

trinity evangelical divinity school

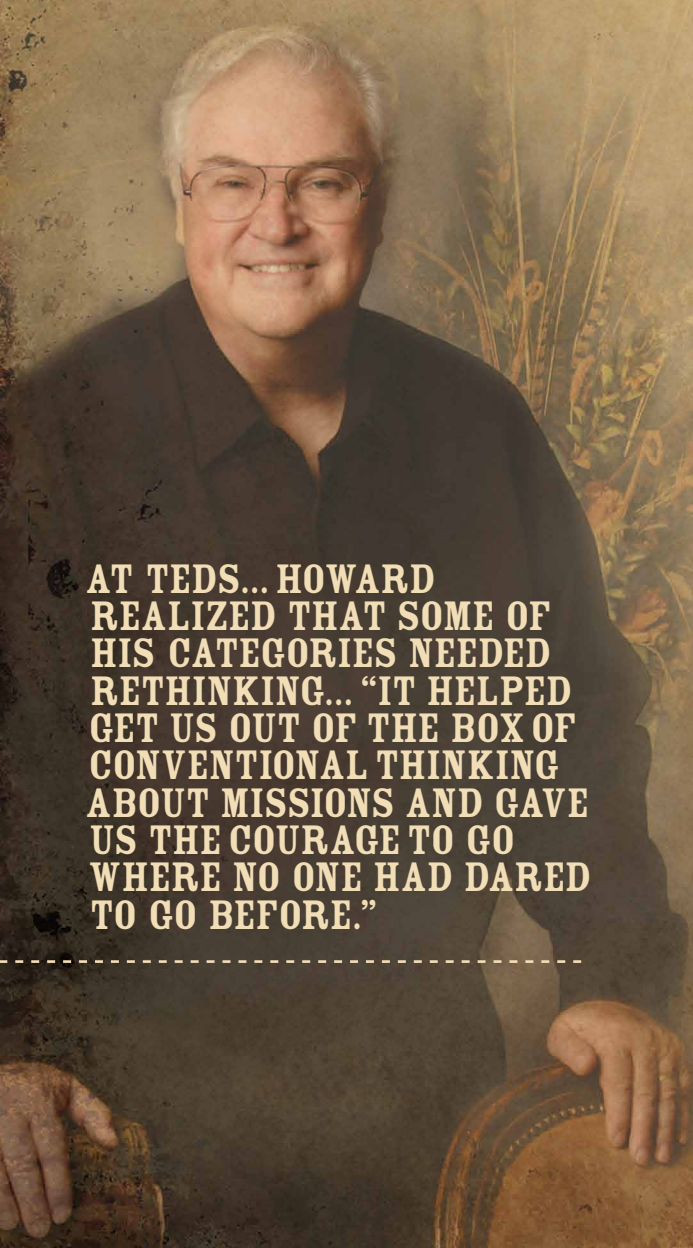
2010 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

Howard Brant (DMiss '85)

“There is a unique contribution

every nation has to make in global missions. When one part is missing, it is as if part of a great orchestra is silent. In the divine symphony, the West has played a leading part for several hundred years. Others have had lesser parts or been silent all together. But now in these days, the Divine Conductor is turning to all parts of his orchestra and bringing it all into one grand finale. As the last score is played, every part of the orchestra is required to play passionately, at maximum strength. What a huge disappointment if—in the last crescendo—individuals or sections of players are silent or drop out! This is the time for the whole church to be passionately involved in global missions.” So wrote Howard Brant. This quote summarizes well Howard’s passion for the internationalization of missions, and SIM reflects this attitude and his influence—they have seventeen-hundred long-term missionaries originating from fifty-one countries.

Although born in Alberta, Canada, Howard Brant spent most of his early years in Ethiopia, where his parents were missionaries serving with SIM. After finishing eighth grade in Addis Ababa, he returned to Canada for high school and Bible school, where he met Jo-Ann. They married in 1966 with their hearts set on missions.



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After attending Seattle Pacific College—Howard earning a BA and MA in Biblical Studies, Jo-Ann a BA in Education—they set out for Ethiopia in 1971 with one child on the way. For the first two years, Howard taught at a Bible school in Woliso with SIM. During this time, he gave his class an assignment: research local people groups. The students told him about the Guragae people, living southwest of Woliso. Together they researched and found there were three known believers among 750,000 Guragae.

In the words of Howard, “We wrote our report and sent it along with a fiery letter to our mission leaders telling them that if they did not send someone there, God would hold our mission accountable on judgment day. SIM responded by saying, ‘You are right! And you are going!’ That sent us off on the adventure of our lives.”

“The Guragae people built us a grass hut. We moved in and started a school, a clinic, Bible translation, and went zooming all over the place on a motorcycle preaching the Gospel. Then early one morning we heard on the Ethiopian radio station that Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, had been dethroned. Ethiopia was now under communist rule. But we did not want to walk away from the Guragae.” Strategically, they chose to disciple six believers for a year, until they were put on trial in 1977. After a week of house arrest, they were allowed to leave the country through the intervention of the Canadian government.

When Howard briefly visited the Guragae in 1988, he asked how many churches there were. The government had closed them all. So he asked if there were any meetings. Yes, more than fifty houses with up to one-hundred-fifty per house. The Brants had truly taught those who then taught others (2 Tim 2:2). Today there are one hundred churches and fifteen thousand believers among the Guragae, who now number over 2 million.

In 1978 they were redeployed to Ghana, where they ministered to the Builsa and Mampursi peoples and launched a mission to the Koma, a small tribe in a remote area. It is an amazing story, illustrating Don Richardson’s principle that peoples are prepared to receive the gospel through redemptive analogies. As told by Howard, “These people believed that God had lost his son. And one day God would come looking for his son. We told them God’s son is not lost. You’re lost. We’ve come to tell you about his son. So they read the Bible we left them. When I went back the second time, they said, ‘That book you gave us, it’s all about the son of God. And we want to accept him as our God.’” Christians from among that Koma village have now taken the gospel to all the villages of their tribe and beyond.

During this era in world missions, there was growing tension between mission agencies and local churches about their respective roles and boundaries. Some in Majority World churches were calling on missionaries—predominantly Westerners—to go home. Howard dreamed of healing this divide by challenging both missions agencies and indigenous churches to unite around the common task of taking the gospel to unreached peoples. What would this look like? It meant launching missions from the Majority World countries and helping agencies like SIM fully integrate these new missionaries. So Howard pursued more training in the form of the Doctorate of Missiology at Trinity.

Howard and Jo-Ann had a good biblical and theological base, but by their admission, rather fixed ideas about missions. At TEDS, studying with professors and students who had served around the world, Howard realized that some of his categories needed rethinking. He was exposed to new and creative ways of doing Kingdom business. Howard describes it as a Copernican revolution in his thinking—all the bits of information

were there, but he saw them interconnect to form a new mosaic. “It helped get us out of the box of conventional thinking about missions and gave us the courage to go where no one had dared to go before.” During this time, Jo-Ann also pursued higher education, completing an MA and PhD (ABD) at Northwestern in cultural anthropology.

SIM, which now stands for Serving in Mission, began in Africa under the name Sudan Interior Mission, and has always focused on unreached people groups. After his degree, Howard was brought aboard as the international outreach coordinator to help open new areas in Asia and Latin America. He led teams to scout locations, research strategies, and establish the first missionaries in country. If there was a church locally, SIM would develop an interdependent partnership to develop ministry to the unreached. If there was no church, then the SIM missionaries would work to plant an indigenous church. During this period, Jo-Ann worked in and later led the SIM-International Resource Center and Archives.

In 1993 Howard became the SIM deputy international director under Dr. Jim Plueddemann and was responsible for East Africa and Asia, while Jo-Ann was responsible for SIM’s Advisory Services, coordinating media, translation, development projects, and the initiation of their HIV/AIDS work. Then, in 2006 they moved to Nairobi, Kenya. Jo-Ann pioneered the rapid growth of SIM in Southern Sudan as the acting director for SIM-Sudan. Howard was named SIM’s champion for emerging mission. This role allowed him to continue to internationalize the missionary staff of SIM, with the vision of making a highway for all nations to be involved in the missionary enterprise.

Howard has come to believe three fundamental principles: “First, just as God has prepared all people to ‘receive’ the Gospel (as Don Richardson taught), so God has also prepared all people to ‘take’ the Gospel. Second, our ecclesiology must match our missiology, and if one day we will all worship together at the throne, we should work together here and now for the glory of God. Third, there is no power on earth that is stronger in uniting believers than a passion for the Gospel.”

Now, after thirty-three years, the Brants plan to return to the Guragae people. “It’s gone full cycle. Now some church leaders have earned their degrees and are opening their own Bible school. Before, we were the initiator, the provider. We now go back as their guest—and as their servant. So how all this works will be our new step of faith. We will spend our sunset years pouring out our lives creating mature and true disciples who can lead their churches and expand God’s Kingdom. We want to spend our closing days just working with a handful.” After a furlough and publishing Howard’s commentary on Acts, they hope to move back to Ethiopia next year.

Howard and Jo-Ann have three grown children: Krista Lee Roes, a missionary with Greater Europe Mission in Germany; Lisa Lawrence, a nurse working with Iraqi refugees as a part of Arab World Ministries in Amman, Jordan; and Judson Brant, who just reenlisted for a third tour with the U.S. military in Iraq, where he witnesses for Christ while working in military intelligence.

It is with great honor and pleasure that the Trinity Alumni Association awards the 2010 Alumnus of the Year Award to **Mr. Howard Brant (DMiss '85)**

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