



DR. MARVIN (RICK) DUNBAR JR., Chairman
DR. PAUL CHITWOOD, President

Introduction

As I began tenure in November 2018 as the 13th president of Southern Baptists' 173-year-old international mission entity, I — along with International Mission Board trustees and leaders — have a deep gratitude for God's never-ending provisions of grace and mercy, and for Southern Baptists' continued support through prayer, giving, going and sending.

For the International Mission Board, 2018 proved to be a year of transitions as Southern Baptists pushed forward in sharing the gospel with the vision of a multitude from every language, people, tribe and nation knowing and worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ. We reflect on this year reminded that we cannot predict how the Lord will guide our plans and ministries within a designated timespan on the calendar. But we know He remains unchanged, as "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). We also know there are millions of lost people waiting to be reached. And we know that the Lord of the Harvest has called us to the fields, and that His mandate to us remains unchanged.

Partnering with Southern Baptist churches across the convention, IMB facilitated the sending of 177 full-time, fully funded missionaries during 2018, in addition to others sent as mid-term personnel or team associates, for a total of more than 350 sent through IMB in 2018. These new personnel included missionaries such as Nathan and Kim Gunter, sent by Lansing (Kansas) First Southern Baptist Church. The Gunters grew up in small churches where they saw the cooperative giving of Southern Baptists send men and women around the world with the gospel. After years of pastoring a church family in the U.S., and Nathan serving as an IMB trustee, the Gunters felt God calling them to serve in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While celebrating the sending of new missionaries, IMB also celebrated the ministries and grieved the loss of Randy and Kathy Arnett, missionaries to Africa, in March. The Arnetts died from injuries sustained in an automobile accident in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as they were traveling to conduct theological training with national believer partners. In the months following the accident in Africa, IMB followed the ongoing recovery of fellow missionaries Jeff and Barbara Singerman, who also were in the vehicle. The Singermans reported ways they have seen God mobilize fellow believers in Benin since the accident — a testimony to the continued partnership Southern Baptists foster with like-minded believers around the world, and to the way God blesses even the most difficult life events for Kingdom growth.

Southern Baptists demonstrated faithful support of their international missionaries through the Cooperative Program and the 2017-18 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering®. In the 100th anniversary since Southern Baptists named their global mission offering in honor of esteemed missionary Lottie Moon,

IMB reported \$158.9 million given, the second-highest offering in its history. Still, IMB finances reflect the impact of untapped potential for Southern Baptists' financial support and the impending limitations of sending full-time, fully funded personnel under current giving trends.

My first official act as IMB president in November was a personal request to every state convention executive director to encourage — even implore — the Southern Baptists in his state to give as sacrificially as possible through the 2018-19 LMCO in support of our international missionaries. During the 2018 Week of Prayer for International Missions, IMB missionary Larry Pepper recounted ending his career as a NASA flight surgeon decades ago to follow God's call to a new career in medical missions in Africa. Pepper's story was one of seven shared during the annual prayer emphasis and marks the type of firsthand account of God's miraculous work on the mission field that we anticipate celebrating and sharing in the year ahead.

It is with heartfelt gratitude that we enter our report for this year's annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. With that expression of gratitude, we also call upon Southern Baptists, their churches, and state conventions to rise to the challenge, responding to God's call to missions to fulfill the world's greatest need.

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