

# THOMAS TRIBUNE

Spring 2017 Edition



Tim & Sherry Thomas

## koinonoß

As I was looking for a verse, or theme, for this letter, I received an email from one of our ministry team members detailing how she has been working a church near her that was considering dropping Awana after only three years. Thankfully, they have decided to continue using Awana to reach boys and girls with the Gospel of Christ. As I was considering how privileged we are to minister side-by-side with a group of faithful and tireless teammates, I was reminded of another team I was on over 26 years ago.

My Orlando-based Army Reserve unit was activated for Operation Desert Storm in late 1991. Within days, we found ourselves at Ft. Stewart, GA preparing ourselves and our equipment for service in Saudi Arabia. The process was to take approximately 40 days, after which we would be leaving for the Middle East. While we were quite busy, there were also extended periods of downtime. To pass the time, the Army provided us with several boxes of books. Those who know me well, know that I do not read novels so I was looking for an anything-but-a-novel book. Among the boxes, I came across one that was a dictionary of uncommon words. Success!

Each morning I, or my bunk-mate, Jeff (actually his name was Geoffrey and I enjoyed calling him by his full name, with a very bad British accent) would pick a word from the book and we would try to use as many times as possible throughout the day. Some of the words I remember were miscreant, misanthrope and subjugate.

As the days drew nearer to our departure, something started to happen with the members of the 138<sup>th</sup> Aviation Company. Our relationship grew to another level as it became real to us that we were not headed out for our two-weeks of annual training (sometimes referred to as summer camp) but we were on our way to war. As we worked, trained, and played side-by-side, we started to become comrades. God had other plans for me and I did not deploy with my unit so I gave the book to Jeff as he left for Saudi.

When my unit returned thirteen months later I was accepted back as a member, but things were different. Why? They had served together in war-time. I was their friend, but they had become brothers.

In I Kings 19:15-19, after winning a decisive battle, Elijah was feeling a bit lonely so the Lord gave him a list of specific individuals to seek out but also informs him about a host of fellow laborers who were already serving. Perhaps Elijah did not know about them because he never stopped to

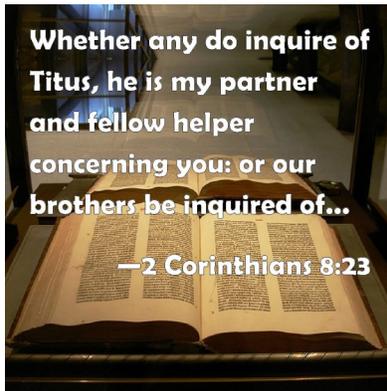
look around. He may have realized that God was not only working through him but around him as well. The Lord gave Elijah what he needed - a ministry team.

Today, our word-of-the-day is "koinonoß", which is transliterated as Koinonos. When translated to English it is often rendered as partner or comrade. Paul uses this word to describe his relationship with Philemon and Titus. In 2 Cor. 8:23 he uses it this way, "If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner (koinonos) and fellow worker concerning you. Or, if our brethren are

inquired about, they are messengers of the churches the glory of Christ." (NKJV).

As Awana missionaries, we do not – can not – and do not want to do this ministry by ourselves. Like He did for Elijah and Paul, God has provided a team of ministry partners for us as well.

Many of you partner with us through your prayers; we could not do this without you. Thank you for your prayers, for they give us the strength to journey on. Some partner with us with your financial gifts; we could not do this without you. Thank you for your support. It means a lot that you invest your resources in this ministry. Others partner with us with your spiritual gifts; we could not do this without you. Thank you for being event coordinators and volunteers, for consulting with churches, training leaders, and more. There is not enough space on either side of this paper to list all your names. Then there are some who partner



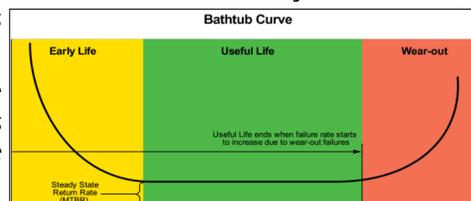
From page 1 with us in all of the above; we could not do this without you. Talk about going the second mile – I believe there may be a special crown for you.

In his book, MOVE, Brannon Marshall says that relationships cannot be based on an organizational chart, pecking order, or seniority. When they are, trust becomes elusive and ministry is stifled. Thank you for entrusting us with your gifts, time, and abilities. I know sometimes I do not say “thank-you” enough, but please know that your service is not overlooked. Over these past 12 years, you have not only become our friends and our comrades (koinonoß) in the work of the Lord; you have become our brothers and sisters

Now to the churches: the churches using Awana so that children and youth would come to know, love, and serve the Lord, Jesus Christ. Here there is most definitely an org chart. Awana is the servant of the local church. Without you, there would not be Awana. It is a privilege to come alongside you as you reach the next generation for Christ. We know that many of you also pray for us, support us, host and staff events, and for you, we are truly grateful.

## Ministry Update: 1 to 3 Year Strategy

In electronics, there is something called the bathtub curve. It says the chances of having a problem with a brand new TV is actually quite high. Within a few weeks, that likelihood drops off to almost zero and stays there for a significant period. Then over time, as the TV deals with warming up and cooling down, dust settling on components, power fluctuations, and perhaps being moved from one house to another, the chances of failure slowly starts to rise, eventually getting to the same point as when it was new. If you graph this the resulting image resembles a bathtub, hence the name.



This this is not unique to electronics, a similar pattern exists in business. We have all heard that most new business ventures fail. Then there is Sears. Sears is over 130 years old and as recently as 1990, it was the largest retailer in the United States. Today, they are hanging on by a thread.

Did you know that this phenomenon can exist in ministry? The first three years of an Awana club are the most tenuous. During these first three years, any number of factors can cause a church to discontinue Awana. After this initial period, clubs usually find their “groove” and enjoy several years of stability. Over time we start to see changes in significant positions (pastors, commanders, etc.), conflicts with other ministries, and people are less excited to volunteer. What was once a groove is now a rut. When clubs reach this point, once again the probability of the church dropping Awana is on the rise.

As a result, Awana missionaries across the country have been concentrating on building deeper and wider (Awana volunteers, pastors, staff, etc.) relationships with churches who have been using Awana less than three years. For us, this list includes 17 churches. We have also been working to get acquainted with the 34 churches that were added to us last July when our territory was expanded. Seven churches are on both lists.

This club year, we have driven over 15,000 miles making these connections, visiting and speaking at clubs, attending events and trainings, and participating in missions conferences. We praise God for keeping us safe as we have navigated, the sometimes treacherous, winter roads. We are praying for a more suitable vehicle before winter returns.

**Coming up:** The first week of May, Tim will be in Colorado Springs for training related to the Legacy Coalition. The next week the North Central missionaries are gathering in Minnesota for meetings and training. After Mothers’ Day through the end of May, we will be hosting On Target Sessions at 8 locations throughout the state. June 3 is Sparks Camp in Fredonia and Westfield.



To keep current with the Awana ministry in southern and eastern Wisconsin, please like our Facebook page: [www.fb.com/awanaswi](http://www.fb.com/awanaswi)



Previous issues of the Thomas Tribune and other news are available from our website: [awanaswi.org/newsletters.html](http://awanaswi.org/newsletters.html)

Tim & Sherry Thomas are missionaries with Awana serving in Wisconsin. Their sending church is the Deltona Alliance Church of Deltona, Florida.

None of this would be possible without prayer and financial partners. Would you please pledge to pray for us during 2017? If so, please let us know by sending us a card, letter, or email. Would you also prayerfully consider becoming a financial partner by pledging a monthly or quarterly gift of any amount to help us stay on the field? If so, please visit the support page of our website or contact us for more information. [www.fb.com/awanaswi](http://www.fb.com/awanaswi) • [www.awanaswi.org/support](http://www.awanaswi.org/support) • Tim & Sherry Thomas • 750 Summerset Dr. • Johnson Creek, WI 53038 • 920-699-1977 • [timt@awana.org](mailto:timt@awana.org)