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# On Crossing Oceans and Mud Puddles

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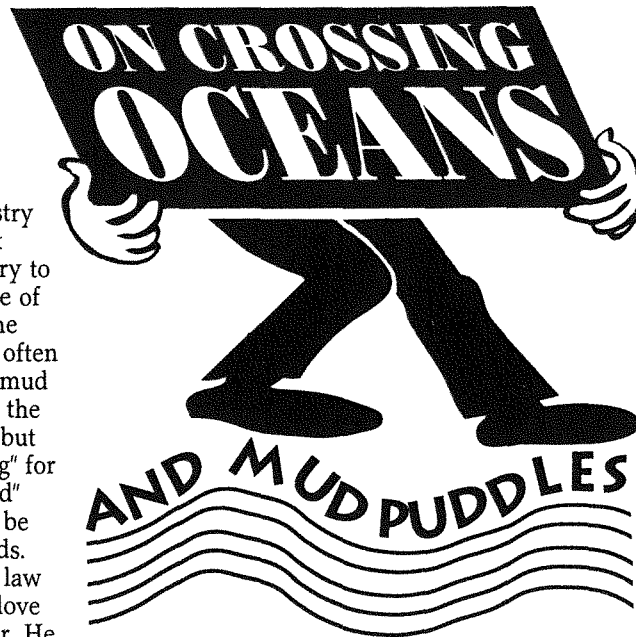
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BY PAUL ANDERSON

**C**ROSS-CULTURAL ministry may be one of the most difficult kinds of ministry to grasp, and yet it can also be one of the most rewarding. Indeed, the crossing of an ocean for Christ often seems easier than crossing the mud puddle between our house and the neighbors'. Of course it is not, but the lure of doing something "big" for God often blinds us to the "good" that can be done, and needs to be done, right in our neighborhoods. When Jesus reduced the entire law of Moses to two priorities, the love of God and the love of neighbor, He was calling us to local ministry as well as a commitment to global outreach. Sometimes this involves cross-cultural ministry.

So what is cross-cultural ministry? Put simply, cross-cultural ministry involves the crossing of human barriers and group boundaries, motivated and empowered by the redeeming love of Christ. It demands that we look beyond the social groupings in which we feel most at home and become open to how Christ would use us as His partners in loving/reaching a hurting world. Sounds good, but why is it so difficult?

I suppose the comfort of the group (especially when comprised of "folks like us") may keep our horizons low, dimming our vision. After all, complacency is a terrible thing to give up, especially when mastered as an art!

And, there are few things more threatening than to explore involvement in another culture setting, where others "do it well" but we don't. We may feel out of our element; unable to feel secure, always wondering whether we're fitting in or seeming awkward. Like the social insecurity of a perpetual junior high school existence. Help!

As helpless as such callings make us feel, true leadings of Christ bear within themselves real means of empowerment. Where our vision is dim, Christ gives us new eyes to see others as He does. Where our courage is weak, His Spirit gives us genuine boldness whereby no

risk is too daunting. When our resources seem small, He reminds us that God is the true Source of who we are and what we have. This includes such resources as time, energy, money, talents, possessions—and even love.

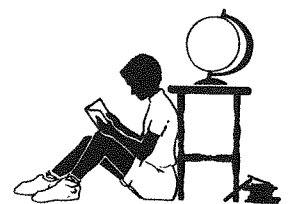
Over the last couple of decades the Lord has prospered the concern of cross-cultural ministry among evangelical Friends in North America. Such places as Piedmont, Akron, and Cabrini Green have become synonymous with the

spiritual calling to look beyond white, middle-class groupings to some of the rest of the world for whom Jesus died. In the last couple of years the Houston Project has also become a reality, offering yet another set of opportunities for Christian ministry. As contexts for service and as examples for further outreach, these mission points of cross-cultural ministry challenge us to be a "Kingdom people," responding faithfully to the government of a God confined neither by temporal fads nor cultural trappings. The New Heaven and the New Earth begin here and now, and this is part of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

In the name of Him who crossed the greatest gulf to become a mortal and who also reached out to Samaritans and dined with "sinners," give us the vision to see our neighbors as He does and the willingness to lay down our lives as He did. Thank you, God, that Your redeeming love reaches across the widest of oceans... and even the most daunting of mud puddles. Amen. EF



### Introducing New Features



We are pleased to announce that this issue of the EVANGELICAL FRIEND includes the first of two new regular feature articles by Janet Johnston and Dr. John Williams, Jr., which will alternate between the regular contributions of Nancy Thomas and Charles Mylander.

Janet is an instructor of Christian Education and Drama at Barclay College in Haviland, Kansas, is President of the Missions Commission of Evangelical Friends International—North America and is currently engaged in involving students in prison ministries. Janet's creativity and sense of humor will make her article, "Ponderings and Bustlings," a delight to read.

John is Superintendent of Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region, after having served very successfully for a decade as pastor of Canton First Friends Church. John's insights into sociology and his concern for world evangelism will make his article, "WorldWinds," a source of encouragement for all who are concerned with Christian outreach. Thank you, Janet and John, for your willingness to contribute in these ways!