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Pastors, Persecution and Planting

An Animist's Grandson Uses Thirdmill to Spread the Gospel

PLUS: Reaching the Chinese Diaspora

Pastors, Persecution and Planting

An Animist's Grandson Uses Thirdmill to Spread the Gospel



Reverend N grew up in a Christian home in India.

His grandfather had been an animist who practiced human sacrifice to satisfy the “land god.” But when Reverend N’s father met his mother, everything changed. His mother was a Christian pastor’s daughter and a believer, and after his parents’ marriage, his father received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Then his grandfather gave his life to Christ. And so did his grandmother. Then the entire village believed. It was an extraordinary work of God.

As a child, Reverend N was “very much good in obeying ... and going to church.” But despite his family’s remarkable story, he “slowly and gradually became worldly.” Then, in his last year of college, he attended a prayer meeting and heard a sermon on the book of Revelation that outlined the consequences of the last days for unbelievers.

Reverend N was terrified. In that moment, he decided to leave everything behind and follow Christ.

Starting in 1997, he began working for Campus Crusade for Christ (now known as Cru) and traveling to villages in India to preach the gospel and show the Jesus Film. It was during these years that,



despite having little experience and no theological training, Reverend N heard the Lord’s call to plant churches.

In Chhattisgarh (Reverend N’s home state in central India), over 19,000

villages remained unreached. To reach them, Reverend N left Campus Crusade for Christ and founded a small indigenous ministry. His goal was to evangelize and plant as many churches as possible. But there was a problem. The more churches he planted, the more pastors he needed. And finding enough well-trained pastors was difficult. As Reverend N tells us, “In India, hardly 4 to 5 percent of evangelists and pastors are trained.”

In addition, pastoral training was unavailable in his area, so pastors in Chhattisgarh and the surrounding states had to go elsewhere to attend a Bible school, leaving behind their families, congregations, and incomes. Tuition was a financial hardship for most. But these weren’t the only problems.

In India, many Christians also face intense persecution. In 2008, Reverend N experienced this persecution firsthand.

During the Kandhamal massacre, more than 6,000 Christian houses

and nearly 400 churches were set on fire by radicals in neighboring Odisha state. According to Reverend N, “We lost our house, and we lost our church ... and about 400 Christian pastors or Christian believers [were] killed, including some of our close relatives.”

After losing their church, home, and loved ones, Reverend N’s family hid in the jungle for 12 days before going to a government relief camp. He had to pause the ministry for three years as they “scattered here and there.”

But in 2011, Reverend N restarted his ministry in Madhya Pradesh. From there, the ministry expanded to Maharashtra and other places. But he still needed trained leaders. “That is the main negative point to not grow the ministry in India... Because many people, they do not know what they are preaching ... or what to preach.”

Then, in 2021, Reverend N attended a pastors’ conference where they presented Thirdmill’s curriculum. He heard about the depth of the material, and he learned that through Thirdmill Institute, students could earn certificates and a diploma — all in their heart language of Hindi. And amazingly, it was all free. “That motivated me,” Reverend N recalls. He asked the Thirdmill representatives, “Can [you] please help us train our believers and our untrained evangelists?” Our answer, of course, was “Yes!”

Reverend N held his first Thirdmill Institute training in July 2022.

“Now, we have 212 small congregations,” he says, “and we are also training more people.”

Since he was introduced to Thirdmill, there have been several violent attacks on churches and pastors by radical Hindu fundamentalists. Thirdmill Institute has been a lifeline for many church members and pastors who could not safely gather in churches but could continue their studies in home-based learning communities.

“In 2022 and 2023 we ... trained more than 500 believers and pastors,” Reverend N tells us. At least 144 people received their first-year certificate and continued on for the second year.

“

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Reverend N

”

In 2024, in Chhattisgarh, 127 students received Thirdmill Institute certificates, with approximately 350 students working to complete the first-year curriculum.

This early success of Thirdmill Institute led Reverend N to open a new training center in August 2024 using Thirdmill’s Hindi-language materials exclusively. The center recently secured residential housing and classroom space and is currently equipping 33 students

from throughout Chhattisgarh State to return to their homes to train more leaders.

Since its inception, Reverend N’s ministry has helped to train more than 1000 students and issued at least 500 Thirdmill Institute first-year certificates, with more to come.

They are also collaborating with Thirdmill’s partner Equipping Farmers International (EFI). In July, they conducted a joint Thirdmill/EFI training event in Madhya Pradesh, where they taught farmers sustainable farming techniques and trained them to use the Thirdmill Institute.

“We are teaching evangelism as well as farming,” says Reverend N. “We have to show the government that we are doing the work for the development of the nation, as well as development of the kingdom.”

From being an animist’s grandson, to planting churches and using Thirdmill to train hundreds of leaders, Reverend N is changing India.

We couldn’t be more delighted to be a part of his journey!



OPPOSITE: joint Thirdmill/EFI training event; new Bible training center
ABOVE: Thirdmill students learn sustainable farming techniques through EFI



Dallas, TX

Creating a Solid Foundation

How One Small Church in Texas is Reaching the Chinese Diaspora

三一華人教會 Trinity Chinese Church



Graduates of TCC's Thirdmill Institute training show off their certificates.



Members of Trinity Chinese Church enjoy a meal with Thirdmill's Rev. Chen.

ACCORDING TO A REPORT from International Christian Concern, "There is no longer a safe place to be a Christian in China."¹ For this reason, many believers from China have left their homeland and come to the United States. But it isn't easy to find a church in a place where most people don't speak your language. And although God's Spirit can still move, learning and absorbing God's Word in a language that is not your heart language can be challenging.

In Allen, Texas, a suburb of Dallas, Trinity Chinese Church (TCC) is working to make a difference. Texas contains the third-largest population of the Chinese Diaspora, behind California and New York. To serve this growing population, TCC decided they would plant more Chinese-speaking churches. But they had a problem. It's difficult to plant healthy churches without trained leaders, and while many of TCC's congregants had master's degrees and PhD's, they were still biblically and theologically unprepared for leading church plants.

A few years ago, on a trip to Dallas, Thirdmill's Regional Director for East and Southeast Asia, Rev. Ben Chen, met Rev. Dr. Kaibin Fu, pastor of TCC, and his elder, Chen Le, who is in charge of TCC's equipping program for church planting. Rev. Chen introduced them to Thirdmill Institute, and they immediately saw the value.

In 2022, they began two Thirdmill Institute learning communities to train leaders. These learning communities completed the first certificate in the program in December 2023, and learning community members are now working on the second certificate.

Thirdmill Institute has been adopted as the core discipling and leadership development program for their church planting program. According to Rev. Fu, the Thirdmill Institute certificate program "provides faithful and fruitful leaders and lays a solid foundation for future leaders," which is a very good thing, as TCC has now grown to more than 250 congregants!

Thirdmill's Rev. Chen was invited to speak at TCC's graduation ceremony in January 2024 and heard many life-changing stories from the students and learning community leaders. He and his wife also spoke at TCC's annual Labor Day church retreat. Please pray that Chinese Christians in Texas and throughout the world can continue to study God's Word in their own language and lead others in the truth of the gospel.

¹www.persecution.org/2021/09/17/new-icc-report-records-year-christian-persecution-china



Bidibidi Refugee Settlement
photo by Franciscobcn

Partner Spotlight: Edgewood Ministries



THROUGHOUT BIDIBIDI, one of the world's largest refugee settlements, something remarkable is happening. Pastors who once fled war are now cultivating relationships for God's kingdom—equipped and empowered with theological training made possible through Thirdmill and our partner Edgewood Ministries. This is more than education; it's transformation. And that transformation is fueling hope in one of the most vulnerable regions on earth. Don't miss this glimpse into what God is doing. Click the QR code to watch the video now.



Planned Giving: Wills & Bequests

Leave a Legacy of Biblical Education!



Have you considered how your legacy can advance God's kingdom? By including Thirdmill in your will, you can ensure that free, high-quality biblical education continues equipping church leaders worldwide for generations to come.

Bequests have a profound impact and are one of the easiest, most popular types of planned gifts. Simply indicate in your will your intentions for leaving part of your estate to Thirdmill. If you don't have a will, sites like freewill.com, totallegal.com, and rocket-lawyer.com will guide you through creating a simple will for free or at a low cost.

To learn more or access sample bequest language, visit thirdmillgivinglegacy.org, or contact Jeremy Ruch at jruch@thirdmill.org. Your generosity today will empower church leaders for years to come!

Scan the QR code to learn more about legacy giving from our President, Richard Pratt and Legacy Advisor, Jeremy Ruch.

Recent Graduations



Colombia



Russia



Dominican Republic - Haiti

Generosity Corner

At Thirdmill, we are continually blessed by the stories of those whose lives have been transformed by the power of God's Word. One such story comes from Pat Penton, a faithful supporter whose journey exemplifies the profound impact of sound biblical teaching.

It is my great privilege and pleasure ... to offer some support to your ministry because I believe so strongly in what you do.

"It sits very right in my soul that you are able to reach and teach so very many people all over the world and enable them to give to the people in their own communities that gift God gave to me so many years ago."

— Pat Penton

I am a 79-year-old widow. I grew up in a church where the Word was not preached. Instead we heard topical, mostly "feel-good sermons". In a beautiful story (beautiful because God made His hand in it so amazingly obvious), I was brought, along with my beloved husband, to ... a church where I learned Reformed theology and was exposed to faithful expository preaching of God's Word. That was about 46 or 47 years ago, and I still haven't gotten over it! I often sit there during a worship service just overwhelmed that God gave me such a gift.

That is how I see Thirdmill — as God's wondrous way of giving people all over the world the precious gift that I was given. I think it's one of the most wonderfully conceived missionary works I know of for this particular day and time. It sits very right in my soul that you are able to reach and teach so very many people all over the world and enable them to give to the people in their own communities that gift God gave to me so many years ago.

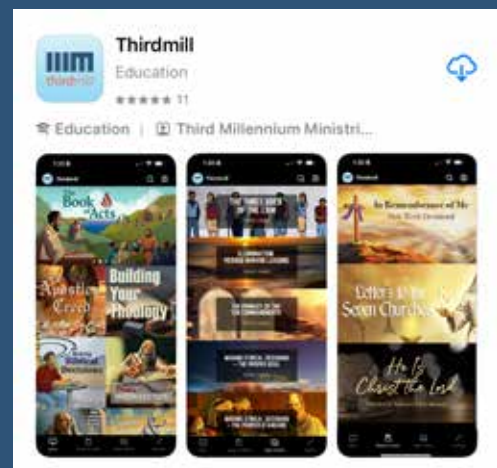
You are in my prayers daily and you are also remembered in my will. God bless you all so very much!



We are honored by Pat's prayers, support, and legacy, and we rejoice in the many lives being changed through the work of Thirdmill.

Study at Home with the Thirdmill App!

Now, you can access not only our seminary curriculum and topic videos but also our *Study at Home* series, all on your iOS and Android devices. Several of our *Study at Home* series have already been made available on the English app, and more will be released over the next few months.



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