A Response from the West Pines Team

For the Glory of God

“There was a car bomb at the café, and we can’t get in touch with Mike…” Twenty hours earlier, our team, fifteen short-term missionaries from West Pines Community Church, boarded a jumbo jet to Burkina Faso. Jittery with nervous energy, yet ready to comfort struggling widows, wrap our arms around smiling orphans, build fences, herd cattle, we were prepared to do anything asked of us that we might be the hands and feet of Jesus in one of the poorest countries in the world.

Mike and a local pastor, Pastor Valentin, traveled two hours in two vans to pick up our team from the capital city of Ouagadougou. They were waiting a few blocks from the airport in the Cappuccino Café for our plane to land that evening. The details of what happened next were splashed all over the news in the United States for days. Car bombs exploded outside the Café and nearby Hotel Splendid. Gunmen burst into the Café and targeted westerners with their gunfire. At this same time, the plane with our tired but very excited mission team was preparing to land. Approximately 1,500 feet from the ground, the entire plane went dark. Television screens flickered, and went black. The wing lights went out, and the plane accelerated back into a steep climb.

Initially, told by the crew that rioting had prevented our landing, we were rerouted to Naimey, Niger. What originally seemed a minor inconvenience, turned grave as our team leader was informed of the car bombs and shooting. He tried calling Mike’s cell phone every few minutes, only to have it go directly to voicemail. After a couple hours sitting on the tarmac in Niger we flew into a third African country, Togo. Issued temporary visas in Lome, Togo we sought a few hours sleep in a hotel before returning to Ouagadougou the next afternoon.

Apprehensive about landing in a city struck by terrorists hours prior, our greater concern was for Mike. Knowing plans were being made to get us home as soon as possible, an irrational part of me hoped Mike would appear, shaken but unharmed, drive us back to Yako, regaling us with incredible stories of a narrow escape. But still, no word from Mike. Prayers became more fervent and frequent. Our shared mantra of “he’s probably in a hospital somewhere,” became less and less believable. We were losing hope of hearing good news. The silence was piercing, and we hurt for Amy. Where would we go? And then something amazing happened. The Lord gave us Bart, Jane Ann, Betty, John and Joanna-fellow missionaries in Ouagadougou, that know and love Mike and Amy. These people housed us, fed us, and loved us. After 20 long hours, we heard the devastating news that Mike had been killed in the terrorist attack. Together we cried, prayed, shared and yes, praised the Lord together.

Sunday morning a group of Burkinabe young men whom Mike had mentored including, Pastor Valentin, came to us from Yako. We cried with and found comfort with them. They told stories of Mike, and his larger-than-life personality. They sang How Great Thou Art in their tribal language. The Lord gave us precious time until we stepped onto the plane, homeward bound. God works in amazing ways. He turned every part of our plans upside down. We intended to swoop into Burkina and spread the love of Jesus. Instead, sequestered in a guarded house with nowhere to go, the Love of Jesus came to us. Freely, freely He gives! We intended to work side-by-side with Mike, but instead his face and life story were plastered on news stations, speaking of the man who gave up his earthly possessions to follow the Lord. In Amy we witnessed true trust in the Lord. Facing heart breaking grief and loss, she praised her heavenly Father wholeheartedly, vowing to stay in Yako to continue their mission. God chose the fifteen of us for very specific reasons. Most of us are still sorting through the lessons we learned, trying to discern our places in His plan. Our lives don’t feel quite the same after returning home. Deep and persistent questions about how I can better serve our Lord, how I can reach out of my comfort zone, and how I can be like Mike still linger in my heart. Erin Wilson -
Response from a Few Board Members

From The Heart

Receiving the call from Burkina Faso of Mike’s death brought me shock and grief. Overwhelmed by my own love for him as a brother in Christ, as well as my responsibility to report the news to the board left my mind spinning. I am so grateful that God had placed me in Florida where my wife and I could run to Him and seek refuge and comfort from Hollywood Christian Church, Mike and Amy’s home church. We stand in awe of the love Pastor Brian and the church family exhibit toward the Ridderings. I feel great comfort in knowing that Amy and her family will be loved and cared for. I am forever grateful that we serve a God who can take even the deepest tragedies and show His love and comfort, and give us peace. Jim

It is a most difficult time but I know each of you have been placed in SW, perhaps for such a time as this, and I encourage you to continue to do the hard work through these trying times. I am confident of your calling and ability and Wisdom resides in each of you. May the Comforter also be near you as you comfort others and help to guide Sheltering Wings affairs in the coming days. We can do what is needed and best as we work together and lean upon the Lord and not our own understanding. We Know He reigns. We Know He is good. We Know He does things that are Right...we trust Him. Thank you all for giving of your life. Today we fight with great soberness, the Victory is assured, it belongs to the Lord. He has overcome and holds the Keys of death and hell. Now, we must rule in the midst of our enemies. Mercy will triumph over judgement. Do good, overcome evil.
Your fellow servant, Bruce K. York

As secretary to the board of Sheltering Wings, it was pure pleasure to hear Mike’s heart as he shared ideas and reported on projects to us--so much so that it was hard to remember to take notes sometimes! I remember from a sharing session at a retreat a couple years ago: we asked Mike to share with us his hopes and dreams. We wanted to know the God-sized dreams, not the edited-for-practical-considerations version. His face lit up and we heard the real, unfiltered stuff, some of which we’ve seen already, or at least started, and all of which we hope to complete even now in memoriam. Mike was a man who wanted to hear from God, did hear from God, and lived strong to do what he heard. Every monthly update was full of unfiltered, faith-filled report on his projects...it’s been such an honor to know and serve such a faithful servant of God. Respectfully submitted, Charlotte

Response from a Friend

From The Heart

These last few days, my mind and heart have been challenged as I questioned the killing of innocent bystanders like Michael Riddering. My heart sank as I read the many news reports and Facebook posts about this tragic incident. At one point I had to walk away and appeal to heaven, seeking the explanation that only God can provide. Through my gamut of emotions, I have taken comfort in what Martin Luther King Jr. so famously stated: I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.“Mike, as we called him, was a man that displayed love toward God as he laid down his life for his wife and family, for his friends and the people of Burkina. My expectation and prayer is that the seeds that the Ridderings have sown will produce much fruit and that God’s will for Burkina’s people will be realized. Lea

Please pray for the Board as they grieve and grapple with their mission to bring Hope to the Nations and... for family, friends and supporters as they seek to understand and wrestle with a godly response to an ungodly act.
The Work Continues

Love Hope and Faith Abound in Kimini

Ruth and Linda returned unexpectedly, a little earlier than anticipated to their home away from home. We give thanks for their obedience and flexibility as they submit and serve as instruments in the hands of our Redeemer. Their obedience and response to God’s call is overwhelming to me at times. They returned to Yako first to support Amy and her family. Thereafter, they returned to the village of Kimini. Upon arrival, they were met by a precious expression of love from their new friends in Kimini. The love of Christ, that has been so freely given, came back to them. They were greeted with acts of kindness and expressions of grief and gratitude for the sacrifices the ministry of Les Ailes de Refuge has offered to the Burkinabe. In a remote village hours away from Yako, the people knew of the death of a martyr.

My prayer is that the Heart of God continues to be revealed through the work of His humble and willing servants. Our God is an active God! He is present and at work in our daily lives. Progress is being made in the lives of the village woman empowered through lessons using available resources. The government has assigned a nurse and the medical building is awaiting final equipment before opening. May the joy of the Lord reign in Kimini and spread like wildfire!

Update on the Banfora Team

The Matheny Family

I read this quote today from the Matheny blog: “Faith is not found in the going or the staying, faith is in the listening and obeying.”

Philip had returned to Burkina as planned with his brother in law to check on the Banfora project and get insight for the church back home. The rest of the family stayed behind to help and care for new baby and momma. Not only did Philip manage to get an update on the Banfora project, he was instrumental in responding to the crisis in Ouagadougou. We are so grateful for his leadership and his flexibility and above all his obedience to Christ. His love and support provided hope and healing for many. Philip visited each of three families currently in their Host Family Program. He reported that 28 more children are on a waiting list. Praying on what to do, God provided godly counsel to him.

While in Yako for the memorial, a local Burkinabe, Ernst counseled him. Ernst loves the Lord and has been instrumental in keeping the orphanage in Yako up and running. He advised Philip to discern whether family members can help, in an effort to equip and not enable the people. Those are the facts in a nutshell.

Now, the emotion. Let me start by saying, I LOVE THIS FAMILY!!!!! My heart has been burdened to pray for them constantly as I have watched current events unfold. As a friend, I will confess, I worry for them. As a supporter, I am comforted by seeing them and their faith family at work. I am grateful to see the body of believers rise up and care for them in such amazing ways. I was thrilled beyond belief to discover that gifts and opportunity allowed them to receive debriefing, counseling, support and security training. Watching the Church rise up to share their gifts and equip this young family, offers great comfort. And so, in an effort to honor this precious family and their faithfulness to our God, will you join me in praying for them. Lord, give them wisdom and understanding each and every day. Shari Grueninger

And so from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Colossians 1:9 (ESV)
7th Annual

Trivia Night for African Orphans

Saturday, March 5th, 2016

Doors open @ 6pm  Trivia starts @ 7pm

Test your knowledge and help Orphans in West Africa by attending a fun-filled general trivia night to benefit Sheltering Wings.

Proceeds of the event provide food, clothing, and education to orphans

Location:
St. John Vianney High School
(1311 South Kirkwood Road, Kirkwood, MO 63122)

$20 per person  $160 for a table of 8

Reservations are essential

Prizes for 1st, 2nd, & 3rd place

Soda ~ Water ~ Pretzels included with Registration

Feel free to bring your own snacks too!
50/50 raffle ~ Silent Auction
Mulligans ~ Attendance Prizes

To Register and pay online go to:
www.Sheltering-Wings.org

For more information contact Brenda at (314) 635-6316 or info@sheltering.org

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in affliction, with the comfort for which we ourselves are comforted.

For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5