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Recurrent Phenomenon of Divine Intervention in the Recruitment of Teachers at the American Christian Academy: A Narrative Inquiry

Abstract

This narrative inquiry investigated the recurrent phenomenon of divine interventions in teacher recruitment at the American Christian Academy (ACA), a hard-to-staff K-12 school located in Ibadan, Nigeria. Inhibiting factors such as Boko Haram kidnappings and the Ebola outbreak stymied the already challenging international recruitment efforts, with half the elementary school teacher positions still vacant two weeks before the start of the 2014-2015 school year. However, through supernatural intervention all staff positions were filled. This narrative research presents an account of five such stories told from the perspectives of the recruited teachers as well as other staff members who observed or participated in the recruitment process. Beginning with older stories that highlighted the most unusual providential recruitments, the narrative proceeds to the most recent divine intervention in 2014. This inquiry explores what led up to and resulted from these supernatural recruitment occurrences. The same Scriptural principle that turned “fishing all night and catching nothing” into a boat-sinking load of fish, inspired our school administration to “stop fishing” on our own and to trust God “at His word” to supply all of our teacher needs. Our continual acts of faith did not disappoint. The impact of the collective experience on our school community over the years has created an organizational legacy of faith in God’s providence and timing and a reaffirmation of an age-old alternative to the more Modernist approaches of strategic planning.

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at the American Christian Academy: A Narrative Inquiry

by

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B.A., Cornell College, 1982

Action Research Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Department of Education
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Sioux Center, Iowa
April, 2015

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American Christian Academy: A Narrative Inquiry

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Table of Contents

Title Page i

Approval Page..... ii

Table of Contents iii

Acknowledgements iv

Abstract v

Introduction..... 1

Review of the Literature4

Methods.....9

Narrative 14

Discussion46

References57

Appendices

 Appendix A59

 Appendix B60

 Appendix C61

 Appendix D.....62

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And to the ONE who is behind every supernatural intervention - My Lord and My God! In your love, you've saved me again! I can't say thank you enough! I'll forever live to sing your praise!

Abstract

This narrative inquiry investigated the recurrent phenomenon of divine interventions in teacher recruitment at the American Christian Academy (ACA), a hard-to-staff K-12 school located in Ibadan, Nigeria. Inhibiting factors such as Boko Haram kidnappings and the Ebola outbreak stymied the already challenging international recruitment efforts, with half the elementary school teacher positions still vacant two weeks before the start of the 2014-2015 school year. However, through supernatural intervention all staff positions were filled. This narrative research presents an account of five such stories told from the perspectives of the recruited teachers as well as other staff members who observed or participated in the recruitment process. Beginning with older stories that highlighted the most unusual providential recruitments, the narrative proceeds to the most recent divine intervention in 2014. This inquiry explores what led up to and resulted from these supernatural recruitment occurrences. The same Scriptural principle that turned “fishing all night and catching nothing” into a boat-sinking load of fish, inspired our school administration to “stop fishing” on our own and to trust God “at His word” to supply all of our teacher needs. Our continual acts of faith did not disappoint. The impact of the collective experience on our school community over the years has created an organizational legacy of faith in God’s providence and timing and a reaffirmation of an age-old alternative to the more Modernist approaches of strategic planning.

Although a highly effective teacher has the capacity to appreciably improve student achievement, in some hard-to-staff schools, principals are sometimes more concerned about filling vacancies than hiring the best teachers—sometimes being relieved to hire whoever walks in the door (Maranto & Shuls, 2012). The American Christian Academy (ACA) located in Ibadan, Nigeria, is a hard-to-staff school; recruiting qualified Christian teachers over the last twenty years was a daunting challenge long before the recent inhibiting factors of Boko Haram (“western education is evil”) threats in the Northeast and the Ebola outbreak of 2014 in the Southwest.

Throughout the history of ACA, teacher recruitment fairs, job hosting websites, and other conventional means of recruitment only led to “fishing all night and catching nothing.” Yet, to date, ACA has never lacked excellent international teachers. The teacher recruitment experience at ACA over the years has been most unconventional.

Through an in-flight conversation over the Sahara, a dentist-patient interaction in Minneapolis, a dream in Nigeria, and a bold entrance into the ACA front office, quality teachers have emerged from nowhere, enlisting to teach at ACA. These incidents of miraculous “catches” have made for good stories while the recurrent phenomenon of such occurrences has been worthy of note.

According to Clandinin (2007), in most narrative inquiry methodologies, participants are asked to tell their stories. The narrative inquiry is both a process (in which the narrator tells) and a product (the story told).

This narrative inquiry into the phenomenon of divine intervention in recruitment at the American Christian Academy begins as an autobiographical account as the school originated our home and I was the primary witness of such occurrences. Autobiography is a fundamental form

of narrative inquiry, according to Freeman (2007). Nevertheless, the author acknowledges that scholars question whether autobiographical narratives may be considered truthful enough to earn a place in scientific knowledge.

This research chronicles five stories of supernatural recruitment, the first two of which are primarily first person recollections augmented with data collected from both of the miraculously recruited past participants, now in China and the United States. The last three stories chronicle the providential recruitment of 2014-2015, narrated in the first person with input from current participants as well as other school staff who witnessed the phenomenon.

Witnessing the divine recruitment process, thoroughly spiritual in nature, impacted not only the faith of individual staff members, but created what Hancock and Epston (2013) term an “organizational legacy” of faith at ACA. Impacted faculty were encouraged to relive the process, telling the story from their point of view, and highlighting the spiritual significance of the experience. Bruce (2008) advocates the use of narrative inquiry to investigate spiritual matters because of its holistic, creative and consciousness-raising characteristics.

Purpose

While Parrot (2009) states that we “naturally look to our intellect, insights, experience, and ideas,” he admonishes leaders that it is critical to “begin with the unshakable understanding that God alone knows the way” (p. 238). During the last week of August 2014, when ACA had three out of six elementary staff positions still vacant, there was no option but to trust God to show the way.

Luke, a Biblical narrative inquirer, indicated that his research was “undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us...by those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses” (Luke 1:1-2 Revised Standard Version). Biblical narratives

“show God at work in his creation and among his people. The narratives glorify him, help us to understand and appreciate him, and give us a picture of his providence and protection” (Fee & Stuart, 2003).

There is a similar purpose in this narrative inquiry—to showcase divine intervention in the provision of teachers at ACA, thereby glorifying God for what He has done. In her auto-ethnography chronicling her healing from cancer, Harris (2008) was inspired to share her “personal experience along with the perspectives and written narratives of participant observers who shared this phenomenon” (p. 7), as she acknowledged there is a hope born of faith. It is my intent to share the “hope born of faith” with other Christian school administrators who will inevitably encounter similar crisis situations as they lead their community.

The systematic reoccurrence of supernatural intervention in recruitment has led to the following **Research questions:**

1. What is perceived to have engendered the recurrent phenomenon of divine intervention in the provision of teachers at ACA?
2. What impact have these phenomena had on creating a culture of faith in the administration of ACA?

Definition of Terms

Narrative inquiry – Narrative Inquiry is the study of experience understood narratively. It is a way of thinking about and studying experience (Clandinin, 2007).

Organizational legacy – Organizational legacy exists in transit as a “story-in-the-making,” in which organizational members not only “live it” but “rewrite” it as they go along, through their actions or inactions (Hancock & Epston, 2013).

Literature Review

Literature pertaining to this specific narrative inquiry on supernatural phenomenon in recruitment within a school setting includes investigation on the following subject areas:

1. Narrative inquiry as a methodology in the formation of organizational identity and legacy as well in the exploration of spirituality.
2. Research on methods of strategic planning in schools, views on integrating faith and strategic planning, as well as specific recruitment strategies.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry, according to Clandinin (2007), is the study of experience as it is lived. Experience, then, becomes a source of insight useful not only to the inquirer but to the wider field of social science scholarship.

A methodology useful in generating organizational identity and legacy

Hancock and Epston (2013) advocate a narrative inquiry approach to strategic planning in order to involve all members of the organization to recall and pass on “stories that deeply matter” and thereby create an organizational legacy derived from the defining moments in the organization’s history. The constituents not only carry that legacy into the present but also consider how it might pass in transit into a “sought after future.”

The purpose of a narrative inquirer’s research is to study an individual’s (or in this case, an organization’s) experience and “through the study seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others” (Clandinin, p. 42).

In researching an organization’s identity and creating its legacy, the researcher has a broad gamut of sources from which to garner information. Czarniawska’s (2007) research into how organizational identity narratives are made, include a compilation of official documents and

all kinds of storytelling that attempt to create a “quasi-subject” – the Organization. There is no single authoritative method since narrative research studies vary in every respect from underlying epistemology and method through the process of data collection, transcription and analysis to the interpretation of the product of the research (Reissman, 2002).

A methodology useful in deriving spiritual meaning from life experiences

Narrative inquiry is especially conducive in researching the spiritual facets of life that are not accessible through quantitative studies. Bruce (2008), in her article, “Narrative Inquiry: A Spiritual and Liberating Approach to Research,” refers to narrative inquiry as a spiritual practice because its methodology supports the power of life experiences to offer meaning. The inquiry itself can help offer insights into the spiritual depths of human experience.

Gockel (2013) supports the view that narrative research is an ideal method for investigating how people create and transform meaning through spiritual and religious frameworks, practices and experiences, since it is based on the exploration of the process by which meaning is constructed. In a study of twelve participants who suffered a broad range of mental and physical health problems, the author illustrated the benefits of narrative research as she explored the participants’ experiences in drawing on spirituality for healing. She noted that when participants tried to explain their rationale for making a particular decision or why they knew something to be true, they would refer to their experience as the main influence.

Freeman (2007) expounds on autobiographical understanding of narrative inquiry tracing its history from the Augustinian era, typified by Augustine’s reflective *Confessions*, to the Middle Ages, where the realization that although the human character clearly had the lead role in the cosmic play, the omniscient God was the director. Autobiography then was based on the assumption that life is inextricable from God and takes place against the backdrop of the eternal.

All this changed with the modern era where God is no longer seen as the driving force. In Augustine's day, "the path inward was the path upward." Now "the path upward has largely been closed off or considered a dead end" (p. 129), and we are left to ourselves to fabricate our own meaning.

In their book, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*, Fee and Stuart (2003) state that narrative is the most common literature genre in the Bible, constituting 40% of the Old Testament. Biblical narratives are stories about how God worked through people, plots, and events. Narratives record what actually happened, not what should have happened. God is the hero in all Biblical narrative.

Integrating Faith and Strategic planning in Leadership

In the education industry, meticulous planning, according to Parrot (2009), "is not only the norm, but is considered the gold standard of quality leadership." (p. 142) In Christian education, leaders have differing viewpoints on how faith is integrated into strategic planning. Referring to strategic planning in his book on educational leadership, Drexler (2007) categorically states, "Prayer is indispensable but is not sufficient."

Parrot (2009), however, identifies that a major problem with evangelical leaders is the seemingly effective way of using their own independent power to get God's work done. He refers to the "sailboat vs. powerboat" method of leadership where, likened to sailors, we either trust the wind or trust the motor. Parrot advocates taking the risk, becoming vulnerable and letting the winds of God direct our sails, rather than clinging to the powerboat that we can control (p. 237-239).

Acknowledging the small size of a boat compared to the vastness of the ocean, and the uncharted, potentially rough seas of the unknown future, Parrot (2009) insists that we do not

have the power to command our boat's direction. He admonishes Christian leaders to trust the unpredictable wind, however scary, rather than following a self-determined direction. He confidently avows that the wind of God will never disappoint us.

Dreams as a means of strategic direction

Harris (2008) in her qualitative doctoral research on "The Role of Religion and Faith in Self Actualization," recounted seven dreams of significance, regarding her physical and spiritual battle relating to her experience with cancer. The dreams were "a source of strength and hope." Harris states, "Biblical references to dreams and visions throughout the Bible are a testament to their spiritual significance" (p. 71).

Parrot (2009) mentions that operational planning in the Bible is rather limited to accounts of Nehemiah rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and Jesus sending the disciples to prepare the Last Supper. He concedes that "most of the big ideas God gave to His people in dreams: Jacob, Joseph, Abraham, the Magi, John on Patmos." Rather than attempting to plan what is God's best for our schools, Parrot encourages Christian leaders to give more time to "dreaming, praying, and listening to what God wants" (p. 151).

In the Biblical narrative accounts, dreams are one of the primary means God used to direct the affairs of the people he cared for. In the narrative of Joseph in Genesis, six dreams are recorded within five chapters (Genesis 37-41), while in the narrative of Joseph in Matthew; five dreams are recorded within just two chapters (Matthew 1-2).

Strategic planning and recruitment strategies

In a case study of Wheaton Academy, strategic planning, with regard to recruitment, paid off. According to Frost (2007), Wheaton's aim was to secure the best possible teachers and lift up the standard of the school. Advertising with lengthy ads in both *Christianity Today* and

WORLD magazine, creating a recruiting budget and establishing a part-time staff position caused Wheaton Academy's annual scramble for teachers in August to develop into a recruitment process with hundreds of applicants and a waiting list of able teachers. This ideal recruitment strategy may prove useful primarily to schools within urban areas in the United States.

Rural schools may face additional challenges. Maranto and Shuls (2012) highlighted measures that may improve teacher recruitment and retention in hard-to-staff rural schools. Their conclusions and recommendations on how to make best use of websites as a means to enhance the recruitment of high quality teachers through improving format, increasing information and selling the school were valid and practical tips to be incorporated in the ongoing recruitment process at ACA, a seemingly hard-to-staff school.

Although recruitment of qualified international teachers at ACA is quite different than the search for the right spouse, the strategies employed by Abraham and King Ahasuerus in the Bible serve to highlight the contrast between relying primarily on planning or prayer. The incredibly long "search for a wife" Biblical narrative, found in Genesis 24, reveals that before Abraham's servant opened his eyes at the end of his prayer asking God for a wife for Abraham's son, Rebekah was already there! When the servant realized that God had caused him to find Isaac the perfect wife (a hospitable, beautiful young virgin, willing to draw water for his camels) and that her parents were willing to release her, "he bowed his head and worshipped" (Genesis 24:26, 48, 52, Revised Standard Version), acknowledging that it was the steadfast love and faithfulness of the Lord toward Abraham that caused this quest for a wife to be prosperous.

In the search for a queen to replace Vashti, King Ahasuerus, using standard operating procedures for international recruitment, ordered officers in all 127 provinces, spanning the world from India to Ethiopia, to search for beautiful young virgins. Each virgin then spent 12

months having beauty preparations before approaching the king for her “interview.” The amount of energy, time and money spent in such a wide search was unnecessary, as Esther, God’s chosen one for the position, was already resident in the very citadel of the King.

Summary

In the modern era, as people become more self-sufficient and less dependent on God, they perceive little or no need to solicit His intervention. However, as Parrot remarked hearing from another seasoned college president, “the most significant things that have ever happened were never planned” (Parrot, p. 143).

By allowing His wind to blow in our sails, rather than clinging to control regarding strategic planning, we open the upward path a crack and are able to view the undeniable acts of God in the seemingly routine process of teacher recruitment. The result is to “bow and worship.”

It is evident that the immanent hand of God to intervene in the situations of life, whether by provision of a suitable wife for Isaac or to give strength and direction through a dream, is ever present. Involving members of our community in the narrative inquiry of supernatural intervention in recruitment will serve to establish a faith-infused organizational legacy at ACA and may enrich the faith experience of others.

Methods

“To understand rather than control and predict,” was the purpose of this narrative inquiry, as I investigated the phenomenon of divine intervention in recruitment. According to Clandinin (2007) the narrative inquiry methodology accepts the “relational and interactive nature of human science” and uses story with the “focus on careful accounting of the particular” which enables learning on both the part of the researcher and the researched (p. 25).

Setting and Story Selection

The setting for this study was a Christian K-12 international school in Ibadan, Nigeria. In the past twenty years, there have been numerous accounts of supernatural intervention in the recruitment of international teachers at the school. The inquiry focused on three major stories of such divine intervention. The stories were selected due to their significance based on the incredulity of the story and because there seemed to be a connection between the three narratives, which enabled the creation of a metanarrative.

The first story of a third grade teacher recruited on an airplane marked the beginning of providential intervention, and is considered a landmark case. At the time, “Shell Close” School was losing half of the school’s staff and multiple replacements were required. The significance of the setting—an airplane—was most remarkable. The recruitment process involved absolute reliance on God by the head administration. This incident occurred exactly twenty years ago and marked the beginning of an organizational legacy of faith in matters of recruitment.

The third story involving the divine recruitment of third, fifth and sixth grade teachers for the 2014-2015 academic year was selected for significance once again due to the severe need for elementary school recruits. In addition, the crisis extended until just days before resumption, making it a unique case in terms of the endurance exercised by the administration prior to intervention. Dependence on God was evident not only in the leadership, but also in all staff who experienced firsthand the implications of belonging to an organization with a legacy of faith. An interesting similarity between the landmark case and the final case under investigation was that both involved an event of three teachers that arrived on a particular Tuesday.

The second story involved the recruitment of a fifth grade teacher while in the dentist’s chair in 2009 and served as a bridge between the landmark case of 1995 and the recruitments of

2014. Like the first, this recruitment story was selected for significance due to its unique setting. The narrative provides a stark contrast from the other stories, however, as there was no wait-time involved. Prefaced by a simple action of faith, this episode was followed by a lull in supernatural intervention as international teachers extended contracts, abating the need for recruitment. This period was a precursor to the critical challenges in 2014, which shaped the third narrative.

Participants and Procedures

The first two stories were constructed from the written accounts of past participants (divinely recruited staff), my personal recollections, and emails from an observer. The two former American teachers were introduced to the research through an initial email, but only sent questionnaires (Appendix A) after indicating a willingness to be involved in the research. The initial plan to communicate via Skype was cancelled due to time zone challenges between Nigeria, China and California, and participants opted to respond with written answers to the questionnaire via email.

The third story comprised of three recently recruited American teachers, involved current participants as well as staff observers who were introduced to the research during a brief staff meeting at the beginning of February 2015. Forms were distributed (Appendix B) and staff members were asked to fill in the form if they had any contributions. Participation was optional, apart from the HR Manager and Head of School whose input was mandatory for the research. In addition, interested staff could choose whether to write their responses or be interviewed by audio or video recording on Friday, February 13th.

A total of 26 current participants and observers responded. Ten staff opted for the video interview method, in addition to the Head of School and HR Manager, while five indicated their preference for audio interviews. The remaining nine participants and observers responded to the

questionnaire in writing.

A video recording outfit was employed to shoot the videos and record the audio interviews. The audio and video interviews were informal, conversational-styled and conducted in 15-minute segments. Interviews were held in the HR office with two staff sharing experiences at the same time. Participants were encouraged to speak freely and follow a free-flow of thoughts and emotions as they responded to the questions in the sequence highlighted on the questionnaire. Such interaction allowed for input back and forth, stimulating memory and encouraging free flow narrative. I was present at the beginning of each interview, to explain procedures, but was present only intermittently as the volley of narration continued, so as to enable staff to express their account as freely as possible. The HR and Head of School interviews were conducted similarly, except that the interview lasted 45 minutes, and I was fully present.

A video camera was used in the exercise, and the video and audio recordings were then transferred to a laptop. I later transcribed the interviews, the long process serving to imbed the participants' experiences and facilitate the next step of merging different accounts into one narrative. Particular quotations left an indelible effect as they were revisited numerous times throughout the transcription process.

In addition, emails from observers and outside sources pertaining to the 2014 recruitment were compiled along with written dream accounts, solicited ever before this research was underway.

Triangulation strategy was used to crosscheck information and strengthen the design of the study. Multiple data sources and methodologies, such as written narratives, audio and video transcription, email correspondence, phone calls, personal journal accounts, as well as multiple researchers (participant/observer corroboration) served to verify and support the composite

narratives.

The reliability and validity issues were minimized due to the cross section of observers who contributed data. The demographics of the participants and observers (Appendices C and D) represented people from four nationalities; varying years of employment from the longest serving staff to those most recently hired; those in leadership as well as assistant positions, as well as staff serving in different domains from the preschool, elementary school, and senior schools as well as the administrative group.

Data Analysis

I had written up a chronological account of the narrative from personal journal accounts and recollections prior to the data collection from participants and observers. All transcribed and written responses, emails, and dream accounts were coded in three phases. First, using open coding, data was initially sorted and labeled by name and date. Secondly, focused coding was used to categorize data under five story headings; as the third narrative was comprised of three separate stories. This data was incorporated and served to corroborate and validate the narrative created from my personal recollections as well to provide alternative perspectives. Direct quotations served to enrich the narrative and introduce key players in the school.

Thirdly, data from participants and observers were clustered into meaningful units, and themes emerged from this coding which in turn answered the research questions. To answer the first research question, the *actions* observed were thus coded, while the *quotations* were thematically coded to determine the answer to the second question. The meanings derived from the data were summarized and synthesized to draw conclusions.

Although the inquiry was narrowed to the divine recruitment of international teachers, the questionnaire gave opportunity for all staff members to share personal stories of supernatural

recruitment. This data collected, although not essential for this this, may be useful for subsequent research and served to stimulate staff interest in this research process.

Narrative

The Genesis of the school

“Pull them out and teach them yourself,” was my mom’s advice early in 1991, after hearing my criticisms of the school our children attended. But, I wasn’t a teacher. It’s not that I was unfamiliar to teaching. In 1984, my first year in Nigeria, I taught art at a village secondary school, and just a year earlier American missionaries had hired me to teach their three children using the Calvert Correspondence Course curriculum. I wanted the best education for our children, but the only option was unaffordable.

In Ibadan, a city of 3.5 million, there were hundreds of nominal “international” schools. In reality though, only one maintained an international curriculum, staff, and student body. It was located at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), where my husband, Equi, was employed. When the head of the International School at IITA asked me to submit a résumé for a full time job in the fall of 1991, I was thankful that our children would be entitled to free international education.

The day I submitted my résumé; I had a visit from a French woman whose children I had been teaching piano lessons. She asked if I would take over the education of her two children. Apparently, since the 1960s, there had been at least one foreign businessman in Ibadan whose wife had assumed responsibility for teaching international children in town. Currently, it was Mrs. Young’s school, operating for four hours every morning out of her home and catering to children in first through fourth grades. However, her husband’s job was soon ending, and the parents of the children were searching for another teacher. The French mom had told them that

she knew the person for the job—her kids’ piano teacher.

Although I wanted our kids to attend the IITA School and did not want the sole responsibility of educating young children from five different countries, my husband insisted that I consider the challenge. I knew the person who had the training and experience to help me handle this assignment—my mom. However, my dad did not agree with the idea of her leaving him at their mission post in Cameroon to help me in Nigeria. When on May 9, 1991, I began teaching nine students in our kids’ former bedroom; I was forced to depend solely on God. By September 1991, our children also had the privilege of attending Shell Close School, our own private “international school” located in our house on Shell Close.

As the school grew, we were blessed with trained teachers who were “Nigerwives” (non-Nigerian women married to Nigerian men). We employed Seema (from India) in 1991, Joan (from Scotland) in 1992, and Jacqueline (from England) in 1993. My cousin, Julie, came out to help expand our school to include a preschool in 1994, and my mom eventually offered her expertise in teaching first grade in January 1995. My dad, having recently retired from full time medicine, was now willing to use his many skills to help out at the school.

The excellent international teaching staff drew more students, which in turn created the need for more teachers. I was forced to rely solely on God to equip me to teach in 1991, and I would soon learn how to depend on him to recruit teachers.

Twenty years ago (Spring 1995)

Julie was handling the entire preschool; my mom was teaching first grade; and Jacqueline was teaching second/third grade. In the spring of 1995, Jacqueline became pregnant and planned to return to the UK. Simultaneously, my parents were moving on to serve in a Field Director

position in Burkina Faso, and my cousin's two-year stint was over. We were losing almost half the staff of our fledgling school.

It was Spring Break, but I could not relax with the pressing need of staffing for the next year. My husband was undergoing job training in Belgium and, since my parents were around to baby-sit; I accompanied him for the sake of solitude and prayer. For two weeks, I stayed in a hotel, alone with God, while my husband worked. Through fasting and praying and meditating on God's promises, I was refreshed and confident that God would supply our needs by the time we returned to Nigeria,

On our return trip to Lagos, Nigeria, on a plane full of Africans, an American couple sitting behind us was conversing. When I heard the woman mention "Minneapolis," I turned around to engage her in conversation, as Minneapolis was originally my "home." Peggy and John were en route to Benin City, Nigeria, for a brief visit. Peggy had a lucrative marketing job in Berlin, but was fascinated with Africa and felt she should "take a break from business and give back to society somehow."

When I told them about our school, her husband said, "I would pay you to have my wife teach" there. I couldn't believe it, but remember sharing my thoughts with God, "You're letting me know that you can supply teachers anywhere!" Peggy and I then exchanged contact information.

Peggy recalls the unusual contact and how coincidental it was that we had so much in common: "We were nearly the exact same age; our relatives were in Minneapolis and we both spent many holidays there; we both have an adventurous streak, and love music and kids."

Shortly after our return, three international women walked into school at different times during the same Tuesday—all interested in teaching. An experienced preschool teacher from

Jamaica was immediately hired to take the place of my cousin, while the other two American teachers were hired to take over first and third grades. One of the American teachers, also a missionary, later told me that she wanted to teach only Bible. In need of a third grade teacher, I contacted Peggy in Berlin who immediately agreed to teach at Shell Close School and proceeded to resign her job. Peggy recalls the unusual experience:

I felt Karen was someone I could trust, and this would be the opportunity of a lifetime.

Never before have I met someone on a plane with whom I felt such an immediate kinship. It took a lot of trust on both of our parts, but I don't think Karen or I doubted for one minute that this was the perfect next step for both of us.

Peggy paid her expenses to come to Nigeria to teach third grade in the fall of 1995.

Peggy's sister was an elementary school teacher in the United States, and our students benefited from the educational materials she shared with Peggy. Gifted in music, Peggy composed a song still sung during ACA's Kindergarten graduation ceremonies today: "When I grow Bigger." Her legacy lives on.

"I have not been back to Africa since 1995," Peggy recently reflected, "but it has etched its way into my permanent memory and changed my soul...It was indeed the experience of a lifetime."

The recruitment experience of 1995 was the beginning of what has since become a legacy: the recurrent phenomenon of supernatural intervention in the provision of teachers at the American Christian Academy. (In 1996 Shell Close School was officially registered and recognized as the American Christian Academy.)

Summer 2009

It was the summer of 2009 and we needed a fifth grade teacher, but there was no time to find solitude and wait on God. In July, I brought a group of 10-12 year old ACA boys to the United States to attend a Christian camp and play soccer at USA Cup in Blaine, MN. I had also enrolled in the M.Ed. program at Dordt College with classes starting July 6th. There was no time to think about recruiting, but I did have time for a critical dental appointment at Crystal Dental Care.

Lying back in the chair and waiting for the dentist, I told God that I just couldn't recruit. He would have to find a teacher by himself. Just then the dentist walked in and asked me some questions about myself. I told her about our school in Nigeria. "There's someone you ought to meet," she said, and then called in her dental hygienist, Dana.

Dana recalled the encounter, "The doctor knew my son went to Northwestern University and brought me in to meet Karen. She said she was looking for teachers for her school." Dana then mentioned that her son David had a roommate who had been searching for a teaching job. David's roommate Warren recalls that a few weeks earlier he had run into David's parents and they had asked about his job hunt. "I really wanted to teach in Africa, or anywhere overseas, but couldn't find a job, so I'd stick around for another year or so," he reminisced.

Leaving the office, I asked for Dana's phone number. Unaware of what had transpired, I was told they couldn't give out a staff's contact information. Because there was no time to wait while the receptionist verified my story, I left with a sigh and said to God, "I told you, you have to do it all."

Warren recollected that since graduating in December 2008, he had applied to “45 schools on every habitable continent” but by July 2009 had finally stopped looking for jobs overseas and had started applying for substitute positions in Minnesota.

Suddenly, Warren received an email from David telling about his mom’s encounter with me. He remembers his attitude, “When I began applying to schools, I originally was quite enthusiastic about every opportunity. But as time passed, I became more and more skeptical. By the time that I applied to ACA, I was very hesitant.”

In the middle of a busy week at Dorcht, I received an email from Warren, indicating his interest in teaching at ACA. I called him up and we later met at a Caribou coffee shop on July 28, 2009.

Warren mentioned that his sister was nervous about most of the schools overseas, but when he told her about the American Christian Academy in Nigeria, she said, “Oh, Warren, I don’t know why but I feel the best about this one. It seems safest.”

“Ironically, Nigeria was one of the more dangerous places that I looked at,” Warren noted. He acknowledged that “what my sister sensed was that because this was God’s will, His protection trumped that of any danger I may encounter.”

Warren signed the two-year contract for employment on August 4th and landed in Nigeria on August 28th, amazed at how God had put events together. He recalls the experience as “strange, yet providential.” Six years later, the dentist also acknowledged ACA’s source of supply; “God provided a teacher while Karen was having work done on her teeth!”

Fall 2011 – Spring 2014

During the middle of ACA’s 20th anniversary dinner celebration on May 9, 2011, I

received a phone call that a Canadian Christian teacher with three years international teaching experience had agreed to take up the fifth grade teaching position that would be available after Warren left. She would come with her husband – a soccer coach. In addition to that couple, we were blessed with four excellent American teachers that fall, each with their own supernatural recruitment story.

ACA enjoyed a three-year respite from recruiting as all but one of the teachers extended contracts from two years to three years. Another American teacher, Sam, replaced the only teacher who left at the end of her two-year contract in June 2013. By the 2013-2014 academic year, we had an ideal set up in the elementary school section. International teachers taught first, third, fifth and sixth grades, while Funmi and Ethel, experienced Nigerian teachers, taught second and fourth grades, respectively.

The season of stability, however, was coming to an end as we were losing six international staff—three of whom made up half of our entire elementary school. The first grade teacher, Sam, would be the only returning single American teacher.

“I was obviously sad,” Sam recounted, “but I didn’t doubt that there would be more...It never occurred to me that I would live alone.”

Mabel, the HR manager, expressed her concerns, “Yes, I was a bit worried, considering the number of positions that had to be filled up.” But two American teachers had sent in résumés and, “There was comfort knowing that there were possible options that we were trying to finalize.”

Sumbo, our biology teacher of 17 years, “wondered how God was going to provide replacements for the caliber of teachers we were losing” but was looking forward to seeing what

he would do, recalling she had seen each past recruitment had its “own unique story showcasing God’s faithfulness.”

We decided to meet the approaching teacher recruitment storm head-on and declared a “praise party” on June 14th. It was a farewell of sorts, but we decided to give thanks and worship God for the teachers He had blessed us with, rather than lament their leaving. The very next morning I received an email from a K-6 licensed American teacher, known to two current staff, asking about the possibility of teaching at ACA in the fall. It now appeared we had three American teachers waiting in the wings, as well as one Nigerian teacher with an M.Ed. from the United States, who had already signed our contract and would be relocating to Nigeria to teach in preschool. Four out of six positions were seemingly filled and we were hopeful.

However, just before school vacated on June 20th, two of the prospective teachers backed out. The only American teacher left was the one who had applied on June 15th. Most staffs were not alarmed, and expressed their confidence that they knew our staffing needs would be supplied. Sam said she “never felt panicky. I just definitely knew God would do it, or we would make it, somehow.” Funmi said she “didn’t give it any thought. Why? I have been here for 11 years and have seen God move in diverse [and strange] ways with staff recruitment.”

James, a math teacher since 1999 said, “I felt almost nonchalant” because “as usual God was going to help us. There was still time for God to do a miracle.” The School Head, Equi, expressed mixed feelings:

At that point in Nigeria, and particularly in Ibadan, there were cases of kidnapping; Boko Haram was causing trouble elsewhere in Nigeria, and I was elated that these teachers were actually leaving without any incident. To think that it was possible to get additional teachers was actually a difficult thought because the political situation was worsening and

law and order was breaking down. However, knowing how God has supplied in the past, I was convinced that the only way to get six new teachers would be an act of God.

I left for vacation on June 29th. Mabel “had this confidence that Mrs. Karen was going to the United States during the summer” and there were “always teachers that come along the way.”

July 2014

We were about to experience the biggest crisis we had ever faced in terms of international recruitment. I had posted ads on several sites, but there was no response. Just three months earlier Boko Haram had abducted 276 schoolgirls from Chibok, fomenting international outrage. To make matters worse, the deadly Ebola virus arrived in Lagos, Nigeria, on July 20th.

By the third week in July we received word from the Nigerian teacher who had already signed the contract that she was unable to find a buyer for their house in the United States, and therefore, was cancelling her contract. The only new teacher was Sam’s acquaintance, whose last email to us, dated July 6th stated, “I am almost sure I will be committing to teaching with you come the fall semester, but am ironing some details out here. I am so excited about what all is going to happen.”

By the end of July, all traditional recruitment methods had failed. Equi, however, was still optimistic “because by human thinking we had at least six teachers who had good experiences this past year, and they were a good force that could recruit for us wherever they were.... We still had August.” On July 29th I sent an email prayer alert to some ACA friends and family:

Six days from today, August 4th, Dayo will be heading back to Nigeria, and I'll be

packing up to leave on August 5th. I'm reminded that it took God only six days to create the entire universe and everything in it. He formed it out of nothing but His Word. We need another major six-day miracle. (Like the 6-day war!) ACA is in need of teachers to fill the positions of those who left... We need teachers for third, fifth and sixth grade.... There is NOTHING impossible with God!

I reminded everyone of a similar crisis a few years earlier when our administrator, Anjali, had left for India in March, as the Indian school calendar begins in April and her daughter was enrolling in school there.

It was the morning of August 4th that I went to the staff lounge and met Mabel and Dayo and said let's pray that Anjali comes back. And that very day I got an email from Anjali with the glorious news that her husband asked her to return! She had been gone over four months; she was living in her own house; her daughter's fees had already been paid for the year; and she was even working by then!

I signed off the letter with "Walking by faith..."

Mabel recalls her immediate response to the email. Not knowing where it was in the Bible she remembers typing on her phone, "You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water." This verse, found in II Kings 3:17, was exactly what we were about to experience.

Instead of a positive response to the prayer request, I received an email from the only prospective teacher, dated July 31st and stating that although she wanted to come to Nigeria, she felt she ought to honor her parents' wishes for her to avoid the safety hazards. When I got the "bad news," I felt like David when he heard that the son he believed God would heal had died (II Samuel 12:10). With all hopes gone, I lay prostrate on the bedroom carpet and worshipped God

in song. I saw neither wind nor rain (no sign of *any* teacher), but believed that the valley (vacancies) would be filled and all our needs supplied. Recruitment would now be solely by faith in the promises of God's Word.

Responding to the news, Bid, vice principal and administrative group member, wrote that she had peace and was "certain that the Lord will provide his own people to fill the positions." Sumbo, in the United States for the summer, recruited her children to join in the intercession. She said she "had to keep in focus God's faithful provision of teachers in time past in order to encourage [herself]." Sam expressed discouragement about the prospective teacher: "[I was] really sad, because I felt like [the prospective teacher] would be a really good fit here, and I was a bit frustrated with her parents."

When Mabel heard the news, she felt led to describe a dream she had the night before: Some people were sinking in a murky well filled with many objects. I ran to the well with a rope to see if I could rescue them. I tried, but only recovered objects. I told God, "There are people in this well; I don't want to draw out objects; I want people!" God gave me a word that they would all be recovered, so I started shouting, "Come forth!" On the water's surface, full of objects, I saw unrest, and then someone tried to grab the rope. I quickly helped pull the person out. Other people also came to help in the rescue. We continued rescuing others while I kept shouting, "come forth" and after a while the well became crystal clear. We had a roll call and two people were left in that well. We just kept on calling out and eventually the last two people were rescued. Immediately as the last person came out we fell down in worship and sang, "Thank you, thank you, Lord."

"The Word of God can create life in dead situations," was the response Mabel received when she prayed, asking for the interpretation of the dream. Mabel concluded her email by

stating that we should “call forth” our needs for staff and every need would be met.

August 2014

On August 5th, I left the United States empty-handed in terms of actual teachers, but armed with a supernatural strategy and eager to join with our administrative group to “call forth” the teachers needed. The administrative staff resumed work on August 11th, four weeks before school was to reopen.

Mabel recalls that, “a bit of anxiety had stepped in. We could hardly focus on work, because when you have so many vacancies, you don’t even know how to prepare. We would spend time just praying and worshipping and believing God.” She felt she may have overlooked some applications and remembers going through the HR web portal, looking at applications even from several years prior. We spread our nets wider, searching websites, posting jobs, all to no avail.

On August 14th, I recorded in my prayer journal a paraphrased version of the prophecy in Isaiah 41:17: “When the needy search for teachers and there is none. When the school staff is parched... then, I will answer them. I will never abandon them! I will open up...” I prayed that God would open up the hearts of teachers to ACA.

I spent Friday night, August 15th, recalling stories of faith demonstrated by those who chose to trust God in the face of overwhelming obstacles. In I Samuel 16, I became David, reminding myself that God who had helped me with the lions and bears (Peggy and Warren) would help with this giant Goliath (third, fifth and sixth grade teachers). My prayer journal entries included statements that I trusted God to find ideal teachers since He had “eyes searching the whole earth” (II Chron. 16:9). We were already “conquerors” and were simply required to

“stand” on His promises (Romans 8:37; Ephesians 6:11-14), in order to obtain victory.

At our administrative group meeting on Monday, August 18th, we realized that there was no time left to process visas even if we had an interested teacher. We added fasting to our praying, recalling the previous year when a teacher’s visa had initially been denied, but later approved just in time to catch her plane following a three-day fast with the administrative group.

Equi recalled that at this point it was a serious crisis situation; something needed to be done and done quickly. He remembers, “we were trying to figure out which of us could teach certain classes, and that was actually a point of desperation.” However, he added, “we were still asking God to prove himself strong in our needs.”

James recollected his feeling of panic: “I was really very worried, because by this time I knew that there was no amount of juggling that could ever solve the problem.”

During extended time in worship and prayer, we received images to bolster our belief that God would supply. A personal paraphrase of II Samuel 23:5 was of significant encouragement: “You have made an everlasting covenant with ACA. Your agreement is arranged and guaranteed in every detail. You will ensure our success.” Picturing how a manufacturer’s guarantee ensures that when an appliance malfunctions, one is entitled to a new one, I saw myself taking our “guaranteed teachers” back to God and asking for replacement. Remembering how Jesus multiplied what was brought to Him to meet the needs of the multitudes, I figuratively took Sam, thanked God for her, and asked Him to multiply international staff—enough to provide for our needs.

Mabel reminded us that God was in a state of perpetual rest and definitely not stressed about our staffing needs. She pictured God as a mom who had already put the food in the oven,

knowing her children would soon be satisfied, even though they felt they were “starving.” These pictures were sources of comfort.

On Thursday night, August 21st, six days before all teachers were to resume work, a long-standing friend, Noma, came to visit from Lagos. After sharing our situation, we went on our knees in worship and prayer. Suddenly I felt impressed that God wanted me to open to the Bible passage where Elijah “heard” the sound of rain after three and half years of drought. I picked up my 1692-page Chronological Bible, to locate the passage, when it opened to the exact page (without any flipping around). I “heard” in my spirit that teachers were on their way. Yet, it was impossible to get visas at this point.

Earlier that week, we were debating whether to postpone resumption, as the Ebola crisis would be a good excuse. After prayer we had decided that we weren’t exercising faith in God’s provision (for teachers) or protection (from Ebola) so we sent out letters that we were resuming on September 8th, as planned.

On Friday, August 22nd, during our time of prayer, I shared with the administrative group that I had “heard” that the teachers were on their way. We went to the classrooms where we needed the teachers and worshipped God, thanking Him for the teachers that we had “heard” were coming and we “saw” them, by faith, teaching in their classrooms.

Bid recalls her faith shaking when she looked around the sixth grade classroom. “This was once my class... well, worst case scenario, I might have to come and teach here,” she mused.

Immediately after our worship, Mabel had scheduled interviews for prospective teaching assistants. Ethel and Funmi were present, and in the course of discussing which applicants would assist specific lead teachers, Sam’s name was mentioned. It triggered Ethel’s memory:

“O, I had a wonderful dream last night,” Ethel said, “It was so real, so clear. I’m not a dreamer, I don’t even remember my dreams.” Then she proceeded to describe what she saw:

It was the first day of staff resumption and we were giving hugs and greetings as we usually do. Sam was there and happy to be back. And then I looked and asked Funmi, “Do we have all our teachers?” and she said, “Yeah,” and I looked towards the left and I saw this pretty, slender white lady. Then I looked the other way and there were two of them, and then I saw new teachers everywhere. I said, “We have more than we actually need.” I remembered Ebola and Boko Haram, so I said to someone around me, “What’s happening with Ebola? Has it been contained?” Then someone said, “Forget about Ebola, it’s not stopping us.” So I went ahead and started introducing myself to the new staff... They were very sociable, and very excited to be among us.

Our faith was strengthened. During the previous night of extended worship and prayer, I had “heard,” Ethel had “seen,” now we all believed and were poised to receive. By that afternoon I was so sure of the incoming staff that I had confidence to write Sam, who was still in America. “We can’t wait to see you and the new teachers,” I wrote.

Sam responded the next day, asking for the new teachers’ contact information. She wanted to connect with them while still in Michigan. Rather than write back, I focused on scriptural precedents when God intervened with sudden supernatural supply. In II Kings, the famine in Israel was so bad that mothers were devouring their own children. Elisha made an astounding prophecy that “by this time tomorrow” there would be a surfeit of food. “Even if God opened the windows of heaven how could it be?” was the captain’s response. However, God made good His Word, causing an enemy army to “hear a sound of chariots” and flee, leaving their booty behind.

My journal entry that day read, “Thank you for supplying more teachers than we need. The where and how is your problem! It’s way beyond any human calculation.” The idea that angels could teach actually crossed my mind. I didn’t know what God was going to do, but by this time had no doubt that we would have our teachers.

Sunday, August 24, 2014

Although our six-day miracle did not materialize in July as initially hoped for, we were about to see an act of God that was almost as spectacular as the Six Day War in 1967 when, against all odds, Israel liberated Jerusalem and extended her borders. Our six-day miracle began Sunday, August 24th.

Mabel remembers finding it difficult to focus in church, thinking, “What are we going to say to our staff when they get back? Three classes with no teachers!” It was a battle of faith and since “faith comes from hearing,” (Hebrews 10:17) I spent the entire day at home, eyes fixed on the Scriptures.

At 5:35 p.m. I sent an email to our administrative group sharing the Word that had ministered to me that day and encouraging them to hold on in faith:

- “Is anything too hard for the LORD? Nothing is too hard for you!” (Jeremiah 32: 27, 17 New Living Translation)
- “So the promise is received by faith... We are all certain to receive it... if we have faith like Abraham’s... This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing. Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping.... In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that

God is able to do whatever He promises...It was recorded for our benefit, too.”

(Romans 4:16-24)

- We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance....This hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us. (Romans 5:3-4)
- “You will see neither wind nor rain...but this valley will be filled with water.
- You will have plenty...this is only a simple thing for the LORD.” (I Kings 22:17)

Immediately upon sending the email, I sensed God reminding me of the name of an American pastor in Lagos, with whom I had not communicated since 2010. I sent him a brief email at 5:40 p.m., detailing our need: “We've had a few prospective teachers, but the situation in the country has deterred them...I just thought I'd ask, in the event that you know quality, American, Christian, dedicated teachers that want to live in Ibadan.”

Confident that our teachers were on the way I wrote Sam at 7:22 p.m., “I'll tell you about the other teachers tomorrow.” Then I told God, “You just have to give me at least one name, because I told Sam I'd tell her tomorrow.”

Exactly at 9:04 p.m. I received a reply from the pastor telling me about Monica, a young American woman who had been looking for a teaching job, but was planning on returning to America. Her qualifications included an M.Ed. in international education with a specialization in elementary school. God had given me a name!

I wrote Monica that night, introducing ACA and explaining the challenge of getting staff this year. I shared our vision of reaching the international Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Buddhist children with the gospel and of the immediate need we had for elementary school teachers.

Monday, August 25, 2014

At 5:42 a.m. on Monday morning I received a short email from Monica expressing her shock at getting my mail. She wrote that she was flying to the United States that Thursday, but would be willing to talk with me. I then asked for her number and the meaning of “acts18” embedded in her email address. Her response confirmed that she was the perfect fit for ACA: “My email is for Acts 1:8 because I am called to the nations.”

Armed with a name, I wrote Sam that Monica was one of the new teachers, although I didn’t mention that I had yet to meet her, or that Monica was planning to go to the United States that week.

Bid and Mabel were the first to convene in the conference room Monday morning. “We just started to sing and sing and sing “You are good and your mercies are forever,” Bid recalled, “It was like the miracle of the burning bush or parting of the Red Sea. It was that big for me.”

Mabel described the awesomeness of the moment: “We were just on the floor, worshipping, weeping, saying ‘This is our teacher.’...All administrative staff came in and we couldn’t stop praising and rejoicing and thanking God for what He had done.”

I called Monica around noon. She recalled her feelings, “Again I still wasn’t seriously considering it. But I agreed to come out and look at the school the following day and just visit and see what ACA was like.”

In Michigan that same day Sam had an accident injuring her knee and elbow. She was due to fly out to Nigeria via Turkey on Tuesday. Her medical-trained parents even hinted that it was a sign that she wasn’t supposed to return. Sam wrote asking for prayers for healing.

Tuesday, August 26, 2014

The day before all staff was to resume was a very special day. Exhibiting faith, Sam boarded the plane for Nigeria, despite injuries to her body and headlines of Ebola on every news channel. Our driver went to Lagos to fetch Monica, and in the meantime an experienced Nigerian teacher from Lagos arrived and was hired to take the critical preschool position. It reminded me of 1995, when we received three teachers all on one Tuesday. This time, however, despite the influx, we still had two major vacancies and only eight days before school was to start. Tuesday afternoon, Monica a “beautiful, slim and white” teacher arrived at ACA. Monica recollects her impressions that day:

Karen was telling me all about their vision, and it really registered with my own personal vision. But I still had a lot of doubts because I had already made this plan to go back home and that’s what I thought I should do. I just wasn’t sure if this was really the right place for me. I had been praying that whatever God wanted me to do next, He would show me, not just through my own heart but confirm it through someone outside of me...And then Karen told me about this dream that another teacher had...I felt like “wow” this is kind of a confirmation, just like I had asked.

Monica spent the night at our house, praying for still more confirmation and I went to bed, confident that God, who had brought Monica to ACA, would confirm His will to her.

Wednesday, August 27, 2014 (Monica’s Birthday)

At 5:15 a.m. Monica came out of her room and informed me that she was willing to teach at ACA. She said that during prayer, the Holy Spirit had spoken the word ‘Ephesus’ to her. Recalling that it was a church mentioned in the book of Revelation, she looked it up and found

“it was talking about how you should go back to the things you were doing before.” Monica felt it was confirmation, because she hadn’t been teaching for the past few years and felt God was telling her to “go back into the classroom, the way that you were before.”

Monica related that in the weeks prior to our meeting she had sent emails and resumes out to about ten international schools in Lagos and tried to follow up. “Even though they had posted online that they had openings, I couldn’t get any response,” she said.

Monica described how her parents, hearing about Ebola, were adamantly opposed to her staying in Nigeria. So, although Monica accepted the job offer of a sixth grade teacher she still had the fear, “Are my parents going to fight me on this or are they going to be accepting of me wanting to stay here and take this job?”

Monica needed her parents’ blessing in order to work with us and prayed that if ACA were truly where God was leading her, He should change her parents’ hearts. She returned to Lagos, but asked for prayer about the phone call she would place to her parents at noon.

At 9:00 a.m., the administrative group met. Carrie, our admissions counselor and administrative group member, was speechless when she heard about Monica’s change of heart. An “American, very qualified to do the job, a believer, physically in Nigeria, especially with Ebola threatening on all sides of west Africa...I just praised Him from the bottom of my heart.”

At 10:00 a.m. we welcomed back all staff with the good news that we had an American sixth grade teacher, who although due to fly out to the United States the next day, had agreed to stay. We shared the dream that the other two teachers would be coming soon. And then we began to worship together. We were still singing at noon when I considered interrupting to ask everyone to join in prayer for Monica’s parents, but instead told God that I knew He was enjoying the worship, and so were we. He would just have to take care of Monica’s parents.

Equi remembers his doubts: “I was still very apprehensive that maybe her parents would say, ‘come back to the U.S.’ and it would be a case of getting so close and not having a teacher.”

Monica’s phone call with her parents was her final confirmation. She described it as “a really good conversation.” She explained how God had led and they responded, “If this is really where you want to be we support it and you can make the decision that you want to make.”

On Thursday, Sam missed her connecting flight in Turkey; Monica cancelled her flight to the United States and then contracted both typhoid and malaria. Friday we prayed for a swift recovery for Monica and a safe arrival for Sam. Then, on Saturday, six days after not even knowing her name, Monica drove in to ACA, accompanied by Sam. However, unknown to us, a longer wait was still ahead.

September 1-18, 2014

While much of the world viewed with trepidation the Nigerian Ebola outbreak, which was only two hours away from ACA, we did not have fears. On each letter that we wrote to parents, we included the quote from Psalms 91: “no plague shall come near our tent.”

We did what was professionally possible to protect our community from Ebola. Dr. Christian Happi, Harvard professor, as well Dean of Graduate Studies, Redeemer’s University, and Director of Africa Center of Excellence for Genomics was the first to diagnose Ebola in Nigeria. As a parent of ACA students, Dr. Happi briefed the staff on Ebola, trained four staff on how to respond in the event of an outbreak and donated a trunk full of PPEs (personal protective equipment). We purchased digital thermometers to take temperatures at the entrance gates and planned how to start school with all necessary precautions in place.

However, without a third and fifth grade teacher we were not ready to start school on

September 8th, and were relieved when the government decided to postpone the reopening of schools until the 22nd.

We usually hand out the staff list on the first day of staff resumption, but I did not feel comfortable printing such a list with glaring blank spaces. To meet the faculty expectations, I decided to print an altered list including the teachers we trusted would soon arrive:

Third grade teacher: Faith Mustard (tel: 1111111111) mail: faithasmustard@solidrock.com

Fifth grade teacher: Grace Covenant (tel: 7777777777) mail: covenantofgrace@Godsmercy.com

For Equi, although he felt I was showing spiritual leadership, he thought that for the rest it might appear ridiculous. However, he recollects, “we all somehow went along with it, and everybody could see, that we had a designation for who we were looking for. It was very bizarre. It’s either you believed or you didn’t.” Equi thought people would think we were “getting a little too spiritual.” However, the staff had the opposite response.

Sumbo felt “like we were drawing a line in the sand and that we were destined for a miraculous intervention.” James thought we “were contending with the devil about our inheritance” insisting on maintaining a “foothold upon our portion,” while Suja, the accountant and administrative group member praised God, knowing “that it’s our *faith* and by His *grace*” that we would get teachers.

Mabel admitted that the names brought a sense of relief, especially for those in the office. She recalled having a conversation with a parent who wanted to know the name of the new fifth grade teacher. “Her name is Grace,” Mabel responded, recalling that it was a dimension of faith, where you call forth the “things that are not as though they were” (Romans 4:17).

We put our faith into action in other ways as well. The administrative group went to pray by faith in the upstairs apartment that had been vacated by the former fifth grade teacher and her

husband. We invited the family living downstairs to join us. Newton, remembers someone saying to him, “What if we pray for a new couple with children so that your kids could have people to play with?” We prayed, he recalled, “but somehow I seriously doubted.” Then we went a step further and agreed that if we’re going to have people moving in, we should paint the house.

Leah, Newton’s wife and American preschool and art teacher for the past nine years, remembered the challenge of being asked to pick out colors for the house. “I have no idea what her personality is like,” she lamented, but proceeded to select the colors.

The scene was different in the Main School Block—everyone was decorating their classes, but two classes were basically bare. Staff attempted to decorate the empty rooms, but the lack of a teacher’s presence was very obvious.

Funmi recalls that she “began to panic and started thinking of different options. I better start preparing to teach second and third grade.” At a point, she felt maybe it wasn’t God’s plan for ACA to have international teachers, especially with the Ebola crisis. She remembers “seriously expecting a Plan B from admin” and remembers discussing that possibility with Sam during a coffee break when Mrs. Karen walked in and said, “There *is* no plan B!”

During the period of waiting for the provision of third and fifth grade teachers, Sumbo had an encouraging dream. “ACA staff had something like a sleep over in a dormitory-like hall,” she recalled, and “Mrs. Karen came in the hall and told us that we got a teacher.” We had an all night prayer meeting scheduled for September 19th. I thought that maybe, the dream meant we would receive our teacher then. That is exactly what happened.

September 19, 2014

Our new student/parent orientation at ACA is usually scheduled at 11 a.m. on the Friday

before school reopens. Traditionally, teachers take the new students to their classes while I present an “ACA Overview” presentation to new parents in the auditorium. Once again, the Ebola scare helped out with the government’s announcement that students were not supposed to be on campus until the 22nd. We had a good excuse for a “parents only” orientation in the auditorium away from the classes and teachers (or lack of them). We asked all staff to fast that day and planned to gather at 3:00 p.m. for praise and prayer.

I woke up very joyful that morning singing, “I am a friend of God” and confident that God was even more to me than that – He was my dad (Romans 8:15), my HR manager (II Chronicles 16:9) and even my husband (Isaiah 54:5). The Orientation program went well and no one noticed that I didn’t highlight the names and pictures of the teachers as I usually do. Of course, being new parents, they were oblivious to our usual practice.

Carrie recalls how a current parent with kids in Nursery, third grade and fifth grade, had requested to meet his children’s teachers that day, since he was going back to his base outside the country and wouldn’t be around on the 22nd. “I politely told him that we were expecting them and that the next time he comes he would get to see them,” Carrie explained.

Mabel was in a state of bewilderment. It was Friday and students were coming in on Monday. She recalled reading the story of when Lazarus’ sisters sent for Jesus. Jesus got the news that Lazarus was ill and the Bible said, “He tarried a while.” “God this is really you...dragging your feet,” Mabel thought.

I told Sumbo, who would be leading the prayer session at 3:00 p.m., not to bring up the need for the third and fifth grade teachers although all staffs were well aware of the predicament. I didn’t want any “unbelief,” knowing that only the prayer of agreement, referred to in Matthew 18:19 would generate the desired results. If some doubted, upon receiving the latest update (no

one in sight) it would be as if we were double-minded, and in that state we would not be able to receive from the Lord (James 1:6-8). When it was time to gather for the prayer session, I requested that we sing, “Yours is the praise, mine is the victory, Satan defeated, yours is the praise!”

Funmi recalls her feelings of shock when she didn’t hear any prayers for new teachers. She was even more perplexed when she realized it wasn’t because we found new teachers. She expressed her confusion, “Shouldn’t we be praying more and looking at all other options?”

That day, James remembers being very alarmed, “especially realizing that we just had no hope, I mean, there was no way in 24 hours that anything could happen.”

Earlier, when asked about what I was going to do about third or fifth grade, I would say firmly, “Plan A.” Teachers had the option to believe or stop asking. My position was that God had supplied excellent teachers in third and fifth in the past and we were not going to lower standards and just put anyone there. I was eagerly looking forward to the all night prayer scheduled for 10 p.m. that night. I was grateful for those willing to give up their sleep to pray over this vital issue.

Everyone went home at 4 o’clock that Friday afternoon, and Mabel remembers someone asking her, “What exactly are we going to do?” She replied, “I don’t really know what is happening. I just don’t know what is happening.”

Half an hour before the all night prayer vigil was to start, I went to the office with my laptop to print our prayer agenda and was chatting with Carrie who had come early for the program. At 9:30 p.m. an email dropped into my inbox from “Amanda” – a name I did not recognize. It took only one second to realize that it was actually the *real* Faith Mustard!

When I came back from the United States in August and considered that maybe God had

some American teachers in Nigeria, I joined an online International club in Lagos. I looked way back on their site and found that in May, there was a post from an American relocating from the United States and looking for a teaching job. I assumed I was months too late, so when I wrote I wasn't surprised that I didn't hear from her. I had totally forgotten about the post.

Amanda remembers posting on the site four months earlier, but "since I had never gotten any positive feedback, I completely lost hope in that pursuit and forgot about the website." For weeks she lost access to the Internet as her phone had somehow become locked. It was September 19th when she was finally able to gain Internet access again. She describes her "utter astonishment when this stranger suddenly writes, offering me a teaching position at a prestigious American school in a far-off, unfamiliar town." In an instant she and her husband felt it was the answer to their prayers, acknowledging, however, that it seemed like an impulsive decision to make.

Anjali, administrator and administrative group member since 2005, remembers how she heard the news:

I had entered the gate of ACA at 10 p.m. and saw Carrie's office light on. I went close to her window and as soon as she saw me she started jumping with joy. I was quite surprised and kept asking her, "Carrie, what's the matter with you?"...She just kept on saying, "God is good and his love endures forever." Go to Karen's house and she will give you the surprise."...We all went flat on the ground when we heard the miraculous way God had provided us with Amanda.

There is no way to describe the joy in the house that night. We danced before the Lord as David danced before the ark. There was loud music, dancing and making merry, like the party in the Father's house that Jesus described in Luke 15. The lost had been found!

Although Mabel was too tired to come to the all-night vigil, she did join in the party vicariously. She recalls her reaction when she heard the news:

It was about 1:00 a.m. I woke up to pray because I knew the other admin staff would be praying in school. At that point of time, I'd always keep checking my phones....It's almost like something's about to happen. On one of my phones was a message, "Hallelujah, we got a teacher, at 9:30 pm." And that was it! Words are not enough, I was shouting. I'm down on the floor in my room...."O God! This is God!" It was just a very humbling experience. Like, "O my God," God just shows up. Just in time. Just in time.

Mabel called us at 4:30 a.m. but by that time we had all lost our voices from singing all night. Other prayer group members recall their thoughts and emotions at the news of Amanda. James was "incredulous! I didn't think it was possible because it sounded too unnatural, you know, too bizarre, for it to happen just like that." Suja's reaction was to say, "If you believe you will see the glory of God" (John 11:40). We all saw the glory of God that night!

September 22 – October 7, 2014

Staff who had left on Friday afternoon wondering, "What are we going to do?" were welcomed on Monday with the good news that our "mustard seed"-sized faith had brought forth Faith Mustard – now officially, Amanda. There was extra cause for relief, as the government announced there would be another two-week delay in starting schools to ensure that the Ebola epidemic was fully contained. The new date of resumption was set for October 8th. We all felt that God allowed the extension to give time for Grace Covenant to show up.

Amanda's family arrived at ACA on Tuesday, September 23rd, exactly 100 hours from

the initial contact. All were expectant that the next teacher would appear at any moment.

Newton remembers wondering, during the earlier prayer for the housemates in the upstairs apartment, how a couple and their children would come to ACA within the short time we had. “But it happened suddenly,” he recalled, “I saw Amanda, her husband and her children, and they were about the same age as ours. That was a miracle!” His wife was equally amazed, “Not only did Amanda have children for my children to play with, she said she loved the colors of the newly painted house.”

In the meantime, we decided to have “virtual school” and prepared welcome packets to give out on Wednesday, September 24, 2014. Although there was no new case of Ebola in Nigeria, students were not permitted on school grounds so we asked parents to collect the packets. No one needed to know the whereabouts of Ms. Grace since all classes were virtual and students were not supposed to be on campus until October 8th. Other elementary teachers had prepared two weeks’ worth of virtual lesson plans for third and fifth grade.

Without classes on campus, we had time each day for extended Bible study, worship and prayer. During this period I discovered that the promise of Isaiah 54:14, “My covenant of blessing will never be broken, says the Lord who has mercy on you” pertained directly to our expectation of Grace Covenant at covenantofgrace@God'smercy.com. God had made a covenant with us because of His mercy, and we could boldly approach Him to receive Grace. This was confirmed during a staff prayer session, when Vic, a long-standing night vigil prayer partner and preschool teacher of 15 years, mentioned that God had revealed to her “that He had made a covenant with ACA and we should base our prayers on the covenant.”

The two weeks were up, and yet there was no Grace Covenant. The night before school started, I had another PowerPoint presentation to prepare, but this time, all students and staff

(except one) would be present in the auditorium. I looked at my watch before going to bed - 4:19 a.m. and Philippians 4:19 came to mind – yes, God will supply all our needs! Faith rose, and I sensed that we were going into the lions’ den and the fiery furnace, but we would come out alive and all would know our God. I slept one hour, but in that short time, I had a dream. Standing in the front of the auditorium I looked at our staff and saw “faith” in their eyes. I do not know how to describe what it looked like, but I saw tangible faith. It was a substance. After this vision, I was confident to make my way to the auditorium for the Opening Assembly.

October 8, 2014

During Opening Assembly I had all new staff stand up (there were seven physically), but on the PowerPoint I had eight names, including Grace Covenant. I decided not to call them out one by one, but played a game, where the students had to guess which fact matched the teacher. I only featured four staff so as not to draw attention to everyone present (or absent).

Bid became the substitute teacher for Grace Covenant in fifth grade. Sam remembers someone making a comment that an angel would come, “I guess Bid was the angel,” she remarked. Nevertheless, she felt overwhelmed on behalf of Bid. Equi was very relieved. He knew Bid was not supposed to be a class teacher, but “she just graciously took over the fifth grade.”

“I was just concerned about the kids,” Bid remarked, “I just went into the class and started teaching. And in fact, after a while I settled into the teacher mode.” James, however, considered Bid’s stepping into fifth grade as “a thorn in our flesh” that we had to bear.

Some jokingly said Bid was Grace Covenant-- but I did not think it was funny. During our staff meeting at the end of school on Friday, October 10th, I declared “there was no more

fishing for teachers.” God had promised to supply our needs and one way of showing our faith was to stop searching for teachers. But that wasn’t easy to do, especially for Mabel.

Mabel began looking for other teachers locally, “I guess because of being desperate,” she admitted. Dividing the teaching responsibilities amongst teachers and assistants already in the system to help share Bid’s load was another consideration. “Are we sure that we’re not trying to find an alternative?” Mabel questioned, “We had said there’s no plan B.” True; but it didn’t seem fair that someone was carrying an excessive workload while the administration was seemingly taking a back seat in not trying to recruit.

During this whole time Monica remembered wondering, “How long is Karen going to keep having faith that this person is going to come?”

Preparing for Bible classes, I saturated myself in Scriptures about God’s provision for His children’s needs. Bible lessons were about the flowers of the field and the birds of the air. We memorized Philippians 4:4-6 and sang songs in praise of God’s love for us. This was a personal recruitment strategy, learning to live carefree, because of His care, even in crisis situations.

One day, Mabel had to substitute for Bid and the kids were complaining because other classes had amazing themes while they had none. Staff had put up temporary décor, but that day, a student commented, “Look at these ugly things in our class.” Mabel brought the concerning report to the administrative group that morning. During the prayer, I had an inspired image of a reading loft, shaped like a boat mounted above the sea, and within days we had it built. We purchased sea-motif shower curtains to hang under the wooden ark. That weekend the “ark of the covenant” theme was complete, with a wall-to-wall rainbow at the front of the class, children’s names on paper white doves hanging from the ceiling, and a suspended Noah’s ark reading loft above the sea. The class was transformed and the kids were ecstatic.

Around this time I discovered that the words “grace” and “covenant” appeared for the first time in the Bible within the narrative of Noah. The theme for the class, and the name of the teacher were now one and the same. Now, all we needed was the *real* Grace Covenant.

We felt it was about time to tell the fifth graders that Grace Covenant was not actually a real person, but words that represented God’s promise of a teacher. The kids joined in prayer, as did the “praying moms” group that met on Friday mornings. It was a relief to “let the cat out of the bag.” Because of the testimonies of Monica and Amanda, and the excellent teaching of Bid, everyone seemed to accept our recruitment plan – “only believe.”

As we entered November, we decided not to have a Thanksgiving holiday, but celebrate an entire month of giving thanks, beginning on 11/11 at 11:00 a.m. We put a ban on complaints, opened “our tank of thanks” box in each class—filled daily with slips of personalized “thank you God for...” notes, and pasted signs all over the school that said: “Give thanks always, in everything.” Staff meetings on Fridays were “worship only” sessions.

My prayer journal entry for November 20th, gleaned from *Come Away My Beloved* (Roberts, 2010) epitomized our mood in November:

The singing heart is blind to obstacles and recognizes in all things the loving hand of an all-wise Father... In such a state, delays are unnoticed... The power of evil to destroy joy is nullified when Christ Himself becomes the one point of attention. In Him all things are possessed now for faith beholds that which is yet to be as though it were already a reality.

Mabel recalls that, before closing in December, she had totally given up on the position being filled by an American. Bid came up with the idea of training a teaching assistant to stand in the position. Both Mabel and she thought it was an excellent option. Mabel said, “The only thing left is to tell the principal.” When I heard of it, I was adamantly opposed to the idea.

January 2015

The arrival of Grace Covenant took us by surprise. By faith, I told Bid that I would tell her about the new teacher in two days time. I had no idea who it would be, but I knew that we needed a time limit for Grace to show up, and the time set was two days. When Bid saw me the morning of *the* day and asked who the teacher was, I told her that I would tell her in the afternoon.

Then, suddenly, the miracle we had been waiting for just happened. Elena, an American teacher with 12 years of teaching experience walked into ACA. I had met Elena the previous June, when she had recently arrived in Ibadan. At that time she mentioned that she was an AP World History teacher. Newly married, she was not looking for a job, but would consider possibly teaching one History class. She was going back to the United States in October and therefore unavailable for the first semester.

In January I had asked her to come in to see about future part-time possibilities, as we already had a history teacher, when she walked in I suddenly thought of fifth grade. I hesitantly mentioned the available position, noting it was a full load and not the age level with which she was familiar. I was stunned when she expressed an interest in the position. I promptly took her to Bid's office and said, "This is Grace Covenant!!!"

Bid recalls the moment I knocked at her door with Elena: "That was the greatest shock of all ages because, Elena was somebody I felt was out of reach. I knew something had changed...because I couldn't imagine that she'd be able to give that much time to ACA."

Elena recollected her previous position of not being willing "to go back into teaching to that level of intensity." However, she stated that her newfound openness to teaching was because she "was beginning to miss the interaction with children."

Equi recounts his version: “Miraculously, from nowhere, Elena walked in and that was the icing on the cake, and we were just overjoyed, overwhelmed and very thankful for having our full staff strength, beyond what we had expected.

After a week in fifth grade, Elena’s husband lost his job. Elena acknowledged both the providence of God in creating an opportunity for her that was needed for her family. And, at the same time, He brought her on staff to fit the needs of the school. She concluded, “I do believe God answered both of our prayers.”

Discussion

The narrative inquiry revealed interesting discussion points which, when sorted into themes, helped to answer the questions posed in the introduction of this study.

Research Question One:

What is perceived to have engendered the recurrent phenomenon of supernatural intervention in the provision of teachers at ACA?

Evidence from this narrative inquiry points to supernatural interventions occurring when there are impossible situations with no alternatives except to look to God as the sole solution. Harris (2008) acknowledged that in her battle against cancer, “My *only hope for survival* (emphasis added) lay in my faith” (p. 233). ACA’s stories of divine intervention in recruitment have followed the same pathway of absolute dependence on God.

Losing half the international staff in 1995; no opportunity to recruit in 2009; and with Ebola and Boko Haram inhibiting recruitment in 2014-2015, ACA’s administration was forced to trust in God alone to recruit the needed staff. Through supernatural intervention all positions were filled.

The recruitment stories investigated revealed specific actions demonstrating total dependence on God. These actions of faith, which engendered divine intervention, include the following:

1. The prayer of faith, based on promises in the Word of God. All supernatural recruitment stories involved holding unflinchingly to promises in the Bible.
2. United prayer and fasting. Apart from the incident in the dental chair, prayer and fasting preceded all other divine interventions in the narratives.
3. Worship and thanksgiving. Except for the story of Warren, recruitments involved worship and genuine thanksgiving prior to the miraculous intervention.
4. Divine dreams, visions, and direct communication from God. There is no recollection of such in the Peggy and Warren narratives, however, each of the recruitment stories of 2014-2015 involved dreams, visions, and express communication from God, which served to direct and encourage staff to believe for the supernatural occurrence.
5. Waiting patiently. Each supernatural recruitment story has an element of waiting. Parrot (2009) admits that “God’s wind usually gets us there much more slowly than we might desire, although it always gets us there just in time....God’s timing is never wrong. Although the patience to wait for it is sometimes especially frustrating” (p. 246).

It is worthy of note that in the Biblical narrative accounts alluded to in this research, the stories are replete with the same faith-actions listed above. Consider the quest for Isaac’s wife and the *prayer of faith* by the servant, confident that God would stand by His covenant of steadfast love to Abraham. Daniel, the “greatly beloved,” (Daniel 10:11) lived a life of *prayer*

and fasting and experienced supernatural intervention in the lion's den, while his three friends experienced the same in the fiery furnace. Immediately following David's *worship* in the loss of Bathsheba's son, a second son was conceived and Solomon, the "beloved of the Lord" (II Samuel 12:14) became the wisest king who ever lived. Both Josephs mentioned in the Old and New Testaments received divine direction in *dreams* leading to the preservation of the Jewish race (Genesis 40-50) and the preservation of the beloved Son (Matthew 2:13-15) who became the Savior of the entire world. Finally, concerning waiting for God's timing, the Bible says he "loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, so when he heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days." Martha and Mary needed to *wait* for his timing in order to receive the supernatural intervention.

In the process of summarizing the administration's faith-actions and comparing them with those recorded in the Biblical narratives highlighted above, another theme emerged: Faith-actions seem to stem from the foundational understanding of God's unfailing love. In the Biblical accounts cited, each includes mention of God's love for those who received the intervention.

Parrot (2009), asserts that we can only be responsive to the wind when we are "firmly grounded in our understanding of God's nature." God responds when His children declare that "He is good, for his steadfast love endures forever." When that theme song was raised after the completion of Solomon's temple, the glory of the LORD filled the house (2 Chronicles 5:13-14). "You are good and your mercy is forever" was the theme song in the administrative group (in August) the night-vigil group (in September) and in all-school staff meetings (October – December). Faith in His everlasting love engendered "seeing the glory of God" (supernatural intervention).

In the three-month wait for Grace Covenant, of particular note, was the realization that her pseudonym and email address, the development of the theme in the class, and the promise given in Isaiah 54:9-10 although emerging independently, were all related to the story of Noah.

“For this is like the days of Noah...For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD who has compassion on you.” (English Standard Version)

Once again, it was the knowledge of the steadfast love of the LORD, which engendered trust in Him alone, leading to faith-actions and resulting in supernatural intervention.

The “calling forth” scriptural strategy Jesus used in raising Lazarus, although new to ACA this year, was put into effect when an entire family was “called forth” to fill an apartment that previously had only been occupied by couples. Both Faith Mustard and Grace Covenant were “called forth” before they appeared. Proclaiming that teachers would surface “by tomorrow” (to Sam) or “in two days time” (to Bid), followed the Scriptural precedent Elisha used when he prophesied a surfeit of food “by this time tomorrow.” This “calling forth” Scriptural strategy was revealed through a dream to the HR manager, early on in the process and became the primary method through which the divine intervention occurred.

Recalling the illustration of a mother and hungry children, there appears to be a similarity between ACA’s recent supernatural recruitment experience and that of the Israelites receiving angel’s food in the wilderness. What engendered the experience? God explains in Deuteronomy 8:2 that He intentionally let the Israelites go hungry in order to feed them with manna and teach them not to live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from His mouth. It appears that God may have led ACA into the recruitment wilderness where the administration was left to go

without in order to teach them that they are not to live by natural reasoning but by His direction (through Scripture and dreams, in this case) in order to receive supernatural recruitment. It was a humbling and testing experience, meant for good, so that we would never say to ourselves, “I have achieved this recruitment with my own strength and energy” (Deuteronomy 8:17, personal paraphrase).

Other “God’s agenda” intentions may include what Francis, support staff of six years, revealed when he concluded, “ACA is God’s idea – not man’s. God supplies what he has initiated.” Supply of quality international staff at ACA is a God-given mandate if we must fulfill His mission to reach the nations for Christ.

And finally, just as Abraham’s servant bowed and worshipped when he received God’s provision of a wife for his master’s son, each account of divine recruitment has also led our staff to bow and worship. This may be God’s chief motive in supernatural intervention, because as we worship, we fulfill both His desire (John 4:24) and our purpose as His creation.

Research Question Two:

What impact have these phenomena had on creating an organizational legacy of faith?

In the case of Peggy and Warren, I was solely responsible for recruitment, and the experience of walking by faith to secure staff was a personal one. However, in the supernatural intervention of 2014-2015, what began as personal faith recruitment initiative in July became an administrative group prayer focus in August, a night-vigil prayer group focus in September, and an all-school focus from October – December.

According to Parrot (2009) a leader cannot shift organizational culture alone. He acknowledges that although all employees are important, “there is a small group of ‘game changing’ team members” (p. 232) that will make or break the ministry. Fortunately, at ACA the

admin prayer group and night-vigil prayer group are that force. Parrot refers to the thrust they create as “a swirling force that will draft others into the momentum, until, like a tornado, every employee will either be swept up in the change or hiding in a bunker for cover.” Recruitment by faith, was a unified effort, led by those in the prayer group and followed by the rest of staff.

The experience of supernatural intervention in recruitment this year has had remarkable bearing on several aspects of the staff’s faith. Specific comments under each heading, gleaned from staff questionnaires and recorded interviews help to summarize the general effect that the recruitment experience of 2014-2015 had on ACA as a whole. As a community we have learned to...

1. Have increased faith and trust in God, depending solely on Him
 - “It was a high point in my life, because we had to depend on God.” – Equi
 - “When Monica came, an American teacher, found here in Nigeria, I just realized that the only thing that made sense was for one to trust God all the time....No need to try to find out how He could solve my problems.” – James
 - “Don’t try to find an alternative.” – Newton
 - “I don’t want to walk by sight anymore, only by faith.” – Anjali
 - “When I realized that Faith Mustard and Grace Covenant were fake names, I saw faith in demonstration and my faith grew also.” – Raymond (design technology teacher of nine years.
 - “All of this has taken my faith to a different level....I now trust God for things that are way beyond my imagination.” – Funmi

- “My faith has increased on how to be more patient and thankful to God even in times of trial and tribulations. He will take care of all our needs.”
– Suja
 - “The first thing I learned through this was to trust God.” – Mabel
2. Call things forth that do not exist
- “Now when I pray, I see what I ask as already there, and that is what real faith is, seeing what is not there!” – Funmi
 - “We started calling forth the names of teachers and, without making any connection with these teachers, they actually came to be. That was a wonderful experience for me. A practical experience of faith.” – Francis
 - “I have never seen this kind of thing anywhere. You have empty positions and then you say this person is going to come and everyone came, one after the other. It was just amazing to me, it was supernatural.” –
Raymond
3. Worship and serve God
- “It did something to my faith. I drew a line, that Lord, – I will serve you!...I’m going to be dedicated to you whether it hurts me or not. I just felt it pays to serve God.” - Bid
 - “You cannot help but fall in worship and thank God that He really is who He says He is.” – Equi
4. Have patience
- “Asking and receiving immediately is great, but asking, and patiently waiting is far better, because the joy is more in-depth when you receive.”

– Funmi

- “After all is said and done, you just stand, wait, believe what He has said to you and He is faithful He will bring it pass.” – Mabel
- “If God has made a promise, and shown you something and God has told you and you find it in His Word, you should just stick to it.” – Newton
- “I understood that faith and hope do not ever fail.” – James
- “If you wait long enough, the thing that you’re waiting for is going to happen.” – Monica

5. Appreciate the community of faith at ACA

- “I thank God for all that He’s doing here among us. I thank God for the spiritual environment that we’re enjoying.” - Francis
- “This is a place where my faith could be built up. All of a sudden we prayed, we had faith, and these teachers started surfacing. I said ‘my goodness, this is quite supernatural....’ So my faith was built up and I’m really encouraged spiritually. I’m stronger in terms of faith, seeing what is happening here day by day.” - Louis (newly employed art teacher)
- “Because we were together as a group it really helped me to hold on in faith even when it seemed that all hope was lost.” – Bid

6. Believe more in prayer

- It strengthened my belief in prayer – Sam
- God answers all prayers. If not for Mrs. K and her strong faith in prayers, we wouldn’t have prayed long hours in the month of August 2014 in the conference room to get teachers for third, fifth and sixth grades. – Anjali

In Parrot's (2009) chapter, "Shaping Organizational Ministry Culture," he acknowledges that every organization has a distinctive culture permeating all levels of operation. He notes that the "most distinctive corporate cultures can be summarized in a single word: Disney is happy; MacDonald's is consistent; Wal-Mart is inexpensive" (p. 216). Such cultures, developed over time, are "often inherently understood and informally passed on rather than articulated and promoted" (p. 216). If the ACA's organizational ministry culture could be summarized in one word, according to James it would be a "Faith"-full people... People who are full of faith." Abbie, a staff-member of 19-years, concurred: "It just boiled down to faith...If you've worked at ACA you know that a lot of things work out, all the time, mainly because of our faith."

Summary

Supernatural intervention in the provision of teachers at the American Christian Academy (ACA) has been a recurring phenomenon since its inception in 1991. Upon researching this repeated occurrence, it became apparent that believing God solely is what engenders intervention. Last year, with Boko Haram and Ebola threatening the safety of people in Nigeria, international recruitment became virtually impossible. The only solution to the crisis was found in the promise that although "we would neither see wind or rain, the valley (in our case, vacancies) would be filled." Through the "only believe" recruitment strategy, staff experienced what a teacher termed the "Bible made alive." Clinging to Scriptural promises in faith, being united in prayer and fasting, and partaking in worship, ACA experienced the credulous supernatural supply of three American teachers. Through directions in a dream to "call forth" teachers, "Faith Mustard" and "Grace Covenant" (pseudonyms) were called forth and actually arrived, by faith.

While at many Christian schools prayers are often tagged to the beginning and end of

administrative meetings, at the start of the 2014-2015 academic year, ACA administrative meetings consisted *only* of prayer and worship. The result was that God supplied the most qualified (Monica with an M.Ed.) and experienced (Elena with 12 years of experience) international teachers ever recorded at ACA. This research is a narrative of the process with the purpose of encouraging other faith-based schools to rely on God solely as their Plan A, when facing similar challenges.

Implications/Recommendations

This narrative inquiry reveals that God is still in the business of supernatural intervention. However, such intervention is engendered by reliance on God alone. For Christian organizations, where planning is the “golden rule,” it is essential to let go of control in order to “catch the wind of God” and experience His limitless power. Biblical strategies work, but are underutilized in the modern age, because “powerboats are present.” However, the prayer of faith based on the Word, unified fasting and praying, worship, recognition of dreams and visions as a means of guidance, and patient waiting on God to act are standard operating procedures in Scripture and relevant today as methods of strategic planning.

“Letting go, and letting God” is not just a cliché, but a means to experience the supernatural. Quoting Joseph Conrad, Parrot (2009) states, “the safest place to be is 1000 miles from shore” (p. 244). Jesus encouraged the disciples who had fished all night and caught nothing to go out into the deep. It was at His word that they received superabundant supply. Parrot asks, “have you ever been so far from land that you had to focus on the vastness of the sky because your motor wouldn’t do you any good that far from your secure harbor?” (p. 243).

Recommendations include the need for further exploration as to how to effectively administer a school with age-old faith-based practices. Case studies of school administration’s

reliance solely on God and His providential interventions need to be researched and published. Such studies would lead others to bow and worship and to have faith to trust God as their Plan A. Further studies would encourage others to launch into the deep and receive their own supernatural supply.

“Hearing” God is crucial to know how to proceed in circumstances that defy solutions. His Word will always bring supernatural results, but it takes “ears to hear” and a heart to believe in order to follow what He says. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He delights in our welfare and if we humble ourselves He will lead us, just as He led the Israelites.

Limitations

One limitation in this study may be my personal bias. Another limitation may be that the participants were or are currently employees and may be biased in wanting to testify to please their boss. Their recollections may also be somewhat biased.

An additional limitation is that this study was location specific, in a third world country, facing security threats. Although other areas require supernatural intervention, challenges in recruitment may not necessarily be considered as an impossible task.

Finally, considering God as Plan A without a backup plan also may require more faith than the norm. If one hasn't killed bears and lions first, it may be difficult to challenge a Goliath.

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Appendix A

Past Participant Teacher Questionnaire

Teacher Questionnaire (Past Participant) Please answer the first three questions.

1. How did you come in contact with the American Christian Academy (ACA)?
2. Please describe the circumstances and events leading up to your employment at ACA.

(Include specific dates if possible)

3. Did this experience seem unusual? How?

(Optional)

4. Did this experience have an effect on your faith? If yes, how?

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Current Participants and Observers

While the focus of this research is primarily on the supernatural intervention in recruitment of international teachers the inquiry involves what engenders supernatural recruitment generally and the impact such “stories” have on both individuals and our school’s culture of faith.

Please consider contributing to this project if you have something concrete to share, even if it’s only one comment.

Name: _____

Interview preference

- Video recording
 Audio (only) recording
 Written response

Please tick as many of the statements below if you have a significant contribution that you would be willing to speak/write about.

1. share the story of significant supernatural intervention in my recruitment/hiring process. (Please describe the circumstances and events leading up to your employment at ACA. Did this experience seem unusual? How? How did it impact your faith?)
2. share words that you would use to describe the experience of recruiting teachers this year? Please explain the choice of each word.
3. Share your perception at the initial stages of this process. What thoughts did you have, or comments you recall making to each other at the following stages:
 - a. At the end of last year when we knew that six international staff were leaving.
 - b. During the summer when the potential teachers all backed out, including the one who had already signed a contract.
 - c. The week prior to staff resumption, with no teachers on the horizon.
 - d. When “Faith Mustard” and “Grace Covenant” appeared on the staff list with contact information
 - e. Sept. 19 – New parent orientation, fasting and prayer day, school to resume on Monday, Sept. 22 without 3rd and 5th grade teacher in sight.
 - f. Oct.-Dec. – with Ms. Bid in 5th grade and no more fishing for teachers, yet still expecting one.
4. Share your thoughts, feelings and comments
 - a. When you heard about Monica.
 - b. When you heard about Amanda arriving before school was to reopen.
 - c. When Elena arrived, without fanfare, as our 5th grade teacher
5. Share how the outcome of these stories has affected your faith

Appendix C

Table of Demographic Data of Participants

Name	Country Of origin	Designation	Interview Method	Recruitment	year of employment
X = considered supernatural d = involved a dream					
<u>Past</u>					
Peggy	U.S.A.	3rd Grade	Written	X	1995
Warren	U.S.A.	5th Grade	Written	X	2009
<u>Current</u>					
Monica	U.S.A.	6th Grade	Video	X-d	2014
Amanda	U.S.A.	3rd Grade	Written	X-d	2014
Elena	U.S.A.	5th Grade	Written	X-d	2015

Appendix D

Table of Demographic Data of Observers

Name	Country Of origin	Designation	Interview Method	Recruitment	year of employment
X = considered supernatural d = involved a dream					
<u>Admin Group</u>					
Equi *	Nigeria	School Head	Video	-	1996
Mabel *	Nigeria	Human Resources	Video	X	2008
Abidemi *	Nigeria	VP Academics	Audio	X-d	1997
Sumbo *	Nigeria	Chaplain/Bio teacher	Written	X-d	1998
Carrie*	India	Admissions	Written	X-d	2003
Anjali*	India	VP Admin/Bus.St. teacher	Written	-	2005
Suja	India	Financial Officer	Written	-	2010
<u>Senior School</u>					
James*	Nigeria	Snr Sch Acad supervisor Math teacher	Audio	X-d	1999
Newton*	Nigeria	Economics teacher	Video	X-d	2009
Dayo*	Nigeria	Chemistry teacher	Video	X	2007
Yinka*	Nigeria	Physics teacher	Written	X-d	2006
Raymond*	Nigeria	Design Tech teacher	Video	X-d	2006
Louis	Nigeria	Art teacher (5 th – 12 th)	Video	X	2014
<u>Elementary School</u>					
Linda	Nigeria	1 st Grade teacher	Video	X	2014
Sam*	U.S.A.	1 st Grade teacher	Audio	-	2013
Funmi	Nigeria	2 nd Grade teacher	Written	-	2003
Ethel*	Nigeria	4 th Grade teacher	Video	-	2006
<u>Pre School</u>					
Seema*	India	Pre Kg teacher	Video	X	1991
Abbie	Nigeria	Kg teacher	Audio	X	1996
Leah	U.S.A.	Art (PSch – 4 th)	Video	X	2006
Vic*	Ghana	Pre Nursery teacher	Written	-	2000
<u>Support Staff</u>					
Abayomi	Nigeria	teaching assistant	Video	X-d	2014
Francis	Nigeria	book store	Audio	X	2009

* night vigil prayer group members