



ON LOCATION

ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN

Seeds Planted Two Generations Ago Produced a Vibrant New Leader for IM

The Rev. Sharon Koh receives the prayers and blessings of IM leadership at the ceremony where she was installed as IM executive director elect.



by Mark Staples, contributing writer

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

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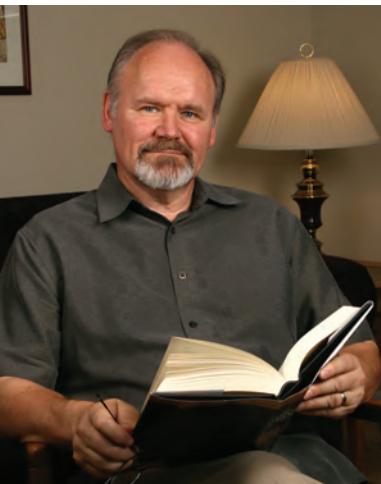
"THE FUTURE IS AS BRIGHT AS THE PROMISES OF GOD."

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)



Interview with
Executive Director

SHARON KOH

by Catherine Nold, director of
Communications and Marketing

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?

“ 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. **”**

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.



A Vibrant New Leader

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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 her grandmother. "My grandmother did not receive Jesus right away," she says, but, when her grandmother

became a widow years later, she had a choice—either to accept the financial support of her extended family, or to choose Jesus. "She made the right choice," Sharon says, "because of the seeds planted by those IM missionaries." And it was that choice that today makes it possible for Sharon to be standing as the next executive director of IM.

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

Photos by Jim Wagner

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 1978. Earlier leaders, starting in 1814 with William Staughton, bore the title of corresponding secretary.

The historic installation before more



Sharon Koh's grandmother, LEE YOW SAN, (shown front and center in the picture on the right) first heard the gospel from ABFMS missionaries.

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."



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 ministry 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."

ABFMS Women in Ministry

1814 The General Missionary Convention, the first nationwide Baptist mission society, creates the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions (BBFM), appointing Adoniram Judson in Burma as its first missionary and considering his wife Ann to be his assistant.

1816 The Board resolves that "it will not be expedient in future, as far as they can now judge, to make appointments of an unmarried female Missionary."

1846 Sarah P. Merrill sent to India as first Free Will Baptist single woman missionary.

1859 The Board resolves "that the wives of missionaries be no longer regarded as assistant missionaries and that they be held responsible for no service."

1871 Women organize the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (WABFMS) of the East and WABFMS of the West to send and support single women missionaries. The first WABFMS missionaries, Alvira L. Stevens and Katherine F. Evans, go to Burma.

1879 Dr. Ellen Mitchell appointed for Burma as first single woman doctor.

1882 Board president George Dana Boardman the Younger advocates sending missionaries of both sexes.

1895 First five women elected to the Board.

1911 The Free Will Baptist Foreign Mission Society merges with the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS; formerly BBM).

2016 The Rev. Sharon Koh becomes the first woman executive director of ABFMS (International Ministries).

1700

1800

1782 Hannah and George Liele sail to Jamaica as first missionaries from the U.S.

1800 Mary Webb organizes the first woman's missionary society in America, the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes.

1815 Charlotte H. White, a widow, becomes the Board's first appointed woman missionary.

1821 Ann Cleaver becomes first of 27 single women missionaries appointed to serve among American Indian nations.

1847 The Free Will Baptist Female Mission Society is formed and sends its first missionary, Lavina Crawford, to India.

1860 Ellen Mason returns from Burma and unsuccessfully urges BBM to appoint single women missionaries.

1866 The Board states: "discretion should be given to the Corresponding Secretary in discouraging or encouraging applications from unmarried women."

1874 Women organize WABFMS of the Pacific Coast.

1881 WABFMS opens Baptist Missionary Training School to prepare women for mission service.

1886 Lulu Fleming appointed to serve in Congo as the first African American single woman missionary.

1955 WABFMS begins 13-year integration into ABFMS. Helen Morse Wigginton becomes Board's first chairperson.

1900

2000

READY TO SERVE

OUR NEWEST ENDORSED MISSIONARIES

When people express interest in becoming a missionary through International Ministries, they enter an extensive discernment process in which they work with IM staff to determine whether full-time mission service is right for them and, if so, which ministry opportunity would be the best fit. At the end of this time, IM officially endorses them as future IM missionaries and they can start creating a network of prayer and financial supporters. The following couples and individuals have just come through the discernment process, and IM has proudly endorsed them to begin preparing to enter crucial ministries around the world.



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



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

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.

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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.

"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



OUR NEWEST APPOINTED ASSOCIATE MISSIONARY

An associate missionary is sent and supported by both IM and another organization, with support channeled through IM to the employing agency. New associates are immediately appointed for mission work, rather than endorsed, and often are already active in their countries of service.

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

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 members of the Continental Christian Network for Peace (CCNP). He will also seek to advance the CCNP's goals of peace research and education, public advocacy, supporting marginalized groups and strengthening the organization itself through internal structural changes.

"Searching for peace is an imperative, an obligation, a call from heaven to earth. I give my heart and am committing my steps to this cause. IM has a heart for peace; many of its partners in the region are invested in search of it; and, united, we can make it happen. The challenge of violence seems overwhelming, but the message of Christ's resurrection from the cross tells us that life, not death, has the last word." —Ricardo

I am IM

World Mission Offering Matching Opportunity

Help us fill the basket

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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