

Name: Scott and Beth Cunningham

Date: 6 October 2009

1. Briefly describe your ministry role(s).

I (Scott) am on loan from SIM to Overseas Council. My primary ministry goal is to increase the effectiveness of Christian leadership development through the training of seminary leaders around the world. I oversee the Institutes for Excellence – training workshops conducted annually in the ten different regions in which Overseas Council has seminary partners.  
<<http://www.overseas.org/instituteForExcellence/default.aspx>

Beth has a variety of different ministries including: Encouraging others through hospitality; service at the Midwest Food Bank; care for her mother in Dallas; and assisting Scott with Institute logistics.

2. What did you see God do in the past year that encouraged you?

So far in 2009 we have conducted six Institutes on the topic of “Nurturing Spiritual Growth in Seminary Students” (three more are planned for October and November 2009). I (Scott) have been pleased with the curriculum that we have developed, the quality of the presentations, and the excellent interaction between participants. We have received very positive feedback from the participants on how the material from the Institutes is being used by these seminary leaders to bring a culture of spiritual formation into their seminaries and by faculty to make spiritual formation a more intentional focus in and outside of the classroom. The Lord is using each of the Institutes this year to bring about improvements in how seminaries nurture spiritual growth.

We have begun to make some new friends through our church. The Lord has provided us with a wonderful small group for Bible study, prayer, ministry, and fellowship. This has been an important part of our spiritual sustenance this year.

We are pleased at how the Lord is working in our children’s lives, as evidenced by the choices they are making and the directions they are going. Micah is now engaged to a wonderful Christian young lady who shares his heart for overseas ministry. Marc has successfully transitioned from teaching in Nigeria to a master’s program in Atlanta. Scottie continues to teach at a Christian school in La Paz, Bolivia.

The Lord has allowed me (Beth) to frequently be with my mom in Dallas this past year.

He brought all of our family (along with a fiancée) together for a wonderful two weeks of summer vacation.

3. What opposition or discouragement did you see in the past year?

Due to financial pressure at Overseas Council, Scott’s capable assistant for logistics was let go mid-year with those responsibilities being covered by another (already busy) staff member. While financially necessary, this has resulted in additional responsibilities for Scott as well as increased stress, disequilibrium, and some discouragement.

Our life as pilgrims - traveling frequently - has its good points but also its difficulties. I (Beth) notice that it takes longer than I expected to build strong friendships as we are constantly in and out of the lives of those around us.

4. Describe any goals or new directions you anticipate in the coming year.

We are planning to address a subject in next year's Institute for Excellence never before directly addressed in its ten-year history. We will be training seminary leaders in church-seminary relationships, a critical issue for seminaries around the world which affects the effectiveness of their curriculum and programs, as well as their financial sustainability and governance. These will be conducted for seminary leaders in Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and the Russian-speaking world. Scott may also assume a role in the Institutes being held for the Chinese world.

I (Beth) plan on going to SIM headquarters to volunteer for a few weeks in February 2010 to help them with their candidate school for those interested in joining SIM. There is an opportunity to volunteer to help in the Overseas Council office.

5. Do you have any financial concerns currently or anticipate any additional expenditures in the coming year?

God has faithfully met our needs. Our financial support decreased significantly two years ago (the first time in our twenty-five years of ministry with SIM) as several supporters reduced their financial contribution,. However, there was no further decrease in our support this past year (October 2008 – September 2009). We are in need of additional commitments of \$1,400 per month to be fully supported for 2009/10 and are open to new partners who would like to invest in Christian leadership development.

6. How can we best pray for you now and in the coming year?

a. Pray for the remaining three Institutes in 2009 (Mexico, Lebanon, Belarus) – that the Lord would move through the presenters and in the participants. Many of the seminaries we work with need a renewed emphasis on spiritual growth in their students.

b. Pray for Scott's planning for the 2010 Institutes. He is working on the objectives, outcomes, and curriculum, and then will begin to identify presenters for each of the regional Institutes. We desire that seminaries will renew their relationships with the churches they serve.

c. Pray for others to desire to be part of what God is doing through us by participating financially in our ministry.

d. Pray that we would remain faithful to do what God asks of us, and that we would grow in grace this next year.