

Missionaries find a welcome in Gallup

Written by Story and photos by Tom Hartsock
Friday, 14 August 2015 05:01



Gallup has always welcomed visitors, of any rank or significance down to the utterly desperate. Some arrive in expensive cars, some in beat up jalopies, but all find a welcome that in the writer's experience is not always easy to find in other venues.

The road to Gallup for most has been Historic Route 66, up until the time I-40 was finished. For Dave Pickett, his personal road was not nearly as wide or straight before he came here.

It was a friend from Sri Lanka – a former Hindu priest converted to Christianity – that first sparked the interest of Pickett to this area.

Dave had traveled through before, taking a road trip from Oklahoma to Los Angeles on the Mother-road, or what was left of it at that time. The friend gets the credit for telling him that he should minister here.

Even that roadway was not as smooth as some had it. As a youngster he had attended Sunday School with his brother – the parents did not make the effort – when he began to feel a separation from God and distanced himself even more.

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By the time Pickett was 17, he had joined the Royal Marines and put all thoughts of God away and set out to enjoy what life had to offer. Tours of duty in Northern Ireland, Malaysia, and the Falkland Islands hardened his heart and he knew this was not what he or God wanted for his life.

His only prayer during that period of his life was a variation of the Soldier's Prayer, "God, get me out of this in one piece, and I will come to church!"

Promises like that are seldom kept, as humans continually ask for help but seldom respond in kind. It's often been said that even if a miracle occurs, the humans are too busy patting themselves on the back rather than bending a thankful knee in praise to a God they cannot see.

Such was Pickett's life.

During one of his times at home, his wife Alice informed him that she had become a Christian, and he could see the change in her. But he did not want to change himself, so he kept his distance from God, content if not satisfied with the military.

When he was medically discharged from the Marines he found his entire previous life changing, and he had no control over it, it seemed to him. He began talking to Christians about their faith and was able to regain some control through the power of belief.

"Did I have to change?" he asks in his pamphlet. "Or to follow rules?"

He realized the answer was no, that Christianity is about more than the "Do nots" and other strict guidelines that so many churches demand and so few parishioners enjoy. Instead it is about grace, freedom and a relationship with God that allows Him to lead you to others.

Dave's testimonial is lived on a regular basis, as he and the group he brings with him follow his example. Visiting during the Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial allows them to contact more people,

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and in addition to talking to those in the jails, or the downtrodden that walk the streets of Gallup and other nearby areas, Beacon Mission interacts with persons of different faiths to spread the word of the Bible, that you can be forgiven and that God loves and cares for you.

Pickett is a graduate of Regents Theological College in Malvern, England and had been ordained as a minister by Elim Pentecostal. He established an independent congregation, the Thundersley Congregational Church in Essex. His passion led to the start of Beacon Mission, and his involvement in this area began in 2007. That was when he led a team to visit and become involved in a less pious, less sanctimonious, and more loving field of work, where many had come before with different messages of salvation on their terms. Dave's message is more simple, God Loves You, expressed symbolically with a cross, a heart, and the letter U.

He writes about his own decision in the mini-pamphlet his group carries to distribute to others with the same need.

For more information: www.thebeacon.org or [facebook.com/thundersleycongregational](https://www.facebook.com/thundersleycongregational) .