This is a special year for Baptist International Missions, Inc. (BIMI). June 2020 marks 60 years of ministry for our mission agency. There have been many changes in our world since the official organization of BIMI on June 28, 1960. Nonetheless, one of the things that remains the same is our dependence on Jesus Christ. When BIMI began 60 years ago, we were Counting on Christ. Today, we are still Counting on Christ and as we look to the future, we will continue Counting on Christ. We are celebrating 60 years and counting—Counting on Christ.

As you may have concluded from the opening paragraph of this editorial, BIMI’s theme for 2020 is Counting on Christ. We are depending on Him, not just for some things but for all things—a complete, confident, continual, constant, and comprehensive counting on Christ. There are many things that could be mentioned, but I would like to write about three particular things for which we have been and are still counting on Christ.

First, we are counting on Christ for additional missionary personnel. The one main prayer request Jesus gave us was for more labourers for His harvest field (Matthew 9:37–38; Luke 10:2). Baptist International Missions began 60 years ago with just a handful of missionaries. God has continued to call Christians to full-time missionary service since that time and He is still calling laborers. Some have asked if the number of those being called to full-time missions has decreased in recent days. My answer is that God is still calling as many now as He did in the past—perhaps even more. However, I do not believe Christians are responding to God’s call as they did 60 years ago. Nonetheless, we are not discouraged, but we are confidently counting on Christ to...
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Second, we are counting on Christ to provide His power to accomplish the task of worldwide evangelization. In Matthew 28:18, the recently resurrected Christ makes the declaration that all power had been given unto Him. The Lord’s declaration is followed by the command “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19 — emphasis added). In essence, Jesus is telling us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel in His omnipotent power. It is wonderful to know that the Lord has not lost any of His power since making His resurrection declaration. Thus, Christ is just as powerful today as He was when BIMI began in 1960. Consequently, we continue to obey His Great Commission, completely counting on Christ’s unlimited, eternal power.

Finally, we are counting on Christ to fulfill His promises. There are several major promises Christ has made in relation to missions. We have been promised His power, which I mentioned in the previous paragraph. Christ also promised His presence. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus said, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” As we fulfill the Great Commission, we do so with Jesus by our side. No one goes to the mission field without His presence! The Lord has also promised His provision. Jesus said we are to go and bring forth fruit and as we do, whatsoever we ask of the Father in His name, He will provide (John 15:16). No one goes to the mission field without His supply! Additionally, Jesus made a promise when He made His victorious proclamation in Matthew 16:18, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Church planting is a major part of this victory proclamation. This is not to say that missionaries are exempt from difficulties and defeats. On the contrary, Satan fights any efforts to win souls and plant churches. However, no one goes to the mission field without His victory! Thus, as we move forward, we do so confidently counting on Christ to keep His promises—because He always does.

As I considered possible themes for 2020, my desire was to remember the 60 year history of BIMI and at the same time look forward to our future ministry. We were counting on Christ in 1960 and we are still counting on Christ in 2020. Lord willing, the next issue of the BIMI World Magazine will be a special 60th anniversary issue. We are counting on Christ for missionary personnel, miraculous power, and for the fulfillment of His manifold promises. In short, we are relentlessly relying on Christ for everything. We are celebrating 60 years and counting—Counting on Christ.
In May 1974 Dan Johnson left the States with his seven month pregnant wife, Gerri, and two-year-old son, Allen, and headed for the country of Brazil. Excited and energetic, they set out to do God’s will for their lives. They landed in São Paulo, eager to begin language study so they could plant churches. After one year in language school, they graduated and received their diplomas, printed in Portuguese on the front and in English on the back—I suppose in case they did not understand the Portuguese.

From São Paulo they went to Orlandia to fill in for Missionary Phillip Allen. They stayed one year while he was on furlough and then went to Jardinópolis to start a church. They worked feverishly for 12 months in this new church plant, but Dan quickly realized the Lord had not given him the gifts of a church planter. Yet, God had called him to Brazil. Was God wrong? No, the Lord had other plans for him and his family.

God wanted them to work as a supporting family for other missionaries in Brazil—effectively multiplying the labor through teamwork. Dan did not realize it then, but God had given him certain gifts that would help complement church planters and He would use him mightily as a second man to spread the Gospel throughout Brazil and to foreign countries.

The Lord led Dan and his family to work with Jimmy Rose, the grandfather of independent Baptist missionaries in Brazil, to help his ministry become established and effective for the Lord, and to start a Bible institute. With this new vision, they went to the States on a furlough and came back six months later to Ribeirão Preto.

From that day to this day, they have been faithfully serving different Pauls as their Timothys in Brazil. They have been laboring for 45 years and their impact has been far-reaching and lasting. They helped establish four works—one in Ribeirão Preto, one in Limeira with fellow BIMI missionary Garry Tyler, one in
Londrina with a Brazilian national, and one in Taubaté. They helped those works become strong, vibrant ministries, each with its own Bible institute. Through these works, scores of men and women have been trained for the ministry. These graduates have become church planters, missionaries, pastors, and Christian workers across Brazil and in different countries of the world.

Dan and Gerri Johnson have assisted in whatever was necessary according to their gifts. They have won souls, counseled, taught, trained, mentored, started Bible institutes, and helped develop Christian resources in Brazil. Because of their willingness to help where needed, thousands of people have been influenced for the cause of Christ through the Bible institutes and the ministries that were started because of them. The ministries they have labored in have been able to multiply themselves because of their labors. If they had not been there, those churches would not have thrived as they did and those Bible institutes would not have been established and flourished as they did.

Missionaries often go to a distant land where the true Gospel has never been preached. They go where there are no Christian resources available—no good Bible colleges, no Christian music in the native language, no radio stations, no books, and no Christian fellowship. While there, they live by faith. Many times they need to pray in the money necessary to feed their families and to pay for the ministry expenses.

Oftentimes the church-planting missionary family does this all alone. They must become carpenters, bricklayers, and electricians. They are the secretaries, treasurers, music leaders, instrumentalists, youth workers, children's workers, nursery workers, school teachers, principals, administrators, janitors, theologians, counsellors, church-planters, and pastors. They venture into the dark spiritual headquarters of evil principalities away from family and friends, learn a new language and a new culture and then they start a church, endeavoring to establish it into an autonomous, indigenous, self-supporting, and self-propagating work.

Moreover, the missionary family must stay in touch with their supporting churches. They travel to the States while leaving their work under-assisted for extended periods of time or simply stay on the field even though a furlough is desperately needed because there is no one to cover for them. The church planters have to be the Pauls of missionary work, often without a Timothy, Silas, John Mark, or Luke. The Pauls are needed but so are the others!

There is a huge need on the mission field, not just for lead missionaries but for second men as well! Men and women are needed who are willing to give their lives to help the cause of Christ advance on the front lines of the enemy regardless of their positions. There is a great need for more Timothys on the mission field. Perhaps you are not a church planter but want to be used of God on the mission field. There is room for you. Team missions is biblical and it is effective! Every laborer is important!

I am honored and thrilled to work with second men like Dan Johnson. He is my hero, my mentor, my assistant in the ministry, and he is my dad!
The first Caribbean Radio Lighthouse (CRL) station manager, Al Snyder, wrote that quote in October 1973 as plans were being formed to start a Christian radio station on the island of Antigua. Almost two years later on September 7, 1975, the Caribbean Radio Lighthouse began broadcasting Bible programs and Gospel music to the islands of the Eastern Caribbean! Before the end of the year, CRL received its first letter of a salvation decision from a woman on the nearby island of Montserrat.

The Caribbean Radio Lighthouse is still beaming out doctrinally sound Bible teaching and Christ-honoring music from Antigua to a potential listening audience of over two million people on more than 20 island countries. Much has changed in 44 years!

Did you hear yet that we decided to call it the Caribbean Radio Lighthouse? We think the Lighthouse identity will help the spiritual purpose of the station to be better understood by the people, and we are praying much already that God will use the beaming out of the Light of the Gospel of Christ to lead many dying souls out of darkness and into new life in Jesus Christ.—Al Snyder

Beaming Out the Light of the Gospel of Christ

By Nathan Owens
• The studio location and towers have changed, but CRL is still on Antigua.
• CRL began as an AM station, but today, it also broadcasts on FM and online.
• CRL started broadcasting seven hours a day and now broadcasts 24 hours a day.
• Many of the programs were received on reel-to-reel and then cassettes and CDs through the mail. Today, almost all of the programs are received over the internet.
• Those reel-to-reels kept our board operators pretty busy, but today, all our programs and music are digital and the automation system handles a lot of the board work.
• In 1974, CRL was raising $1,000 a month to begin operating. Today, CRL needs nearly $11,000 a month to operate smoothly.
• At the end of 1975, there were three US missionary couples and six West Indies national staff members working at CRL. Today, CRL has one US missionary couple and four Caribbean staff members.

I am sure this list could go on and on. Even though the technology and equipment are always changing, one thing remains constant—our adherence to the doctrines and principles on which the station was founded, that is, a basis of biblical truth. Our goals are to evangelize the lost; to edify, encourage, and train believers; and to assist the growth of the local churches in the Eastern Caribbean. After 44 years, we have been able to reach several generations!

This summer while canvassing for Vacation Bible School, one of the mission team members, whom CRL housed, heard this testimony from a listener. The listener said he grew up listening to CRL with his mother. She told him the only reason she is a Christian is because of what she heard on the radio when she was a child. Although this man was not saved as a child, he wanted the group to know that he is now a second generation Christian because of the radio station and the testimony and teaching from his mother. He shared how thankful he is for CRL, and he is convinced that if his mother had not heard CRL as a child, neither he nor his mother would have been saved.
The Lord has truly blessed and used the ministry of Caribbean Radio Lighthouse through the years. Our ministry does not just stop at being a Christian radio station though. We also distribute Bibles, tracts, and mail-in Bible correspondence courses to the islands. We pray for listeners’ prayer requests and direct our listeners to Bible-believing churches. We also host mission teams to minister at like-minded Antiguan churches.

In 2018, we started a live, call-in program called *That’s Truth* with Dr. David Murphy, a local pastor, in order to answer and discuss contemporary questions and topics from listeners. The response has been outstanding! Pastor Murphy has received numerous phone calls of additional questions and
people seeking counseling. We even had to lengthen the program from one hour to an hour and a half. Dr. Murphy says:

The new call-in program has been a real game changer for our ministry. It has broadened our ministry constituency, provided countless opportunities to give biblical answers to listener’s questions, enabled us to address crucial contemporary issues, given us a forum to publicly refute cultic and apostate movements, and created a door for a regional counseling ministry.

The response has been phenomenal. I recently had a pastor tell me that it is the type of program that has been needed for decades. Regularly, I am surprised by the breadth and depth of its impact. Radio is not dead; it just requires creative new approaches to how we interact with the audience. Our methods are volatile, but our message is immutable!

Thank you for your prayers and support of the Caribbean Radio Lighthouse on Antigua. CRL is a missionary radio station and it depends on the support of churches and individuals. To date, CRL receives 92 percent of its needed monthly support from regular donors. Please continue to pray for additional financial support for CRL so we can continue to reach the Eastern Caribbean with good quality Christian programming! If you would like to be a part of our financial support team, funds may be sent to BIMI and allocated to Account Number 243.

Personnel Needs: CRL has been blessed through the years with several families who devoted many years to the radio ministry. Unfortunately, age and health caused our faithful missionaries to retire from the field. Nathan and Renee Owens have been the only missionary couple at CRL since July 2019. Although they are currently managing, there is a great need for additional personnel, especially a person with an aptitude for computer and technical equipment repairs. Please pray with us about this need. If anyone is interested, please contact Nathan Owens directly at LighthouseBIMI@gmail.com.

CRL staff
A big change took place in our family’s life and ministry in January 2019. Just a few months earlier, we visited missionaries in Croatia on a trip to the Leadership Conference Europe in Romania. What God did in our hearts was unexpected. After we returned to Estonia, my wife and I talked. We prayed. We talked with our children. Then we sought counsel from our pastor and other men of God. By November, we had perfect peace from God that He was leading our family to Croatia. On January 23, we packed our things, moved to northern Croatia, and teamed up with veteran missionaries Johnny and Tori Leslie. After serving Russian-speaking people for more than 15 years, we were starting a new chapter in our ministry.

Croatia is a beautiful country with natural wonders, national parks, stunning sunsets, 1,244 islands, mountains, nine UNESCO sites, and coastal cities along the Adriatic Sea. We have been privileged to see some of these breathtaking sights. However, in the beautiful country of Croatia there are also four million people, most of whom are Roman Catholics, people with souls who will spend eternity somewhere. People for whom Jesus died. What an honor that the Lord wants to use our family!

Within just a few weeks of arriving in Croatia, I found a language school and we started studying the language. Never in our wildest dreams would we have thought we would be learning another new language! The Russian language uses the Cyrillic alphabet, while Croatian uses the Latin alphabet. However, the grammar structure is similar and we are thankful for that. It is a comfort to know that God enables us when He calls us to do something. It gets overwhelming very quickly when we do things in our own strength. Philippians 4:13 reminds us I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

While we study the language, we are attending Pobjednici Neovisna Baptisticka Crkva (Victory Independent Baptist Church) in Varaždin, a city of 47,000 in northern Croatia. In the seven months we have lived here, the Lord has given us numerous opportunities to serve at the church alongside the Leslies in spite of our limited language skills. It has been
exciting to watch Christians grow, welcome visitors to the services, see people saved, and be a part of weekly evangelism. We look forward to what God will continue to do in northern Croatia.

One of the highlights of our week is helping in the Gypsy village. There is a large population of Gypsies who live in villages in our county in northern Croatia. One of those villages has a red, 20-foot shipping container that serves as a church building. About three years ago, the Leslies started having services and children’s programs to reach the Gypsies. Week after week children crowd into the little room to sing songs, play games, learn Bible verses, and hear Bible lessons. Since there is not room for everyone, there are two programs each week. On Saturday mornings 40–60 young children come. Sunday afternoon is for preteens and teenagers with about 20 in attendance. The shipping container was much too small for the number of children who were attending each week. We prayed for a bigger place and in His perfect time, God provided. In August, a building that has plenty of room was purchased. Praise the Lord! When word got out in the village about the building, there was a bit of shock as they realized the Baptist Church was in the village to stay! We are not going anywhere. In fact, we have started a Wednesday night service for adults as well. It is exciting to be a part of what God is doing in this village!

Our family is thrilled that God called us to serve Him in Croatia. It is because of the sacrificial financial support and faithful prayers of God’s people that we can be here. Missionaries are dependent on churches in the States that hold the ropes. The missionary who goes and the churches that give are both vital in reaching the lost world for Christ. Please pray for Croatia. Pray that we will be diligent to spread the Gospel. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work (John 9:4).
If one stays in a place long enough, one begins to observe a ministry cycle. Summers are full of plans for Vacation Bible School, children and teen camps, and warm-weather outreach. As families regroup for the new school year, fall events take shape with new Sunday school and Bible study themes, ladies’ Bible studies, Children’s Clubs, organized soul winning, and the beginning of discipleship times. Things really get rolling with the missions conference, the holiday season, and the theme for the new year. Adding the parallel schedule of a Bible college makes it easy to see how missionaries or pastors can get into the routine of keeping up with what comes next while forgetting to soberly consider the purpose of each message, activity, and event.

The Tyler family has been in Romania for over 16 years—not so long in comparison with other European missionaries but long enough to see fruit begin to ripen on the vine with potential of a great harvest. There are many demands for attention, but three factors help keep things in balance.

Prayer

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1).

This is not a cliché or an over-simplified spiritual duty—IT IS IMPERATIVE! Both the personal practice and the teaching of prayer are important to keep ministry centered on the will of our Heavenly Father. There may be personal trials or seasons of seemingly fruitless efforts, but these should drive us to depend more and more upon our gracious Lord. Likewise, close communication with Him must be maintained when we become busy about the Master’s business.

In 2005, the Timișoara Baptist Church was started in an auditorium once used for communist youth assemblies under Nicolae Ceaușescu. Over the years other locations were rented and much work has been done to reach people in the fourth largest city in Romania. Today, the church has her own property on a main boulevard and has a multi-national congregation made up primarily of Romanians but also with German-speaking and English-speaking members. All are a result of God’s answering the prayers of others, as well as those of the church families.

Priorities

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:19–20).

Soul winning and discipleship have been and continue to be the priority of the local church. Tens of thousands of tracts, Gospel of John
and Romans booklets, and other evangelistic materials have been distributed over the past 14 years, and the result is evident—God blesses! There is relative freedom to share the Gospel in public, but the greatest opposition is the spiritual darkness and fear that control the majority of people who adhere to the Romanian Orthodox religion. However, their respect for the Holy Scriptures continues to be the best avenue for opening blind eyes to the saving faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Preaching and teaching from God’s Word are also a priority in the local church. Church services, one-on-one discipleship, Bible studies, Sunday school groups, and the Christian Children’s Club are some of the ways the life-changing principles of the Bible are taught to those who assemble.

The training of servant-leaders is also an important part of the Tylers’ ministry. The Timișoara Baptist College International (TBCI), located 30 miles east of Timișoara, was started nearly 20 years ago under the leadership of Dr. Ron White (BIMI ARM Missionary) and Missionary Ed Hembree (now BIMI Europe Director). Tim Tyler is the Executive Director of the school and his wife, Debra, is one of the professors alongside national pastor Florin Stanca (2006 graduate) and Miss Charity Shambaugh. The two major courses of study are Pastoral Theology and Christian Ministry. A Church Music minor is available for those who wish to add it to their major. The curriculum is taught in English and there have been students from other European countries such as Germany, Ireland, and even the United States. The three-story college building provides classrooms, library and computer learning center, dining facilities, and dormitory rooms to house up to 50 students and participants of annual Youth Conferences and other local church ministry events.

People

Someone has said, “The most important things in life are not things.” They are people! More specifically, other people. During the 15 years in the pastorate in Wyoming prior to coming to Romania, the Tyler family learned the importance of fellowship and encouragement for the brethren in the Lord’s work. There is a great need for this as well in Europe due to the often isolated location of those serving the Lord here. By participating in events in other parts of Europe and touring with the TBCI choir, as well as hosting several large church planting conferences, many relationships have developed with a desire to hold up one another’s hands in prayer and practical encouragement.

One common observation comes out in every part of Europe: MORE LABORERS ARE NEEDED!

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest (Luke 10:2)."
Looking back at what God does to work in the lives of people and to build His church is always something that draws out a proclamation of praise. One such story is that of a man in our church named Lawrence. He is a retired Marine, and when we first met, he just seemed to be a quiet man who had been coming to Faith Baptist Church in Iwakuni for some time. One day during the after-service fellowship, God pressed it on my heart not to let him leave without trying to get to know his name and background. We briefly talked, and I asked if we could meet for coffee to talk about his testimony. He gladly accepted the invitation, and we met for the first time in late 2016.

Lawrence began to recount how he had recently been saved and wanted badly to find out more about being a part of the church family. A fellow Marine had witnessed to him many times in the shop. One day, the man gave him a Bible, but Lawrence was not receptive to the Gospel. However, he knew he could not just throw away a Bible, so he put it on a shelf at home and forgot about it. Years later, while he was going through a difficult chapter in his life, God began to reach into his hard heart and nurture the Gospel seed that had fallen there, bringing to mind what his fellow Marine had shared with him. It was not long before Lawrence accepted Christ as his Savior. God brought Lawrence to Faith Baptist Church through a series of events not long after.

Lawrence went on to express that he had been unsure if he was allowed to join the church and was shocked that we even met at all to discuss it. He was not baptized. We set up a time to get that squared away, and he was baptized soon after.

Fast forward a few months—we were out canvassing a neighborhood with invitations to our Japanese services. During this time, Brother LT (as we now affectionately call him) seemed like he had a lot on his mind. Finally, as we were leaving for the day to head back to the church, he opened up that he had found the Bible his fellow Marine had given him. He had forgotten about it, and now he felt as though he should reach out to let the man know what had happened in his own life. He did, and it was timely good news that this man needed in his life—an encouragement of faithfulness that both he and Brother LT strive to never forget.

Brother LT has weathered some difficult days alongside us in our church but now God has been blessing. Over the last two years, God has breathed new life into the ministry. We are
seeing souls saved regularly, and those who are saved are growing in great depth. In addition, during this time God has blessed Brother LT's family. He has been able to witness God work in the lives of three of his children and his sister, who have all been saved. We are still praying for more in his family to turn to Christ, but we are confident that God will work in their hearts to bring them to Himself. After all, *is any thing too hard for the LORD* (Genesis18:14)?

As you serve in your corner of the world, never lose sight of the one in the service whom you see but often overlook. He may be new, newly saved, or seem to be just passing through, yet, you never know exactly what God has in store. It is His church and He has promised to build it. We just get the extra special blessing to be a small part of it all! W

**PNG UPDATE BY ALAN BROOKS**

In June 2019, we set a goal for the printing of one million Bibles for the students of Papua New Guinea. I am excited to announce that this goal has now been met and 770,000 Bibles have already been shipped into the country! We have ordered 230,000 Bibles, which brings our total to one million! Lord willing, these Bibles will arrive into the port of Papua New Guinea in 2020.

Some may think that this will end the project, but the truth is that **there is much more to do**! When the Bibles do arrive at the docks, we must take them by trucks, boats, or planes to the different districts for storage. Once in the district, we will be able to branch out into the many villages or stations where the schools are located. Presently, we have been able to distribute and preach to over 740,000 students and teachers. Because most all of the inner cities have been done, our work is now in some of the most remote areas of the country. There are several secondary schools in the isolated areas still to be completed and hundreds of primary schools are anxiously waiting to receive their Bibles.

What an open door! Through this project, we now have opportunities to see souls saved, Christians grow, individual lives and families changed, and churches built for the glory of God. There is also freedom to plant new churches and to continue education in the schools and colleges with God’s Word. The needs are great. Perhaps God is speaking to your heart about being a missionary to this country. What would God have you do? W
And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name (Isaiah 62:2).

As an introduction, let me tell you about my name—Jerilyn. My parents blessed me with this unique name by combining their names—Joshua and Merilyn. Hence, I answer to Jerilyn. I praise the Lord they did not call me Moshua! Everyone has a uniqueness to his or her name, a reason why one answers to Myrtle, Sue, Mickey, or Thomas.

This brings me to this true story. When my husband, Tom, and I are in the States, we are active in our local church, Victory Baptist Church in Crestview, Florida. On Saturday visitation over a year ago, we were following up on a prospect card. My husband and a college student, who interns at our church on Sundays, had filled it out. We boldly knocked on the door of the apartment. A pleasant woman came to the door with two small children shadowing her. I took the lead and reintroduced Tom and introduced myself with the visitation card in hand. I asked if she were Esther, the name listed on the card. She nodded her head, affirming that she was Esther. We soon learned that Esther was deaf. Victory Baptist Church did not have a deaf ministry, and my sign language was limited to spelling words out with sign language I had learned while teaching my son’s Cub Scout Den (about 40 years ago!). I earnestly prayed that we would somehow be able to minister to Esther and her family. We invited her to ride the church van on Sunday and to our surprise, as we entered the church, we noticed Esther was there.

Several in the church had gone over to greet her and I signed the only real sign I knew, except for the alphabet, “How are you?” I introduced her to our pastor, who knew some sign language. I felt sorry for her as she sat in a silent world during Sunday school and the worship service. Pastor did announce to the church that we had a definite need for someone who could sign for Esther.
A few weeks passed and it was time for us to return to the field for five months. Shortly before our departure, a missions’ student from Pensacola Christian College volunteered to interpret on Sunday mornings for Esther. I asked the translator, David, if he would translate for me during the invitation. I asked Esther where she would go when she died. Her response was a headshake and waving her hands. She did not want to answer the question. This sent alarms off in my head and heart.

Five months pass. I had such a burden for Esther. I soon found out that she had been faithful every Sunday, but she was no closer to trusting Jesus as her personal Savior. I shared with Pastor my burden for Esther and asked if I could teach her separately, utilizing the talent of the college translator and using the Soul Winning Binder Tom and I use both on the mission field and at home. The pastor and Esther seemed thrilled and I had my own Sunday school class! During the first class I shared my testimony and began presenting the precious Gospel with her. Esther, I also learned, can read lips somewhat. The second Sunday, Esther responded in faith and trusted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior.

Knowing that the Deaf community has special “signs” for themselves and others, I asked Esther what her sign was. She curved her fingers next to her jaw and signed C and B. The translator and I looked at each other puzzled. What did the letters C and B have to do with the name Esther? She then in sign language explained to David that her name was Christine Brown! He then shared the news to me! Why have we been calling her Esther for nearly a year? Esther is a relative of hers and does come to her home occasionally, and she had been there for that initial visit. Christine did not correct me or anyone else because she did not want to embarrass me. I was in tears. First of all, she got saved! Second, she was thinking about my feelings. I then asked her what would be a good sign for me. I jokingly made a circle with my fingers next to my head, indicating crazy! She laughed and shook her head. She then used her little finger and signed a J next to her mouth and then she continued to communicate with David. He then turned to me and said the J was for Jerilyn, and she signed it at the corner of her mouth because I smile all the time.

At the end of the morning worship service, I asked if she would like to go forward and share her “news” with Pastor Matheson. She grinned and took my hand; with David in tow, we made our way to the front of the church. Pastor was already in tears! Before she shared her news, I told Pastor that I wanted to introduce him and the church to Christine Brown. I used her sign as I spoke. She then shared with him that she was saved! The words of that great hymn screamed out to me, “There’s a new name written down in Glory!”

I have quite an imagination. I pictured Jesus grinning when Christine signed her name to me. After all, He knew it all the time.

As a postscript to this story, I have been discipling Christine. She recently presented herself for baptism and was baptized in the Gulf of Mexico by our home pastor, Wayne Matheson. She is making her decision known to the world.
I remember as a younger man having a desire to live and work in a large metropolitan area. That dream almost came to pass shortly after I graduated from college and was offered a job by a large bridge building company as a project engineer in what was going to be a large subway station retrofit project in Coney Island in the greater New York City area. I remember visiting the city during the interview, riding the trains, and being amongst the throngs of people while thinking, “This is where I need to be.” The Lord ended up guiding our family in a different direction, and we never ended up working in that big city.

Years later in 2009 when I first visited Colombia on a survey trip, I was overwhelmed by the sheer masses of people. We visited Bogotá and Medellín, two of the country’s largest cities. While traveling down through the Andes mountains into the Valle de Aburrá where Medellín is located, I remember being impacted by the size of the city. I looked over at the veteran missionary and asked him this simple question, “How many independent Baptist missionaries are here?” He looked over at me with a slight grin and said, “They are sitting here in the car with you.” I could not believe it! He was working there alone. That missionary has since retired back to the States.

God placed us in Medellín in 2011. It is much different than New York City. While we are not building literal bridges or transportation facilities, we are laboring by the grace of God to reconnect people with their Creator. This does not happen by way of tradition, culture, or religion but by the “bridge” found in the person of Jesus Christ.

A couple of years ago, God answered our prayers and brought us another missionary couple. It was such a blessing because God sent us help. We are firm believers in team ministry. It has been a vision of ours since before arriving here and it is a model that God has ordained. Whether it was John the Baptist sending two of his disciples to speak to Jesus (Matthew 11:2), Jesus sending out the 70, two by two (Luke 10:1), the church at Antioch sending out Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2), or Paul sending Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia (Acts 19:22), the truth remains the same. God’s work is better accomplished when done together.

The wisest man in the history of the earth said it well, *And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken* (Ecclesiastes 4:12). If missionaries are to achieve
the enormous task laid before them, they must work smarter, not harder. The smart thing to do is pool resources and attack the enemy together.

We praise God for the support He has sent to work with us, but it is nowhere near enough. God is opening doors here faster than we can physically handle them. We have the potential to expand our small Bible institute into a four-year, live-in seminary. That requires more professors and team members. A recent ministry opportunity with a women's foundation gives us access to 450 families in the greater metropolitan area. That means more follow-up, more visits, and more Bible studies, all of which require more ministers and team members. The owner of the building our church just moved into has offered to hand over to me his Christian children's foundation. This foundation has access to train religious directors and work with young people in over 20 public schools. That is at least 20,000 students. That is a full-time ministry that requires energized, excited, and devoted youth workers and team members. We literally cannot meet all of these opportunities and at times have to simply say, “I am sorry.”

Team ministry is biblical. Team ministry is accountable. Team ministry is powerful. Team ministry is safe. However, team ministry requires humility and cooperation. It requires men and women who will say amen to statements like those from the late President Truman when he said, “It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.”

The opportunities in Medellín continue to open and our time continues to run out. We do not care who gets the recognition; we just want the Gospel to send a ripple across this nation that can be understood as nothing other than a true movement of God. Would you consider enlisting as part of this team? Would you stand in the gap so that God’s plan could move forward uninhibited?
I grew up in and around Memphis, Tennessee. I was consistently inconsistent concerning church attendance and spiritual matters. Fortunately, when our family did attend church, we visited Gospel-preaching Baptist churches. Therefore, I grew up knowing the Gospel, though I did not trust Christ until I was 29. Allow me to take you through 37 years of personal history.

Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble (Job 14:1).

I was stillborn to a 16-year-old homeless mother on September 24, 1981, in Memphis, Tennessee. After I was resuscitated, the Lord saw fit to restore my life. Even though the Lord blessed me with a wonderful mother who was not slack concerning her responsibilities, starting a family in an unbiblical fashion produces a troublesome life.

In January 2000, I joined the U.S. Air Force. I became a defense contractor in Saudi Arabia in 2006. While there, I met an American Muslim family who gave up United States citizenship to live in an Islamic country. They were finding that to be a bad decision. A member of the family asked me a question I could not shake: “How does a person become a Christian?”

Until then, I assumed I was a Christian. I was from the South and surrounded by churches, but it never occurred to me that we must become Christians. This burst of light shone on my empty existence. I knew the answer to their question. I explained that all are required to trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The trouble is that I had never actually come to a place where I personally called upon the Lord.

My curiosity was peaked, my heart was convicted, and I needed answers. Yet, I was still in Saudi Arabia. There was no pastor or church available, so I did what any sensible American would do in 2010. I turned to YouTube. The only pastor I knew of was Adrian Rogers. He had a sermon online called The Simplicity of Salvation. He made salvation so clear to me.

I struggled with the decision to call upon the Lord for nearly two weeks. I understood my 29 years of baggage could not come with me into the Christian life. Considering what Christ suffered for me brought me to a final conclusion. I happily bowed my head and came to be identified with the whosoever who have called upon the name of the Lord. Our Savior is so wonderful! He reached down into Islamic darkness and saved a wretch like me.

And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God (Psalm 64:9).

I left Saudi Arabia a saved man. During my time in Saudi, I came to be involved in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). From Saudi Arabia I moved to Long Island, New York, for my next training camp. While there, I attended a Bible-believing church. The Lord made clear to me that MMA fighting was not for Christians.

My MMA training sessions subjected me to certain lewd fellows of the baser sort as well as colorful music and language. It became clear as a follower of Christ, I would have to put childish and spiritually unprofitable activities away. My replacement for MMA training was standing on busy shopping corners to pass out Gospel tracts. The weapons of my new warfare
were not carnal. I became engaged in *the good fight of faith* (1 Timothy 6:12).

Living in Long Island, New York, depleted my savings. I began looking for work, but a background in aircraft armament systems from the Air Force was not exactly marketable. After diligent search, reality set in that living in New York was not sustainable. The defense company I worked for in Saudi Arabia called about a position in Egypt.

The Lord helped me find a faithful Bible-believing missionary in Cairo. Excited about spending time with a missionary in Egypt, I accepted the job. On my way to Egypt, I was sent to the Naval Air Station in Virginia Beach for training. While there, I searched for a church to attend and found Bible Believers Baptist Church outside the Navy Base. In the church service, the pastor did something I found incredible. He preached line-by-line and verse-by-verse through the book of Acts. It was refreshing. I stayed after church to talk with Pastor Tim MacDonald for nearly three hours. He gave me a book and a CD produced by James W. Knox. The disc had James’ Bible school course *How To Study and Teach the Bible*. My life was greatly enriched! He taught me to unequivocally trust God’s Word!

As I was living in Egypt—encouraged to study and provoked to trust God while serving the Lord with a missionary—the Lord gave me a taste of my future. The missionary and I spent hours each night on the streets of Cairo witnessing. This was an exciting time. The Lord set my heart ablaze for missions. After one year my contract ended. I moved to DeLand, Florida, and started attending classes at The DeLand School of THE BIBLE.

I had been in DeLand one year when I was offered my last contract in Afghanistan. I spent the next seven months at Camp Leatherneck, working with the U.S. Military. While there, the chaplain allowed me to teach the Bible in the chapel each Saturday. This Bible study was open to anyone interested in coming. The same men from Uganda came consistently. These men were wonderfully receptive to God’s Word and captivated my heart, sparking the desire to learn about the need there.

I planned a trip to Uganda, and my friends in Afghanistan made arrangements for me to preach daily while in Africa. The excitement was mounting, but then we received the news that President Obama was drawing down the war in Afghanistan. Instructions were given to prepare for immediate return to the United States. This included canceling upcoming trips. I was devastated. It seemed to me the door was closed. As instructed, I helped prepare for the return to the States.

Returning to DeLand, I eased back into Bible school and various church ministries. I also married the most wonderful woman God could give an undeserving man. We spent our evenings searching Google Maps for various countries to see whom God had laboring there, all the while praying the Lord would show
us where we could be used. One evening, I received a message from a Ugandan man whom I had met in Afghanistan. The message detailed a series of islands situated in Southern Uganda.

I searched and found the islands situated on the northern shores of Lake Victoria. This vast body of water demands reverence for its Creator. Northern Lake Victoria has 84 islands, known as the Ssese Islands. Kristin and I were unable to identify any missionaries laboring amongst those people. This was an answer to our prayers. The Lord gave us the desire of our hearts!

I contacted Keith Stensaas in Masaka, Uganda. He is a second generation missionary who has been in Uganda for more than 20 years. With zeal, I explained the desire of our hearts regarding Ssese. With reciprocated excitement, he offered to assist us along the way. He has done exactly that and more. We hold Keith and Sally in high regard and look forward to laboring with them. Starting under the guidance of an experienced missionary is foundational for us.

**With His own hand, He leadeth me.**

I enjoy surveying my life, a man amongst the chiefest of sinners, and identifying the wonderful ways the Lord has led. Few men could be more undeserving; yet, the Lord can use such a one as I to labor in His fields. My hope is that this brief sketch of His workings in my life will encourage believers to trust Him more along the way. It is good for us to note these points in our lives, bringing them to remembrance as a memorial unto the Lord. May He receive the honor and glory due Him in each of our lives.

*I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints* (Psalm 52:9).
Hasn’t South America Already Been Evangelized?

By Roger D. Blevins — South America Director

From time to time someone will ask me, “Hasn’t South America already been evangelized? Are there not many missionaries in South America? Should we not be concentrating on other—more needy—parts of the world? Is there really still a need in South America? Do they not already have their own religions? Are they not all Catholics? Have we not sent enough missionaries there?”

No—South America has not already been sufficiently evangelized! While it is true that there are more missionaries in South America than in many other parts of the world, there are still far too few if we ever hope to reach a rapidly increasing population of more than 428 million souls. I am afraid the people who ask questions like those listed above do not understand the reasons missionaries must still be sent into every part of the world. If they understood, they would not be asking those kinds of questions.

Nonetheless, the question—Why should we still send missionaries to South America?—is a legitimate question and one worthy of an honest, biblical answer. I realize that if I were to take the time and space to lay out an exegesis of the “why” of missions, it would certainly be too much to fit into this format. Yet, in my own heart and mind I have an obligation to give a reasonable answer to the question. After all, I am actively going around to churches week after week, preaching on missions and praying that God will raise up new missionaries for South America. Therefore, why should we still send missionaries to South America?

First, we must still send missionaries to South America because God’s command to do so has not changed! Into all the world is not optional; it is a command. Second, we must still send missionaries to South America because tens of millions of South Americans for whom Christ died have never heard a clear presentation of the Gospel of salvation. A third reason that we must still send missionaries to South America is because if we do send the missionaries, some South Americans will be saved!

The Great Commission could not be clearer. Local churches are to send the Gospel into all the world. Obviously, in order to do that, missionaries must be called and sent. It has never made sense to me to think that the lack of a sufficient missionary force to reach the whole world is due to too few being called to accomplish the task. No, it is not that too few are called but rather that too few respond to the call and give their lives to reach the world with the Gospel. The prayer request for more missionaries is not a new or even recent phenomenon. All the way back to Jesus’ day we read: The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest (Luke 10:2). As long as there are lost souls who have never heard the Gospel, we will still need more missionaries.

We certainly praise the Lord for the 48 faithful missionaries currently on the field, serving or on deputation preparing to go to South America through BIMI. It is definitely a good start, but we need more missionaries, more faithful churches to support those missionaries, more national pastors, more churches planted, more Bible institutes and seminaries to train national workers, more—just MORE!

Please join with us in praying the Luke 10:2 prayer to the Lord of the harvest that He would indeed send forth MORE laborers into the ripe mission field of South America.
Roger: Justin, where are you from and when were you saved?

Justin: I am from Chilhowie, Virginia, and I accepted Christ as my Savior when I was five years old.

Roger: You must have grown up in a Christian home and attended church regularly, correct?

Justin: Yes, that is correct. Nearly all my family are saved, and we all attended the same church. My parents taught Children’s church.

Roger: When did you first feel the Lord might be calling you to be a missionary?

Justin: My first mission trip, when I was 15 years old, was with my grandfather to Alaska, where we helped build a church. That trip was eye-opening because I saw the work of missions up close. We stayed with a missionary family who had two boys near my own age. I returned home, thinking that I could do something like that with my life and wanting to do just that. The following year at church camp, I answered the call to preach and surrendered to be a missionary.

Roger: Where did you meet your wife, April, and did she know from the beginning that you were open to a call to the mission field?

Justin: I met April at The Crown Bible College. April grew up as a missionary kid in Canada. Early in our relationship, we spoke about our love for missions, but neither of us felt the specific call to missions at that time. Prior to that, I had spent much time thinking about where God might guide me someday and wanting to know every detail about His plan. By the time I met April, I had come to the realization that God was going to lead me one step at a time, and I had finally yielded to His timing.

Roger: When did you know for sure that the Lord was calling you into missions and did you know then that it was Argentina?

Justin: I had been the pastor of South Webster Baptist Church in Ohio for six years when God made his calling clear. At that time, Argentina was the first and most fervent desire in my heart. I prayerfully considered other countries and continents, but God continually brought my heart back to Argentina. Nearly a year before that you came to our church and presented a Bible project to Argentina. I remember the shock of learning how few missionaries and Bible-preaching churches were in a modern place like Argentina. Little did I know that it was just the beginning of God moving in my heart.

Roger: Deputation is a challenging time for missionaries. How do you feel about your time of deputation as you look back on it from the field? What do you think was the most important lesson you learned from your deputation experience?

Justin: Deputation was a growing and a separating process that exposed individual strengths and weaknesses of which we were previously unaware. If we had simply decided to go to Argentina and skip deputation, we would not have been prepared. Deputation is similar to an incubator—by the time God provides your support, you have matured emotionally and spiritually and you have had time to deal with the idea of leaving home and family. The most important lesson I learned from deputation was meeting face-to-face
with the Christians who give sacrificially so we can serve God in Argentina. This is very humbling. If we simply received anonymous support every month, it would be easy to take for granted. It is also encouraging to know that when I send a prayer letter, the people I shook hands with will be reading it and praying for me.

Roger: Where did you go to language school, how long were you there, and do you feel that your time in language school was well spent?

Justin: We went to The Spanish Language Institute in San José, Costa Rica, for one year. This school is specifically designed to teach Spanish to new missionaries. Our time in language school was definitely well spent. I could never have imagined how much there is to learn in another language. You go into it with the mistaken idea that you simply need to learn Spanish vocabulary and substitute Spanish words for English words. Learning the language is difficult but essential. Even after language school and nearly two years on the field, we are still learning.

Roger: We have heard that missionaries commit some “bloopers” when they begin speaking a new language. Share briefly about one of yours.

Justin: Which one should I choose? There have been so many! Once I was preaching and tried to say that Christians are pilgrims. The word for pilgrim is *peregrino*, but instead, I said that Christians are *pinguinos* or penguins!

Roger: How have your children adjusted to life in Argentina?

Justin: Our children are adjusting well. In many ways, they are able to capture the hearts of the people better than we can. The Lord has sent many different people into their lives to play important roles: their friends, their music teachers, and others. Our children are able to use their instruments regularly in our church services. This has given each of them a heart and a desire for the ministry.

Roger: Justin, would you please summarize your thoughts as you reflect on having completed a year of language school in Costa Rica and almost two years on the field in Argentina?

Justin: Nothing could have prepared me for the shock of life, operating in a different language. Now that we are living in our field of service, we are putting into practice what we learned in language school. We are slowly progressing and have spoken to each other often how difficult it would have been if we had not prepared ourselves through time spent on deputation and in language school. If time spent in preparation is never wasted, then it could be argued that time spent without preparation is wasted!
The Emotional Rollercoaster Of Furlough

By Erika Cisler

For a long while leading up to our first furlough, I was so excited to go back to the States. At one point, I even had to wrestle with the Lord over the fact that my thoughts were consumed with the upcoming trip rather than with Him and the task to which He had called me. Yet, as the days grew nearer, I was surprised by an unexpected sentiment—dread. I found myself thinking, “It was so hard to leave the first time. I do not know if I want to go through that again!” I also struggled with the realization that no matter how much time I had, it would never feel like enough. Thus began the emotional rollercoaster I would ride for the next eight months.

When we reached the States, I faced the predictable sensory overload. The sheer volume of people, cars, and STUFF is overwhelming. Even a small grocery store could cause inner turmoil! So many choices made my head spin. Yet, I was still excited to be back.

Suddenly, the rollercoaster turned and I was confronted with the sensation of “no one understands.” I had such a desire to involve my friends and family in my life, yet in the back of my mind I struggled with the knowledge that they could never truly relate. I was bursting with stories and emotions I longed to share with them, yet there seemed to be an invisible barrier between us that I knew I could not tear down.

At this point, I moved on down the track to “taking it all in.” I remember sitting in my home church, one of my favorite places to be, and just wanting to sit back and absorb every sight, every sound, every moment. I did not want to leave the church! I wanted to stay and immerse myself in fellowship, to drink it in deeply and savor it. I just wondered if everyone else around me felt the same appreciation, if they understood how truly blessed they were.

As the ride continued, I reached a point of acceptance. This was simply a nice vacation, so I would just purpose to make memories. We visited many neat places, took a LOT of pictures, and tried to enjoy as much as we could. After a while, I even started to miss the simplicity of life in Uruguay, whereas I had missed the variety of the States. The grass is always greener on the other side!
The next twist in the track brought me to the big hill right before the giant fall. I found myself taking things for granted. As strange as it sounds, this was actually a good thing! I had finally stopped focusing so much on mentally preparing for the impending departure. Having formed some kind of routine, I was comfortable. I was just living day to day in what was my current state of “normal” (visiting churches, schooling, family time, etc.).

A month and a half out from our departure came the first farewells. The descent down the giant hill on the rollercoaster was upon me. I had faced this feeling before and I knew it by name—Grief. On one of the last Sundays at my home church, I sat alone in my pew. At least that was how I felt. I was surrounded by people, yet felt like no one knew the pain I was struggling with, as though there was an elephant on my back that no one could see. It was a bittersweet time. I was trying to take it all in, savor every moment, but I was overwhelmed with the thought of it coming to an end. For some reason, the pain seemed more unbearable this second time around. I think we all had a new understanding of just how long four years can feel and just how hard it is to be apart for that long.

As we arrived back in Uruguay, getting back into our daily routines, I kept waiting to reach the bottom of the hill, for that “sigh of relief” to come. In my mind, I thought that when I reached Uruguay, I would feel a sense of relief. Yes, it was hard to leave, but now I would be back in my own house, ready to get back into a stable routine of life. Instead, it was as though that “sigh of relief” was a long, deep breath that I was exhaling ever so slowly over a matter of weeks.

Just as a rollercoaster ride is filled with various emotions from every hill and turn, so is the emotional rollercoaster ride of furlough. We experience excitement and anticipation, joy and laughter, fear and sadness, ups and downs, and twists and turns. Sometimes it is hard to know if we love it or hate it, if we want to go around again or simply want to get off and walk away. Yet when the time comes, we will gladly climb aboard the rollercoaster once more, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).
The northeastern United States is a mission field that I moved to in 1970—not by choice or call. I had no desire to move to New Jersey. My dad told us to get in the car. It was time to leave!

God had His plans for our family. There were many threads in the tapestry God was weaving in my life and I was never going to be able to understand the reasons why as a 10-year-old. I needed to put my faith in my father and follow him, trust him, and know that he would take care of me.

There was the thread of family. A few months after we moved to New Jersey, my grandfather became very ill in Connecticut and we were close enough to help our grandparents and visit every other weekend.

There was the thread of my father’s work and leadership. He and my mother were Christians first. Each time we moved, they never rested until we found a church where we could worship and serve. He was a computer engineer who worked long hours, but instead of just teaching us to love God, he showed us by example how to love God and live in obedience to Him. He was not perfect, but after 35 years in ministry, I can truly say I now know what a great blessing God gave to me in my parents and family life.

There was the thread of faith. We became members of a church, started by a home missionary in Kendall Park, New Jersey. It was my first experience in a new church—meeting in living rooms—growing in numbers and spirit. For the next eight years, our family would be founding members of three churches in three different states.

Each of these threads, along with so many others, having different colors and textures was woven into my life story. One of the base themes is missions—from the local church to the foreign land.
New England is the land of Adoniram Judson, Baptist missionary to Burma. It was home to Jonathan Edwards, the Great Awakening and the sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. Roger Williams founded Rhode Island and the very first Baptist church in America. Dwight L. Moody was born and buried in New England. History seeps from every pore of New England and the Northeast (cultural note: New England refers to Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. New York, New Jersey, and a small part of Pennsylvania are included in the term Northeast.).

New England was different when I arrived as a young boy to New Hampshire. Harvard, Yale, and Princeton no longer trained men to preach the Gospel. Churches that held to the fundamentals of the faith were rare. Our family searched months until we found a small church plant, renting a quaint cemetery chapel for church services. We became founding members of Tabernacle Baptist Church in Hudson, New Hampshire. In the years to come, it would be where I was trained for ministry and would be my home and sending church for these past 35 years as a missionary in Venezuela and Paraguay. Our church was the sending church and home church for many missionaries and it sent out men to start new local churches. I look at my home church and thank God for its sending capacity and not its seating capacity.

*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things* (Romans 10:13–15).

These verses are so relevant to the churches of New England. Where once they sent men to preach to the distant frontier (Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois) in the United States, they became the mission field. Modern missions now sends men to New England as well as to the entire world.

I say all of this to emphasize that missions never ends. The world changes, borders close, time passes. The only things that will last for eternity are the souls who know the salvation of Christ. All those great men of God of the past are now gone. They finished their work. Where are the new workers of God? They need a church that cares about missions. They need to be trained and they need to be sent. We cannot rest in what was done in the past; we must obey today in order to fulfill God’s will in the future.
Retired Missionary Carol (Phillips) Ackerle (89) went Home to be with the Lord Friday, October 4, 2019. Carol was the widow of BIMI Missionary Dr. Roy Ackerle, who went Home to Heaven February 1, 2019. She fought a good fight, she finished her course, and she kept the faith. In short, she finished strong and leaves behind a wonderful testimony of a life fully dedicated to God.

Lester Griffin, known to his friends as Les, went Home to be with the Lord early Sunday morning July 21, 2019. He has been the pastor of Maranatha Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, since 1999. Les and his wife, Darla, joined Baptist International Missions, Inc. (BIMI), as USA church planters. Prior to joining BIMI, Les started the Bethel Baptist Church in Philadelphia immediately following graduation from Tennessee Temple University. Les and Darla relocated to North Carolina for a time and returned to Philadelphia in 1985 to pastor Ontario Baptist Church.

Missionary Polly Irvin went Home to be with the Lord on November 25, 2019. Polly joined BIMI in 1992 and worked with her brother and sister-in-law Daniel and Judith Irvin in Minsk, Belarus. Polly worked with women and children’s ministries in churches. In 2001, Polly resigned from missionary service to care for her mother. She was reinstated in 2007 as a missionary to the Ukraine. Many have made mention that she had a beautiful singing voice, which she used for God’s glory.

Retired Missionary Jerry Johnson (82) went Home to be with the Lord on Friday, August 9, 2019. Jerry and his wife, Scharmel, joined BIMI in 1964. They were the first BIMI missionaries to serve on the island of Antigua in the Caribbean. The Johnsons planted churches and established a Christian school. Jerry and Scharmel retired from missionary service in December 2017 and were granted Emeritus status after 55 years of serving the Lord with BIMI.

Retired Missionary Richard Wright (87) went Home to be with the Lord on Friday, August 16, 2019. Richard and Carolyn Wright joined BIMI in July 1974 and arrived in Australia in 1976. They were involved in the ministry of planting churches and establishing Bible colleges and institutes. Richard wrote the curriculums for the four-year degree college courses and several courses for graduate study. Richard and Carolyn retired from full-time missionary service in 2004.

Memorial Gifts have been received in memory of:

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Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

(Psalm 116:15)
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