

## "Full Circle" News and Prayer

Dear Friends and Family,

We greet you with a lot of love in Jesus' Name! We are excited to share that God is taking us **"full circle"** as a couple in ministry. As many of you know, I was raised in the **tropical jungles** of Suriname, South America as the son of missionary parents. I always felt a strong call to full-time ministry and believed it would be in Suriname with the indigenous people I grew up with.



After graduating from High School, I came to the U.S. and received my B.A. in Biblical Studies at Trinity College in Florida. After my wife, Junine, and I got married, we moved to Southern California so I could attend Talbot Theological Seminary, where I received an M.A. in Intercultural Studies and World Missions from Biola University. At that time we were pursuing becoming full-time missionaries in Suriname. However, through various circumstances, it became clear that God was redirecting us into pastoral ministry in the **"concrete jungle"** of Southern California. Over the last 20 years serving as a pastor in Orange County, I have had the privilege of seeing many lives impacted for Jesus Christ. As meaningful and fulfilling as that has been, I've always had a sense that someday God would call me back to serve the people I grew up with. Thankfully, the Lord has allowed me to take numerous short-term missions trips back to the jungle leading ministry teams which have kept me connected with the people and fluent in their languages. Isaiah 55:9 says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Indeed God's ways and thoughts are always higher than ours, and now God is taking me **"full circle"** back to the jungles of Suriname. While the timing and path are drastically different from what we envisioned in the early years of our marriage, looking ahead at what God is calling us to do in Suriname we can now rejoice in His perfect will and timing. We indeed have come **"Full Circle."**

### **A Great Commission Victory Ready to Advance:**

#### **Early years:**

During the first years of ministry, my parents, along with other missionaries, made contact with two indigenous people groups, the Wayana and Trio. After establishing trusting relationships, they were able to learn the languages, reduce them to writing, teach literacy, translate the Bible, provide medical and dental clinics, and establish churches.



**Early Church service with Wayana Indians**

The Wayana and Trio experienced almost 100% literacy and 80% conversion. Although many of the goals of the early years of ministry have been met, the story does not end here!

***The Indians in Suriname are on the move!*** On one of my recent mission trips, the leaders of the Wayana and Trio Indians shared their hearts about the changing world their communities are facing and the difficulty they are experiencing trying to provide spiritual guidance. When they first came to understand the Gospel, the Indians lived in larger, more centralized villages where churches had been established. While these churches are healthy, with the encroachment of the outside world and their rapid population growth, the people are finding it necessary to move away from the main villages. They have to search deeper into the jungle for wild game and fertile ground for their crops resulting in smaller communities living together. In addition, many have started working in the mining or lumber industry to provide basic necessities for their families. Consequently, communication between church and family is now very challenging, and church leaders are concerned about how they are going to disciple and reach out to this continually changing demographic.

Furthermore, the Wayana and Trio have a passion for outreach and evangelism. They are engaging in mission's trips lasting many weeks through difficult terrain to preach the Gospel to the unreached in Brazil, Guiana, and French Guiana. However, travel is often cost-prohibitive as fuel is expensive and navigating the river rapids reek havoc on their outboard motors. When river travel is not an option, they are left to trek through the jungles, limiting the number of people they can reach with the Gospel.

#### ***Radio: an answer to discipleship and evangelism***

In America, Christians have many avenues to hear the Gospel and pursue spiritual growth. They have multiple churches in which they can choose to attend. There is a plethora of books, podcasts, seminars, and media (websites, T.V., and radio). The Indians do not have any of these resources. Having a radio ministry will begin to address this void. The radio will reach the Indians wherever they may be traveling. Just think of what it will mean to them to have daily programs in their languages, to hear a voice from home each evening in their outlying villages, isolated lumber, mining or hunting camps or traveling the rivers! They can listen to Christian music composed by their own people, Gospel preaching, Scripture reading, Bible teaching, encouragement, exhortation, and prayer.

Radio is also a strong evangelistic tool, which can expand the reach of the Gospel to Suriname's neighboring

countries as well as to the 70,000 Brazilian mining workers in and adjacent to the Indian territory.

On a recent visit to one of the small remote Trio villages, a family came out of the jungle carrying heavy backpacks made of palm leaves. As they approached the camp, I noticed their legs were covered in mud and it appeared they were returning from a long journey. They told me they were returning from a missions trip across the border into Brazil, where they had gone to minister to the "Naked People."



**"The Hilton"**

**Overnight camping on a missions trip**

It took them over a week to travel through the rugged jungle terrain on foot. We learned that the Trio family had stayed with the people several months and were overjoyed to report that the Brazilian tribe was very receptive to the Gospel. When I later told the family about the possibility of a radio ministry, they immediately saw the vision of bringing radios to the "Naked People" on their next missionary journey. These trips come at a great sacrifice to these missionaries and their families as they are unable to provide food through hunting and fishing, cut their gardens, build canoes, etc. while they are away. This technology would greatly expand their ability to minister to these people. Just like the Wayana and Trio used to be, the "Naked People" are steeped in witchcraft and held captive to their animistic beliefs. They too are hungry to hear about a God who loves them and provided a way of salvation through His Son Jesus.

**The Wayana and Trio tribes desire to use radio to evangelize and keep the community of believers together and disciple those who have given their lives to Christ.**

#### **Launching the program:**

The Wayana and Trio have both radios and cell phones. They already use their radios to listen to secular broadcasts from Paramaribo, the capital of Suriname. The Government has installed cell phone towers. These towers comprise a digital data network over which audio can be streamed. We are in negotiations with the Government to secure space on their towers to place F.M. broadcast antennas. Within the first year, we plan to have two broadcasting studios, one for the Wayana and one for the Trio. Much material is already available for broadcast. The Indians hold church services five days per week, so there are many Bible teaching sermons available. They have written well over a hundred original worship songs, so there is also much music material to broadcast. They will have indigenous leaders who are qualified elders in the church operating each studio.

#### **A NEW PARTNERSHIP: *Trans World Radio (TWR) and The TriAna Foundation***

Through a series of events and personal connections, a formal partnership has been formed between TWR and the Triana Foundation. We see this as nothing short of a miracle and God's direct answer to prayer fulfilling a long-term vision for the next generation of indigenous peoples. My family created The Triana Foundation, which is registered in Suriname to benefit the Wayana and Trio people. The board consists of elders from these tribes, myself, and another Suriname national missionary colleague. We are thrilled that TWR shares our vision and has come alongside to provide the technical assistance needed. Specifically, the equipment, radio experience, and much of the cost of constructing, and maintaining the studios in the Indian villages. This will add one more country to the 190 countries of the TWR global outreach and several more languages to the 230 languages in which TWR is presently broadcasting.



**Steve & Tom at signing of partnership between TWR and the Triana Foundation**

I will be leading the development of the radio ministry acting as the on-the-ground liaison between the Suriname government and the Wayana and Trio elders for licensing and subsequent implementation. Along with TWR, I will work with a Suriname team to build the two radio transmission stations and train the indigenous people to maintain and operate them. I will also train the people in the production of broadcast-ready material.

This is what we plan to accomplish by establishing the very first indigenous language Christian radio ministry in Suriname. Upon our acceptance to TWR, Steve Shantz, TWR VP of Latin America & the Caribbean, wrote the following statement in our letter of appointment as missionaries, "I am feeling some fairly strong emotions right now. I will take that to be from the Holy Spirit as I have become acutely aware of God's love and heart for the Wayana and Trio people. He cared enough to send the Schoen family, to reveal his power deep in the jungle and to even have his Son appear to an Akurio Girl to tell her someone is looking for her. May this be another step in God's plan for these tribes." The Akurio is the last Stone Age tribe of indigenous people we contacted in Suriname. Stay tuned; we will share that story in the next **"Full Circle Newsletter."**

#### **Partnering with us in Suriname through praying and giving:**

As missionaries with TWR, we are required to raise 100% of our personal support before we can leave for the field. We have raised 52% of our monthly support and are looking for individuals and churches that want to partner with us on this adventure through giving and prayer. If you

feel God is leading you to become a part of our team, you can send your gifts to:

Trans World Radio  
P.O. Box 8700  
Cary, NC 278512

**To donate online:**

1. Go to [www.twr.org/donate](http://www.twr.org/donate) Select: *Donate to staff*
2. In the search box type: *Schoen*
3. Tom and Junine's picture will appear in a separate box. Click on our picture
4. Select the orange Donate button and follow the links



Tom and Junine Schoen  
[schoent05@gmail.com](mailto:schoent05@gmail.com)

We are very aware that without your prayers and help the radio ministry cannot be achieved. We hope you will rejoice with us in all God has already accomplished to bring about the radio ministry and partnership with TWR. We ask that you will join your prayers with ours so that the Kingdom of Heaven continues to expand its reach in Suriname and the surrounding countries. To Him be all the glory!

In the love of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Your missionaries and friends, Tom and Junine Schoen