

Farragut's Stephens trains groups to go overseas

By Carolyn Evans



Stinky Americans. Why in the world didn't the American church group ever bathe?

The locals in the Southeast Asian village

couldn't figure it out. They had provided a tub full of water in the middle of the bathroom. Why didn't the water level ever go down? Finally, at the end of the week, they managed to discreetly enquire "Why don't you bathe?"

Debbie Stephens, president of Equipped To Go, says the Americans had preferred to take sponge baths. She laughs about the misunderstanding. It's all part of being immersed in a new culture, she says.

Her ministry, Equipped To Go, provides training to get individuals and groups ready to go abroad. She says she never set out to have a 501c3 registered nonprofit. She and her husband of 34 years, Alan, are longtime Farragut residents with two grown sons, and for many years Stephens was a mom who volunteered and worked at a local church helping train teams to do missions. But things were about to change.

"In 2009 the Lord said it was time for me to quit," she says. "I didn't understand and wasn't sure what was next. About three months later, God formed a vision for this ministry."

She began writing a Bible-based curriculum for cross-cultural training. Now she offers in-person and online workshops that focus on key areas: spiri-



Debbie Stephens, president of Equipped To Go, prepares a group to go overseas.

tual preparation, worldview, health, safety and security. She also discusses how to debrief the team and what the next steps should be. Stephens has worked with local groups and has also traveled around the U.S.

"I have a board, so I have a team," she says, "but at this time I do the training myself." She has never advertised. "Everything has come through people I've known and networking."

Stephens' interest in mission training started when she was 33 and on her first international mission trip.

"We were in Nicaragua on a medical trip visiting orphanages," she says. "A pastor was showing us around and said, 'Some-

times we run out of rice and beans.' Stephens spoke up and asked, "What do you do then?" He answered, "We teach the children about fasting."

"That really rocked me," Stephens says. "When I returned it was Black Friday and I struggled to process the commercial Christmas season."

Since then she's been on 17 other trips in 8 different countries, including a pivotal trip to Southeast Asia.

"About a year after Nicaragua, God sent me to Southeast Asia with a group to teach an English camp. I experienced a lot of spiritual warfare That trip began the journey, and desire, for me to help equip others to

face the unknown. We can't know everything that will happen on a trip, but we do need a biblical foundation for why we go and who we serve."

To learn more, go to equippedtogo.org

cross currents



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Of stars and words

Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth?
(Job 38:31-33 NRSV)

Sometimes when I am looking for something else, I stumble across a Biblical text which I have somehow missed (or forgotten).

That is how I discovered the word Mazzaroth. I was wandering around in Job's frustration, and there it was. Say, what? Who?

So I looked it up (which my mother taught me so well to do: "Let's look it up," she always said) and there it is: Mazzaroth! Which, of course, sent me to the footnotes. No meaningful help there. That is where the all-knowing Internet came to the rescue.

Mazzaroth is a very old name for the 12 constellations of the Zodiac; it is a tool that uses the stars to tell a story. Fair enough.

However, there is more learning to be done! The word Mazzaroth is also a *hapax legomenon*! (Could I possibly make this stuff up?) A hapax legomenon is a word that appears only once in a text.

Really, I worry about the scholars who go through books looking for hapax legomenons. Do they truly have nothing else to do? And then I begin to wonder if legomenons is actually the correct plural form of legomenon. Turns out, it isn't; the correct plural is legomena. (Begins to sound like "Leggo my Egg-o, doesn't it?")

If you have read thus far in these musings, I suspect you are one of "us" – those people who love to learn, and especially love to learn unusual and very new, or very old words!

FAITH NOTES

Meetings/classes

■ **Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church**, 3700 Keowee Ave., will host Grief Care, a weekly grief support group for people grieving the death of a loved one, 6-7:30 p.m. Mondays through May 16. Info: 522-9804 or sequoyahchurch.org.

Special services

■ **Westside Unitarian Universalist Church**, 616 Fretz Road, holds meditation services 6:30 p.m. each second and fourth Wednesday. Includes quiet reflection, simple music and readings. Info: westsideuuc.org.

Youth programs

■ **Beaver Ridge UMC**, 7753 Oak Ridge Highway, hosts Morning Breakfast and Afternoon Hang Out for youth each Tuesday. Breakfast and Bible study, 7:20 a.m.; Hang Out Time, 3:30-5:30 p.m. Info: 690-1060 or beaverridgeumc.org.

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AGENDA

June 1st and 2nd • 11am - 1pm

11:00 a.m. Speaker kickoff

12:00 lunch provided by Sherrill Hills

12:00 to 1:00 Breakout Sessions!

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