

DECEMBER 2023

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.... Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" (Matt 14:27 & 31)

Dear Friends,

I have just returned home after travelling across the US for two months. My heart is filled with gratefulness to God and to all the wonderful people who received me with so much love and generosity! In this season of expressing our thankfulness, I want to thank each one of you who have given financially towards Advocates in this past year – there is still some way to go before our income budget for 2023 is met, but we have blind faith that God will come through for us.

In my November newsletter I wrote about my visits to Florida and Tennessee. From there I travelled to southern California where I had the privilege to meet with Prof Eric Halverson, the Dean of Trinity University Law School in Santa Ana. Advocates International already has a treasured relationship with Regent and Liberty University Law Schools and we are eager to establish a similar relationship with Trinity.

The 33rd Annual Global conference of Transform Our World (TOW) in Santa Clara, CA was an unforgettable, lifegiving experience! The organization was started by Dr Ed Silviso and his wife Ruth decades ago and is a strategic alliance of pulpit and marketplace ministers who are building prototypes for transformation on every continent and in every sphere of society. During the conference there were amazing testimonies from across the world of how Christ's ecclesia has contributed to the transformation of cities, communities, governments, the arts and media, youth, and technology. I am excited about the connections I made and the prospects of collaboration. I am so grateful to Rick Heeren and his wife Rachel for convincing me to attend the conference and for all their love and hospitality!

In San Francisco CA, I spent a great time with John and Marjory Bancroft, longtime supporters of AI. There was a very special moment when I handed Marge a new AI brochure not realizing that she was the photographer of the photo on the brochure of the attendees of the 2008 convocation in front of the US Capitol Building in Washington DC!

From California I travelled to Colorado. In Denver, the CLS chapter hosted a lunch for 15 lawyers at the Justice and Mercy Legal Aid Centre where I could introduce the Daniel Project. It was a very special occasion for me as the Christian Lawyers Association in South Africa and CLS Denver got to know each other in 2000 and had various initiatives together. It was wonderful to catch up with Jim Helfrich and our other longtime friends and make some new friends!

In Colorado Springs I had the joy to have breakfast with Phil White. He and his wife Lynda have been friends of the Ericsson family for the past 50 years. Phil's memories of the first years of AI are precious and his personal advice on leading a Christian non-profit, invaluable! Also, in Colorado Springs I met with Dave and Sandra Schultheis (Dave is a former member of the Colorado Senate and now engaged in mentoring Christian School Board members) and with Dan and Donna O'Bryant. Dan and Donna are a remarkable couple serving respectively on the boards of Covenant Eyes, the National Centre on Sexual Exploitation and Shared Hope International.

In Virginia Beach, our board chair, Prof Jeff Brauch, and I met with Shaheryar Gill, Senior Counsel of the American Centre for Law & Justice. Shaheryar himself has an Advocates International background and was excited to discuss collaboration with AI in the Daniel Project in Pakistan and in Africa.

Back in Washington DC it was great to reconnect with Kelsey Zorzi, the Director of Advocacy for Global Religious Freedom of Alliance Defending Freedom International and her colleague, Sean Nelson, the Legal

Counsel responsible for Africa. AI and Advocates Africa already work closely with ADF International, and we are enthusiastic to expand the collaboration to specific cases of persecuted Christians.

One of the highlights of my visit to the US was my meeting in DC with Dr Christopher Chou, the CEO of Christian Post! ChristianPost.com is the US's most comprehensive Christian news website and was launched in March 2004 with the vision of delivering up-to-date news, information, and commentaries relevant to Christians across denominational lines. Christian Post is about to launch **Christian Daily International**, a global news company who would also like to share our stories of the Daniel Project and other AI focus areas from across the world. We are eager to connect the Christian Daily International journalists to our network and for us to benefit from the training they can provide for our advocates in publication of statements and reports.

In the last week I was in the US, Ligia and I hosted a lunch in Fairfax for David Treadwell, James Gravell and Pastor Mark Henson. It was a wonderful time of fellowship and recalling memories! In the first decade of AI's existence, David was Sam Ericsson's right hand who took care of all the details while Sam was taking care of the big picture stuff! Dave was also one of Sam's best friends – his continued support for AI is a great encouragement to us and his institutional memory invaluable! James, a retired military man, is a longtime supporter of AI. Pastor Mark Henson is from Fellowship Bible Church, Sam, and Bobby's home Church in West Virginia. It is precious to know that, after so many years, Fellowship Bible Church still supports AI financially!

On my way back to South Africa I detoured through Ethiopia. I could visit our dear sister Misgana's husband Yared, her two little girls and her sister Elshaday. It was good for me to see them and see that they are comforted after Misgi's sudden passing.

While in Addis Ababa I met with the board of the Ethiopian Christian Lawyers Fellowship to discuss the Daniel Project. It is encouraging that they will already be conducting training at the first National Assembly of Christian Lawyers re Persecution which will be held on Dec 2. I also had a productive meeting with Dagnachew, one of the leaders of OpenDoors in Africa. Other than the excellent data on religious persecution which we obtain from OpenDoors, we can benefit greatly from their existing training materials and their Arise Africa campaign which was launched recently. Dagne and I will be working on various areas of collaboration in the Daniel Project.

Abishag is a young female attorney in northern Nigeria who works primarily for the release of Christian girls who have been abducted or forced into marriage. Quietly, she is achieving amazing results! During the past week she sent the following WhatsApp: *"14-year-old Lami was abducted and forcibly converted in August. She was given "parents" who fixed her marriage for this weekend. Today Lami was rescued and safely hidden for rehab and deliverance."* We praise God for Abishag and pray His protection over her.

When I am in Addis, I attend Beza International Church. On Sunday morning, Dr Dennis Sempebwa from Eagles Wings International spoke about the reckless faith Jesus required from Peter when he called him to step out of the boat and walk on the water towards Him. Jesus required from Peter to not listen to the objections of his boatmates or the wind or look at the waves of the storm but just concentrate on Him. We all know what happened. Jesus says to Peter *"You of little faith, why did you doubt?"* My prayer for Advocates and for all of us that we will have reckless faith, devoid of doubt with our eyes fixed on Jesus!

Warmly in Christ



Teresa Conradie - President and CEO, Advocates International



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