

May 11, 2022



To all our partners who support our family in mission,

Greetings! The time has finally come to update you on our future plans!

As we have shared before, we returned to the US last summer prepared for a period of transition, knowing that our upcoming term would be different from our past 27 years in mission. We had wrapped up our work with CCI, packed up our rented house in Chiang Mai, and left Thailand uncertain of what was next. We were coming “home” to get Jonathan settled into college, reunite with Christopher and other relatives, report to Interserve, touch base our supporters, and... to discern God’s direction for our path ahead.

At the onset of our home assignment, we felt we had come to a crossroads. We were torn between two basic choices: Do we continue service overseas, or do we set down some roots in the US and be closer to family? In other words, are we still called to serve as Interserve mission partners, or is it time to settle into stateside jobs? And if we were to do the latter, what in the world would we do?

We are grateful for the period of reflection we have had — a time of debriefing, prayer, pondering, and many long walks in the woods. We are thankful for conversations with wise people on both sides of the world. It has been helpful to think through our life journey thus far to see how God has been leading us. Growing up in Asia as missionary kids, returning to the US for higher education, and then spending our entire careers overseas on the mission field, we have always experienced a sense of being “in between.” With that experience comes a degree of instability — of disconnectedness — which can be hard at times. But it also offers a multitude of blessings, one of which is the gift of having lived in both worlds, and thereby having the ability to act as a “bridge” between cultures, wherever we happen to be.

Through our discernment process we have come to realize that being “here” and being “there” is part of our identity and is the basis of our vocation. And we have discovered (with great joy!) that God is not calling us to choose between the two options, but rather to follow a new path that combines them both.

So, with Interserve’s blessing, we are preparing to embark on what we are calling a “hybrid” mission journey. By this we mean we will serve both here and abroad, splitting our time equally between the US and Asia.

In short, our road map looks like this...

For six months of the year we will be based in North Carolina, reaching out to refugees and facilitating church participation in the Welcome House ministry. Then we will spend short-term assignments in Thailand and Nepal — supporting Thai seminary students and staff, and encouraging Nepali ministries that uplift the poorest of the poor. These opportunities for service — both here on our own doorstep and across the globe — have unfolded through long-term relationships we have developed over the years, and through the amazing ways God leads us into new chapters of our lives.

The upcoming year and a half will be an exploratory, experimental period to ascertain if this hybrid model will work for us for the longer-term (i.e. until our retirement). Interserve leadership affirms that our plan matches its mission and vision, and stands firmly with us. We pray that our supporting churches and individual partners will do the same!

For those who would like more details about our new format of mission service, see the following page. We welcome any questions you may have, and look forward to continuing our partnership in mission.

Walking with you,

Ellen & Andy Collins

Hybrid Mission Plan - Andy & Ellen Collins - July 2022 through December 2023

USA -

Since October 2021 we have been blessed to volunteer with Welcome House, a mission ministry of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina (CBFNC). We are responding to a personal call and an invitation to continue this work of welcoming strangers and newcomers as we would welcome Christ.

Welcome House...

- believes in housing and hospitality as mission
- provides for immediate housing needs of refugees while agencies process their documents and find permanent housing
- provides temporary accommodations to refugees in houses provided by local churches
- serves as liaison between resettlement agencies, churches and refugees

Our role...

- use our intercultural gifts and backgrounds to welcome refugees
- support and facilitate the outreach of churches and their welcome teams
- serve on a new leadership team for our area of NC
- share about the Welcome House model among churches

We will be seconded by Interserve as fully-supported mission partners to serve with Welcome House six months a year, starting in January 2023, with a two-month orientation period in July/August 2022.

Thailand -

We served in Thailand (Andy's first home) from 2006 through 2021. At the end of our last term, Andy handed over his role as audio-visual consultant at the Christian Communications Institute (CCI). Ellen's role teaching at McGilvary College of Divinity also came to an end. We are honored to have been offered an opportunity to return on a short-term basis at the seminary.

McGilvary College of Divinity...

- was founded by Presbyterian missionary Daniel McGilvary in 1889
- is part of Payap University, a Christian institution of the Church of Christ in Thailand
- offers Bachelor Divinity and Master of Divinity degrees to Thai and hill ethnic minority students
- equips students to serve in Christian leadership roles in the Thai church and community

Our role...

- live with students in Beth Shalom, the seminary dormitory
- tutor seminary students and enhance their practical English skills
- provide English editorial assistance to Thai faculty
- provide video and communication support to McGilvary and to Interserve partners

We plan to serve this year from October through December. The timing could change slightly for 2023.

Nepal -

When we lived in Nepal from 1994 to 2005, Ellen (who grew up there) worked in community health and education. As a trustee for her father's Dr. Dick Harding Charity Fund for Nepal since 2001, she has liaised with leaders of small, innovative projects that address the needs of the most marginalized in Nepal (e.g. providing sewing training for destitute widows, a dairy farm rehab center for the mentally ill, scholarships for village children). She has also maintained a long relationship with the Tansen School of Health Science (previously Tansen Nursing School), a model institution for young Nepali women.

After an absence of 17 years, we feel called to provide in-person encouragement to these Nepali partners. Due to precautions relating to pandemic and politics, this year we will spend just one month in Nepal to meet with people and visit projects. In consultation with local personnel on the field, we will explore ways to be involved there for a longer period in 2023.