Suzy Bachert, Finance Manager



FULL-TIME MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY

HUMAN RESOURCES

Friends In Action International is actively looking for a dedicated and enthusiastic Human Resources Manager to serve from our Headquarters location in Elizabethtown, PA.

The Human Resources Manager will set the tone for the Human Resources department and is an advocate of staff and member rights. From employee relations to payroll to compliance management, the HR department helps ensure that an organization runs smoothly, and within the guidelines of employee management regulations.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Orientation and new staff/volunteer onboarding
- Member records
- HQ health and safety training

INTERESTED?



Scan the code to learn more and download applications.

OR CONTACT ANDY BACHERT,
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER

717.546.0208 | AndyBachert@FIAintl.org

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We have **more trips** planned this year to carry out the Great Commission than at any time in our history. Skilled and unskilled laborers are welcome. Please take a moment to review the upcoming trips, and if the Lord is calling you, please call us.

MORE OPPORTUNITIES

Office Positions | Administrative Roles

FIA office administrator positions are open that directly support headquarters staff as they work to support, serve, and promote the goals and objectives of the organization.

Open Positions

- Communications Admin (Content Creator)
- Shipping Customer Engagement Coordinator (Shipping Team)
- Finance Department (Back-up Bookkeeper)

South Pacific Team (PNG & Vanuatu)

Mission Mechanic (Vehicle Maintenance & Service)

With the rugged roads and interior of the South Pacific fields, it is critical that mission vehicles be well-maintained and in good working order. Knowledgeable mechanics are hard to come by, and this service to missionaries and partnering organizations allows us to help them keep moving forward in their ministries.

Builder (Timber and/or Steel frame)

Construction services (building and/or repair) are a growing request from our various partner organizations in the South Pacific Islands to help upgrade and build homes and stations for international workers serving in remote locations.

Bolivia (Project Leader)

FIA supports an existing team of Bolivian pastors serving in Northern Bolivia in the areas of construction and financial support of outreach via radio ministry and medical/food outreaches into the Amazon jungle (by boat and by motorcycle). The Project Leader is a North American-based position, liaising with the Bolivian team as they engage in ministry. The position serves to engage North American churches and donor base to support the field.



Surrendering TO HIS CALLING

NAOMI LIESER | INTERNATIONAL WORKER, FIA WEST AFRICA TEAM

In 2017, I was a stay-at-home mom of two young children (ages 4 and 1) when my husband, Darren, had just returned from a short-term trip and felt the prompting of the Lord to pursue full-time missions work. It was a time of confusion as it seemed we were being called to two different paths, yet for the next two years, we fervently prayed to understand God’s will for us as we took steps toward full-time missions.

But what would this mean for our children? As a mother, I had many concerns. Would my kids be living in a safe place? Can I find a quality education? Will they be emotionally well-rounded? Will they make new friends? How will they handle all the transitions? All the “what-ifs” of a mother’s mind.

God’s Presence and Peace

To prepare me for the life God would soon call us to, God took me on a spiritual journey in 2018 through a frightening situation that helped me surrender, reminding me to trust Him. Until our full-time commitment,

Darren continued volunteering on short-term trips to West Africa in an area with increased terrorism. The day the French embassy (and army headquarters) was attacked, I received the only text message I had received the entire time he was away: “There has been an attack, but I’m ok.” And that was it.

As I devoured news reports, panic set in, and I let my mind take me through a series of horrible thoughts and “what-ifs.” Then God, in his glorious faithfulness, brought me to complete peace. We knew God had called Darren to be there. God was saying, “Trust me! I will be with you if your husband doesn’t come home, I will be with you if I call you to go to this place that is not safe, and I will be with you and your family if something bad happens wherever you are. I will be with you!”

Since moving to West Africa, He has been true to his word: we’ve faced security issues, such as the break-in of our home while we were sleeping during our first month here. No harm came to us; the thief simply stole some

technology. God walked us through this incident with a peace that made zero sense. I was concerned about my children having traumatic fears or difficulty sleeping. They had good questions we talked through but were not afraid. We all slept fine the next night. It was a beautiful thing to feel God’s promised presence and peace.

Educating Our Children

One of the other significant “what-ifs” is the education of our children. I was a public school educator, and I always imagined that my kids would attend public school. My son was in kindergarten when we really felt God calling us to go. This meant a year in France and then getting onto the field. I had to begin processing now what to do. There weren’t many affordable options in West Africa that were at a level equivalent to what we would expect in the states.

So, God guided me to another possibility: homeschooling, something I never thought I’d do. During our year of fundraising, I learned to homeschool. I knew I

wouldn't have time when we reached the field, as learning a new culture, language, and way of life would consume our time.

After our year of fundraising, we sold our house and, on the next day, moved to another state for cultural training. After this training, we moved to my parent's home, where we thought we would live for a month while visas were processed for France. Because of COVID-19, that month turned into another year of transition. My parents helped with homeschooling while Darren and I began online French language classes. **I praise God that homeschooling allowed the kids to have consistency in their education.**

With all the moves, I expected setbacks in learning, especially while they were in the French system, still needing to learn French. Before we went to France, I planned to help my children get ahead of schedule as much as possible and then try to catch them up when we settled in West Africa. **I praise God for helping me surrender to His plan for educating my kids,** as there were even more gaps from our year in France than expected.

Cross-Cultural Living

Through God's grace, my time in France was a stepping stone to West Africa. I didn't expect France to be all that different, but it was. A different culture, different processes, different expectations. It helped me to get used to change. It's important that supporters back home understand that moms' hearts are for ministry. Yet, we also need to figure out how to live life, get our kids food, make sure we can locate doctors, get medicine, navigate school, and even learn to drive in crazy overseas traffic.

We've been here for about six months, and my ministry, like many other moms with young children, is walking our kids through the life of missions and cross-cultural living. When children are young, all they know is this life of transition. My 10-year-old son, however, really misses the U.S. and often wants to go home.

We don't want our children to dislike God because He called us to do something hard or took us away from family and friends. **Darren and I understand this is what God wants for our family, but the kids are at a different level of faith.** We talk through these issues and don't sugarcoat them. We share that it's not always easy for us, either. But God has called us here, so how can we make the best of it? What interests you here that we can't do at "home"? How can God use us? How can we be His light to those around us who live without hope?

Trust, Follow, and Obey

We still have a lot to figure out. If you ask me in six months, maybe I'll have more of life figured out, maybe I'll understand better what God is teaching us, or know why He has called us here. But for now, **God has called us to trust, follow, and obey till He shows us the next step in this journey. And always to continue surrendering our will to His.** ■



▲ Waiting at the airport



▲ **Life in West Africa:** We are here with all our bags! Random observations: The flowers are pretty, the mosquitoes are abundant. It's super humid even if the temps aren't outrageous it's hot. The cows in the street are loud. The French accent is going to take a bit to learn, and we will be hearing the call to prayer multiple times a day.



▲ **Life in West Africa:** Today's task, do a small load of laundry and iron ALL of it to kill the eggs that the mango flies might have left behind while drying on the line. They can hatch, and burrow into your skin if you don't. Yesterday's task: Google how to cook a whole chicken in a pot, because I couldn't figure out how to work the oven with all the labels erased. (Afterward, a team member taught me.)



▲ Mosque in West Africa



Volunteer Reflections

CANADIAN VOLUNTEER WORK TEAM IN WEST AFRICA

In January a volunteer work team from Canada spent a week in West Africa working alongside the FIA well drilling team, supporting ministry partners living out the Gospel message in unreached communities. Here are reflections from two of the team volunteers.

JONATHAN FLIETSTRA, PHOTOGRAPHER

Recently, I had the privilege to join an FIA team for the first time to drill wells in a few rural communities in West Africa. I've always been drawn to missions and love being a part of furthering the Gospel, but God has not gifted me with the ability to preach or teach. **I was excited to learn of a mission organization whose goal is to come along missionaries and pastors around the world and use their mechanical skills and labour to help share the truth of Jesus.**

Our first village had one water spigot in the middle of the town for everyone to use, but we found it needed to be piped in from far away and was unreliable. Our goal was to drill a well in a central location to make water available for this pastor and the community and have enough water to irrigate some fields behind the church to grow food year-round, not just in the rainy season.

Unfortunately, after a half day of work, the starter on the rig kicked the bucket. We had to call it a day and come back the next day with spare parts. By God's grace and the mechanical skills of some of the team members, the rig started up the next day. **We hit water after a few hours of drilling and left that night feeling excited about what God had done that day and what He would do in that village in the future.**

Our next location was a farm run by a pastor from Haiti who teaches young men farming skills, and at the same time, he discipless them and trains them to go out into missions themselves. In West Africa, a good portion of the year is the dry season, where it's sweltering, and there is no rain - a climate that isn't conducive to running a sustainable farm. Our goal was to drill a well to provide the water needed for sustainability, which would help the pastor keep momentum with the discipleship even through the dry season. **After a rough start and three days of work, we hit a great source of water about 520 feet deep (every drilling rod FIA owned was used to**



get to the water). We learned to be patient and flexible this week. Things don't always go as we plan, but God has a plan that is better than ours, and we need to trust in that.

My heart was moved by how many different missionaries, pastors, and mission organizations were working together to share the Gospel. **My experience stirred a desire to see how I can use my God-given gifts to help my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and point lost souls to Jesus.** I'm not a preacher, but I can do something practical through FIA to make Christ known to the last, lost and least.

ERIC WITHERS, LAND USE PLANNER

After 1.5 days of travel (and no sleep) from frigid Canadian winter, we landed in the capital and started acclimating to the balmy 86°F (30°C) weather we'd be working in. That first night we collapsed exhausted onto our beds (military cots with bug nets), sleeping under the stars in one of the unfinished block buildings on the FIA mission compound. As we moved out to camp in the villages we would be working in, we had a pretty good chorus of snoring men, braying donkeys, and singing imams to serenade us at night, although it wasn't usually that hard to find sleep after long days of work. In terms of wildlife, we saw mostly livestock, including cattle, goats, and donkeys, absolutely everywhere. Interestingly, we learned that in North America, people build fences to keep their animals in, but here in Africa, you build fences to keep other peoples' animals out. This was evidenced by the walls of blocks, wood, and woven sticks that surrounded most properties and villages.

Given my profession as a land-use planner, I found the distribution of the villages most interesting. Human settlement patterns are often driven by the prevailing mode of transportation, and in rural Africa, the dominant transportation road is either by foot or donkey cart. With clusters of settlements often spaced no more than a few hundred meters apart, many are also concentrated around communal wells, usually shallow-dug wells scattered across the landscape meeting both personal and agricultural needs. When it comes to agriculture, these shallow wells don't produce enough water to meet the irrigation needs of the community. **FIA is drilling these higher volume wells to help support the needs of their mission partners and the water is being shared to meet the needs of unbelieving communities around them. Where you have water, people come together.**

God is using the FIA team in West Africa to do the hard work of preparing the fields for spiritual planting and harvest. As Jeremy, FIA field leader, put it early on, the work they are doing right now is like pulling big stones out of a field before you can work it. **It's incredibly difficult work, but God will use it for his glory to produce a plentiful harvest in this country.** Please pray for the FIA team, their workers and their families, along with the partner missionaries in ministries they are working with. **Pray that they continue building relationships with each other as they bring physical and living water to the people. ■**

Isaiah 44:3 (KJV)

"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring..."



2023 TRIP OPPORTUNITIES

A short-term trip can be an adventure of a lifetime! On a trip with FIA, you'll see the work of God on the mission field, be a blessing to another culture, and discover how your skills can help further the Gospel. Use your trade skills to help make Christ known by volunteering on one (or more) of FIA's upcoming trips.

Learn More: [FIAintl.org/get-involved/trips](https://fiaintl.org/get-involved/trips)



SCAN CODE TO
LEARN MORE



Construction



Nicaragua

March 17-31, April 1-15

Construction of a community kitchen and meeting space (earthworks and foundation work, fabrication and installation of steel-frame structure)

Welders, tractor operator, general laborers needed

Vanuatu

April 13-29

Timber-frame construction (rough and finish work), residential electrical, plumbing, cement-boarding and finish work

Specialized and general laborers needed

Vanuatu

July 6-21

FIA Base repair and infrastructure (steel frame and wood frame construction, plumbing, electrical, interior and exterior finish work)

Vanuatu

July 6-21

Water Project Development, launching Phase 1 development work (road works and excavation, remote site access and materials stockpiling)

Equipment operators and general laborers needed

Mechanical & Support Services



Mexico

April 15-22

Providing mechanical services to support vehicle and equipment maintenance programs for a remote mission hospital

Automotive mechanics needed

Mexico

November 11-25

Providing mechanical services to support vehicle and equipment maintenance programs for a remote mission hospital.

Investigating and developing a water supply system to manage onsite water services for residential and hospital usage.

Automotive mechanics and plumbers/water system designer needed

USA Teams



Wisconsin

June 9-25

Roofing project (gable-end extension) at ETHNOS 360 training school in Waukesha, WI, in addition to other renovation work (exterior/interior)

Pennsylvania

August

Interior and exterior work maintaining FIA International Headquarters (landscaping, exterior fascia repairs/replacement, painting, remodel/construction)

Missouri

November 11-19

Interior remodel of residential dwellings at ETHNOS 360 mission training center in Camdenton, MO.

General laborers, interior finishing, plumbing, and electrical workers needed

Well Drilling



Mexico

2 weeks, April

Drilling wells to support a mission hospital water supply ministry serving in the Sierra Madres mountains



**FRIENDS
IN ACTION
INTERNATIONAL**

United States Headquarters

✉ PO Box 323, Elizabethtown, PA 17022
📍 3950 E Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057
Phone: 717.546.0208 • **Fax:** 717.546.0214
USA Email: FIA-USA@fiaintl.org
501(c)3 Non-profit Organization

Canada Headquarters

✉ PO BOX 901 Stn Main, Guelph, ON, N1H 6M6
Phone: 905.642.9531
CA Email: office.fiac@gmail.com
Charity Number: 818791212RR0001

[FIAintl.org](https://fiaintl.org)