



## Worship Resources for *Steeple*s Ad Run – Fall 2008

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### God is Stillspeaking in Mission

In the fall of 2007 I had the pleasure of visiting friends who had recently become missionaries in Jamaica. They are working with Christian Service International and are truly inspirational people. Nick and Jodi Vrettos, with their two young daughters Dora and Lydia, along with family friend Jamie Barton, left their southwest Ohio community to dedicate an unspecified time of their lives to serving the extremely poor population of rural Jamaica.

Their primary mission is to host teams from U.S. churches and universities as they come to Jamaica to learn and build homes. Along the way they have also started an education assistance fund and are working closely with local churches in the Highgate area to assess and deliver assistance to the most needy.

I tell you this as introduction to an amazing experience we had with the Stillspeaking God in Jamaica. One of the local partner churches had invited our team to worship with them on a Sunday morning. The church could best be described as charismatic, with plenty of singing and unstructured praise – even a little speaking in tongues!

As we milled about with the sound of musicians practicing, introducing ourselves to the 40 or so attendees, Nick came up to me and asked if I would deliver the message for the day. What? Did I hear you right, Nick – preach? Now? The other U.S. pastor on the trip was providing music for the service, and as their guest, I was to be honored with speaking.

I didn't feel honored at first. I felt a little terrified. No quiet time to reflect on scripture. No Internet to find relevant news stories. No quotes that popped into my head. I was drawing a blank.

Then, in a calm and assured way, I was reminded of the conversation I had with Dora on the way to church that morning. She had been presented with a Bible at school a few weeks earlier (an Anglican private school.) She turned to Psalm 100 and began to read. Sweetness of heaven, that eight year old spoke the words, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth..."

I quickly opened my Bible and read through the psalm. Phrases stuck in my heart - "all the earth", "we are God's people," "enter the gates with thanksgiving," "the Lord is good," "God's love endures forever."

Encouraged by how these passages opened up to me in the context of partnered ministry, in how God provides relationships and resources that made collaborative mission possible, and humbled by the of our hosts, which is hope for them in desperate living conditions, I felt ready to speak.

But mid-way through the service, following a minute of free praise, the Jamaican pastor's wife stepped away from her role as worship leader and began to speak prophetically – eyes clenched tight and hands raised high...

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all ye lands!" "Amen," came the response.

"Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing!" "Amen, yes, yes..."

"Know ye that the Lord, he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." "Oh Lord, yes!"

Purposefully and perfectly she recited the King James Version translation of Psalm 100. Then she began to speak about how across time and culture, race and age, gender and class, God has always spoken to and through those who offer praise.

I was nearly speechless but reiterated the story about how I was inspired to speak on Psalm 100: that the Holy Spirit had made possible a convergence of messages, that many had heard the Stillspeaking God that morning and been obedient to relay what they were hearing. I told them what a great honor it was to worship with such faithful people – with other sheep of God's pasture – all cared for the same.

Following the service the other American pastor came up to me and expressed astonishment at how Dora, I and the pastor's wife had all heard the same thing that morning. A veteran of mission experiences he said, "That sort of stuff never happens to me at home."

I replied, "That's because it's not printed in the bulletin..."

It is truly amazing what can happen when we are in places, frames of mind, and environments that encourage our reliance upon the Stillspeaking God. I am assured that God speaks to all the people equally – may we all have ears to hear, hearts to love and hands to serve the Stillspeaking God.