

# Conversation with Erik Spruyt & Mike Jones: Rescuing the Rescuers

by Charles Strohmer

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I remember the mild trauma I suffered being in Romania the first time and how it changed me. It was just a few years after the uprising in 1989 that brought to an end forty years of communist rule there and the lives of the dictator Nicolai Ceausescu and his wife, Elena. I had gone for a week to teach in the Bible institute in Oradea, but I had never been in a nation abused, corrupted, and crushed by a dictator. The people had suffered so much. Things unimaginable to my Western mind had occurred. I was seeing the leavings and simply couldn't process it all. Probably I could have understood my collapse if I had gone there foolishly. But I had been prepared, or so it seemed. I had communicated by fax and phone call off and on for a couple years with the principal of the school, and that provided me with valuable information about the school and the students. I had also been prepared by a colleague who worked closely with Princess Margarita, the daughter of Romania's King Michael, who lived exiled in Switzerland. David traveled frequently to Romania on all sorts of mercy initiatives, and preceding my trip he continually provided me with the kind of invaluable insights that only a person who knows can give.

So between the principal and David, I became ready for post-Ceausescu reality. Besides, I wasn't an "immature" Christian. I'd been a believer for nearly 20 years, been raised in the Lord in good churches, been disciplined by some choice men of God, and had disciplined others myself. I'd published books, had an international teaching ministry, was an ordained minister. I'd been around. Not only that, for an American, I had been through the ringer a couple times even as a Christian.

Why, then, after just three days into my 10-days in Romania, under conditions of the best hospitality, did I start to crash? Why, then, beginning the fourth day, even with a warm, budding friendship with my Romanian translator and his wife, was I in bed each night despairing? Why, then, for a couple of days, was I secretly trying to arrange to abort the trip and get the heck out of there, contriving any excuse?

The only relief came when I was actually in the classrooms teaching or visiting my translator and his wife in their flat. But I couldn't go anywhere. I felt trapped. Claustrophobic. Immature. Useless. It became stupendously clear that I was a wimp. What kind of discipling had I been under back home, anyway? My American pragmatism and Christian idealism had been shattered as I saw what had happened to the Romanian people and their nation, as I experienced their conditions, felt the devil in the Ceausescu regime's demonization of the infrastructures.

From this experience I've gained a deep sympathy for humanitarian aide, missions, and relief workers who go "prepared" into global hotspots but then crash and burn there. The past decade has seen a huge influx of both employed and volunteer workers, many from Western nations, going into the horrific social aftermath that these violent hotspots leave in their wake. They go as educators, engineers,

agriculturists, nurses, pastors, refugee workers, orphanage workers, whatever. They go to bind up wounds, to care for the children, to rebuild community. They go idealistically or realistically, out of compassion or calling. They go knowing that they run the risk of being shot at, abducted, raped, or killed.

In many ways they are prepared, but probably not for the acute traumas they may experience personally while there. How do you train and equip people to have a gun stuck in their face, or a mob threatening them, or worse? Many workers simply cannot handle it and they crash and burn right out on the field. What happens to these brothers and sisters in Christ? Who will rescue these rescuers? The following story, exclusive to Openings, surrounds just such a rescue operation quietly unfolding on the French-Swiss border. In 1994, Dutch-born Erik Spruyt and his wife, Jeltje, founded "Le Rucher," a groundbreaking ministry in the foothills of the French Jura Mountains overlooking Geneva, where they and the staff care for humanitarian aide and missions workers from around the world who suffer acute trauma arising from their work of rescuing others.

The sacrificial life of these aide workers and missionaries is unimaginable to most of us in the Western world, especially here in America, where we live sheltered from the brutal horrors and social devastation inflicted on many regions of the world. This world-picture is bleak indeed. We get CNN cameras pointing at it occasionally; we get brochures in the mail seeking donations; we may get a five minute commercial about it from a pulpit. But that's not making us aware. Yet a new breed of humanitarian aide and missions worker is aware, and still they boldly go. For them, Le Rucher is a jar of balm in this world of pain.

I asked Erik Spruyt about this "sea change" in worker care and why there is a need for ministries like Le Rucher. "Up until the mid-to-late '80s, aide workers and missionaries enjoyed a certain status overseas. They normally were protected and respected in their host countries, and often when there was internal conflict, missionaries and Christian aide workers were often the 'men of peace' or the negotiators. That has completely changed, parallel to a change in warfare. It's not so much any more one nation army fighting another nation army. It's now much more militia warfare. Militias try to destabilize a government by deliberately targeting the civilian population and the nation's infrastructure. We've seen this in Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, South Africa, Mozambique, and many other places. If a militia can prove that the government cannot protect its citizens, they make their point. To advance their political goals or aspirations of greed and power, militias create a state of terror that affects the total fabric of social structures and relationships, as well as the mental health of a population. So they target the groups that hold the infrastructure of the civilian population together, like what the Khmer Rouge did in Cambodia. They went into the hospitals, took out all the doctors, even those who were operating, and shot them. We're seeing this more and more."

People supporting civilian populations in these regions are largely missionary jobs. "They are doctors, nurses, teachers, pastors, orphanage workers--the whole human aide and missionary community. And so these foreign workers," Erik said, "as part of the infrastructure, become deliberate targets of violence and they get devastated. Many have to leave the field because they're completely traumatized. So a shift has taken place in who becomes a casualty, and the international

missionary community has to respond to this important change needed in missionary care. But where do they go to recover? For most of them, their churches back home, their families, and perhaps even their sending organizations do not yet have the training necessary to provide them with appropriate care. Missionary life for Jeltje and me has had an increasing pastoral dynamic, a passion to care for those who go into the mission field. 'Care for the Carers and Help for the Helpers' has become one of our mottos. So at Le Rucher, Jeltje and I and our staff work quietly with about 20 well-known humanitarian aide agencies and missions organizations to deal with this increasing problem of missionary attrition. The sending organizations may have issues to deal with for which they are largely unequipped, and they may need a place to send devastated and traumatized workers off the field. We help them implement that care."

Western workers arriving at a hotspot from their normal routines back home immediately must try to adapt to the onslaught of powerful abnormal forces and conditions. In Pristina, for example, besides the demanding physical toil, workers psychologically battle the relentless roar of U.N. and KFOR helicopters flying overhead day and night and noisy convoys running up and down the roads. Weary humanitarian aide workers driving continually from village to village--assessing housing, school, and building damage--must watch the roads tediously for all the wild drivers and car crashes. The mental pressure is tremendous. Workers are thinking: we've got to get the schools and hospitals back on line; we've got to get roofs back on houses, the windows and doors installed; we've got to have food distribution; we've got to help those women who've been raped, and those who don't know where their families are, and those who have had half their family killed, and those who don't have jobs anymore, and . . . , and . . .

"And if you think about aide workers and missionaries in places like Liberia and Sierra Leone, Kosovo is a picnic," says Dr. Mike Jones, who with his wife, Jenny, serve as part time staff counselors at Le Rucher. The Joneses have been in missions full-and-part-time since 1977, in counseling and teaching capacities. "We know a missionary who was part of a team that ran a base in Liberia for 7 years. She was in Liberia when rebel forces ran amuck and slaughtered people. She herself would have been raped if she hadn't got rescued literally (miraculously, really) just as the soldiers were attacking her. She was immediately flown out, but the trauma doesn't end with that, for people like her. Over the years, she had become good friends with the Liberians whom she had trained to become her staff. (These friends had seen the rebel forces come into their town three times and, though God spared their lives, they had to witness the killing orgies each time.) So another part of the trauma is that when the Western workers have to get evacuated by their embassies, they have to leave these dearly loved ones behind, to the mercy of whatever is going to happen. And that's another trauma. This happens repeatedly. The indigenous workers don't have the visas to leave.

"And then when you get to come back, you don't know if your indigenous friends have been killed, tortured, captured, or what. So you go back in and wait at the refugee checkpoints to see if your indigenous staff come back when the borders re-open. And if the staff come back, everyone breaks down in relief that their beloved friends have not been killed. But that doesn't really resolve anything. It's just relief that their dear friends are not dead. The conflict's not over. The militias aren't through. It's just an uneasy truce. And so the missionary workers

and the indigenous Christian staff face yet another trauma: how do they go together to the Lord and literally give their lives back to the Lord, that should they live or die, they live or die unto the Lord. You see, it's become the reality that they may not live very long."

At Le Rucher, they are also becoming very much aware of the problems arising from the wide gap that separates people in the West from the global hotspots. For one thing, it's got everyone scrambling, playing Catch-Up. "It's the stark reality," Mike notes, "that in parts of the world terrible evil is loose. But in the West, we're not living where evil is on the loose as it is in these other places. So we're unable to process it--we're numb to it--when we hear of it. Television itself plays a big part in this. It habituates us to seeing violence and switching off in our heads that it's phony. Then when you get on the field and see someone being beaten, or an arm being chopped off, or a brain suddenly spilling over . . . , it's not a movie, it's not phony. It's reality. And there's not anything in us to cope with it. So people freak out, and we get them coming to Le Rucher. What happens is that you go into a sudden stress syndrome, where you keep re-living the horror of what you're seeing."

"People can't travel to these places as missionary tourists anymore," Erik said. "You may get shot. You may die." And what about the organizations? How are they responding to the change of need? "Some are being kind of protectionistic of their organizations," Erik said. "Others are more open. And for everyone, it's still the early stages. We're on a steep learning curve ourselves. When I spoke at the Mental Health in Missions Conference in Indiana in 1999, there were a couple hundred Christian psychologists and psychiatrists present, and they wanted to hear what models we were developing at Le Rucher. They told us afterward that we were doing things that no one else was doing, and that there was no literature about this. So in many ways we feel very much alone and wonder how the bigger body of Christ will come to help us.

"The word for me right now is partnerships. We hear a lot of what I call 'the flip side of the nice brochures'. It's not our task to make that known or speak into that much in a critical sense. We partner with the organizations. We don't change them. Our goal is to come alongside and strengthen their identities, support their callings, anointings, and purposes, so that they can get stronger and do their jobs better. One of the things taking place at Le Rucher is that top leaders of these organizations and agencies are coming here to talk these things through. They recognize that they've got to have a much better way of assessing potential workers and caring for workers who get traumatized."

"One change taking place," Mike Jones said, "is the rise of a new breed of crisis missionary, a kind of 'spiritual mercenary'. They relate to American, British, and other Western embassies and to the U.N. If you like that sort of stuff, you can just live it. It's all very crisis oriented, and it's hyper adrenaline. And all around you evil is being perpetrated at a phenomenal level. And then there's always the horrible aftermath."

The buildings and facilities at Le Rucher (the name means "bee farm," which was its original use before WW2) were completely remodeled in 1994, and in 1995 missionaries, aide workers, teams, and missionary families began to arrive for

debriefing and trauma care after they had been evacuated out of global hotspots. "We've had people," Erik said, "who've been abducted at gun point and later released, or who've lost houses, or had team members murdered. People have come from Chechnya, Rwanda, Sudan, Afghanistan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Kosovo. A lot of workers get traumatized because they can't handle it any more; or they lack the skills to handle it, or the back-up, and then they disappear and never return to the mission field. One of the things we want to be at Le Rucher is a funnel to catch them, to be able to help them find the motivation and strength to go back, if they should."

Mike Jones: "One of the things we're discovering is that the 'spiritual mercenaries' just turn up wherever there's acute conflict. Because the conflicts are becoming more widespread, the Christian aide and missions organizations are all crying HELP, and so all kinds of motivated people are turning up with their CVs and, because the need is so desperate, basically anyone who shows up gets employed by these organizations. Some are not Christian, and may be fantasizing, idealistic, and feministic to the extreme--they turn up because 'it's injustice and we've got to save these people.' Now some of them are great, but others, they just make the whole situation a million times worse. They're not disciplined, there's no lines of communication..."

"And then what happens? They're out in the field doing what they want to do, and then they get bombed, shot at, abducted, abused, threatened with violence. And they freak out and go into acute traumatic stress. You're driving around as an aide worker for a very well known organization in your very well marked truck and suddenly you're confronted by a mob bouncing your truck around trying to roll you over. And you're the good guys! You yell for the KFOR troops nearby to help you, but for whatever reason they won't help--maybe they don't want to get involved in that particular trouble--so you start to lose it. The organizations are realizing just how deeply many temporary workers from the West--although they may have great compassion--live an idealistic or television-fantasy world and don't have the spiritual-psychological makeup to jump from unreality on the tube to reality of death on the field. People who come to Le Rucher out of this are actually the best people the organizations have, but we're discovering that many of them just don't have a vital relationship with the Lord."

I asked Mike Jones, who practiced psychiatry for a number of years in England, what a typical visit to Le Rucher might be like for recovering workers. "It actually starts with working out visas, because a lot of people aren't allowed into Switzerland. Switzerland is the home of the Red Cross and yet it's a tough nation to get into. We may spend weeks trying to get visas for people. When we do get them in, we go to the airports or train stations to meet them. These are people who are used to standing in refugee checkpoints day after day waiting for movement, and when they get back in the West everything accelerates if they've got the right passport and visas. If they don't have these, believe it or not, they're sent back to these hotspots, and they have to try again. We're living in a mad world. But you make it, and we pick you up and you're shaking. You see the snow capped mountains and say, 'Oh it's beautiful, so green here.' You come to the customs post and out step the soldiers, and they simply wave you on. Same thing at the next checkpoint. Then we drive you through the countryside to Le Rucher, where friendly people greet you, saying, 'Hello, we've been expecting you.' We

take them to a beautiful room. Show them around. The hospitality is incredible. You then meet the staff and the other folk who are being debriefed.

"We've learned that meal times are the most important times. Family time. So they sit down with us for the first time. They're still shaking. Everyone is a stranger. They don't know what to expect. But we just eat and talk. After that we might take them for a walk. And it's quiet, peaceful. And then, what do they need? Hours, days, of sleep. And they get it. They also get tremendous freedom to do whatever they want. We don't have horrible rules and routines at Le Rucher. They make their own breakfast when they want to, and then we see them afterward and we just let them talk till lunchtime. They can eat lunch, or not, and then we meet with them in the afternoon and they talk. And we just listen. And we do this for a week, sometimes two. We let them talk out what's happened, all the incidents, all the relationships, and particularly all the things that have deeply wounded them. We listen for as long as necessary, because nobody else wants to listen. And that's the grief in God's heart, too. Because God is crying out, "Listen, listen, pay attention. My heart's breaking." But it's costly to listen. It changes you. And then after all that we talk to them about Jesus and the cross and grace. And we just simply say, are you ready to give it all to the Lord?"

"Interesting things happen at this point. For instance, it becomes obvious that some of them are New Agers. They don't want to do it with Jesus. They just want to do 'white light' meditation. Others are angry with the church and say, 'No, I just want to share it with you. I don't believe in that Christian garbage.' Others we discover, and they discover it too, are just humanitarian. They might say, 'I thought I was a Christian, but now I don't know that I am.' What we see time and time again is that these workers never realized that when faced literally with death, they would come unglued. How do you know? How do you know if you're going to do well at a refugee checkpoint when suddenly six tanks rumble through firing over your head, soldiers screaming abuse at you and driving you off the road? How are you going to fare when you're working to rebuild something somewhere in the city or countryside and a bomb explodes nearby killing and maiming the people you're trying to help and blood and brains are suddenly splattered on you? It's stark, man. It jumps you out of your fantasy idealism into raw reality. You don't know how you're going to respond until it happens. Some people go just to find out how they're going to respond."

Many kinds of workers come to Le Rucher for ministry. "One type of person," Erik said, "are Christians who have a quite superficial 'victory mentality'. Often the thinking is that 'blessing' means health, prosperity, safety. In that frame of mind (Jesus wants us to be victorious) there's little place for weakness, pain, suffering, failure, and the shock of what they've seen in the field. Others go into these places with too romantic a notion of missions. They get there and they don't see a God of love but a God of war, and they don't know what to do with it."

Another type of worker coming to Le Rucher are the grown children of career missionary parents who unknowingly neglected their children in a peculiar way. These children grew up seeing their parents ministering all the time to "sinners," and the children translated that as "mommy and daddy paying attention to the really bad people." And out of this arose an attitude: "No one really cares anything about me because I'm a good girl. To get cared for by anyone in ministry, I've got

to be a big sinner, and then I can get saved and be allowed on the platform--get heard. I'm not very bad, so that's bad. I never get heard. My parents are too busy. Good people who don't sin never get heard. I need to sin, do something bad, so my parents will pay attention to me."

Mike Jones: "Not long ago at Le Rucher we had a Canadian guy, Steve [some names and places have been changed here]. His grandfather was famous in missionary circles, and his father joined a well known Christian aid agency when Steve was 6 years old. For the next 10 years Steve never stayed in a nation more than a year. The parents took little Stevie everywhere they went to do crisis relief work. You name it, they were into it. So the little boy suffered attention deficit because mommy and daddy were busy saving 'them.' Occasionally they returned to Canada, where Steve watched his very bright, educated dad give professional, focused reports to churches and large organizations, and especially to the donors, the financiers: 'Here's what you wanted us to do; here's what we did. We've achieved the goal you sent us to do. We will march on with your help.' But for little Stevie, the cynicism began settling in.

"When he was 20, his parents divorced and he descended into a life-destructive cycle. Drugs, promiscuity, punched out a church elder. One big mess. Dad continued as an international leader of this organization; mum remarried and ran a drug rehab center. His saving grace at this point was his famous grandfather, who recognized Steve's journalistic skills and got him into university. After he graduated, he went to this same organization (where his dad was a leader) and told them, 'You need me to go to these hotspots as a photo-journalist, to paint these pictures clearly, so you can put them in top magazines to get the money.' They hired him and he went.

"When he came out of Kosovo to Le Rucher, he was jerking and chain-smoking. The first night he slept 10 hours, the second day he slept 12, the third day, 15. And then, listening, all this stuff came out. He showed us his articles, and in one sense they break your heart, because they're so true, so tragic. And he says, 'I know why I'm doing it, so that we can raise the money to help the children on the streets of Kosovo. And the cynicism is a mile wide on my back.' When I hear this, I say, 'In many ways you guys are the conscience of the West, because we don't go, we don't get involved, you do, and we feel good about it because you guys are doing something out there and we ain't.' And everyone of them that I say this to just nod their heads."

Ministry at Le Rucher is also proactive. Workers are trained to deal better with the stark realities when they return to the field. Mike Jones: "For instance, we coach them so that when they have their acute frantic times of caring for thousands of people in, say, a three day period without any sleep, they can stop and say to their leaders, 'I need 2 days to sleep, to recover, before I give out again.' Many just haven't been doing that. They've been working crazily for 5 days, sleeping for 2, and then repeating the process again and again. And they burn themselves out quickly. If you're going to burn for 3 days, you've got to rest for 2. Then we say to them, if you stay in an acute crisis for 4-5 weeks, that's the maximum. You've then got to get out to someplace relatively peaceful to recover for a couple weeks, or you'll burn yourselves out. We've also seen that most people cannot take this

acute crisis life for more than 9 months. At that point they need a long timeout before they go back in.

"Even the humorous stories we hear are tragic. We ministered to one worker at Le Rucher who handed out water at refugee checkpoints in Kosovo until he dropped, and then he would pull back to the border with his mates to rest. He told us about vans full of women protestors of every sort from the U.K. who would arrive and, believe it or not, go looking for dogs and when they found them, hug them. In the midst of all this human suffering and pain, can you imagine what the Albanians and the Kosovos are thinking? These women also strip and bathe naked in the streams--in front of the Muslim soldiers, who then fire bullets over their heads. So they say, we're not wanted, and they get back into their vans and drive back to Britain."

There are also workers who are not returning to the field but going back home from Le Rucher. "Going home," Erik said, "usually means sharing stories of how many got converted or how many schools and field clinics were built, supported by accompanying slides, photos, or video. There is often little room for asking the missionary, 'How are you doing?' Less than twenty percent ever receive help with debriefing. For many, perhaps only a few minutes are set aside in the church service to share about a missions experience of 3 years. Hardship, failure, cultural adjustment, problems with schooling the children, financial restrictions, sicknesses, injustices, corruption and violence witnessed on the field, doubting the Scriptures or personal calling . . . , these are things one does not talk about in our success-driven Christian culture. After all, Christians have Jesus, and he makes everything alright and Christians are victorious. So many missionaries just do not make it back home. Too many remain hurt and feel completely misunderstood even after 10 years back home. Church, family, and friends cannot imagine what goes on inside the returned worker. They have little or no frame of reference to help them interpret what happened in the cross-cultural context."

Mike Jones: "People recovering from acute trauma have had their lives powerfully changed. The way they think about life (worldview) is no longer the same as when they left home for the field. People back home are going to look at them the same way, but the returning workers are not going to look at them, or anything else, the same way. It's a huge problem. Another is that when they return home--having experienced all this stark reality--nobody really wants to know. It's too threatening. People don't know why they should listen. They may be 'too busy'. They may not even know that their friend has been traumatized. At Le Rucher we help them discover ways of dealing with this; what they should say, what they should not share, and so on."

Broadly speaking, Le Rucher comprises three distinct yet overlapping areas of focus. One is "member care," which is trauma care for workers who come to Le Rucher and for those out on the field, regardless of the organization they are with. Staff at Le Rucher get invited to global hotspots to provide direct trauma care in the immediate aftermath. In 1999, for instance, Erik and Jeltje were on the first U.N. helicopter flight into Freetown, Sierra Leone, where they cared for traumatized Christian aide workers and local pastors after a civil war there. In 2 weeks, 6000 people had been killed and a third of the town destroyed. There had been tremendous atrocities, including many women and children who had had their hands hacked off by the militias. The second area of focus equips local

churches to be healing agents in and after ethnic conflicts. "The word, of course, is 'reconciliation'," Erik notes, "although it's becoming a bit of a negative word. So we run 4-day residential seminars on a biblical approach to all this. Dr. Rhiannon Lloyd, an affiliate of Le Rucher ran these for 5 years in Rwanda and we have run several in West Africa, and we're running some in South Africa with Rhiannon. Currently we're building up one to run in the Balkans. We also run these for professional groups like teachers or police." The third "attention field" is community development. Here, Le Rucher staff works with ethnic groups in a region who don't share the same language or values. The object is to build a biblical view for these diverse groups so that they have a platform to start talking to each other and to do things together in their communities after they are reconciled.

The balm is having its effect. In Rwanda, where Rhiannon and African Enterprise run workshops for various kinds of leaders, and train local pastors to run the workshops, a Hutu pastor and a Tutsi pastor, once mortal enemies, have been leading these workshops together for 4 years, traveling to all major towns. The workshop results are evaluated with follow-up meetings after three months, six months, and one year, and they are finding stunning testimonies of reconciliation and sustained change in people. In one town, after participating in a workshop led by Rhiannon, one woman--she had lost more than two hundred family members in the genocide--realized her nation could not be rebuilt on bitterness and hate. "She let Jesus minister to her," Erik said, "and found a place at the cross to go to with her pain, and she forgave. In the meantime, the main perpetrator in the killing of her family was now in prison and, amazingly, had become a Christian and desired to express to his victims how wrong he had been. A local pastor set up a meeting between "Sarah" and this man. It took place in the prison, and he listened to Sarah's story and asked forgiveness. And he received forgiveness because Sarah had found the place to go with her pain. Sarah now supplements this man's poor prison diet on a daily basis, and the story has initiated a whole series of restorative actions throughout the community. We've also seen similar things taking place between the different ethnic groups in South Africa--powerful transformations in individuals and then communities. Sustained changes like these lead to new joint initiatives between those who would never have considered working together before. Now they are in unison combating crime, poverty, and domestic violence. We could fill a book with these stories."

Results with children is another tremendous breakthrough. An indigenous worker in southern Africa, named Silas, was a physical education teacher during the war in his country, when rebel soldiers trained boys between the ages of 8 and 14 to kill their own parents. The rebels then took the boys to their parents, stuck a gun in their hands and said, "If you don't kill them, we're going to kill them, and then we'll kill you." When the war was over, these children were filled with fear and shame. Nobody wanted them. And just to add evil to evil, these children were used to clear the landmines that had been planted everywhere. It's a story, however, that unfolds like a prophetic fulfillment of "and a child shall lead them."

Mike Jones: "Silas is also a gifted artist, and he opened up a small part of the school where he taught and invited these traumatized children just to come. He would get out paper and just get the children drawing what they had done, to let it out of their psyche, so they could grieve and cry over it. The tribal leaders were

so impressed with the results, that they rounded up all these 'parent-killers' and invited them to big meetings where they explained to the children that they had been made to do these things, that they weren't guilty. Then they were welcomed back into the villages. Silas is now married, and he and his wife are both doing similar work in Kosovo. By working with the children they eventually meet the parents and town leaders, and then they start training them to play with and to debrief the traumatized children. When the parents and elders see a child cry, it releases them to grieve and cry. It's simple but profound, because out of it whole community networks build and slowly community life gets restored. But here's the punch line. Silas and his wife can only live there for 3 months at a time because they've got the 'wrong' passports and visas. It's crazy."

Will the larger body of Christ allow itself to be touched and moved to action by the need for more crisis missionaries and by this "sea change" occurring in the type of care now required for humanitarian aid and missions workers? "For those of us at Le Rucher," Mike Jones said, "It's a new kind of bearing one another's burdens. If we were walking around with Jesus in the first century, this would all make much more sense. But today we've developed defense mechanisms to tune out or minimize what we hear about crisis situations. Few people really want to hear it. It's too painful. And the format in which to say it just isn't there yet. We still want to distance ourselves from it. But the distance isn't increasing, it's getting shorter. If we don't face up to it, what is out there at arm's length soon will be in our faces. That's what I'm seeing. And we can't say God isn't warning. And he knows what the answer is, grace, the cross, redemption. We've just got to be willing and act."

When my wife and I were "on the mission field" in Scotland, during the mid-to-late 1980s, one of the modest diversions we enjoyed was listening to BBC Radio 3 and 4, stations with countless talk shows and programming, intelligent and often witty, ranging from the arts, to gardening, to education, to politics, to virtually any contemporary issue. One particularly bad weather weekend--a strong gale blowing fiercely upon the North Sea--I hunkered down in our flat and listened to a fascinating BBC Radio story about a hearty sea captain who for decades had been leading rescue ships out to sea around the U.K. to save the lives of crews and their passengers stranded or ship-wrecked in violent storms--harrowing tales of lives saved and lost, even of his own crew. At the end of the story, the BBC presenter asked the obvious: "What makes you keep doing this?" she said. "You've got a family. Why keep risking your life?" I've never forgotten his reply, or its incarnational implications. "There's nothing like a rescue," he said passionately. "There's nothing like a rescue." To that I now must add, "Unless it's rescuing the rescuers." Charles Strohmer