REV. S. DOUGLAS BIRDSALL

Rev. S. Douglas Birdsall has served as a missionary with Asian Access since 1980. He and his wife, Jeanie, joined the mission, which was known then as LIFE Ministries, shortly after graduating from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in the summer of 1979. They arrived in Tokyo on January 12, 1980. Japan was home for the Birdsall family throughout the eighties. During their first term, Doug and Jeanie were involved in student ministry in Tokyo. Following a year of studies at Harvard during their first home assignment, the Birdsalls returned to Japan to lead a church planting team on the west side of Tokyo. Doug also assumed responsibilities as the director of the missionary staff in Japan in 1985.

Doug’s involvement with Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization began in 1987 when he participated in the first Lausanne Younger Leaders conference in Singapore. Two years later, he served as the assistant to the Director for Lausanne II in Manila. “Those early experiences with Lausanne,” says Birdsall, “served to broaden my horizons and deepen my understanding of the challenges and opportunities before the Church. My deep commitment to the revitalization of the Lausanne Movement springs from my sense of indebtedness to Lausanne for connecting me to a global network of men and women who share a passion for the vision of ‘the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world.’”

In June of 1991, Doug was appointed to serve as the president of LIFE Ministries. This appointment placed them in Pasadena, California until the summer of 1994. Upon returning to Japan, work was begun to re-organize the ministry to focus primarily on leadership development and church planting. Two years later, the work of the mission began to expand beyond Japan began with the pilot project of Asian Access in Mongolia.

Doug and Jeanie and their children returned to the States in 1999. At that time, the work of the ministry in Japan was entrusted to Japanese leaders. In the years since 1999, the work of Asian Access has also been established in China, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Cambodia and Myanmar. Plans are in place for the establishment of leadership training in twelve additional countries across Asia over the course of the next six years.

In 2004, Doug was installed as the Executive Chair of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. Doug is presently working to complete his doctoral dissertation at Oxford Mission Study Centre. Since 1999 Doug has also served as the founding Director of the J. Christy Wilson, Jr. Center for World Missions at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization was held October 16-25, 2010, in Cape Town, South Africa. This Congress, perhaps the widest and most diverse gathering of Christians ever held in the history of the Church, drew 4,000 selected participants from 198 nations. The Cape Town Commitment, a declaration of belief and a call to action, will stand in the historic tradition of The Lausanne Covenant, which issued from the 1974 Congress held in Lausanne, Switzerland. The Lausanne Covenant became widely-regarded as one of the most significant documents in recent church history. The Lausanne Movement, since its founding by the US evangelist Billy Graham, has worked to strengthen evangelical belief and to reawaken the evangelical church’s responsibility in God’s world. The Cape Town Commitment is therefore in two parts. The first part, a Trinitarian statement fashioned in the language of love, is the fruit of discussion by senior evangelical theologians drawn from all continents. The consequent call to action, shaped from discussion at the Congress around critical issues facing the Church over the next ten years, will be completed by December. The Lausanne Movement is rooted globally under regional leadership around the world.

The Birdsall’s three children, who were raised in Japan, are now young adults. Stacia Beth completed her university studies at Princeton University in 2002 and her nursing school training at Yale in 2006. She is a nurse-midwife in New Haven, Connecticut. Judson earned undergraduate and graduate degrees at Wheaton College and now serves in the Office of International Religious Freedom at the U.S. State Department. After graduating from high school, Jessamin spent several months studying in India and is currently in her sophomore year at Harvard University.