

Emmanuel International celebrates 20 years

What may be the world's only non-government organization with an international headquarters in Canada held an open house last Sunday afternoon to celebrate 20 years of visionary corporate thinking.

But while most corporations with global interests are the ones pulling the strings in the countries in which they set up shop, Emmanuel International (E.I.) prefers to assume a subservient position.

Ever since George Middleton founded the grass roots missions operation located on Stouffville Rd. near Kennedy Rd., the aim was to prepare people to serve under the direction of local churches in third world countries ravaged by natural disaster.

Two decades later, Middleton has been proved to be a visionary. His son Mark, who has taken over the international directorship from his father, takes pride in telling



From where I live

Bruce Stapley

how E.I. has stuck to its original mandate of being a global, church-based Christian humanitarian aid organization which trains people for holistic ministry.

In contrast with the traditional missions stereotype held by so many, E.I. hasn't set out to send enlightened western aid workers to choreograph rescue operations overseas. Instead, its philosophy centres around winning the respect and trust of the local people by giving them equal input into how best to ease the suffering. Only by establishing an equal partnership with those being helped can an organization hope to bring about lasting change, according to E.I. thinking.

With six offices world wide E.I. is attempting to change the face of Christianity by refusing to allow borders and cultural differences to come in the way of believers committed to global relief. It points to the vast changes in the church over the past 20 years, changes which have resulted in a significant shift of both church membership and credibility from the western world to the third world. Whereas the Christian humanitarian aid missions field was once considered the domain of western based missions agencies, the job is now being equally divided among churches around the world.

Witnessing first hand the success of the E.I. program world wide, Mark Middleton insists he has had his own faith reshaped, along with his understanding of the true nature of humanitarian aid and its biblical basis. He has looked into the heart of darkness worldwide and seen the dramatic transformation of people who once contributed only misery and suffering to the third world and its problems. He has also come to see that it's not just peasants and poor farmers who find themselves in need of assistance from countries that are so richly blessed. He recalls how surprised he was to travel to the Sudanese refugee camps and find doctors, lawyers and

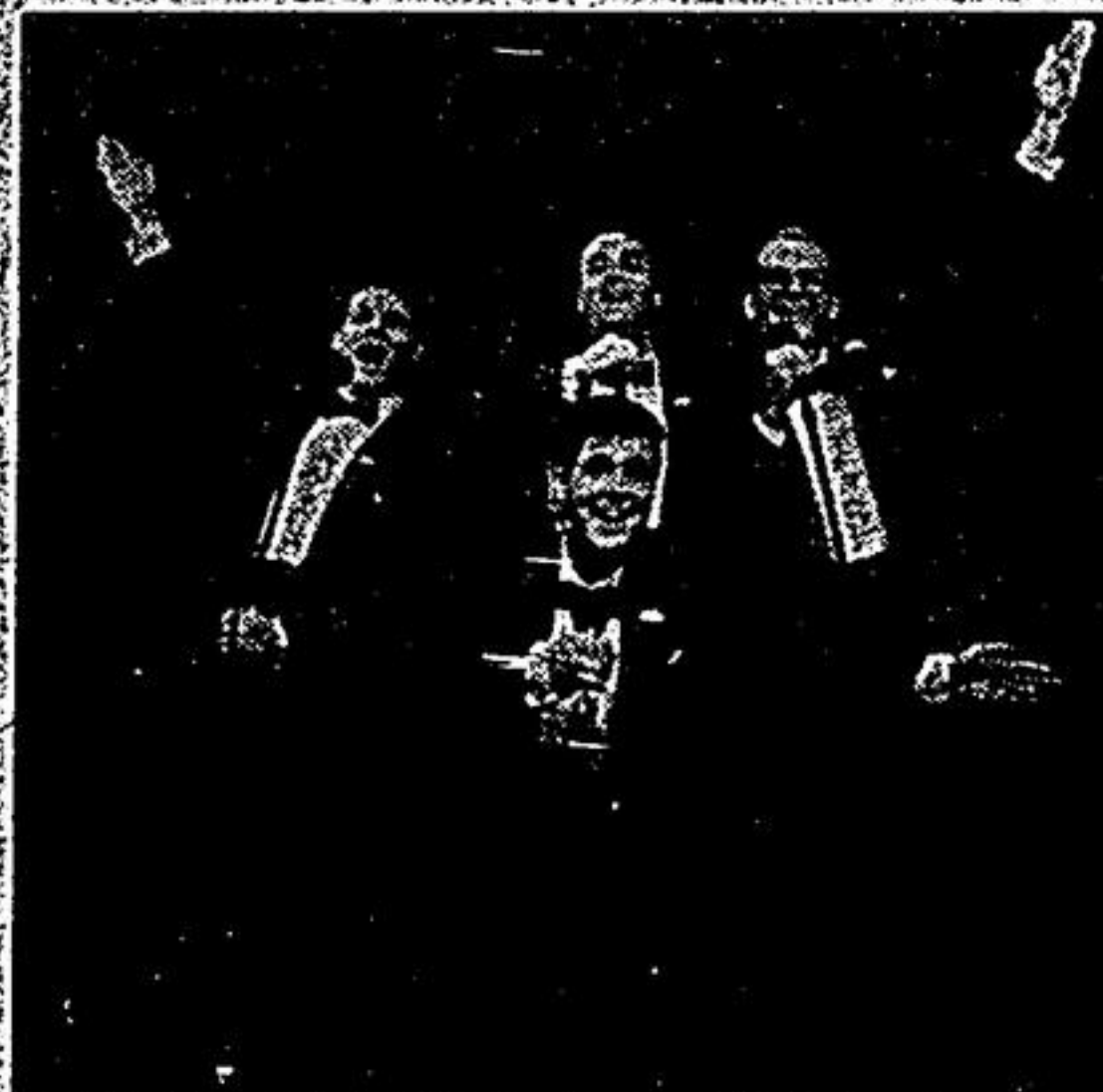
teachers among those huddling together in the middle of the desert. Twenty years after its inception, E.I. now works to raise support for over 200 workers scattered across 22 projects in nine countries. Among those it has trained for cross cultural aid excursions are Doug Gordon, Jeff Newman and Heather Mtamba (McGilvary) of the Stouffville area, and Uxbridge area residents Trish Lowe and Don and Sandra Stephenson.

For Middleton the two decades that now stand being his father's dream have brought about the ultimate in personal career satisfaction. The financial reward is not great, he relates, and there are no guarantees for the future. But he's seen how people with a living faith can indeed make a difference. "If we went bankrupt tomorrow," he told me the other day, "we wouldn't change a thing. It's been very rewarding, very fulfilling."

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