

MUSTARD SEED INTERNATIONAL

“What would you do if God pushed you as He’s pushing me?”

It was the core of this question that caused Lillian Dickson, wife of Presbyterian missionary Jim Dickson, to revolutionize Christianity in Formosa (now Taiwan). A ministry grew out of her deep commitment to God and her intense dedication to help the people of Formosa – Mustard Seed International.



Lillian, whom the indigenous people called “the littlest lady with the biggest heart,” established and developed churches, schools, clinics, tuberculosis sanatoriums and leprosariums throughout the country. At just under five feet in height, Lillian’s determination to ease the pain and suffering of those around her outweighed her small stature, earning her yet another title, “Typhoon Lil.”

“Let’s go where there is greatest need. We only have one life to live,” Lillian penned to her fiancé in early 1927, while he was finishing his education at Princeton Theological Seminary. Following their wedding, in the middle of that same year, Lillian and Jim found themselves in Formosa. By World War II, however, they were forced to flee.

It was upon their return after the War that Lillian began working to transform the lives of the mountain people of that country. Once, while speaking with American aid officials about the severity of the tuberculosis she had seen in the mountainous areas, she was told, “The problem is like the sea. Anything you or we could do would only be dipping at it with a bucket.” Lillian replied, “Nevertheless, I’m going to take out my bucketful!”

It was with this set resolve and belief in Matthew 17:20, (“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”) that Lillian would reduce the misery of the people by showing them a living example of God’s love for them.

By the late 1940s, word was spreading globally about the successful mission work in Taiwan, prompting other charitable organizations to get a first-hand look at faith through prayer and hard work. One such visitor was Dr. Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision and Samaritan's Purse. After he saw what Lillian had accomplished, he was determined to get more help for her. Pierce went back to the U.S. and, in 1948, began what is today known as Mustard Seed International (MSI), serving as its first president.

By the 1960s, MSI began to expand to other island nations of Southeast Asia, working in and through the local church at each mission site Lillian established. Today, with a presence in Africa, Hungary, India, Taiwan and across Southeast Asia, MSI provides hope through evangelistic outreach ministries such as orphanages/children's homes, Christian schools, vocational training, medical clinics, hospitals, a Bible college and theological institute, churches and as-needed relief efforts.



All MSI missions are staffed by indigenous Christian ministry partners and cross-cultural missionary families. MSI goes where they believe God is leading them, following Lillian's example to "present Christ to all we meet, to heal disease and all manner of suffering and to love sincerely and deeply those whose lives we are privileged to touch."