



FRIENDS
IN ACTION
INTERNATIONAL

the CHALLENGE

MOVING EARTH TO SHARE HEAVEN JANUARY 2024

Building for the Future
**One Generation
Away**

God Always Exceeds
My Expectations

**Committed to Serve
the Lord**

Skilled Hands & Feet
That Follow

**2024 Trip
Opportunities**



Growing Spiritually in Vanuatu

One Generation Away

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MATT DURKEE



“And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.” —Judges 2:10 (KJV)

Judges 2:10 (above) is incredibly sobering. It’s a reminder of what can happen if there is a disconnect between one generation and the next, of what could happen if we neglect to invest in the next generation to take up where we left off. It should make us consider: Are we ready for what is on the horizon?

Before Jesus left, He entrusted the mission to His disciples: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...” (Matthew 28:19-20). Taking up that mission, Paul challenges those leading the Church: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).

Package those two verses together. We are told that our responsibility as disciples is to both bring the Gospel message to the nations and to invest in faithful, *reproducing* followers of Jesus. We are to build up a generation that would follow the previous in going out to make Christ known.

Working today, planning for tomorrow, building for the future.

Our prayer as a mission is not only to be successful in meeting the needs of our partners today but to support those partners serving the Lord for years to come. This means getting serious about investing in the next generation of servants so that, by the grace of God, the mission can

and will go on. To do that, I believe that youth and vitality (balanced by wisdom and experience) are needed for us to remain effective where God has called us to serve. *Younger people will continue to shape and strengthen the future of the mission if they are provided with the right opportunities to get involved.*

That being said, here’s a troubling fact: reports have shown that fewer men and women choose to be involved in missions at a younger age. Financial debt, ongoing education, and cultural priorities are just a few of the deterrents. So how do we continue to engage young people, *the next generation*, to invite their greater involvement in *missio Dei* (the mission of God)? We can’t wait until young people have started college or their careers before introducing them to missions.

Church leaders, mentors, parents, friends—we are ALL meant to fan the flame of missions in the next generation of “go-ers” and “do-ers” for the Lord. 1 Peter 4:10, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

Casting a vision while they’re young is important. From preschool through high school, local churches can teach about global missions. Kids can pray for unreached people groups. They can meet visiting missionaries. They

IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue of *The Challenge*, FIA demonstrates its commitment to providing ministry opportunities for capable and qualified younger people to serve in missions.

PAGE 3 | Two young men, **Ryan and Brandyn**, were encouraged by people in their lives to use their welding talents to further the Gospel in Vanuatu.

PAGE 4 | **Austin** is using his leadership skills to lead multiple teams stateside and overseas.

PAGE 5 | **Rachel** responded to the call, “If not me, then who?” to become an FIA Associate, hoping to serve on six trips this year.

FIA is a mission that consists of believers of ALL ages engaging in the mission of God.

can be involved in ministry projects and trips. They can hear their pastors regularly talking and praying about missions.

With hope assured and steadfast faith, we intend to lean into the plans for tomorrow while taking on the challenges of today. We’re ready to do our part, to engage, equip, and enable the next generation, that by the grace of God they may be effective in what God calls them to do. For the faithful yet to come, consider what chapter of their story God’s asking you to be part of. ■

Get Involved

Want to know more about serving with FIA? Join us for our next ORIENT Program, June 6-8.

If you are near Central PA, consider attending our March “Serving On Mission” Breakfast, hosted at FIA HQ.

Call 717-546-0208 for more information, or if you would like someone from FIA to come speak to your church or group.



“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” – Psalm 51:10 (KJV)



RYAN & BRANDYN



Growing Spiritually in Vanuatu

As Friends in Action builds for the future, it is blessed to have younger volunteers who have responded to God’s calling to reach the last, the lost, and the least. When Ryan Hottenstein and Brandyn Myers volunteered for two weeks with Friends in Action in Vanuatu, they hoped—even expected—to make a difference in the lives of the missionaries who serve there and the communities they strive to reach.

They didn’t expect the change that would take place in them.

“I was at a low point in my spiritual growth,” Brandyn, 20, explained. “I wasn’t in the Word much. But being able to set time aside for devotions and being in the Book of James, reading and discussing the passages, I was convicted by God’s Word.”

The experience in Vanuatu helped him to re-prioritize his devotional time and deepen his faith now that he’s back home.

Ryan, 18, agreed, saying that while he looked forward to using his welding

skills to support the project and assist the missionaries, he was nervous about the trip.

People everywhere still need to hear the Gospel. And it takes people with all kinds of skills to make that happen.

“It was really out of my comfort zone. But, when we got there, I started seeing God challenge me,” Ryan said. “Spiritually, before the trip, I was not consistent with devotions, but having set devotion times helped me get into a habit of devotions. I’ve been doing that more consistently now.”

Additionally, spending time with field managers, Levi and Jenn Pitman, and hearing how God is working through FIA in another country and culture made it clear that people everywhere still need to hear the Gospel. And it takes people with all kinds of skills to make that happen.

Ryan and Brandyn were among the FIA volunteers fabricating and installing a

steel frame to support a new roof on a maintenance building in Vanuatu. Both felt called to use their skills to aid FIA’s work.

Before arriving at Vanuatu, they weren’t sure how helping to build a roof on a maintenance building at FIA’s ranch would aid mission work, but as they soon recognized, having a place to repair vehicles safely is vital to the outreach endeavors underway there, including the upcoming Big Bay Water Project. Efforts to improve soil quality, ensure clean water, and teach life skills are part of the overall ministry.

Ryan and Brandyn look forward to participating in future mission trips, and they encourage other young Christians to consider volunteering if they feel God is calling them in that direction.

“There is a lot more going into it than I thought. You need to be physically, mentally, and spiritually prepared,” Ryan said. But it’s also fun, and you get to learn new things. “You get to use your hands to spread the Gospel.” ■



"Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." —Proverbs 16:3 KJV

God Always EXCEEDS MY EXPECTATIONS

You never know how God may work in your life through a simple gesture of helping someone in need. Austin Stehman, 25, met Paul Brosey, FIA Project and Team Coordinator, when Austin helped move a treadmill into Paul's home.

"When I met Paul, I quickly discovered his passion for FIA. At the time I was searching for a bigger purpose outside of my career. Paul affirmed my gifts and abilities and inspired me to use them to build God's kingdom," Austin revealed.

Austin's First Trip With FIA

Austin completed team leadership training and, in 2022, he shadowed Paul on his first trip with FIA to Peru. Austin shared, "I learned how days were structured (mornings led with devotions), how to coordinate travel, how to distribute work per people's skill sets, and the importance of good food!" Austin says the team leader training was good groundwork for trip planning, people skills, and emergency response, but that it doesn't take the place of shadowing a team leader on a trip. "Some things are better learned 'in the field,'" he stated.

Since the trip to Peru, Austin has led two stateside trips to the Ethnos360 training center in Missouri. In 2023, FIA completed renovations to Ethnos' maintenance shop and student apartments. There are plans to install a greenhouse in January 2024 (see our Team Trip opportunities).

If you are considering going on a trip, do it!

"I find the trips to be fun and encouraging. God always exceeds my expectations of what He can accomplish through us," Austin said as he praised the Lord.

Leading A Team

On his first trip as a team leader, the team faced several obstacles before they even arrived at Ethnos360. One of the volunteers from Canada was turned around at the border, a vehicle broke down on the way, and they witnessed a major accident on the highway. Austin expressed that it was easy to feel discouraged. "I questioned if we were meant to go on the trip, but the team showed incredible faith, and God blessed the rest of the trip."

Austin enthusiastically says, "If you are considering going on a trip, do it!" He continued, "Service trips are a great way to make lasting friendships and be encouraged in your faith. God never fails to multiply our efforts, not only to meet physical needs but also to reach people in need of Salvation. No matter your skills or abilities, God already has good works planned for you!" (Ephesians 2:1). ■



Committed to Serve the Lord

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then said I, 'Here am I; send me.'" –Isaiah 6:8 (KJV)

Rachel McKeegan, 41, recognized the need to further the spread of the Gospel and asked herself, if not me, then who? Rachel lives in Texas and heard about FIA through her former pastor, Don Hunt, who moved to Pennsylvania and attends Community Bible Church in Marietta, PA. Knowing Rachel's heart for missions and her skills, he shared the opportunity to serve with FIA because he thought it would be a good fit for her.



"I love to serve and felt the call of missions even as a child. It's a huge blessing to go and work alongside missionaries in skills I've learned over my life," Rachel shared. In addition to speaking Spanish and having experience in animal husbandry, Rachel has many skills, such as construction, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, large equipment, and cooking.

Rachel has gone "all in" for the Gospel as she participated in three short-term trips with FIA this year - Nicaragua in March (see her article in the March issue of *The Challenge*), Wisconsin in June serving Ethnos360, and Vanuatu in September at the FIA ranch.

Rachel didn't experience culture shock from the rough conditions as many travelers do because she has visited South America and Mexico several times; however, she is always more aware of the little things we take for granted in the States. "During the trip to Wisconsin, we lived in a typical apartment with air conditioning and all the conveniences. Not so in Nicaragua, where it is hot and humid, and we could hear the monkeys screaming from our screened-in rooms. And water doesn't run out of a spigot to hook up a hose to make cement. Every gallon of water is carried in buckets to the job site," she explained. It is also noteworthy to her that we have different versions of the Bible in English, yet many believers don't have one written Bible in their language.

In Wisconsin, Rachel used her diverse construction skills to assist with the renovation of a newly purchased 100-year-old apartment building for Ethnos360. In Vanuatu, she worked on the new roof for the maintenance building.

Rachel recently finished training to become an associate with FIA. She is now a committed volunteer, meaning she is on the shortlist to go and serve when called. "I am willing and hoping to go on six trips this year as the Lord leads. I am blessed to partner with FIA and also my personal prayer and financial partners to be able to go and do. It's a blessing to serve, and I'm grateful to Jesus for the opportunity to travel and serve with FIA." ■

VANUATU

Skilled Hands & FEET THAT FOLLOW

"And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship... In the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee..." – Exodus 31:3-6 (KJV)

THE STORY OF LEVI PITMAN, FIELD MANAGER, VANUATU



Serving God in Vanuatu was the last thing I thought I would do with my life. Now I can't imagine doing anything else," said Levi Pitman, FIA Field Manager. As a homeschooled child, Levi's academic schedule was flexible, which allowed him the time to develop his interests and skills in construction and mechanics. In 2007, then-17-year-old Levi traveled to Vanuatu for the very first time to serve the missionary community (a trip, he says, that only happened because his parents made him go). Praise God because a seed was planted for future ministry through that trip. "He returned to Vanuatu twice while attending Bible College, staying for two and a half years on the second trip.



Serving With Mechanical Skills

In those early years as a single missionary in Vanuatu, Levi helped support missionaries reaching out into remote villages, traveling with them, working on building projects and maintaining vehicles needed for mission work. His initial perspective was that someone locally could be hired to do this work. But he quickly learned that qualified mechanics were challenging to find and expensive to hire in this small, remote island nation. Adverse road conditions and salt air are hard on vehicles and equipment. With parts costly or unavailable, Levi often had to fabricate the needed parts or fix pieces that would typically be tossed.



After he returned to America, the Lord kept Vanuatu in Levi's heart. Still, he kept arguing with God, saying it wasn't a real ministry and that missionaries could find other ways to get their vehicles fixed and buildings constructed.

One morning, Levi came across Exodus 31, where God tells Moses how he wants the Tabernacle built. Moses must have wondered how in the world he would get all of this done. Then God tells Moses he has prepared Bezaleel and explains how he has equipped him with the skills needed to build the Tabernacle.

Called To Vanuatu

Levi realized that God had been preparing and equipping him with the skills he needed to be a Bezaleel for missionaries in Vanuatu, and it was time to go.

Even though he questioned it, Levi faithfully answered God's call, trusting that the Lord had a plan. He and his family moved to Vanuatu in 2018 as full-time missionaries, where they have been using the strengths and abilities God gave them to support the Gospel message going out to those without Christ.

Levi serves wherever and whenever he can. In these past four months alone, Levi has worked on several construction projects with ministry partners and repaired seven missionary vehicles needed for outreach and service. He's been the general handyman, missionary mechanic, stand-in preacher, chauffeur, equipment/supply deliveryman, and even an emergency arborist.

God has used Levi and his family to help many missionaries overcome practical obstacles to their ministry and address vehicle maintenance issues and construction challenges. The Pitmans have been sent to Vanuatu with the gift of helping accelerate the mission work of the Lord, being an encouragement to others, and demonstrating the love of God through service. Like Bezaleel and Aholiab, the Lord has given them wisdom specific to help meet the needs of our mission partners today. Together, they see the Gospel moving forward in Vanuatu. ■



Gwen's Lasting Legacy: FIA Planned Giving

Gwendolyn Catherine (Brunk) McCurdy Slater Goodrich was a woman who exemplified a passion for the Great Commission and a mindset of building for the future. **During her 93 years on the earth, she and her first husband, Don, served with New Tribe Missions in Papua New Guinea.** There, she pushed forward the Gospel to unreached people groups and taught several indigenous men Melanesian-Pidgin English literacy skills.

After returning from the mission field later in life, Gwen and her second husband, Dick, continued their commitment to missions by traveling on various mission trips. She loved to serve in practical ways to shine the light of God's love in whatever corner of the world she visited.

When it was no longer feasible for Gwen to be a go-er, she stayed active in missions by investing her dollars in eternal purposes. She donated generously to develop FIA's first headquarters in Missouri and

faithfully and consistently gave to various FIA work projects over the next decade.

Gwen also took steps to see that her Great Commission passion continued even after the Lord called her home. Through thoughtful designations to FIA through her will, Gwen continues to empower FIA to make eternal impacts today while providing her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren with a legacy of impacts in frontline Gospel work. Her planned giving provided FIA's Where Needed Most Fund with generous resources to help make Jesus known in Africa, Papua New Guinea, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Vanuatu!

If you would like to consider Legacy Giving like Gwen, Tim Johnston (FIA's Director of Partnership Development) can connect you with the free-of-charge resources and legal personnel to craft your giving plan. Feel free to email him at timjohnston@FIAintl.org or call or text him at **717.579.7001** to start the discussion today. ■

2024 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)



Training



Nicaragua | June

Missions 101 – introduction to missions from a field perspective.

Well Drilling



West Africa | April

Drilling water wells to support partner ministries. Need general laborers.

Mexico | April & November

Drilling water supply wells to support community outreach programming, in partnership with a remote mission hospital.

USA Teams



Florida | January

Dismantling a hydroponic greenhouse from ETHNOS 360 and preparing it for shipment to Missouri. Need an electrician and a plumber.

Missouri | February & March

Interior remodel/renovation work of residential dwellings at ETHNOS 360 mission training center in Camdenton, MO. Need general laborers, interior finishing, plumbing, and electrical workers.

Wisconsin | June

Supporting ETHNOS 360 training school in Waukesha, WI, through interior and exterior renovation work. Need construction and general laborers, interior finishing, plumbing, and electrical workers.

Construction



West Africa | February

Fabrication and construction of steel frame for vehicle and equipment maintenance hangar, welding, and finishing. Need welders and general laborers.

Vanuatu | February

Completion of steel frame hangar construction and work on Teams building. Need welders and general laborers.

Nicaragua | March & April

Construction of a community kitchen and meeting space (installation of steel-frame structure). Need welders and general laborers.

West Africa | May

Finishing FIA teams center (roofing and finish work) and supporting FIA site development projects. Need construction and general laborers.

Uganda | April & June

Construction of community outreach center and housing units for partner project. Need construction and general laborers.

Vanuatu | June

Roadwork and construction for water project. Road work and excavation, remote site access, and materials stockpiling. Need equipment operators and general laborers.

Mechanical



Vanuatu | April

Mechanical services to support vehicle and equipment maintenance programs. Need electricians and mechanics.

Mexico | April & November

Mechanical services to support vehicle and equipment maintenance programs and drilling wells for a remote mission hospital. Need automotive mechanics.

Special Projects



Papua New Guinea | February

Solar installation partnering with ITEC, setting up solar panel array and installing solar power supply system for FIA ministry.



United States Headquarters

✉ PO Box 323, Elizabethtown, PA 17022
📍 3950 E Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057

Phone: 717.546.0208

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