India Mission Summit Celebrates the Past and Envisions the Future

“"I saw a new heaven and a new earth.”
—Revelation 21:1

More than 5,000 Christians from India were joined by guests from the U.S., Thailand, South Africa, Myanmar and Indonesia to celebrate the past and envision the future at a groundbreaking India Mission Summit held October 2–5, 2014, in Kohima, Nagaland, in Northeast India.

During the four-day event, attendees planned for future joint action while celebrating the 200th anniversary of American Baptist International Ministries (IM) and 178 years of American Baptist mission in India. In opening remarks at the Summit, IM Executive Director the Rev. Dr. Reid Trulson captured the 200 years of IM mission work and impact throughout the world. The services of the next three days featured renowned Indian church leaders and Christian scholars, who delivered a variety of messages on mission-related topics.

“This was an event like no other,” said Trulson. “The sense of unity among the diverse Baptist delegates was absolutely thrilling. You could feel the high energy and motivation to learn from one another and to collaborate in new and compelling ways.”

In his greetings to the assembly, Chief Minister of Nagaland T.R. Zeliang stated that this event would usher in the opportunity for people to recount the struggles and achievements of the first generation of missionaries in India and to give thanks for their sacrifices, while enabling the people to assess the tasks at hand and focus on their future.

In a major move to shape the future, the Baptist delegates adopted a sweeping and visionary declaration calling

(continued on page 11)
The young man pictured at the right was among 300 volunteers serving at the recent India Mission Summit. He and his fellow hosts wore attire that celebrated their rich Naga past, while they worked in a Summit that was focused on embracing the future. In a similar vein, this expanded issue of ON LOCATION reflects on God’s work through American Baptist International Ministries (IM) during the past 13 years as we plan for the future.

Jesus asks us to love God with our mind as well as with our heart, soul and strength. (Mark 12:30) He calls us to thoughtfully plan and prepare for our role in God’s mission. At the start of the new millennium, IM was engaged in the continuing mission of crossing cultural boundaries to make disciples of Jesus Christ, guided by six strategic priorities in an operational plan called Go Global. This ON LOCATION gives a high-level summary of God’s work through IM in those six priority areas.

We walk both in faith and in humility, knowing that our wise and loving God often surprises us. We make our plans “if the Lord wills,” because some plans come to naught while the Holy Spirit opens other opportunities to us and invites our response. (James 4:15) This issue reports both the outcomes from prayerful planning and the fruit of our responses to some of God’s surprises.

As you read these pages, IM’s Board of Directors and staff are again deeply engaged in listening to God’s people as they seek to discern the Lord’s priorities for IM in the coming years. This Responding to the Call process will culminate in recommendations to the IM Board of Directors in June 2015. We invite you to contact us at discernment@internationalministries.org or (800) 222-3872, ext. 2303, to share your vision for our future together in mission.

Yours in Christ,

Reid S. Trulson, Executive Director
At the beginning of 1998, IM launched an ambitious new approach to strategic planning. This initiative would embody as fully as possible IM’s decades-long commitment to do mission in genuine partnership, recognizing that all human partnerships are under the lordship of Jesus Christ. And so, during this time of planning, IM sought a fresh vision from God, the author and finisher of mission.

These commitments led IM to launch Called to the Future Together, a process of listening to partners across the American Baptist denomination and throughout the world, in order to hear “what the Spirit is saying to the churches.” (Revelation 2:7) IM used an approach called “Appreciative Inquiry” to identify both how God had been most powerfully at work in the past (through partners, IM’s own personnel and its collaboration in mission) and how the Lord of mission was calling each member of this partnership network into a new millennium of service to the mission of Jesus Christ.

What emerged from literally thousands of conversations and the spiritual discernment of a very diverse and dedicated 27-person task force was Go Global. This statement of mission vision, principles, priorities and goals has guided the work of IM since it was approved by IM’s Board of Directors on the eve of the new millennium. The living core of everything in Go Global appears in its opening statement:

The mission of American Baptist International Ministries is to glorify God in all the earth by crossing cultural boundaries to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Go Global fleshed out IM’s cross-cultural disciple-making agenda in terms of six mission priorities (each of which included specific strategies and measurable goals) that would be pursued within a framework of 15 core values, called “mission principles.” The six mission priorities were Evangelism and Discipleship, Christ-like Mission, Equipping Leaders, Mission Education, Urban Mission and Mission Explosion.

God has blessed the efforts of IM and its partners far beyond what can be shared here. But, for a tiny taste, turn the page!

"May God’s glory fill the whole earth.”
Psalm 72:19

13 Years of the Awesome Surprises of God
by Stan Slade, IM Global Consultant and Associate Executive Director of Program

Stan Slade

May God’s glory fill the whole earth.”
Psalm 72:19

2000–2013
Evangelism & Discipleship

In response to Christ’s mandate to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), IM has crossed cultural boundaries to share the good news of Jesus Christ so that others might put their trust in him and become his faithful followers.

During the Go Global period, international partner organizations, IM assisted international partner organizations in starting 9,500 new churches. These include 2,400 in Northeast India, where the Council of Baptist Churches has a growing membership of 1.2 million. IM missionaries have also entered 18 new countries like Albania and Brazil, and after an absence have returned to four other nations, including Italy and Zambia.

In more than 20 countries, IM has been reaching the people groups that are least aware of Christ:

- **Global Consultant Walt White** has worked with whole communities in places like Bangladesh and Mozambique, empowering them to develop their own distinctive ways of following Jesus.
- In Nicaragua, Ketly and Vital Pierre have evangelized and discipled young people, who have become effective church planters.
- **Sarah Chetti** has introduced Christ to inmates of a women’s prison in Beirut, Lebanon.

The Power of the Gospel Brings Transformation

The Bible tells how transformational encounters with God have sometimes resulted in a name change. God made a covenant with Abram and Sarai and changed their names to Abraham and Sarah. (Genesis 17:5, 15) Jacob wrestled with the angel of God and Jacob’s name was changed to Israel (Genesis 32:22-28), meaning “one who struggles with God.”

There was a village in the Democratic Republic of the Congo called Mbonga Malembe, meaning “Slow Mbonga.” The people there had seldom seen transformation, and when improvements did occur, they came ever so gradually. But that changed in 2009 with the arrival of Nzube Ndungu, a new graduate from the Kikongo Pastor’s Institute.

IM missionary Glen Chapman (shown in the photo at the left) is known for flying a powered parachute to reach remote villages in his evangelism ministry. As a professor at the Institute, he also trains others for ministries of evangelism. Glen observes, “For more than 60 years, families like Nzube’s, have arrived at the school as simple villagers. But after three years of being shaped by God’s word, they leave with a new identity as transformed people, equipped with the love of God to bring new life in Christ to rural Africa.”

Only four months after Pastor Ndungu arrived at “Slow Mbonga,” the young congregation grew. The people constructed both a new church building and a parsonage. They were energized by the gospel message, and as they worked together, they saw that transformation could come quickly, empowered by Jesus. As a result, they decided to change the name of their village. It is now called Mbonga Vitesse, “Speedy Mbonga!”
Healing Ministries Reach the Most Vulnerable in Nicaragua

“Jesus went through all the towns and villages . . . healing every disease and sickness.” (Matthew 9:35)

Since 2001, IM medical missionaries **Drs. David and Laura Parajón** have been carrying out the Christ-like mission of healing in Nicaragua. Inspired by the prophet Amos, who spoke out on behalf of the sick and impoverished, the Parajóns continue the work of David’s father, Gustavo, who co-founded with them **A Ministry Of Sharing Health and Hope (AMOS)**. Through this work, David and Laura have multiplied their impact by training a network of health promoters and committees that address the need for health care, medication, clean water, sanitation and health education among the poor. AMOS now serves 34 rural communities.

In the past five years, 160 AMOS community health workers have made 81,866 rural clinic visits and 22,288 home visits. They have established 28 community pharmacies, filled 106,764 prescriptions and provided 968 families with water filters. Additionally, David and Laura have hosted 74 visiting mission teams comprised of volunteers with construction and health care skills. In the rural communities served by AMOS during 2008–2013, child deaths have decreased by 75% and there have been no maternal fatalities.

These successes are thanks to trained health promoters like Agustín Malueños. Agustín lives in the remote village of El Cedro, a 13-hour journey from the AMOS headquarters—seven by all-terrain vehicle and six by horseback. Previously illiterate, he trained to become his village’s only health care provider, supported by occasional visits from the AMOS rural health team. As a health promoter, Agustín is trained to recognize signs of danger in pregnancy, providing counseling to future mothers. Recently, he made a home visit to a pregnant woman who had become dehydrated from vomiting. He quickly gave her intravenous fluids and sent her safely to the nearest hospital, eight hours away, where a healthy baby was born!

Training and supervising such an extensive network of health workers is no easy task, but David and Laura have been blessed to see their work bear much fruit. They say, “When we see the impact this critical ministry is having, we are truly inspired to dedicate our lives in making sure it continues to thrive.”

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**Christ-like Mission**

Jesus preached the good news of salvation and demonstrated it with his actions. (Luke 4:18-19) IM has followed this example with Christ-like proclamation and service.

IM has embodied Christ’s redeeming love through a spectrum of ministries that address the results of personal sin, social injustice and ecological destruction, especially as they affect the poor and disadvantaged.

- The ministry of IM medical missionaries **Drs. Anita and Rick Gutierrez** began with HIV/AIDS work and has grown to include fully holistic training of local health builders in South Africa.
- The Inter-Tribal Development Program of **Mike and Becky Mann** began with clean water systems in Northern Thailand and has expanded to address education, economic development and church planting.
- IM missionaries like **Terry Myers** in Bulgaria and **Deliris Carrión Rosa** in San Salvador have taught children who would not otherwise have received an education.
- IM missionary **Karen Smith** and tribal leaders in Thailand have ministered to hundreds of human trafficking victims and to those most at risk.
- IM Global Consultant for Peace and Justice **Dan Buttry** has trained local leaders worldwide in conflict transformation.
Becoming a leader requires developing certain skills. Future pastors in Haiti expand their giftedness at the Universite Chretienne du Nord d’Haiti (UCNH, the Christian University of Northern Haiti), where IM missionary Nzunga Mabudiga teaches theology. He also trains young professors like Samuel Dupré.

Samuel graduated from the university in 2007 and, with Nzunga as his mentor, became an assistant professor. After earning two master’s degrees—one in theology and one in education both from the College of Protestant Theology at the University of Strasbourg in Alsace, France—Samuel became a UCNH professor of biblical Hebrew and supervisor of students’ dissertations. A well-loved teacher, Samuel is now also the Dean of Student Affairs.

Having a passion for pastoral ministry as well as for teaching, Samuel founded the Philadelphia Protestant Church of Gros Morne in 2012. Since the church and the university are four hours apart, Samuel shares church duties with two local pastors. The congregation meets the spiritual and material needs of the community, including sponsoring schooling for several children and providing emergency assistance. Its young people have also received several goats and pigs from programs developed by Nzunga. This increases the youths’ leadership and participation in the community since the livestock considerably boosts families’ incomes, adds protein to their diets and enhances their dignity as they help themselves.

“It’s been a blessing to mentor students and professors like Samuel,” says Nzunga. In fact, Samuel now has helped other young Haitian professors develop their skills, including work on their master’s degrees in France. Nzunga is thrilled to see his students making use of their training in such diverse ways: I celebrate that the God-given abilities of our university community are being developed as equipped leaders equip others so that the kingdom of God can expand in such a needy nation as Haiti.”
A New Generation of Young Leaders Learns by Doing

Students are often told that they will receive an education and then they will put it into action. But in IM's young adult experiences like the Xtreme Team, action has been an integral part of the education. Participants have been “Xposed” to “Xtremes” in such variables as climate, geography and quality of life as they have observed and ministered in a different culture.

The Xtreme Team approach has brought transformation to young people like Marie Onwubuariri, who says: “In 2002, I attended a seminarian conference at Green Lake, Wisconsin, where Xtremers spoke, and it sparked my interest. That was in my early stages of falling in love with this denomination that has been my home since I was a baby.” Marie was born in the Philippines and grew up in New York City. But even with this multicultural background, she was challenged as a 30-year-old seminarian when she became one of four Xtreme Team leaders accompanying nine young adults to Ghana in 2003. She was responsible for writing the “Xfiles”—daily, creatively-crafted assignments for Xtreme Team members. Just as Jesus’ disciples came to know their Master’s expectations only as each day unfolded, so these guided the team, sometimes in surprising ways, during their month-long spiritual adventure.

In describing her learning-by-doing experience, Marie says: “I am grateful that IM is committed to engage young adults in mission education because those are formative years. For me it was a time of discerning God’s call, and this prepared me for leadership among American Baptists. It taught me skills that are relevant for today and for an increasingly multicultural future.”

That future became a present reality on October 11, 2014, when Marie was installed as the executive minister of the American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin, a region composed of 62 churches with a diversity in ethnicity, theology and location!
Urban Mission

IM has continued to “seek the welfare of the city” (Jeremiah 29:7), responding to the unique challenges and opportunities for mission that exist in urban contexts.

IM began the Go Global period with a high-energy investment in urban mission that has continued to bear fruit. Since then, the financial challenges of the decade have led IM to reduce and delay the full implementation of this priority. However, as part of powerful first phase:

- IM’s then Area Director Reid Trulson visited partner organizations in Cairo, Egypt, in 2002 to discuss urban mission needs.
- IM hosted global urban consultations in 2000 and 2002, connecting urban ministry practitioners from across the U.S. with their counterparts all around the globe.
- In 2002, a team from the Baptist Seminary in Mexico City joined with IM missionary Ricardo Mayol to bring together a network of ministries by, and to, the many indigenous people groups that have been entering this city, one of the world’s largest metropolises.

Urban Residents Need More than City Services

In its 2014 revision of World Urbanization Prospects, the United Nations reports that in 1950, 30% of the world’s population lived in urban areas—and that today the number has grown to 54%! This dramatic population shift from rural to urban areas was one of the reasons that IM missionary Jeff Dieselberg, serving in Thailand, felt led in 2002 to launch the Urban Transformation Center (UTC) in Bangkok.

During its two years of full operation, UTC trained 1,700 people to minister to urban residents with its “inside-out” urban immersion program. Attendees received a few hours of orientation “inside” and then went “out” into Bangkok, identifying urban needs and ministries. Years later, Jeff still gets approached by former students who give such reports as: “When I was one of your students, you said to do creative, and even crazy, things. I did—we planted a church using a movie theater!” and, “We brought the gospel to an unreached group by developing a ministry for motorcycle taxi drivers!”

UTC still provides critical training in urban mission, but in a more traditional seminary classroom setting. Jeff and four UTC adjunct faculty, whom he has trained, have taught approximately 2,000 more students during the Go Global period. These five professors have also collaborated on translating works like Ray Bakke’s A Theology as Big as the City.

Jeff’s own ministry beyond the classroom has included responding to the largest slum fire in Bangkok’s history. After meeting with community leaders, he used One Great Hour of Sharing funds and other financial resources to offer scholarships to the slum dwellers’ children and provide wood for temporary housing.

Jeff observes: “Anybody can do urban ministry, like tutoring children or having a soup kitchen. But will that bring transformation to people and their communities? I am not interested in teaching and training people to do traditional urban ministry—I have given myself to see lives and communities be transformed.”
Mission Explosion

Recognizing the gifts of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:7-16) worldwide, IM has supported mission service by American Baptist congregations and regions as they have joined what God is doing through churches and partner organizations in other countries.

Mission Encounters Change Lives

Explosions, like those used to tunnel through a mountain, are earthshaking. The same is true for a “mission explosion.”

The Rev. Holley Faulkner (pictured above) shares this testimony: “During the Go Global period, my worldview was transformed because of a program by the West Virginia Baptist Convention (WVBC). For more than a dozen years I’ve been among West Virginia Baptists who’ve traveled to Russia, building relationships with our brothers and sisters there, including youngsters at camp. When I was growing up, Russia was my enemy. I had been taught to hate, but through these encounters I’ve learned to love as I’ve experienced the power of 1 John 4:18: ‘Perfect love casts out fear.’”

This life-changing opportunity for members of WVBC’s churches began when the Rev. Greg Creasy was that region’s minister of Mission Support. He reports that, in 2000, he received “an impression from the Lord” that WVBC should consider a relationship with some international body of believers. Reid Trulson, who was IM’s area director for the Middle East and Europe at the time, recommended that Greg meet with the Rev. Sasha Yuchkovski, director of Russian Missions.

In 2001, Greg (second from the left) led a WVBC discernment group on a trip to explore possible ministries in Moscow and Ryazan, 120 miles southeast of the Russian capital. Over the succeeding 12 years, Russian Baptist leaders have visited West Virginia and nearly 100 people from 25 WVBC congregations have made trips to the Ryazan area.

“Group members have participated in youth camps, coordinated vacation Bible schools, led seminars for pastors and laity, renovated church buildings and residences and created a micro-loan program for small businesses,” Greg says, celebrating the great strides they have taken over the years. “But most importantly, they have developed Christ-centered, international relationships that can change lives, lasting a lifetime . . . and beyond!”

IM has created models for prayer networks and financial support and expedited relationships between churches in the U.S. and Puerto Rico and international congregations. These models have expanded the full range of mission activities.

- Congregations on different parts of the globe have become partners in mission, like the First Baptist Church of Madison, Indiana, and the Shekiná Baptist Church of Santa Ana, El Salvador.
- American Baptist regions have developed relationships with counterparts and schools in other countries, like the Great Rivers Region with the Baptist Federation of Costa Rica and the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey with Rwandan Baptists and with Central Philippine University.
- Individuals and congregations have become part of Mission Partnership Teams and Mission Partnership Networks that encourage close relationships, prayer support and financial undergirding for IM mission personnel.
- U.S. congregations have ministered to refugees from Myanmar (Burma).
Discerning God’s Will for IM’s Future: Responding to the Call

By Karen Smith, IM Missionary and Director of Mission Design

Mission is the work of God! It springs from God’s initiative, is guided by God’s Spirit, and is accomplished through God’s power working through God’s children. As IM celebrates the results of Go Global and God’s faithfulness in the past, we seek a fresh word from the Lord for the future—and make a commitment to join in what God will do next as IM enters its third century of mission.

Responding to the Call is IM’s discerning and planning initiative to seek God’s priorities and determine how best to accomplish them. This process is based on careful listening and heartfelt prayer.

To date, over 1,500 people throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico and around the world have engaged in spiritual discernment conversations, providing their feedback and input. This data is being studied, prayed over and reflected upon by a Discernment Team, itself composed of people from across the spectrum of IM stakeholders.

Data will be gathered through March 2015, and the results will include a shared statement of vision, priorities and goals for the work of IM during 2015–2020.

IM welcomes all to join in as we continue to listen, pray and prayerfully strive to discern God’s call for IM’s future!

Join the conversation by contacting discernment@internationalministries.org or by calling 800-222-3872, ext. 2303.


GATHERING INPUT from Stakeholders

Discernment Team Responsibilities

Outcomes

GATHERING INPUT from Stakeholders

- Interviews
- Group Meetings
- Events
- Mission Summits

Discernment Team Responsibilities

- Studies
- Reflects
- Prays
- Discerns

Outcomes

Vision, priorities and goals

- Deepened mission relationships

- The release of fresh energies into the transforming work of Jesus Christ in our world

Spread the Word!

Graphic by Courtny Davis-Olds
for the formation of commissions to address the critical issues of religious liberty and human trafficking in India, as well as forums for women and youth.

“The Declaration holds promises of historic proportions,” said Trulson. “Christianity is a minority faith in India. The majority of IM’s partners in India are vulnerable to political, social, economic and religious oppression. Christians and other people of good will must work together to fulfill the right of all persons to freely profess, practice and propagate their faith as guaranteed by India’s Constitution.

“The Declaration calls for united voice and action to uphold religious liberty, oppose human trafficking and empower women and youth,” Trulson continued. “This voice and action is tangibly expressed in the new commissions and forums.”

The Summit’s 1,200 delegates came from 12 Indian partner organizations in Bengal-Orissa-Bihar, Northeast India and South India. An additional 3,500 guests swelled the evening sessions of the large international gathering.

The Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) hosted the Summit on behalf of the Council of Baptist Churches of North East India. In a press release, NBCC General Secretary Anjo Keikung shared his excitement, saying, “Under the theme, ‘Celebrating the Past, Envisioning the Future,’ the Summit beckons us to move forward together .... It’s about honouring the past and respecting history as His story; while envisioning a future where missions become truly His mission.”

Planning team leader and IM Area Director the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chan stated, “I am amazed and deeply appreciate the efforts of NBCC,” which helped to mobilize women’s groups and Baptist churches in Kohima, as well as more than 300 volunteers of different expertise. “This makes a strong statement that the Indian Church is led by very capable believers who are actively engaged in seeking God’s mind.”

The 20 people from the U.S. attending the Summit included IM board members, IM staff, global workers and global consultants, an Eastern University graduate intern and representatives from ABC of the Dakotas.

The Summit, widely reported in secular newspapers, culminated in a call for all Christians to “rejuvenate their faith,” according to the lead story in Eastern Mirror, the newspaper of Dimapur, India.

Learn more at www.IndiaMissionSummit.weebly.com.
Purchase a gift for someone in need.
10 gift ideas enclosed, priced from $50.

INDIA MISSION SUMMIT 2015
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Pranitha Christina
Timothy highlighted the importance of fighting human trafficking in India.

The large permanent tent was packed for evening sessions as attendees celebrated 200 years of ministry and a future of possibilities.

Jacob Isaac gave an enthusiastic message about upcoming generations of leaders.