

PRAYERFUL BEGINNINGS OF MAF



Towards the end of World War II, Christian pilots began thinking about what they would do when the conflict ended. They had gained valuable flying skills and wanted to put them to use — not as a tool of war, but as something useful.

In 1944, American airwoman Betty Greene helped form the Christian Airmen's Missionary Fellowship (CAMF).



In England in 1945, a New Zealander called Murray Kendon had a vision from the Lord. He reached out to other Christian airmen, and Stuart King and Jack Hemmings got in touch.

The three discussed and prayed about what they could do, with Murray's vision leading them to establish MAF (Missionary Aviation Fellowship) with funding from the Mildmay Movement for World Evangelisation.

In 1946, CAMF decided to rename itself MAF as both groups realised their shared mission and began working together. They already had one aircraft in the USA, with Betty Greene flying to reach remote areas of Mexico.



Stuart and Murray began a tour of the UK, with the help of Steve Stevens and his wife Kay, raising prayer and support for MAF with the aim of buying an aircraft.

In 1947, MAF UK was able to buy a Miles Gemini aircraft which was flown to numerous airfields around the country to show people what their prayers had achieved, and to continue raising prayer and support.

It was also a great way of really getting to grips with the aircraft, prior to travelling overseas.

The men had been praying regularly, asking God where He wanted them to serve, and they felt He was calling them to Africa. So they decided to make an aerial survey of several of the continent's countries to discover where they would be most useful.

On a wet, wintry day in January 1948, Stuart King and Jack Hemmings set off from Croydon to Africa. They flew down across France, over the sea to Libya, then Egypt, and into Sudan, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Wherever they went, they met with local missionaries to see if their plane would be needed.

Unfortunately, their flight ended in disaster when downdrafts from the mountains caused their small aircraft to crash in Burundi.

Thankfully, Stuart and Jack both survived unscathed and were able to finish their survey by land, realising just how vital planes were to getting people around.

They eventually realised they'd be most useful in Sudan – the insurance money from the first plane, along with some additional financial support, enabling them to purchase a De Havilland Dragon Rapide.

The aircraft had more power and a greater load-carrying capability than the previous plane, and was well suited for the task.



Over the years, MAF has gained more and more supporters, and has been led by the Lord to expand and serve in more than 25 countries.

It has always been our hope that MAF's services would cease to be needed once infrastructure and technology improved in each country. This has happened in some nations, enabling us to move on and help elsewhere.

In others, however, instability, political unrest and natural disasters mean that we're still needed.

MAF was able to help for many years in Ethiopia, until civil war forced us to leave in 1977, though we later became active in countries such as Angola, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Timor-Leste and Uganda.



More recently, we served the people of Mongolia, flying throughout that vast country from 2001 to 2020.

It was so exciting to see the Good News reach many Mongolians once the country opened up after communist rule — our aircraft flew many Mongolian church groups from the capital city to remote villages until infrastructure and communications developed to the point where we were no longer needed.

Similarly, after 25 years of fruitful service in Bangladesh, our programme there ended when improvements to the country's transport system connected areas that, without MAF's floatplane, were previously unreachable.

More recently, we've had the joy of establishing new programmes in places such as Liberia (2015) and Guinea (2022), responding to the needs of those living in nations where transport remains difficult and infrastructure poor.

If you'd like to read more about the history of MAF and the places we've served, our books *Hope Has Wings* and *Above and Beyond* tell the full story.



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