Whether addressing a large gathering or conversing with a single person, the Rev. Sharon T. Koh exudes energy, a gift for leadership and an enormous passion for faith in Jesus Christ.

Her commanding, yet warm presence on stage at the Green Lake Conference Center belied her engaging gift of humor. She described American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) as a “really tight family who have loved each other for so long that they have adopted their own dialect,” drawing knowing chuckles from an audience of more than 400 during her July 8, 2016, installation as executive director elect of American Baptist International Ministries (IM).

Yet, in a tone of humility and deep respect, Sharon gave credit to her dear grandmother for passing on the precious seeds of faith. In a stunning irony, Sharon’s grandmother first learned about the gospel of Jesus Christ from American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS) missionaries who served in Swatow (Shantou) China many decades ago. The seeds were planted and service in the name of Jesus was lived out throughout Sharon’s life by her parents, the Rev. Dr. Victor and K.K. Koh, who became career missionaries themselves.

As the call process unfolded earlier this year with the IM Board of Directors, Sharon faced the questions not only about her future, but also about IM’s third century in global mission, by pondering Joshua 1:9. “God never leaves or forsakes us,” she paraphrases. “Be strong and courageous. God will be with us wherever we go, and that is enough.”

When asked about the challenges faced by IM now and into the near future, Sharon compares IM’s story to the unfolding story of the small country of Singapore, where Sharon was born. “Fifty years ago, Singapore was a British colony with architecture that spoke of its colonial roots. We used to be a British colony,” she explained.

“Then Singapore began to grow and develop into a world economic power. The look of its architecture changed in appearance. Government leaders were concerned that if they changed the face of Singapore too quickly people will not

(continued on page 4)
Dear Friends,

With this issue of International Ministries ON LOCATION we welcome the Rev. Sharon Koh as the new executive director International Ministries. Sharon comes to IM deeply committed to the Lord Jesus, sensitive to the Spirit’s guidance, understanding the mission of God and experienced in caring for missionary personnel.

IM is entering its third century of participating in God’s mission. When considering the years ahead under Sharon’s leadership, I am drawn to Adoniram Judson’s words, “The future is as bright as the promises of God.”

But what has God promised? For most of her life, Baptist poet and hymn-writer Annie Johnson Flint (1866–1932) used a wheelchair due to crippling arthritis. In her 1919 hymn “God Hath Not Promised,” she wrote:

God hath not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through;
God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.

This is true for us as individuals as well as for our mission society. In the past two centuries, IM missionaries have experienced illness, attack by pirates, capture by bandits, abduction, attack, theft, rape, threats, misunderstanding, accusation, imprisonment, evacuation, rejection, expulsion, death of children and spouses and their own death by illness, accident and martyrdom.

They also experienced what God has promised. As the hymn continues:

But God hath promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labor, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.

Jesus promises his presence with us in all circumstances and his power through the Holy Spirit. God promises a day when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess Jesus as Lord, when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. (Matthew 28:20; Acts 1:8; Philippians 2:10-11; Revelation 11:15)

It has been a wonderful privilege to serve God and you through IM for 29 years as a Board member, Board president, missionary and area director for Europe and the Middle East as well as, for the past 10 years, as executive director. I thank God for my wife Janelle, an unfailing partner in this ministry, and for our daughters Lara and Emma for their constant encouragement and support.

Effective leadership is truly the work of a team. I am deeply grateful to my IM staff colleagues for their commitment, creativity, hard work and sacrificial self-giving, which are absolutely essential for our global staff to serve in their host countries. Thank you to Cathy Holmes for her counsel and indispensable assistance.

And thank you to all of you who participate together in this mission and who now welcome Sharon Koh into her ministry of leadership.

The future is, indeed, as bright as the promises of God.

Yours together in mission,

Reid Trulson
executive director of International Ministries (2006–2016)
Shortly before the installation ceremony at the World Mission Conference, I had the opportunity to talk with Sharon Koh about the road that led her to accept the position of executive director of International Ministries...

CATHERINE NOLD: Could you tell me a little about your call to IM?

SHARON KOH: There has been an incredible sense of God weaving many strands of my life together for such a time as this in the life of this 202-year-old organization. I am honored to stand in the long line of people of who have given their lives to the service of our Lord Jesus under the banner of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

NOLD: For the past several years, you were a member of the discernment team for IM’s planning process, Responding to the Call (RTC). When IM called you for the role of executive director, did that experience affect your decision?

KOH: It influenced my decision a lot because I had the opportunity to meet many of the people with whom I now work. I enjoyed then, and still experience now, the IM culture that values both relationship and passion for God’s mission.

NOLD: As you think about your new position as executive director, is there any Scripture that stands out to you?

KOH: Joshua 1:1-9 has been on my mind a lot lately because of how God promises to be with Joshua as he steps into the unknown. The third century of mission is an unknown to all of us, but knowing that it is God’s mission that we are stepping into together makes what could feel terrifying feel exciting.

NOLD: What do you think are the greatest challenges that IM will face in the years ahead?

KOH: Understanding and embracing RTC as the unifying operational plan is the greatest work we have ahead of us. When I was interview-ing for this position, a lot of people asked me, “What changes do you plan to make?” I responded with, “The ministry priorities outlined in Responding to the Call are the fruit of a 2.5-year spiritual discernment process, and they are good.” Since I was part of writing RTC, I fully support these priorities and look forward to the global implementation of them. I believe this is going to be the first major step IM will take towards transformational change.

NOLD: What life experience has most prepared you for this new role?

KOH: I would say it has been the life experience of clinging to God in times of desperation. Each time God carries me through a chapter of my life, I grow even more dependent on God for his presence, calling and wisdom in my life.

NOLD: Lastly, on a personal note, what do you do for fun?

KOH: I enjoy photography, exercise and being with family and friends.

Each time God carries me through a chapter of my life, I grow even more dependent on God for his presence, calling and wisdom in my life.
recognize it anymore. They said, “We can’t forget where we came from!”

So, many buildings in Singapore, known as “shop houses” were marked for preservation instead of demolition. “They became incredibly valuable,” Sharon says. “People like buying them. They clean out the inside and update them, but they keep the outside the same.”

Sharon says that IM needs a similar worldview as it carries out its carefully crafted strategic plan entitled “Responding to the Call.” “We can’t forget where we come from,” she says, “but we need to make some changes on the inside.”

Sharon has reasons to remember with gratitude IM’s historic mission. It was ABFMS missionaries decades ago in Swatow who whispered words about the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world in need. It was ABFMS missionaries decades ago in Swatow who whispered words about the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world in need. Sharon has reasons to remember with gratitude IM’s historic mission. It was ABFMS missionaries decades ago in Swatow who whispered words about the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world in need. It was ABFMS missionaries decades ago in Swatow who whispered words about the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world in need.

Karen Smith travelled with Sharon to a key location globally. Karen continues, “Sharon is uniquely positioned to lead IM into its future. Through God’s provision, she was a member of the discernment team itself. She witnessed the integrity of the process and spent hours reading through the interview data and discussing what God was saying to us through the data.”

A Vibrant New Leader (continued from page 1)

Sharon’s appointment was announced April 5 by the IM Board of Directors. At the time, she was serving as senior associate pastor of mission and community life for Evergreen Baptist Church in Los Angeles. She is a pioneer.

Sharon will become the first woman in the 202-year history of the ministry to serve as executive director when on September 1, 2016, she succeeds the Rev. Dr. Reid Trulson, who has held the post since 2006. Trulson retires at the end of August. She became executive director elect July 1. It is worth noting though, that IM has an impressive history of appointing women missionaries to serve globally. Charlotte H. White in 1815 was the first woman formally appointed by IM for missionary service. She served in India from 1816-1826. Other women missionaries followed in her footsteps and have made up 60 percent of the 4,000 missionaries appointed by American Baptists.

Sharon is the sixth person to hold the title of executive director for this historic mission agency since 1976. Earlier leaders, starting in 1814 with William Staughton, bore the title of corresponding secretary.

The historic installation before more than 400 mission supporters was the culmination of a four-day biennial World Mission Conference at the Green Lake Conference Center in Wisconsin.

Sharon was enthusiastically and warmly welcomed into her new role. The installation ceremony ended with a moving laying on of hands featuring members of the IM board of directors, IM leadership, ABCUSA leadership and the entire assembly.

Family and friends were elated. In attendance were Sharon’s parents, her mentor, Cheryl Brown, and her husband, Wes, who have both served as IM missionaries; and Brown’s daughter, Julie Brown Ono, who is a friend and previous colleague. Sterling and Emi Miller, missionaries commissioned to serve in Japan with Asian Access/SIM, also joined the celebration.

Pastors and leaders of ABCUSA celebrated this new and exciting chapter in the life of IM. “The entire ABCUSA family rejoices at the appointment of Sharon and welcomes her as executive director of IM and as a national secretary of ABCUSA,” said Dr. Susan Gillies, interim general secretary of ABCUSA. “We commit ourselves to pray for her as she assumes the responsibilities of office. We look forward to the days and years ahead with great anticipation!”

“We are blessed that Sharon is so passionate about carrying forth the seeds of faith first planted in the life of her grandmother and now ready to take root anew in her leadership of International Ministries,” Trulson said. “She has impressive skills, a wonderful way with people and remarkable energy. She will be an inspiring leader as we and our international partners work together to share the good news of Jesus to a world in need.”

Karen continues, “Sharon is uniquely positioned to lead IM into its future. Through God’s provision, she was a member of the discernment team itself. She witnessed the integrity of the process and spent hours reading through the interview data and discussing what God was saying to us through the data.”

Meeting IM’s global mission personnel and their children was the first order of business for the new executive director. Gatherings were held in four key locations globally. A second objective of the gatherings was to discuss IM’s discernment process and its new statement of global mission priorities. “Responding to the Call: IM Director of Mission Design Karen Smith travelled with Sharon to lead those discussions.

“It was truly exciting to meet with the majority of our global personnel to celebrate IM’s new strategic direction as outlined by ‘Responding to the Call,’” says Karen. “They saw the fruit of the 2 1/2-year discernment process and recognized their voices in the outcomes.”

Karen continues, “Sharon is uniquely positioned to lead IM into its future. Through God’s provision, she was a member of the discernment team itself. She witnessed the integrity of the process and spent hours reading through the interview data and discussing what God was saying to us through the data.”
Denise Osejo-Aragón and Juan Aragón
LOCATION: Mexico
MINISTRIES: Theological Education, Peace & Justice and Education

After eight years of ministering to Hispanic communities in West Virginia, Denise Osejo-Aragón and the Rev. Juan Aragón have been called to take their ministry to Mexico. In partnership with the Council of Rural Indigenous Evangelicals in Mexico, the couple will focus on raising up leaders in rural communities. Denise will seek to empower women, especially those who have experienced domestic abuse, while Juan will teach, train and disciple church leaders. They have two children: Juancito, age 5, and Hefziba “Ziba,” age 2, who will serve with them in Mexico.

“There have been many women who have enriched my life by sharing God’s word with me. These women have reminded me of how significant I am to the Lord. I am anxious to share with my sisters in Chiapas how important they are to God and to the ministry of the church.” —Denise

“God used the lives and stories of our brothers and sisters from Mexico to ignite in my wife and me a passion to serve him in Chiapas and to do ministry alongside our brothers and sisters who are impacting their communities and sharing the gospel in the midst of many challenges.” —Juan

Since 2010, International Ministries’ personalized support model based on mission partnership networks has enabled us to send 36 new persons (including 16 associates) into sustainable long-term cross-cultural ministry. With 13 individuals now building networks and in pre-assignment training and over 250 in conversation with IM’s Vocational Development staff, our community of global servants will continue to grow in the years ahead.

Amanda and Jon Good
LOCATION: Hungary
MINISTRIES: Theological Education, Evangelism, Discipleship and Education

Amanda and the Rev. Jon Good and their four children—Rachel, age 14; Sarah, age 12; Elizabeth, age 10; and Andrew, age 7—are excited to begin their ministry in Hungary. First inspired by stories of Hungarian Baptist Aid’s work in public schools, they will both be serving in education—Jon as a seminary instructor and Amanda as a music teacher—in addition to their primary work of church planting, evangelism and discipleship through the Baptist Church in Debrecen.

“God is doing great things in the nation of Hungary! We feel drawn to Hungary and are excited to see what God has in store. It is a great joy to join God in his work.” —Amanda

“Baptist believers in the country of Hungary are living with extraordinary faith. We are drawn to Christ’s mission in the schools and to planting new churches, and I am looking forward to building relationships through which I can share the life-changing message of Jesus.” —Jon
Ricardo Mayol
LOCATION: Iberoamerica and the Caribbean
MINISTRY: Peace & Justice

After serving as director of the Culture of Peace Ministry for the Iglesia Bautista Emmanuel in San Salvador for several years, former IM missionary Ricardo Mayol is rejoining IM as a regional consultant for peacemaking. Based in Guatemala, he will work throughout Iberoamerica and the Caribbean to provide theological and pastoral training in peacemaking to community members. Lynette will focus on women’s ministries such as classes in hygiene and self-care and creative workshops, empowering women while also sharing and teaching of God’s love. Brian and Lynette have two boys: Calen, age 4, and Richard, age 10, who will serve with their parents in Haiti.

“I am most excited to teach Haitians a trade and craft so that they can support their families while showing them the love Christ has shown me.” —Brian

“I have always had a passion for helping people in their everyday lives and simply ‘doing life alongside’ them. I cannot wait to serve my brothers and sisters in the name of Jesus by providing life skills and love to empower and encourage them to take new hope and share it with their neighbors.” —Lynette

Brian and Lynette Smith
LOCATION: Haiti
MINISTRIES: Economic Development, Health & Wellness, Short-Term Mission and Education

After participating in numerous short-term mission trips, Brian and Lynette Smith made the decision to enter full-time mission service. In partnership with the Haitian Baptist Convention, Brian will lead visiting and local mission teams in construction projects—both helping maintain ministry buildings and providing skills training to community members. Lynette will focus on women’s ministries such as classes in hygiene and self-care and creative workshops, empowering women while also sharing and teaching of God’s love. Brian and Lynette have two boys: Calen, age 4, and Richard, age 10, who will serve with their parents in Haiti.

“It is most exciting to teach Haitians a trade and craft so that they can support their families while showing them the love Christ has shown me.” —Brian

“I have always had a passion for helping people in their everyday lives and simply ‘doing life alongside’ them. I cannot wait to serve my brothers and sisters in the name of Jesus by providing life skills and love to empower and encourage them to take new hope and share it with their neighbors.” —Lynette

Paul Rollet
LOCATION: The Philippines
MINISTRIES: Theological Education, Evangelism and Everywhere to Everyone

Paul serves in partnership with both International Ministries and Mission Ministries, Inc. His ministry is based in the Philippines, where he works with Companion with the Poor (CWTP), a church planting organization and community that seeks to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the poorest of the poor living in the least reached communities of Metro Manila. Paul’s goal is to expand the capacity of CWTP so that it can send its own missionaries throughout the world.

“I served with Companion with the Poor in 2012 and 2013 while working on my doctorate. After returning to the United States, I continued to feel called to return to the Philippines and work again with Companion with the Poor. My desire is to see holistic transformation in urban poor communities around the world and invite more people to join the work.” —Paul
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Matching Opportunity

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Double Your Gift to the World Mission Offering
This year, your World Mission Offering (WMO) gift can do twice as much. If you give to I am IM - WMO, you will be not only supporting crucial ministries around the world, but also encouraging others to join in and do the same!

I am IM - WMO is a challenge opportunity to kick off IM’s 2016 WMO. The WMO is IM’s largest and most important annual fundraising event for both churches and individuals.

How it works:
From now until September 30:
Gifts from generous individual and church donors (like you!) will be set aside as seed money to create the I am IM - WMO Challenge Fund. We’ve already raised $41,000 and we hope to reach $150,000! This fund will enable every undesignated* dollar donated for WMO after September 30 to be DOUBLED up to the total of the Challenge Fund. This will build excitement for the WMO and encourage people to give to support global mission. You and your church are invited to be among these Challenge donors who will make the WMO gift match possible!

Starting October 1:
Every undesignated* dollar donated for the WMO will be DOUBLED up to the total of the Challenge Fund.

It’s easy to be part of this matching opportunity:
To give online, go to www.internationalministries.org and click on I am IM.

To give by check, write I am IM - WMO on the memo line and mail to International Ministries, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482

Questions? Call Carol Snyder at 800-222-2872, ext. 2323, or Ray Schooler at 610-203-0384.

* Undesignated gifts are those given for the entire work of IM. The challenge opportunity is for the support of all the ministries of IM and is not intended for support of specific projects or global servants. Your gift to support a specific IM global servant through WMO is welcomed and appreciated, but it will not be matched through I am IM.

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