


# MESSAGE



# MISSION - ARY

CLASS OF 2017





## Sending Missionaries for 90 Years

The words of Jesus, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel” have been the heartbeat of ABWE for 90 years. What God has done through ABWE missionaries over the decades has been nothing short of miraculous. We are thankful to those who came before us, who saw beyond their lifetime, and fashioned the foundation upon which we continue to build.

When we become children of God, we are given a purpose and a calling. It is a joy to see faithful servants answer His call. Twice a year, during our Candidate Seminars, International Headquarters staff and the ABWE Board are privileged to witness new missionary candidates appointed to the field. Candidate Seminar is an event that never gets old. This year, we were delighted to welcome 45 new candidates to the ABWE missionary family.

This volume of the *Message* is dedicated to our newest appointees. We are honored to partner with these missionaries, and we are committed to serving and praying for them. The journey missionaries take is not without challenges, but we are confident in Him who has all power in heaven and on earth. We do not take this calling for granted, as we know God’s truth provides hope without end.

Please join us in praying for our missionary appointees as they raise support, make new connections or reconnect with past support partners. We are excited to see what God will do through these new appointees.

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### WHO IS THE ASSOCIATION OF BAPTISTS FOR WORLD EVANGELISM (ABWE)?

ABWE was founded in 1927 as an independent Baptist mission. We are dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission by multiplying leaders, churches, and missions movements among every people. Currently, more than 1,000 ABWE missionaries are working to advance God’s work in more than 70 countries by sharing the story of hope, building communities of faith, and serving the world with love.

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Collage by Lauren Miller,  
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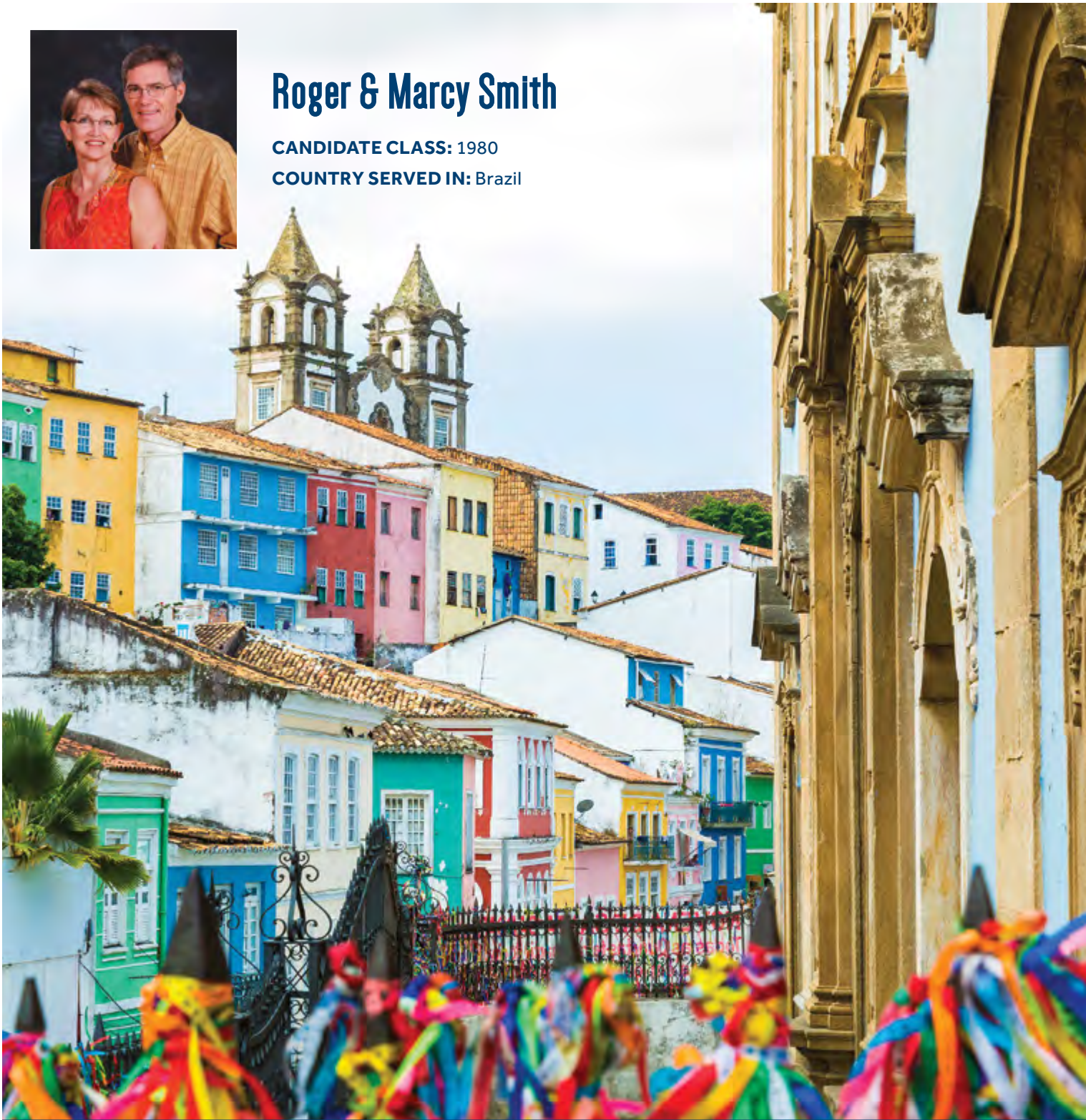




## Roger & Marcy Smith

**CANDIDATE CLASS:** 1980

**COUNTRY SERVED IN:** Brazil



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**1978**

Married on June 3



**1981**

Arrived in Recife, Brazil



Joined ABWE Candidate Class  
**1980**



Began first church plant, Candelaria  
Baptist Church, Recife, Brazil  
**1982**



## AN INTERVIEW WITH THE SMITHS

**Q: How did God first call you to missions?**

**Roger:** Marcy and I grew up on the mission field in Northeast Brazil as children of missionaries. At 12 years old I attended a youth camp in Colorado while my family was on furlough, and I sensed a burden to return to Brazil to be a missionary to my friends. My greatest struggle was believing that I could measure up to the missionary heroes around me. At a missions conference in 1977 God used a message on faith and how He enables those He calls, to confirm my calling.

**Marcy:** When I started college I was determined that the last thing in the world I wanted was to be a missionary. I wanted something different than what I had grown up with. In my heart I was resisting what others were telling me I should do. After I attended the GARBC conference in Seattle, I heard a Filipino pastor give his testimony and thank missionaries for sharing Christ in his country. God used that to burden me to return to Brazil and do the same.

**Q: How did God call you to Brazil?**

**A:** During the time we had spent in the country as children, we felt like the middle and upper class had

been neglected by most missionary outreach. The vast majority of church planting in our region of Brazil had been done in very poor communities. These communities were then unable to support their own pastor once the missionary moved on. Because of this, we wanted to reach communities that could be self-sustaining. This desire, coupled with our knowledge of the culture and language, weighed on our hearts as we sought where God would have us work.

**Q: What is your favorite memory from your time as a missionary?**

**A:** There have been many joys—but it has been a special one to be able to lead people to the Lord and then disciple them. Because we served for many years in the same location, we had the added privilege of seeing these people grow to maturity, and then begin to lead and disciple others.

**Q: What is the biggest thing you've learned through your time on the field?**

**A:** Through prayer, we have learned to trust that God will lead and He will also provide for every need. Sometimes in the midst of problems it's easy to forget that, but we have experienced God's loving hand of

care and guidance time after time. One of the most recent evidences of this has been in the start of our last church-plant outreach. We knew that God was leading us to the city of Arcoverde so we began to search for a piece of land. We did not have a penny for this, but we continued to search. God led us to a wonderful location and soon after that we were given a gift that completely covered the cost of the land. So we began to dream and plan for a building, once again without funds. And God has brought in funds. We've seen over and over that when God calls, He always provides!

**Q: What advice would you give to those considering missions?**

**A:** Trust that the Lord will provide for your every need and give you the wisdom you need to face the unknowns. The "unknowns" will be the norm in missions, but the beauty is that God is all-knowing, and in His mercy and grace He will use us to spread His word if we are willing. ■

**LEARNHOW** you can start building your own legacy of faithfulness  
[www.abwe.org/go](http://www.abwe.org/go)

**1994**

Started second church plant, Koinonia Baptist Church, Recife, Brazil, with a team



Began pastor's mentoring group for local church pastors

**2002****2015**

Wrote and directed 19th Easter play



Started church plant outreach in the city of Arcoverde with David and Sarah Carrel

**2014**









# M I S - S I O N - A R Y

CLASS OF 2017





# MISSION STATE

NORTH AMERICA



## Equip Leaders to Transform Lives

*The pastor's phone rang and a shaking voice cried out from the other end, "They've taken my kids!"*

After months of trying traditional parenting methods, Alexis\* had taken one of her three sons to the police for guidance—hoping the officer would convince him that some of his behaviors were wrong. Instead, something Alexis' son said prompted the officer to respond in an overzealous, devastating way by seeing to the removal of all three boys from the home—all while Alexis was pregnant with her fourth child. Understandably, the pastor could barely catch half of Alexis' tearful words. But one thing she said was clear, "I don't know who else to call...You and your wife are some of the few people we can trust."

As a co-worker of Alexis, the pastor had tried to represent Jesus to her through honesty, patience, kindness and a strong gospel witness. When all hope seemed lost to Alexis, she turned to the person she had seen living a life of hope.

Within weeks of that phone call,



Alexis and her husband Tobias\* visited Restored Church—which had recently been started by another ABWE church-plant in northeastern PA. Even with their children in protective custody, the couple expressed a strong desire to trust in Jesus. After reading Scripture passages that guided them through sin and salvation, they responded, "We believe!"

Last year, both Alexis and her husband were baptized, even as the cloud of their children's absence hung over their heads. Then earlier this year, Alexis and Tobias were able to welcome their children back into a transformed home that is now filled with the leadership and love of Jesus. Recently, their oldest son also received Christ as his Savior and was baptized as well.

This story only exists because of church planters who are working with ABWE's North America team to effectively reach their communities by understanding the opportunities, challenges, people and culture around them.

Alexis' story isn't unique.

North America is ripe with gospel opportunities. Nearly 500 people groups now live in the United States and Canada. More than 250 million people live without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The United States is now the third-largest mission field in the world.

Recognizing the great need, ABWE's

North America team has created the **EVERYETHNĒ** initiative to cross cultures without crossing borders. This means **EVERYETHNĒ** is working to partner with existing churches and North American believers to reach into the lives of their neighbors and impact their communities.

As "graduates" of **EVERYETHNĒ**'s church planter residency, Restored Church pastors attribute the program as key to enhancing their leadership and ministry capacity.

Church residency programs are a critical part of ABWE's efforts to help the North American church grow in its health and capacity, and help North American believers own the "lostness" in their own cities and communities.

To reach more people like Alexis, we need more churches like Restored. To plant more churches like Restored, we need more leaders to be equipped. Will you help? ■

### LEARN HOW you can equip church

planters to reach people like Alexis:

- **READ** page 6 in the enclosed giving catalog (*US donors only*)
- **GO** to [www.abwe.org/GiveJoy](http://www.abwe.org/GiveJoy)

\*name changed for privacy



### Thad & Monique Bergmeier | USA

Leroy Community Chapel, Leroy, OH



Thad started college as a pre-med major, but was surprised when he found his greatest fulfillment in serving at his church. “Over the course of six months, the Lord transitioned my heart. I found myself reading commentaries instead of reading my biology textbooks,” he recalls. He decided to pursue a degree in Pastoral Ministry at Moody Bible Institute.

The Lord placed a love for the church into Monique’s heart early in life. She longed for the day when she could go to college and learn from a new church family. That desire was fulfilled by a wonderful church where she was discipled and grew in her walk with the Lord. It was also where she met Thad.

They spent the next 18 years serving the church together with Thad as a pastor. About a year ago, they felt the Lord tugging on their hearts to change course. “It became really clear to us that the Lord wanted us to step away from our role as the pastor of the church and work on a larger scale with churches in North America,” Thad shared. “We’re excited to be part of the North America team to really help churches grow.”

### Anthony Peña | USA

Fellowship Community Church,  
Mount Laurel, NJ



Anthony’s mother decided that because he lacked confidence, he should “go to church, a Christian school, and karate,” he said with a laugh. “I loved Jesus at a young age and I was baptized at the age of 12,” Anthony shared. But a few years

later, things started to change when he began to live for himself and walk away from his Christian upbringing.

He was 18 when his high school went on a missions trip to Nicaragua. “It was in Nicaragua that God did an amazing work in my life,” Anthony said. “Everything I grew up kind of believing became a real thing for me. God became Lord over my life.”

But three months later, right before he went away to college, he watched a video that tried to disprove the existence of God. He felt so confused. Anthony started attending Campus Crusade for Christ at Slippery Rock University and confronted the questions he had about his faith. That ignited his passion for apologetics.

Two years ago, a friend asked Anthony if he wanted to be part of a church plant in an urban context. That friend was a missionary through ABWE. Anthony became a short-term missionary with ABWE and is now becoming a long-term missionary. “I’m excited to see what God does and continues to do over in Trenton, NJ and in this organization around the world,” Anthony said.

### GLOBAL ACCESS PARTNERSHIPS (GAP)

*GAP is a growing network of churches and ministries across the globe who commit their resources and efforts to advance the gospel in partnership together.*



### Jan & Ana Franka | GAP

Grace Baptist Church of Windsor,  
Ontario, Canada



Jan and Ana were both raised in Eastern Europe. Jan used to think, “Once I give my life to the Lord, He will send me somewhere that I don’t want to go or persuade me to do what I don’t want to do.” His heart changed though when an evangelist came through town in 1982. Something held him back at the service, but when he came home, his grandmother asked, “Do you want to give your life to Jesus?” He responded that night by praying for several hours and giving his life to the Lord.



Ana accepted Jesus when she was seven years old. She was deeply influenced by her grandfather, who, with no training or examples to look up to, went into missions. Among other endeavors, he became a Christian library on-foot, going door-to-door with a huge bag of books on his back.

In 2004, Jan and Ana moved to Canada to pastor a church there. “That was missions for us: a cross-cultural step, away from our friends, away from our home, in a foreign country,” Jan said. But now, the Lord has put it on both of their hearts to minister in a creative access country.

### **Sally Coppola | GAP**

Lakeside Community Church,  
St. Clair Shores, MI

[www.facebook.com/intheholylwild](http://www.facebook.com/intheholylwild)



Sally was born and raised in the church. She said of her parents, “I was very blessed to be raised by this family of devout Baptist parents who were great representatives of Christ.” Sally’s father was a World War II veteran and a police officer, “so if you think I had rules...you would be very correct,” Sally shared with a laugh.

While Sally’s older siblings thrived in that environment, Sally saw it more as an opportunity to live outside the rules. After that season, she asked God, “What in the world are you going to do with me after all these poor decisions I made?” And He made it quite clear, “You are going to teach students, because you know from experience and they will believe you and listen to you.” And that was true.” Sally spent 37 years as a teacher and coach, ministering to the types of students who tended to fall through the cracks in the public school system.

When her son moved out of the house, she started praying for something to fill the void he left behind. She was surprised when that void was filled by a man she’d known since seventh grade, ABWE missionary Phil Coppola, who has spent the past 14 years serving in Cambodia. Phil and Sally were married last year and look forward to serving the Lord together wherever He chooses to lead them.

### **Matthew & Jennifer Johnson | GAP**

First Baptist Church of Fowlerville,  
Fowlerville, MI



When Jennifer went to school to study nursing, she knew it was for a purpose. “I had in my mind that I could use my degree someday if the Lord ever led me to the mission field, but I didn’t know what that would look like.” A year later, she realized that God was calling her to missions, but not through nursing. A connection with friends led her to the New Tribes Bible Institute. “After almost four years of Bible and missions training and serving for a year in Papua, New Guinea, I was back at the Bible Institute in Michigan, serving on staff there.” It was then that she met her husband, Matthew.

Matthew’s father and grandfather were both Baptist pastors, and while today he is grateful for his upbringing, he initially struggled with life as a pastor’s kid. “Life as a PK had its ups and downs—probably more downs than ups—and by the time I finished high school, I wanted nothing to do with the ministry.” By the time he arrived at New Tribes Bible Institute, however, that had changed dramatically. In 2002, Matthew and Jennifer went through candidate seminar with ABWE and became missionaries in Spain.

They were just starting to build relationships and get settled in the community when Jennifer fell ill. It was recommended that they take a medical furlough and return to the United States. “Those were hard days,” Matthew reflected sadly, “It was difficult not to ask God, ‘Why? What was the point in all of this?’” They clung to Psalm 18:30, “As for God, His way is perfect.”

While they were home in the US, Matthew served as a senior pastor and had great joy in that role. Their family expanded, adding two more children for a total of six, and now, they feel it’s time to go back to the field. “As we’ve served in our local church over the past decade, our passion for world evangelism has not waned,” Matthew said. “We’ve been asking God how we can be involved again more directly. God has answered our prayers and we’re looking forward to serving.”





# MIS SION ARY

L A T I N   A M E R I C A





## A Blossoming Promise

*She arrived pregnant and desperate. Without a job, a home or a husband, \*Cristina had considered dropping her baby off somewhere and walking away forever. Instead, by God's grace she ended up at the doorstep of the FLORECE Prenatal Center, a crisis pregnancy ministry in Iquique, Chile, which opened its doors in 2016.*

At FLORECE, Cristina received reassurance and practical help. Not only did she give birth to a healthy baby girl whom she chose to raise, but she faithfully completed her weekly visits, maternity class and Bible study course.

The center's staff continue to see Cristina seeking truth for her life, after coming out of the confusion of Jehovah's Witness teachings.

Cristina's story represents many other women in Chile—where, although not legal until recently, abortions are commonplace and the after-effects of a crisis pregnancy can last a lifetime.

As one great-grandmother emotionally shared of her abortion experience from decades ago, "They say they will take care of the problem here," pointing to her womb, "but not

here, or here," pointing to her head and heart.

Run by ABWE missionaries and national believers, FLORECE—which means "to blossom", is the only known pregnancy center of its kind in a country with a desperate need for a Biblical perspective on marriage and the sanctity of life.

Not only do FLORECE staff desire to see unplanned pregnancies blossom into new life, but they strive to see entire families blossom into spiritually healthy homes through counseling from God's Word.

In 2012, the number of divorces in Chile exceeded the number of marriages for the first time. This pattern repeated itself as recently as last year, when government sources recorded 10,000 more divorces than marriages. By far the number one reason for divorce in Chile is infidelity.

Then there are the heart-breaking stories of trauma and abuse that are pervasive throughout the city—like that of a new-born baby in intensive care with syphilis because, unknown to her mother, the father had been carrying on an affair. Or the 8-year-old girl who suffered repeated sexual

abuse from a trusted adult. Or the teenage daughter and her mother, both pregnant at the same time and by the same man (the mother's boyfriend.)

FLORECE staff desire to enter into the broken lives of those in their city and offer biblical and family counseling, prenatal care, and abstinence education to meet the complex needs of those around them.

"Crisis pregnancy centers," FLORECE director Stephanie Garcia says, "are places where the pieces are compassionately put back together when people's lives fall apart."

This work isn't easy in light of the culture in Iquique, where moral decay and promiscuity are commonplace. The FLORECE ministry is working to expand its pro-life efforts by connecting with young men and women, before the consequences of their actions lead to crisis, through abstinence education in local schools. Sadly, two recent news stories emerged of young women who in their desperation, attempted to have clandestine late-term abortions using chemical concoctions. One baby died and the other remains on a ventilator, with both mothers legally prosecuted.

Though the heartbreak of these



## FEATURED MINISTRY

stories is real, so is the hope that FLORECE provides.

When a “FLORECE baby” was born to a mother who came to the center for guidance, she sent a heartfelt note to the staff. “Friends from FLORECE,” she wrote, “I share that today my baby was born at 5:45 a.m. We are both well and very thankful for what you were and are in my life. Now my son will have the knowledge of faith that I so desired to show him.”

Recently two generous gifts provided

the monies needed to purchase an ultrasound machine so that FLORECE could expand its outreach even more. To do so, however, the Chilean government requires certain building modifications to meet medical standards.

“Purchasing our existing or similar property has become an urgent need to proceed with providing ultrasounds,” Stephanie shares. “We are specifically praying for God’s provision of a permanent home for FLORECE, and for a full-time Spanish-speaking Biblical

counselor. With the legalization of abortion in Chile, the need is greater than ever.”

### LEARN HOW you can care for

women in crisis, like Cristina:

- **READ** page 4 in the enclosed giving catalog (*US donors only*)
- **GO** to [www.abwe.org/GiveJoy](http://www.abwe.org/GiveJoy)

*\*name changed for privacy*

## NEW MISSIONARIES



### Dave & Aleece Cooper | Peru

Lyndock Baptist Church, Ontario, Canada



When Aleece was 13 years old, her family moved to Mexico for two years; her father served as a teacher for missionary kids there. The family moved several more times to various locations, including Ecuador for a year. Eventually, they moved back home and Aleece finished high school. “I think those experiences really confirmed that I wanted to be a missionary,” Aleece said. “That’s what I thought I would do right out of high school.” However, after receiving some further counsel, she decided to pursue a degree at Pensacola Christian College first, which is where she met her husband, Dave.

“During my teenage years, I was ‘that’ pastor’s kid,” Dave recalls. “I wasn’t all that interested in the things of the Lord.” He wanted to do flight training in Canada, but was advised to go to one year of Bible school. He decided to go to Pensacola Christian College and after the first year thought he might as well finish a four-year degree. During his second year, he rededicated his life to the Lord and decided to serve in full-time ministry. “The ministry I knew He wouldn’t

call me to was pastoral because that’s what my dad did and I knew I didn’t want to do that,” Dave shared. “So to prove it to myself and to the Lord, I changed my major to Pastoral Ministries and Biblical Languages...and guess what the Lord called me to do.”

Dave stayed on to attend seminary at Pensacola Christian College, married Aleece, and they planned to go right into the mission field together. Those doors closed, so they went back home to rural Ontario, where Dave has served as a pastor for eight years.

During a trip to Ghana, Dave realized the need for theological education and training of individuals going into ministry, including himself. He continued his training to teach the Bible and completed a PhD in Old Testament and Hebrew. “That confirmed in my heart that the Lord would ultimately be bringing me to a foreign mission field to teach the Bible,” Dave said. “That, coupled with Aleece’s background in Latin America, has led us to interests in South America.” Dave and Aleece are currently raising support and hope to begin language school in 2020.



## Jonatan & Natasha Nieto | Colombia

Iglesia Bautista de Ocala, Ocala, FL



Natasha was in high school when she asked her sister to pray a prayer of salvation with her one night after a church service. “Ever since then, it’s been a learning process of growing and becoming a stronger Christian,” she shared. After a year of college near her hometown, Natasha decided to move down to Florida to go to Bible college with her sister. She had plans to only stay for a year to get her Bible certificate, but after learning about needs around the world through a missions conference, she decided to pursue a degree in missions. In her second year in the program, she met Jonatan, who was studying missions as well.

Jonatan grew up in Colombia. He was 16 years old when he finished high school and joined a missions organization as a volunteer, where he later served for two years in the Amazon. Every time his team would come home from a trip to prepare for the next one, Jonatan couldn’t wait to go back. “I realized it was God putting that passion in my heart. That’s how God started moving my heart towards missions.”

“God also put the dream of aviation for South America in my heart,” Jonatan shared, “so we have been in preparation for that.” It’s been a long process, but they know it will be worth it. “A lot of tribes, they haven’t heard the gospel yet, so that’s why we’re here,” Jonatan said.

## James & Doris Clegg | Jamaica

Deep Creek Baptist Church,  
Chesapeake, VA

[jamesdoriscllegg.wixsite.com/Jamaica](http://jamesdoriscllegg.wixsite.com/Jamaica)



Doris came to know the Lord during vacation Bible school when she was eight years old. “As the pastor was giving the invitation, in my mind’s eye I just remember seeing Christ on the cross, suffering for something I had done.” She knew in that moment she had to give her life to Jesus. By the time

she was a teenager, she felt a heavy burden for the mission field and began serving the Hispanic population on the eastern shores of Virginia.

James, on the other hand, had no idea who Jesus was for most of his life. That began to change when he met Doris. He explained, “God had a better plan for me than I had for myself. He introduced me to my lovely wife, who, for many years, tried and tried and tried to get me to go to church. I didn’t want to go, but eventually I did surrender and went to church.” A few weeks later, James gave his life to the Lord. Then, a few weeks after that, he was baptized. And a few weeks after that...he married Doris.

They’ve been serving the eastern shores of Virginia together for seven years now, but they’re no longer content with missions trips alone. “Everyone knows when you go on a missions trip, you come home and you’re so excited that you just want to tell everybody about Jesus,” James said, “and then about two weeks later...you go back to your regular routine.”

Over the past year, something changed. The burden to do full-time missions work has been ever-present. They opened the door for the Lord to lead them anywhere He wanted and discovered He was leading them to serve with ABWE in Jamaica.

## Jamie Gessner | Colombia

Emmanuel Bible Fellowship Church,  
Sunbury, PA

[Facebook.com/jgess3](https://www.facebook.com/jgess3)



Jamie and her twin brother were born in an orphanage in Bogotá, Colombia. Her adoptive family was from Pennsylvania and had no idea they were getting two kids. “My mom has had a lot of prayer support over the years,” Jamie said jokingly.

She was raised in church and in Christian school, but she wasn’t really walking with the Lord. She graduated from Geneva College in 2010 and moved to Washington D.C. to work for a news production company but ended up back in Beaver Falls, home of Geneva College, a year later.

Jamie started doing media communications for a local prison ministry and remembers the day when her boss, who was also a pastor, told her it was time for her to go visit the



## NEW MISSIONARIES

prison and see what it was really like there. Prison became a mirror for Jamie. She saw the possibility of what could happen if she didn't change her life, and by the end of 2012, she had rededicated her life to Christ and decided to be baptized again.

"I said, 'Lord, what do You want with me now? I'm starting to relearn everything.'" A friend suggested that she go into missions. At first, she couldn't imagine it, but ended up serving in Costa Rica and Panama for two years. Jamie says she is looking forward to "this new opportunity to go back to where I was born, to Colombia, to see if that's where He's leading."

### Bekah Turbeville | Costa Rica

Calvary Church, Charlotte, NC



Bekah was 16 years old when she attended a large youth conference and the speaker gave a call into ministry, inviting anyone interested in serving to come up front. "I'm a very practical person," Bekah said, "so I thought, 'Well, if the Lord really is everything He says He is, He has to be the best boss ever...so who better to work for?'"

Thus began her journey into ministry. She went on to attend Columbia International University, a missions-focused college, and had the opportunity to intern in Peru for three months. Bekah said, "I remember standing outside one afternoon and talking to the Lord and saying, 'If this is something You want me to do for the rest of my life, I would be okay with that.'"

Except first, after graduating, the Lord placed Bekah on staff at her church—something she never expected. That placement became apparent as part of His plan when she went on a short-term missions trip to Costa Rica and saw what the Lord was doing through ABWE missionaries there.

After returning home, she told her pastor about her newfound passion. "He said, 'Okay! Well, let's send you for three months; we'll fully fund it so you don't have to worry about anything. We want you to go and really make sure that's something you want to do.'" She did just that and today, she's excited to know that the Lord really is leading her to serve Him in Costa Rica.

### Michael & Melanie Ball | Chile

Riley's Creek Baptist Church,  
Rocky Point, NC

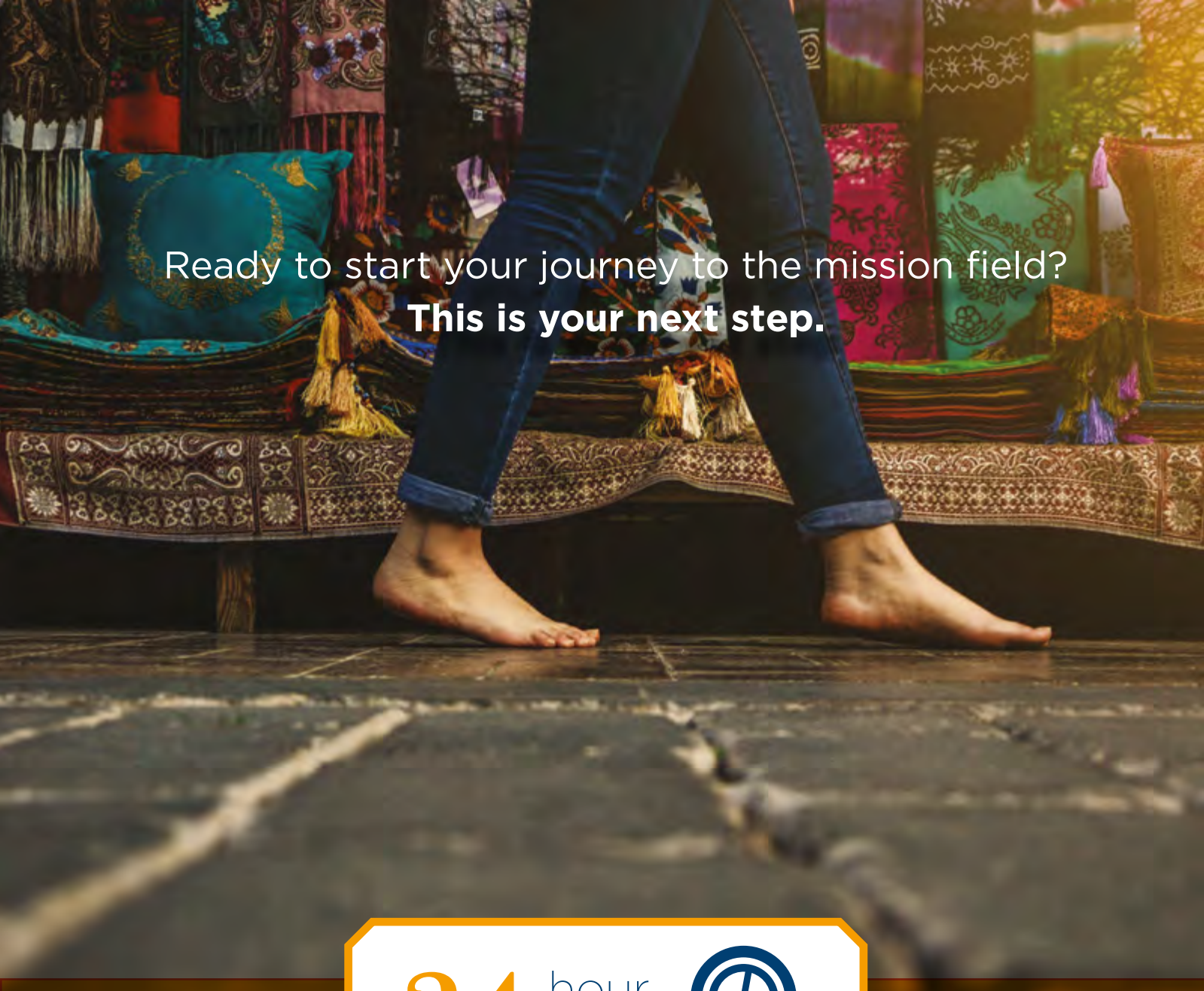


Michael felt a call to ministry when he was 13 years old. "I'm kind of the modern-day Jonah story," Michael said. "After I was called into ministry, I ran." He decided to join the Army and served overseas, but when he came back, he still felt a tug on his heart for ministry. He recommitted his life to the Lord and in 2010, he "started serving in every facet of ministry you can imagine."

At one time, Melanie thought, "I'm never, ever, ever going to receive Christ. I cannot have salvation. I'm the worst sinner, ever." But when her husband, Michael, went overseas to serve in the Army, Melanie prayed all the time. "I was right there beside Him, but I just could not give my heart to Him," she recalls. In 2012, she was driving when she heard a song on the radio that brought her to tears. "I just stopped the car and bawled my eyes out. I sobbed to God and said, 'I can't do this anymore.'" She accepted Jesus as her Savior right there on the side of the road.

"We've been feeling called to missions for awhile, but we've been putting it off until we were empty nesters," Michael shared. "But we know when God calls you, it's His timing and not yours." After a missionary couple serving in South Africa came and spoke at their church, they looked at each other and said, "We can't wait any longer." When they came to ABWE and heard a presentation on Santiago, Chile, they knew it was where the Lord was calling them. "It was kind of like God reaching out and grabbing you, because everything that was listed there was everything we felt called to do," said Michael.





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# MISSION STORY

EUROPE



## NEW MISSIONARIES

**William & Diane | *The Balkans***

Crossroads Bible Church, Grand Rapids, MI

For a while, William, who accepted Jesus as an adult, had neutral feelings about missions. He thought that while there was a need for worldwide missions, American Christians should be investing their time and resources into needs that existed in their own backyards. “As it turns out, God is not really interested in my opinions about missional priorities,” William joked.

Diane grew up in a Christian home and a mission-minded church. “During my teen years,” she said, “I came to a place where I said, ‘yes’ to God, should He call me to foreign missions. Little did I know that 30 years later, He would.”

“While our two sons were still in high school, God began to chart a course for our lives,” William shared. They began taking classes to prepare themselves intellectually and culturally for their yet-to-be-revealed next chapter of life. In 2014, they were applying to become missionaries in Germany when they received a call from one of Diane’s cousins, who worked for ABWE. Her cousin asked if they would ever be interested in teaching overseas.

“We did a lot of praying,” Diane said, and soon, they were both very enthusiastic about joining ABWE’s efforts in the Balkan Peninsula. They’ve spent the past two years there as short-term missionaries. “When we look back at how God prepared us, we really do feel privileged to have had the opportunity to serve Him,” Diane said. “We want to serve Him wherever it is that He chooses to send us.”

**Ethan | *The Balkans***

Southgate Baptist Church, Springfield, OH

Ethan grew up with a very keen awareness of missions work. His grandfather was a missionary to India and his father was born there. As a teenager, depression led Ethan to study the Bible, and that study led him into a personal relationship with Jesus. When he was baptized, his pastor wanted to

say, “Ethan wants to be a missionary, like his grandfather.” Ethan remembers, “I emphatically told him, ‘Don’t say that! That’s not true. I’m not going to be a missionary.’”

Ethan thought that after attending Cedarville University he’d get a job for the State Department, “where I’d get to sit in a little box and type emails to people and not actually have to see them or talk to them,” he joked. But then, after a missions trip to the Balkans with Cedarville, things slowly began to change. “I started to get a heart for people who had never really heard the gospel and never had much access to it at all,” he shared.

He had another opportunity to go back to the Balkans and his passion for the region began to grow, but he couldn’t imagine how he could be of help there. He unexpectedly ran into an ABWE missionary from the Balkans and decided to ask her a question. “I asked, ‘Could you use a history teacher? Because that’s really the only thing I know how to do.’” To his surprise, she answered, “Yes, and you’re the only person who has talked to me about that.” Ethan has been serving in that capacity for the past two years and is exploring what his long-term future could be in the area.

**Arin O’Brien | *Norway***

Berean Baptist Church, Scioto, OH



Arin grew up on a farm in Missouri.

She always thought she’d return to that life. “I was a farm girl; I loved the farm. I thought, ‘Maybe I’ll marry a farmer and build my dream house right here.’”

Arin’s sister, however, moved away from Missouri with her family to be missionaries in Jordan, and Arin spent three months there with them after graduating from Pensacola Christian College. She also went on a missions trip to Thailand during that time. Arin said, “God really used that in a great way to show me that missionaries are normal people. I think we get this idea that there’s this totem pole and missionaries are on the top, but that helped me to see that they’re just everyday people, serving God in different places.”

Arin’s now-husband, Nahum, was in the March 2015 class of ABWE missionaries and agreed to be sent to Norway.



“At a missions conference I met this great couple from Missouri serving in Jordan as missionaries,” Nahum said. “They went home and told Arin about this unbelievably handsome man...”

“So they actually came home and told me about this hillbilly from Ohio...” Arin teases. She had just finished her second year of teaching art at a Christian school in Missouri when her sister and brother-in-law came home and told her about Nahum. Soon after, Nahum and Arin were talking about marriage. “I knew very much that marrying Nahum meant moving to Norway. That was a big thing for me to get used to,” Arin shared. “I’m thankful that He’s been gracious to choose me to go and do something like this.”

### David & Brandi Prairie | *Moldova*

Grace Baptist Church, Chattanooga, TN



Brandi and David met in high school at Tennessee Temple Academy and started dating in 11th grade. Brandi recalls, “I never wanted anything except to be a nurse and a wife and a mother. Missions was not in my mind at all. I love America and I was happy to stay here forever!” A few years ago, Brandi went on a missions trip to Norway—her first time out of the country. The trip helped her begin to consider what life could look like outside of the United States.

David serves as a youth pastor in a church with a rich connection to ABWE, and he was surprised when an ABWE missionary from their church mentioned something about his gifts working well in a cross-cultural setting. “I didn’t think too much about it,” David said. “I thought it was a nice thing to say, but it wasn’t directly on my radar yet.” Serving with ABWE hit his radar fully last fall when the opportunity to do some theological training in Eastern Europe while also leading the first-ever ABWE team there was brought to his attention.

David is finishing his doctoral program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and looks forward to starting a new chapter in Moldova. “It’s still new for us to even

consider something like this,” David remarked, “but we’re glad the Lord has drawn us in this direction and given us the same mind about it.”

Brandi agrees. “I feel like my role is going to be wife and mother wherever I go, and thankfully that’s a goal I can achieve anywhere in the world, but I’m also excited to see what God has for me to do alongside David in Moldova.”

### Kristen Pearson | *Ireland*

East Valley Church, San Jose, CA



Kristen was a serious volleyball player, but when she was 14, she tore her ACL and needed surgery. She was put on heavy medications and it made her very depressed. “I decided there was nothing left to live for if I couldn’t play volleyball, so I decided to take my own life.” But on that particular night, her brother came home early. She decided she wanted to live for him.

A few months later, she went to a conference and heard Christine Caine talk about how Paul says we run the race to win the prize; we’re not just spectators as Christians. “Wow, the Bible talks about sports!” she thought, and she gave her life to Christ.

When Kristen was 15 she went on a missions trip to Mexico and knew that God had called her to serve as a missionary. When she was 19, she lost her best friend, who was not a believer, to cancer. “I thought, if I can’t reach my best friend, why would I do missions? So I completely ignored missions for about two years,” Kristen said.

A few years later, though, she ended up as a missionary in Tanzania for a year. But when she came home, God closed all the doors that would have allowed her to return there. She kept praying for the Lord to lead her to where she should go next. “I prayed for about five years about missions. I kept praying about Europe in general, and it became very clear that Ireland was where God was sending me,” Kristen shared.



**Raise Clark | Hungary**

Thomas Road Baptist Church,  
Lynchburg, VA



Raise may only be 21 years old, but her passion for becoming a missionary has been growing almost her entire life. She knew from the moment she accepted Jesus as Savior at the tender age of five that He was calling her to be a missionary.

She began working towards her calling right away. “As I went through elementary, middle, and high school, I learned what it meant to be a missionary where you are, and not just, ‘Oh, I’m going to wait until I’m overseas,’ but I’m going to be a missionary where I am, today,” Raise shared.

As a student at Liberty University, Raise had the opportunity to go on a short-term trip to Hungary with ABWE. She spent five months getting to know the country, falling in love with its people, and starting to learn the language. It’s one of the hardest languages to master, but Raise notes, “I’m also learning Greek and Hebrew right now...so nothing can be more difficult than that!”

She’s not too worried about the potential barriers in front of her, though. “When we allow the Lord to take over, He can bless our tongues. He can bless our minds, no matter how old or how young we are.”

and had the opportunity to go to London for two years as an evangelism intern. Then, a door opened to study music in Tennessee.

Josh grew up in a Lutheran household in the suburbs of Chicago. Though he had a thorough understanding of religion, he didn’t come into a real relationship with Jesus until he was a teenager. From the age of 14 to his early 20’s, Josh was disciplined in a way that encouraged him to love the Word of God. He grew passionate about evangelism and went on a missions trip to the Czech Republic, where Marie was a translator for his morning English classes.

Josh attended Palm Beach University, where he earned a Bible degree, but he still didn’t feel ready to enter the mission field full-time, so he went to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and obtained a Master of Divinity degree.

Marie said, “The Lord has placed us in Kentucky, where we’ve been working with middle and high school students, but really, what’s been on our hearts has been the Czech Republic.” Josh added, “We both have acquired many skills while serving in student ministry and we feel ready to use those to plant churches in the Czech Republic.”

**Joshua & Marie Ehlers | Czech Republic**

Severns Valley Baptist Church,  
Elizabethtown, KY  
[www.Theehlers.net](http://www.Theehlers.net)



Marie is originally from the Czech Republic and grew up in a Christian home there. It wasn’t until she was 16, though, that she truly came to know the Lord after attending a small church and being discipled by the pastor and his wife. When she was 18, Marie felt God calling her into missions





# M I S - S I O N - A R Y

A F R I C A





## A Home for the Orphan

*Mhlengi was only three when the crowd arrived. They sang loudly and wailed long into the night. He watched in disbelief as they lowered his mother's body into the ground, wanting to move closer for one last glimpse. But he didn't dare.*

Children are unwelcome guests at funerals—even if the deceased happens to be their own mother. When Mhlengi asked his grandmother why they had thrown sand onto the body, she promptly sent him off to collect water at the village well.

They never spoke of that day again.

Mhlengi's grandmother or "Gogo" had nursed her daughter—Mhlengi's mother—through a terrible sickness. The neighbors said she was crazy and that she would also get sick. In the rural community where they lived, the sick and dying are often neglected and left to suffer on their own. Instead, people are showered with blankets and gifts at their funerals. Everyone knows it's better to appease a deceased ancestor than care for a dying relative.

While societal norms didn't prevent Mhlengi's Gogo from caring for her own child, she didn't realize that the open sores on the hands she was using

to care for her daughter were silently exposing her to the AIDS virus that would soon take her daughter's life. Confused by the news that she too was infected, the grandmother began to worry. "What of the little boy? Was he going to die as well?"

Testing at a local medical clinic revealed that indeed, Mhlengi was also HIV positive.

Now 12, Mhlengi isn't old enough to know all that is required for life on his own—but his Gogo won't live much longer—and neither of them knows who will care for him when she dies.

Mhlengi's plight isn't uncommon where he lives. With third-world poverty and low-education rates, his village stands in stark contrast to much of the modern and thriving areas of South Africa, even though they are only minutes apart. South Africa as a whole is believed to have the highest HIV-infection rates of any country in the world. And while access to proper medical care and survival rates for people who are HIV-positive are steadily increasing in South Africa, Mhlengi is missing two things that might save his life: the support of loving adults and food to coat his stomach and protect it against the heavy doses of medication.

Mhlengi's Gogo loves him, but she is coming to terms with her own disease and no longer has the ability to

care for herself or others in such grave circumstances. Additionally, she is too old and frail to walk to the clinic to get their medicine. Even if she could, she would have to endure the wrath of nurses who shout and shame her for previous failures in administering the medication to herself and the boy.

For more than 10 years, missionaries, motivated by compassion and Christ's love, have used basic medical concepts like hygiene and disease prevention as a way to meet practical needs and create meaningful ways to share the gospel with people like Mhlengi and his Gogo.

Seeing incredible needs in this village 35 minutes away, Grace Baptist Church—planted in South Africa in 1987 by ABWE missionaries—created 7 Rivers Outreach to bring help and hope.

With the full support and oversight of Grace Baptist, four missionary families, with a total of 65 years of cross-cultural missionary experience, have united to develop 100-acres of rural land into a working farm. It will become a teaching center for Zulu pastors and a training center for basic job skills. One micro-enterprise on the farm is already providing income for several families. Others will soon be started. Five hundred macadamia nut trees have been planted.

Significant for boys and girls like Mhlengi, 7 Rivers Outreach will have



## FEATURED MINISTRY

a children's village on-site to provide protection and support for vulnerable children. A generous donation has already fully funded the first of eight planned homes. Each home will house orphaned children under the loving care of Christian "parents." Construction can begin once the land is purchased.

A Zulu-speaking church, started in the village by Grace Baptist, is at the

center of the 7 Rivers Outreach and will provide long-term follow-up to all of the ministries and the foundation for evangelism and discipleship. Already, lives in the community are being impacted by the gospel.

By God's grace, 7 Rivers Outreach will touch the lives of vulnerable children like Mhlengi, entire families like Gogo's, and whole communities like this one in rural South Africa, for eternity. ■

**LEARNHOW** transform a community and provide medical care, support and shelter for children like Mhlengi:

- **READ** page 2 in the enclosed giving catalog (*US donors only*)
- **GO** to [www.abwe.org/givejoy](http://www.abwe.org/givejoy)

## NEW MISSIONARIES

### Amanda Bressler | Togo

Calvary Road Baptist Church,  
Alexandria, VA



Amanda grew up in a Christian home and accepted Jesus as her Savior at an early age. "One of the difficult parts about accepting Christ at age five is not knowing what it means to grow in Christ, to not let your life become a checklist." Thirteen years later, Amanda found herself at a camp where she met with a counselor and understood what it really meant to give her life over to Christ.

After graduating from Clarks Summit University (then Baptist Bible College) with a degree in elementary education, she began teaching at the school affiliated with her church. In 2006, she went on a short-term trip to South Africa with ABWE and fell in love, but didn't know how missions could coincide with her ministry as a teacher. "I'd been introduced to missions my entire life," Amanda said, "but a missionary was someone who was way up on a pedestal and I always thought, 'There's no way I could do that.'"

She returned home from her trip and taught for another three years, but God kept tugging on her heart, saying, "You are definitely a teacher, but not here." After another year of teaching, she met a family serving as missionaries to Togo, West Africa. She went there for a year and has been going back and forth ever since. She's looking forward to being a missionary as a teacher full-time in Togo.

### Andrew Johnson | Ghana

Calvary Baptist Church, Hot Springs, SD



Andrew had a unique upbringing as both a pastor's kid and a missionary kid. His dad was the pastor of the church he grew up in and was also a missionary to Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa for about four years. As a result, Andrew has a special message to share with other pastor's kids and missionary kids: "God has done a work in your life and that's something to be so grateful for; be grateful that God separated you unto Himself, lost and sinful just like everybody else."

Andrew's older brother was the first person to confront Andrew about his sin and need for a Savior. He accepted Jesus immediately, continued on in his faith, and went to Bible school right after high school. At Cornerstone Bible Institute, Andrew was confronted with a depth of study he had never encountered before.

His particular field of interest is missionary aviation, inspired by the life and writings of missionary pilot Paul Dye. That interest was confirmed through his time at Cornerstone and he went on to attend The School of Missionary Aviation Technology in Ionia, Michigan, where he was first introduced to ABWE.

Andrew is looking to use his education and flight training to serve in ministry in Ghana, West Africa.



### Patrick & Michelle Reed | *The Gambia*

Grace Baptist Church, Hurlock, MD



“How has God led us to The Gambia? Well, He’s been very patient,” Patrick said with a smile. By the time he was 13, Patrick had declared himself an atheist, and it wasn’t until he was 19 and met his soon-to-be-wife, Michelle, that he started to reconsider his beliefs. A year later, he dedicated his life to Christ.

Michelle gave her life to Jesus as a teenager in youth group, but she wasn’t about to share that information outside of church. She started dating Patrick and when he talked about marriage, she didn’t want to move forward because he wasn’t a Christian. “You’re a Christian?” Patrick asked, and Michelle realized she needed to make some changes in her walk with the Lord.

Now, years later, they’ve found the Lord leading them to the mission field. “I’ve been in business my whole life. Never once had I ever thought about being a missionary,” Patrick said. God planted an idea in his heart about missions and a few weeks later, a missionary from ABWE visited their church. He knew this was where the Lord was leading, but he hadn’t talked about it with Michelle yet and wasn’t sure how she’d react.

Two weeks prior, Michelle had been talking to a friend about the very same desire. So when Patrick told her he thought they should become missionaries, she said, “Let’s pack some bags! I’m ready to go!”

### Brandon & Kathryn Snook | *Togo*

Southern Hills Baptist Church,

Las Vegas, NV

[SnooksToAfrica.com](http://SnooksToAfrica.com)



When Kathryn was 10 years old, her grandmother, who was a Christian, invited Kathryn and her cousin Rachel for a sleepover. That night, Rachel accepted Jesus as her Savior, but Kathryn said ‘no’. She eventually went to nursing school through the Navy and while she was in college, her cousin Rachel died. That had a big impact on Kathryn. When she graduated, she had orders from the Navy, but she still felt lost. “I asked the Lord in my dorm room, ‘If you’re real, please help me.’”

Kathryn envisioned a grandmother figure being the one to come into her life and take her to church, but it turned out to be Brandon. They ended up in Guam together, which is where she came to know the Lord. It’s also where she first felt pulled toward missions.

Brandon knew early in life that he wanted to be a physician. In Bible college, he had the opportunity to go on a short-term medical missions trip to Haiti, which is where he was first exposed to surgery. “God introduced how you can minister to someone who has physical needs. Often, their heart is so much more open to the gospel at that point” he shared.

In the Air Force, Brandon was introduced to Togo through a missionary friend. Brandon also ended up in Togo during an international surgery rotation of his trauma training. “The Lord has continued to burden us to minister in Southern Togo,” he said.

### Sabrina Garzon Orsorio | *Togo*

Christ Centered Church, Aventura, FL



Sabrina was 18 when she went on a missions trip to Colombia, the country of her birth. She was working at a rehab center and with street children and says, “I saw pretty hard realities. Growing up in an affluent home, it was difficult for me to understand so much misery and poverty.” That experience led her to understanding the true meaning of grace. She reflects, “Everything that we are, everything that we have, comes from God, and He gives it to us so that we can bless those that do not have anything.”

She told God that she wanted to serve Him full-time with everything He had given her, so He sent her to France to work in youth ministry. “After eight years of serving God in youth ministry and understanding what it means to serve cross-culturally, I didn’t want to continue as a missionary, but God was calling me to.”

She chose, instead, to get a different job, but after a time she said, “Okay, God, here I am. I’ll go wherever You send me.” She then worked with a French Baptist organization, teaching language and culture to missionaries going to French-speaking countries. Four years later, the French government decided not to renew her missionary visa, so after 14 years of living in France, she had to leave.

“When I left France, I knew that being a missionary was not about a location but about obedience,” Sabrina said. After returning to the United States she went to Togo for a year to serve at Hospital of Hope. During that time, God confirmed that He was sending her to serve long-term in Africa.





# M I S - S I O N - A R Y

A S I A





©SamaritansPurseMinistries

## No Room at the Inn

*A pregnant woman came to the gate late in December after a busy weekend at Memorial Christian Hospital, just days before Christmas. Would we see her?*

When Selina\* arrived at the hospital, her face was blue and she was gasping for breath, unaware of what was going on around her.

As she was rushed into the operating room, medical staff discovered that her oxygen levels were incredibly low. They quickly did a cesarean section without administering anesthesia in an effort to save the child inside her womb.

A limp baby was pulled out. She wasn't breathing.

And neither were we.

But Emmanuel God was with them. And both the mother and baby survived.

After a few days of recovery, Selina was awake and able to breathe on her own. She shared with staff that she had gone from hospital to hospital and no one would take her in. Yet, Selina and her little girl found shelter, hope and life at Memorial Christian Hospital (MCH).

Stories like Selina's are heard over and

over at MCH, which has been serving the Muslim-majority population of Bangladesh for more than 50 years—often providing compassionate care and life-saving medical assistance to patients in desperate need of help, and who may have nowhere left to turn.

Opened in 1966, the existing hospital has over 65 in-patient beds, and is a vibrant spiritual platform for 10-million people who live in the surrounding area.

Cholera, typhoid, malaria, malnutrition, polio, and rabies are common among the approximately 40,000 people who visit MCH in various forms of crisis each year. Sometimes medical staff can save them. Other times they cannot. But every one of them is treated with respect and compassion, providing many opportunities to share Christ's love with those in need. For many people, it is their first-and-only contact with Christianity.

MCH offers excellent, compassionate medical care, creating spiritual openness. The hospital has been the spring board for congregations, Bible colleges, pastoral training, Bible-translation work, literature and other opportunities to impact the community.

After 50 years of hard use, however, MCH facilities were stretched to the breaking point. The hospital has already raised more than \$6.7 million toward renovating and expanding its

facilities—including building a 120-bed medical center, ER and Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

Patients like Selina, who previously had to have oxygen hand-pumped into their lungs—a tedious, pain-staking process that required family members to squeeze a balloon consistently every few seconds at just the right pressure—could now have access to ventilators. Her newborn baby could have access to a neonatal incubator.

The building is complete, but MCH needs your help to equip the hospital ICU with this life-saving equipment so that through medical care we can continue to make great strides and share spiritual truth in Bangladesh. ■

### LEARN HOW you can help

provide life-saving medical care for people like Selina:

- **READ** page 5 in the enclosed giving catalog (US donors only)
- **GO** to [www.abwe.org/GiveJoy](http://www.abwe.org/GiveJoy)

*\*name changed for security*



### Benjamin & Abby | *South Asia*

Emmanuel Baptist Church of Bellbrook, Bellbrook, OH

Benjamin went to Cedarville University as an undeclared student, but soon decided to change his major to English. “Horrible idea. Turns out, I don’t like to write,” he said with a laugh, “but I also think that God had other plans for me.” He ended up falling in love with information technology, declared as an IT Management major, and worked as a student in the IT department.

While he was still in school, he heard about an IT need in South Asia from a family member who worked in missions there. “I would have left right then, but there was one problem...I needed a degree.” He stayed and completed his degree at Cedarville University, which is when he met his wife, Abby.

“In high school, God gave me a desire to help people,” Abby recalls. After doing some missions work with the homeless and inner city populations, she decided she wanted to become a nurse. Abby went to Cedarville University to pursue nursing and went on a missions trip to Malawi during her junior year. “That’s when God gave me the desire to do missions,” Abby said.

When Benjamin graduated, he checked with ABWE to see if there were any IT opportunities, but none were open at the time. Things changed by the time spring arrived. A lot of opportunities had opened up, and after praying about it, he and Abby decided to pursue the application process with ABWE. They are excited to use both of their skill sets to serve in South Asia.

### Dana | *Southeast Asia*

Bethel Baptist Church, Sellersville, PA

Dana has always had an interest in missions, but she quickly learned that Isaiah 55, which talks about God’s ways not being our ways, was full of truth. In high school she signed up to go to Haiti, but the trip was canceled and she ended up going to Puerto Rico instead. “I went to college with the “M&M plan”. I was going to marry and go into missions.

But I did not meet the man of my dreams, and God had other plans,” Dana shared. She signed up to go to Kenya, but, once again, the trip was canceled and she ended up going to New Zealand.

After her college graduation she went back to her home church, which was also a school, and taught there for 19 years. But she never lost her passion for missions. She went on many missions trips and continued to learn that her plans weren’t always God’s plans.

In 2008, she took her first trip to Asia. “I remember sitting in a service and thinking, ‘Could God really use me in Asia?’” She visited many locations throughout the region and each time, wondered if that location was the place God was calling her to go. In 2013, she went to Southeast Asia and although she fell in love with the ministry, she was confident that God was not calling her to go there.

Three months later, God called her to Southeast Asia, and she’s been serving there for the past three years. “I’m grateful that God is helping me to take one more step toward staying there on a more permanent basis, if that’s His plan,” she said.

### Jonathan & Evanie Bryant | *Philippines*

Crosswalk Church, Philippines

[www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/jonandevphilippines/)

[jonandevphilippines/](https://www.facebook.com/jonandevphilippines/)



Evanie was born and raised in the Philippines. Her parents, both nurses, moved their family to the United States to work in Jacksonville, Florida, when she was 14 years old. When Evanie was 16, a simple Bible study with friends led her to give her life to the Lord. After being involved with a variety of children’s ministries, she knew she wanted to be a teacher, and knew she wanted to teach overseas. “Having grown up in the Philippines, I knew the need for Christian education,” Evanie said. She went to Pensacola Christian College for elementary education and met Jonathan there.

At first, Jonathan didn’t want to go to a ministry-related school, but his parents advised him to attend at least one year of Bible college. He decided to go to Pensacola Christian College to study computer science. After his



freshman year of college, he went to China for the summer to teach English. “Through teaching there for the summer, I was able to see that English can be a ministry, and it was a ministry that I enjoyed doing,” Jonathan said.

Jonathan finished his undergraduate degree in computer science and began studying English education. He and Evanie moved to the Philippines three years ago, completely on their own and without support, to teach children there. “Ever since then, God has been providing for our needs, even without support,” Evanie said.

They’ve recently been helping as a guest house manager for ABWE. Evanie shared, “We want to be able to minister to more people. We see that need. We think that’s why God has led us back here, to learn more and be trained.”



**Suzanne Collins** | *Thailand*

Apex Community Church, Dayton, OH

Suzanne has been living and working in Thailand for the past four years, “but I wasn’t part of ABWE because I wasn’t married to Ben yet,” she shared with a laugh.

“One thing I learned in going to Thailand was that God was sending me to work on me. I needed Him. I wouldn’t have learned how much I needed God if I hadn’t gone to Thailand,” Suzanne said.

Before going out to the field, she felt convicted about the fact that all of the people she knew were fairly affluent. She didn’t really know anyone in real need of clothing or food or shelter. One night, after she had moved to Thailand, she was waiting for a taxi and getting frustrated that none were available. Then she felt a sense of peace, as if the Holy Spirit was telling her there was a reason she wasn’t getting a taxi. Not long after, she witnessed an elderly woman being attacked and was able to stop it. “When that happened, I knew it was God saying, ‘This is what I want you to do. Deal with the needs in front of you as they come,’” says Suzanne. She felt like it was a direct answer to the conviction she felt before leaving home.

Suzanne’s husband, Ben, was a candidate at seminar nine years ago and has been serving with ABWE in Thailand ever since.

## Reaching East Asia One Pastor at a Time

**T**hink of the pastors, sermons, and Bible studies that have most impacted you. Now imagine never having heard them. Where would you be today?

In recent years, East Asia has experienced explosive church growth, with more than one million new believers annually. But pastors lack access to high-quality theological resources and preaching materials that can help them produce biblically-sound churches and spiritually mature Christians.

This leaves churches vulnerable to false teaching. “Christianity in East Asia is a mile wide and an inch deep,” one former missionary explained.

Religious persecution, financial constraints, and language barriers prevent most national pastors in East Asia from accessing even some of the most basic tools for sermon preparation that we find so readily in the West. Seeing this need, one ABWE missionary started asking, “How can we use technology to help persecuted pastors be better equipped?”

The free online Bible Study Toolbox was built to provide national pastors and ministry leaders in East Asia with crucial resources, like Bible translations, Hebrew and Greek concordances, sermon outlines for every Bible passage, and commentaries by writers like John MacArthur, A.T. Robertson, and James Montgomery Boice—all translated into their own language and available online at no cost to them.

Although only recently launched, the initial version of the Bible Study Toolbox already has over 1,000 users. Plans for a mobile friendly version will greatly increase accessibility for the roughly 80 percent of East Asians who depend on smartphones for their Internet access.

A pastor in East Asia commenting on the significance of the Bible Study Toolbox said, “We have come to realize the fact that only when the hermeneutics and biblical commentaries are right, can we expect healthy spiritual lives of pastors, and then [have] an empowered church built on a solid foundation.”

Just as the use of new technology in the form of the printing press sparked the Reformation 500 years ago, a completed Bible Study Toolbox has the potential to impact generations and equip a body of believers who are passionate about sending their own missionaries to other countries.

**LEARN HOW** you can help:

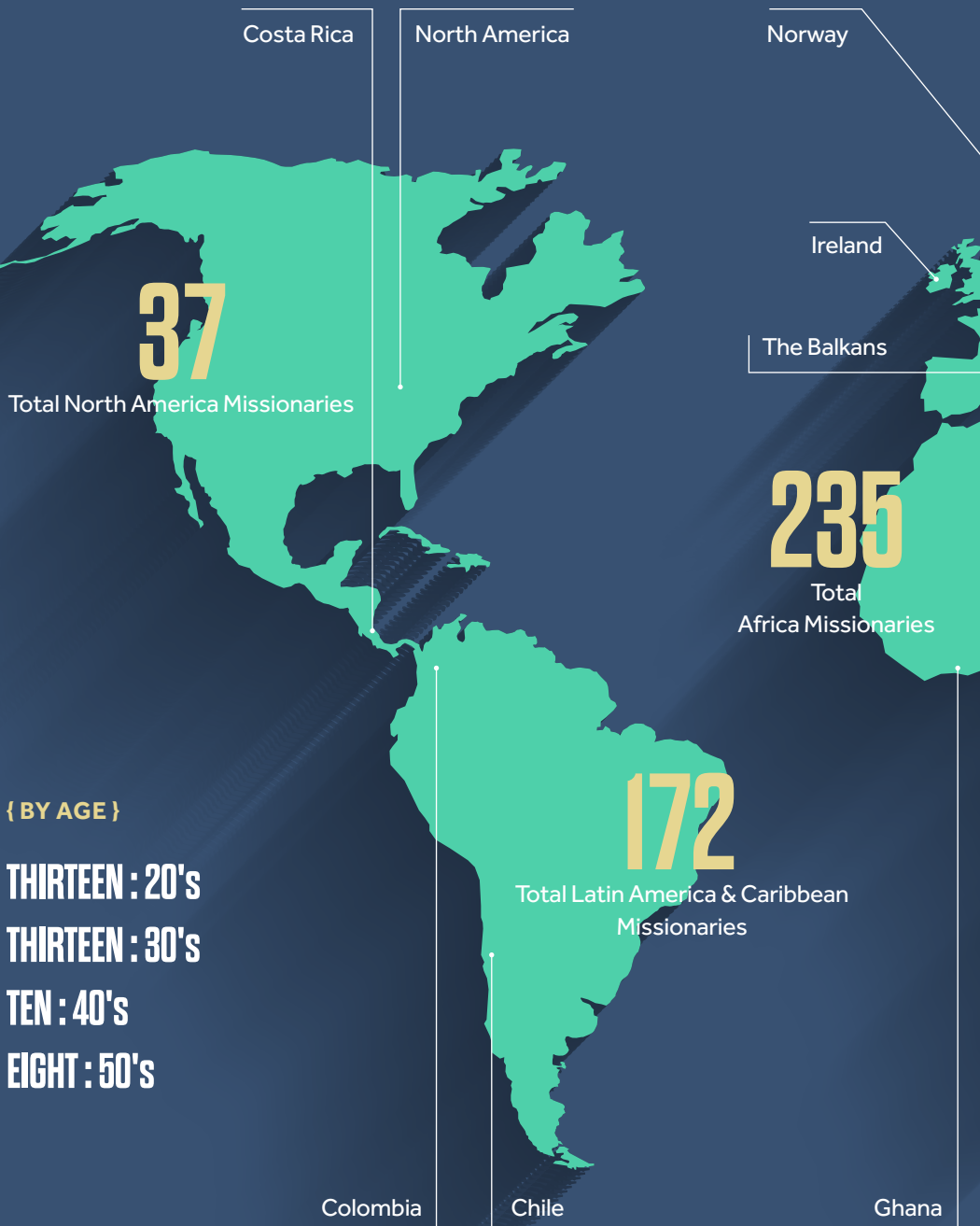
- **READ** page 3 in the enclosed giving catalog (*US donors only*)
- **GO** to [www.abwe.org/GiveJoy](http://www.abwe.org/GiveJoy)



## Candidates

by the numbers

### { COUNTRIES OF APPOINTMENT FOR 2017 }



### { BY AGE }

THIRTEEN : 20's

THIRTEEN : 30's

TEN : 40's

EIGHT : 50's

### { PREVIOUS VOCATIONS OF CANDIDATES }



### { 2017 MISSIONARY APPOINTMENTS }

US & Canadian citizens

45

### { MISSIONARIES TRANSITIONING TO LONG-TERM SERVICE }

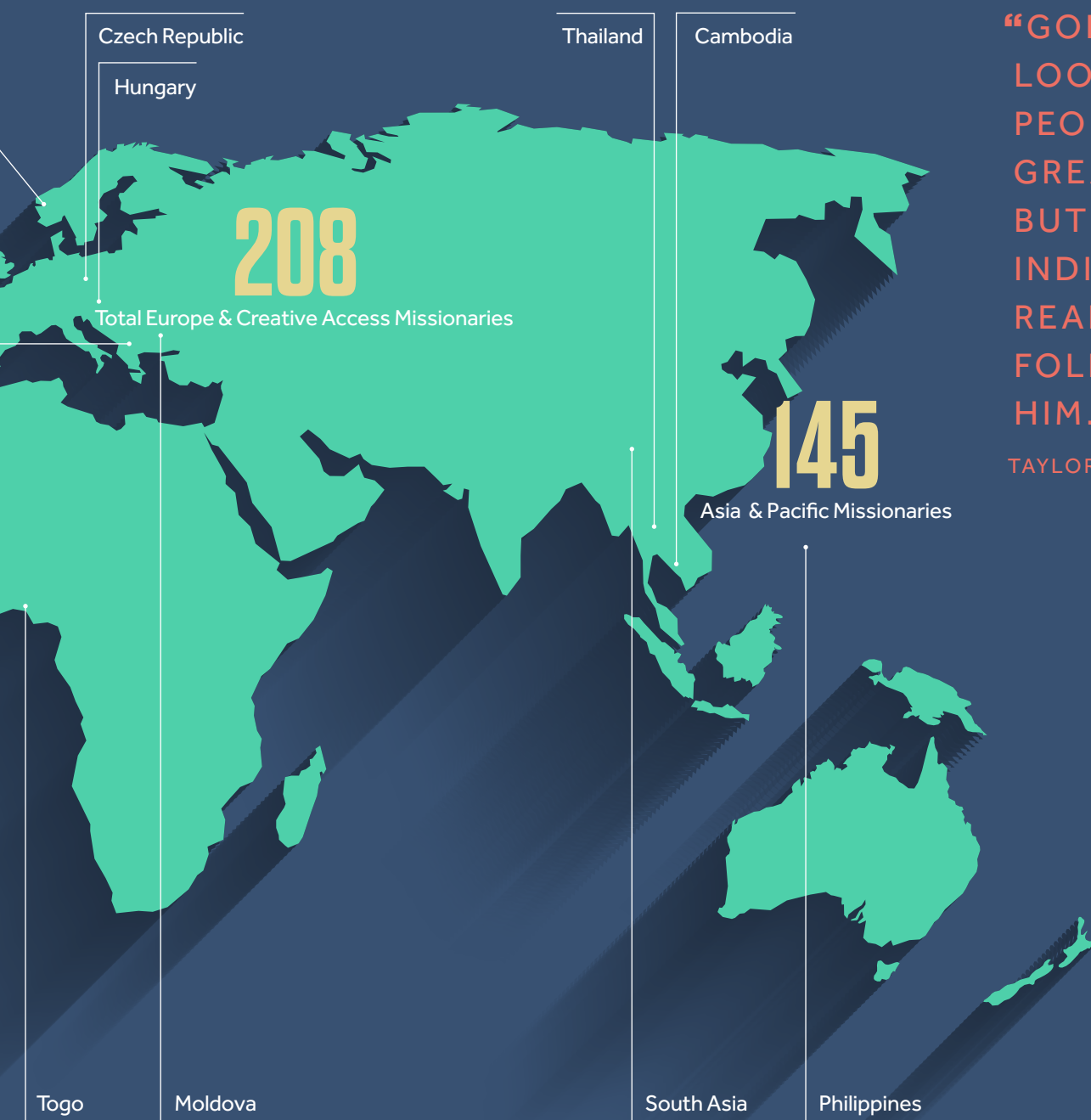
Formerly student or short-term

SIXTEEN

Total new  
MK's in 2017

29





“GOD ISN'T  
LOOKING FOR  
PEOPLE OF  
GREAT FAITH,  
BUT FOR  
INDIVIDUALS  
READY TO  
FOLLOW  
HIM.” — HUDSON  
TAYLOR

#### { TOTAL NUMBER OF ABWE MISSIONARIES }

Long-term  
missionaries

815

Short-term  
missionaries

157

Missionaries sent by  
ABWE Canada

42

Total missionaries  
(preparing to go overseas  
or already on the field)

1,022





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## When God's Plan Looks Like AN ACCIDENT

FN

By Brenda Kosiorek | ABWE Missionary to Togo

*It was supposed to be a nice family vacation. We had just begun our two-week stop in Scotland after serving the last two years in Togo, West Africa, when it happened. A semi flew around the corner and hit our camper head on.*

We later learned that the driver had run a few other cars off the road just before hitting us. I was driving, my 22-year-old son Caleb was in the passenger seat, my husband Eric was napping in the back, and our sons Michael and Daniel were sitting behind the cab.

After the impact, Caleb was pinned for

over an hour, and my husband and I were also trapped. It was only by the grace of God any of us lived.

A helicopter took us to the city of Inverness where we learned that bones and teeth were shattered, faces were cut, and bodies were rattled and bruised. We



received stitches, gluing, X-rays, crutches and bandages—Caleb spent days in the hospital and needed emergency surgery.

Meanwhile, the camper we had intended to call home during our stay, was totaled. Almost everything that we had carefully selected to take back with us to the States—computers, photos, important papers, clothes, hygiene items and food—was destroyed. We suddenly found ourselves injured, disoriented and having no idea what to do next.

However, we serve an amazing God. As news of our accident spread, people we'd never met, in an area we'd never visited before, began offering to help. We received meals, rides to the hospital, laundry services and most importantly, prayer.

A kind doctor and his wife took us in, giving us space to rest and heal as a family while we waited for Caleb's condition to improve.

Then, to add to the stress, we learned that Eric's identity had been stolen. As if we hadn't done enough paperwork filing police reports and insurance claims and medical forms—now we were on the phone for hours with banks trying to make sense of a wild shopping spree that happened somewhere in Grand Rapids, on our dime. We were horrified to learn the thief had changed all our computer codes and left us with quite a mess to try and undo.

And so, we worked and we waited. We waited for our bodies to stop aching, waited for our bruises to disappear, waited for the swelling to leave our faces, hands, knees and backs. Waited to see family and friends and loved ones we had long anticipated reuniting with. Waited to be done living out of suitcases and get back to “normal” living. Worked on getting Caleb better. Worked on replacing and

repairing what we could of our things. Worked on fixing the mess that other people's poor choices had made of our lives.

But as we watched these events unfold, we continued to see God's provision. We were constantly amazed at how the body of Christ is a family we have around the world, even when we've never previously met. We were amazed at how many people prayed for us and encouraged us through practical acts of service for our family.

We are home now and in some ways still recovering from the accident and the identity theft. Caleb may need another surgery, but for the most part, we are settling into our life and our routine.

We are now seeing that—perhaps in part because of our accident—five people we had connected with and witnessed to before we left for Togo, have reached out to us since our return. We look forward to connecting with them again and testifying of God's goodness to our family and sharing more with them of the lessons of provision and His faithfulness He's taught us these past few weeks. ■

*“It was only  
through the grace  
of God that any  
of us lived.”*



Eric and Brenda Kosiorek have served in West Africa for the past two years. They work through ABWE's Project Office at the Hospital of Hope in the city of Mango, Togo, helping with facilities maintenance and keeping the ministry in working order.





## 4 Ways to Build a SENDING CHURCH CULTURE

According to

*Alex Kocman, Director of Long-Term Mobilization*

**When God calls a missionary, he also calls a church to send them.**

In my role as a mobilizer, I work with all sorts of missionary applicants. The only thing more distressing than hearing, “Oh, I don’t have a church,” is hearing, “Oh, my church doesn’t send missionaries.”

The success of missionaries hinges on the support of their church. So, how can you help your church catalyze a sending culture for the next generation of missionaries?

**1. Personal Discipleship** – We all know that discipleship matters. But it matters more in missions. A church focused only on ministering to the masses will struggle to identify potential cross-cultural workers.

Get one-on-one with your people. No missions conference can match the impact of hearing your own pastor or a close spiritual mentor say, “I’ve seen how you relate to new people in our church. You have potential for cross-cultural ministry. Have you considered missions?”

**2. Pipelines** – In Acts 13:1-3, we see God’s blueprint for a church-centered missions model. As the elders and teachers gather in worship, the Spirit selects Paul and Barnabas as missionaries. But that wasn’t Paul and Barnabas’ first day at the church. They were already teaching (*Acts 11:22-26*) and meeting physical needs (*vv. 27-30*).

Antioch may not have had a full-fledged “leadership development” track for Paul and Barnabas, but its example is instructive. Build a pipeline for prospective missionaries that includes interviewing them, and having them serve, teach, and contact agencies to better understand the process and requirements for service.

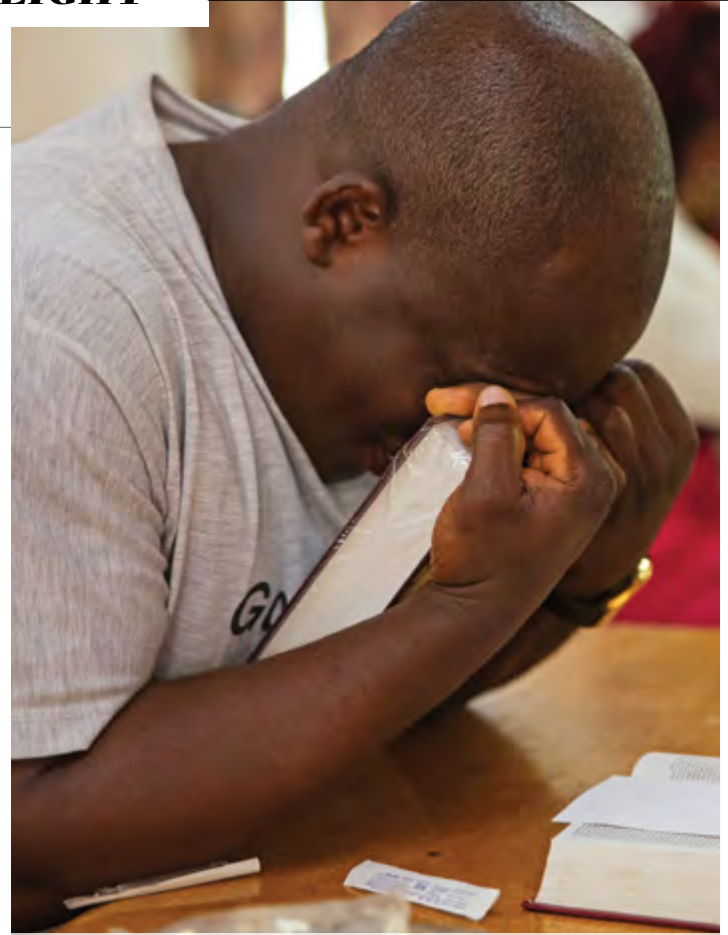
**3. Preaching** – God speaks most directly to us through His word preached. Rich, doctrinal preaching—that which draws out God’s heart for the nations, and culminates in the multi-ethnic scene of Heaven in Revelation 5—is a crucial mobilizing force.

True, preaching alone can’t spawn a sending culture. Yet, if we really believe the gospel is the power of God to save (*Romans 1:16*), we should also believe it has the power to send.

**4. Prayer** – God ordains to pick His workers through our petitions. “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers” (*Matthew 9:37-38*). Right after Jesus said this, he commissioned the 12 apostles to evangelize Israel (10:1).

Pray for missionaries in your church services, staff meetings, and alone. We cannot create a sending culture in our own strength. We must ask God to entrust the next generation of goers to us, and in-turn commit to faithfully “hold the rope” for them. ■





©Judi Bowen



## TREASURING THE WORD

**“I had the delightful privilege of photographing** students from our Togolese nursing program as they each received a French Thompson Chain Reference Bible in preparation for their next class. I absolutely loved watching their responses and expressions as this extra-special gift was presented to them! I observed as Godwin, the young man pictured above, positively glowed with joy as he hugged and kissed his new Bible. Truly, the living Word of God is our greatest treasure, and I love it when the students recognize that. Please pray that these 17 students will apply what they learn from their new copy of the Bible.”



### About the Missionary | *Judy Bowen, Togo Missionary*

*Judy oversees the communications resource center and print shop at the ABWE hospital complex in Togo, West Africa, which provides affordable Christian literature in French and local languages. Her other ministries include missions photography and assisting with Community Health Evangelism.*



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