



CONSTANT CHANGE

THE GREEK PHILOSOPHER HERACLITUS SAID THAT “CHANGE IS THE ONLY CONSTANT IN LIFE.” While our first impulse might be to agree with that sentiment, we who serve at MSC are thankful that this really isn’t the case. While it is true that “living things grow and growing things change,” when we consider the growth and changes to MSC over the past few years, we are deeply grateful for the things that remain constant!

THE CHANGES Anyone who faithfully reads *InsideMSC* will notice that changes abound! Past issues of this newsletter have introduced new staff and new roles to further grow our capacity to serve and support sending churches and their workers in the work God has called them to. Changes have been implemented in how we designate our active workers (now either *Global Mission Workers* or *Canadian Ministry Associates*) in order to more strategically support the needs of cross-cultural ministry, regardless of where it happens. Our capacity for WorkerCare support has grown as God has brought experienced and qualified help to assist our workers through prayer, regular correspondence, and occasional field visits. We are excited about new oversight that is being given to the many projects that MSC helps facilitate globally, along with increased Risk Management support for workers.

THE CONSTANTS The constants for a believer in Christ are many - the unchanging character and promises of God, the Word of God which lives and abides forever, our Saviour “the same yesterday, today, and forever,” etc.

This is not the time or place to elaborate on those constants, but rather an opportunity to say that in spite of developing new roles and making exciting additions to our staff, we remain overwhelmingly committed to constants that have defined MSC for the past 83 years!

In fact, what has driven the above mentioned changes is our firm commitment to the constants within our organization.

As MSC Canada’s new Executive Director, I am excited to reaffirm our commitment to the two defining principles that have undergirded our philosophy of ministry and have been part of our DNA since the beginning. **LOCAL CHURCH DRIVEN MISSIONS** is what we have always supported and **COMMITTED TO GOD’S SUPPLY** is how we have always operated, since 1940!

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The following is an adaptation of WorkerCare material designed to help mission workers prepare for and process the challenges of reintegrating into western society after serving on the mission field.

THE SHOCK OF RETURNING

RE ENTRY SHOCK IS DIFFERENT FROM CULTURE SHOCK

Most mission-minded folks understand the challenge faced by workers when they cross into a new culture. Even if we haven't experienced it for ourselves, we sympathize with the strain and stress of immersing ourselves into new expectations, languages, norms, non-verbal cues, and ways of relating to other people.

Often overlooked, however, is the set of challenges faced by workers when they transition back to their sending culture. In MSC WorkerCare, we refer to a worker's return as "re-entry" and the shock it gives workers is often just as unsettling as the shock of entering into and immersing yourself in another culture.

We'd like to help you better understand re-entry shock so that, as people invested in missions, you can better support the workers you care for and support. Understanding the phases of re-entry can inform us as we support workers when they return from the field.

PHASES OF RE-ENTRY

PHASE 1: EUPHORIA

When a worker first returns from the field, they have usually been planning and anticipating their homecoming for quite some time. There's an excitement to being back in remembered places and the rush of travel, settling back in, and seeing old friends can diminish concern for initial problems that come up. It's good to note that in cases where workers have to return home for reasons beyond their control, this phase may not exist. *Regardless of the circumstances of their return, there will always be a need for loving support and good counsel.*

PHASE 2: SHOCK

One of the hardest things for workers about returning to their "passport country" after extended time away is how expectations will almost always be unmet because the place they're returning to won't be the same

Returning home from the field is maybe just as complicated as going. But in going or returning, and all along the way, the staff of MSC has been an invaluable source of vital assistance and constant encouragement.

Sean & Vera O'Byrne, MSC Canadian Ministry Associates

IN PRACTICE... PRAY, SHARE, BE AWARE!

MSC Canada posts information on social media platforms that can be shared to your network of personal prayer warrior contacts. Look us up and follow for up to date information, prayer points and opportunities to praise God!

Search 'MSC Canada' on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter!



as when they left. In the place where they used to fit in, now they often feel like outsiders. Although they experienced some of the same things crossing cultures, experiencing them in their “home” culture can be intensely unsettling.

Even with regular furlough visits, the scale and magnitude of change is almost always unexpected by returning workers. Friends, family, church, community, and country have all changed in innumerable ways. Additionally, workers themselves have changed in many ways they may not fully understand until they leave the context of the mission field that changed them. Collectively, all this change can create a deep sense of unsettledness as the worker experiences a season of life constantly realizing ways that things have changed unexpectedly.

The duration of the shock phase varies wildly, depending on factors like the length of the time away, the difference gap between home and field cultures, and the overall health of the workers. The ongoing support of friends who work diligently to listen, care, and understand can be invaluable during this season. *Look for opportunities to bless returning workers in these ways.*

PHASE 3: ADJUSTMENT

As the season of shock begins to fade, workers find themselves reintegrated back into the rhythms of life. Life is increasingly characterized by health, humour, and peace as they adapt to, understand, and even embrace various changes. Workers who have successfully navigated re-entry with the Lord’s help and the help of His people enjoy numerous benefits afterward. These benefits include **adaptability**, a “big picture” view of cultures, an **expanded compassion** for new and old ideas and lifestyles, and the **knowledge, skills, perspectives, and practices of life in another culture**. When a worker has reached the point of adjustment, they are a *valuable resource to those around them* seeking to be more nuanced, informed, and thoughtful in their approach to the world.

We recently returned from the mission field due to health issues. We have been very grateful for MSC’s encouragement and support throughout the process. MSC WorkerCare reps were supportive and able to share from their experience as they cared for us, and we are grateful that we’ve been able to stay connected to the Bible School in Cambodia by assisting with the development of a project fund with MSC.

Tyler & Katie VanHalteren, Former
MSC Global Mission Workers

PRAY FOR THOSE IN TRANSITION

We hope this short overview of re-entry shock has been helpful for you as someone who cares deeply about missions and mission workers. Our final encouragement to you would be to persist in praying for workers who are currently in transition - both into culture shock and into re-entry shock. While you may never have the privilege of coming alongside a worker in transition personally, we can all share in the burden of *asking the Lord to encourage, bless, and sustain mission workers as they experience these massive adaptations for the sake of the gospel.*



MAY WE INTRODUCE Stephen Vance

Stephen and Cynthia Vance are based out of Agincourt Gospel Hall in Toronto, where they live with their two teenage children. Their ministry is uniquely focused on outreach to Asian newcomers. Stephen has been in the Lord’s work full-time for decades through preaching, teaching, and summer camp ministry. He also has a part-time private psychotherapy practice.

Stephen has been a valued member of MSC’s WorkerCare team since last year. He provides personal care and support to mission workers serving throughout Canada regardless of their designation as Global Mission Workers or Canadian Ministry Associates.

PERSONALLY Two years ago, the Lord started preparing Sherri and I for a change He knew but that we weren't seeing on our horizon! After an eventful fourteen months during the pandemic where our three children all met and married wonderful spouses, we suddenly found ourselves in the "empty nest" stage of life and praying about our future.

At the same time, Phil Barnes was prayerfully seeking to manage his succession and reached out for a conversation. The abridged version of the story is that Sherri and I were convinced, eventually, that this was the Lord's doing. On April 1st, 2023 I stepped into the Executive Director role at MSC Canada.

What a change it's been! After 24 years of being focused on shepherding and preaching, I am now settling into an executive leadership role with MSC. Of course, what remains unchanged for Sherri and I is our desire to faithfully serve the Lord wherever He leads us. The focus of our work may have shifted, but our desire to invest our lives for eternal dividends remains the same.

Early in the process of seeking the Lord's direction about joining MSC, God settled my heart with words of comfort that He spoke during another leadership transition: "...**just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you**" (Joshua 1:5).

Imagine how God's promise of personal, ongoing presence in Joshua's new role would have brought him great comfort. The best constant you and I could ever ask for in a time of historic personal and global change is the promise of God going with us. When I consider MSC Canada's future, it is this same assurance of God's undying presence with us that gives me great optimism.

As you might imagine, the last several months have been spent learning and absorbing so much necessary information, almost like drinking from a firehose! But what a profound honour it has been for Sherri and I to already meet so many who the Lord has sent out into His harvest; from those reaching the indigenous peoples of Canada to the drug addicts on the streets of South Africa; from those ministering to athletes in Budapest to those teaching the Bible to first generation believers in Cambodia, from those feeding the starving in Haiti to those meeting the desperate practical needs of war-ravaged Ukraine, from those translating the scriptures in India to those serving refugees in Canada.



Sherri and I feel so privileged to not only meet these dear servants of God, but to have a role in serving and supporting them along with their sending local churches. The reality of missions on the ground has been changing, but one thing that remains constant is that the Lord is still **"sending out His labourers into the harvest!"** Each generation is called to reach their generation for Christ. Though the methods may change, we are thankful for this greatest of all constants - God Himself will be present with us as we go.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randy Hoffman'.

Randy Hoffman
Executive Director, MSC Canada

msccanada.org

