

Samaritan's Purse Global Connect Conference



Just a short time ago, March 31 – April 2, to be exact, a small group from the Covenant Brethren Church leadership were invited to attend the Global Connect conference hosted by Samaritan's Purse, in Orlando, Fla. The invitation to this event was made possible by CBC's partnership with the Samaritan's Purse. This partnership began with the generosity of many churches across the denomination whose contributions have supported the presence of Samaritan's Purse and relief in the Ukraine. So, those of us who attended did so on behalf of all of you.

I don't usually write the articles for this publication, so my take on the conference may be a little different and not long enough to explain the "gift" of this trip.

Attending as your representatives were CBC board members Scott Kinnick, John Swonger and his wife Ruth, Grover Duling and his wife Diana, and also Craig Howard and his wife, Camille (that's me). The Lord worked out all the details, making this trip affordable for us, and less anxious for me. In fact, He planned out so many details for our group that in looking back I can see His hand at every turn.

He allowed Craig and me to meet up with long-time missionary friends Dave and Becky Byron and to catch up with their ministry and lives. A gift.

He allowed us to stay in a place that was like nothing we've ever stayed in before. Beautiful accommodations, weather, and surroundings. A gift.



He treated us to the presence of over 5,000 Christians under one roof, from many nations, all there for the common purpose of serving Him. I've been on many trips and stayed in all kinds of hotels, but never have I entered an elevator where people were interested in where you were from, what role you played in the success of Samaritan's Purse, etc. That was another gift in a world that is usually afraid to make eye contact.

God fed us like no other. It was like attending a wedding reception three times a day, only better! And we ate with people from across the globe. Craig and I sat down to a lunch with a Samaritan's Purse mechanic from Kenya and a pilot from Liberia. We had an interesting conversation about their ministries. Our group had dinner with a woman we

will never forget, Pann Wu, from Myanmar, which is a country where Christians are a distinct minority. She was so enthusiastic about her work with the shoebox ministry and follow-up teaching. She spoke of her great-grandfather as being the first Christian in her country. After a short while she realized that we were of Brethren heritage as was her family. Another gift!

John found he had a business connection with a man from India as they talked in an elevator. Craig was able to connect a need for Gospel translation to our missionary friend whose ministry is in working with new language translations of the Word.

Scott was able to begin a connection with CBC churches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with Operation Christmas Child.



We toured a portable hospital, like ones being used in Ukraine and Turkey, and their disaster service mobile “tool box,” a semi-truck that some of you may be very familiar with. We heard first hand stories of the work in those two counties and how God made inroads possible through the Christmas shoeboxes.

It wasn't just a “fun” trip. It was a brainstorming session on how CBC can better partner with Samaritan's Purse in spreading the Word. Information was collected to help with the work in Africa and Guatemala. Our hearts were encouraged through preaching, singing and celebrating the 200,000,000-shoebox mark. It was a blessing to hear what Franklin Graham had to say about the ministry and those who are the hands and feet of God.

We were accompanied many times by Samaritan's Purse representatives Lynne Rienstra and Dane Fowlkes, who will be at this year's Covenant Brethren Church Annual Meeting and Worship Conference. Lynn wanted to know how Samaritan's Purse could partner better with CBC and Grover requested, and received the name of a dedicated person for CBC to contact.

So many amazing gifts from God. For me, the biggest gift was that little glimpse of Heaven, where every nation will be present and we will sit down with one another, with no language barriers, to enjoy a meal together and to worship the Lord in a unity unknown on this earth. Our experience was a reminder that God is preparing a fabulous place for us and that the throngs of people there are all His children.

God is a gift giver. He doesn't deal in coincidences but purpose, which we saw on this trip. He gave us gifts we didn't deserve and weren't even looking for. None of us came home empty handed.

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17).

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