



NON-LOCATION

ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN

IM Seeks a Successor for Kim Brown After 32 Years of Ministry in Thailand

by Laura Timmel

Twenty years ago, American Baptist International Ministries (IM) missionary in Thailand Kim Brown founded the House of Love as a refuge for former brothel workers who had contracted AIDS. Over time, the House of Love transformed into a home for the HIV-positive orphans of the original residents and for other at-risk ethnic minority children. It was joined by the Christian Center for the Development of Persons with Disabilities and by the House of Blessing, a preschool program for children from the urban slums, under the auspices of the Integrated Ministries for Ethnic Minorities Foundation (IMEMF).

Now Kim is planning to retire within the next couple of years and pass the reigns of these important ministries. New leadership is needed urgently, since preparation and training should begin as soon as possible.

The decision to move on from this work in Thailand has been difficult for Kim, who has come to consider many of the children in the IMEMF programs as part of her family.

“The most rewarding thing for me is watching the kids grow and develop—with their education, with their ability to be independent and most of all with their spiritual development,” Kim says.

It is also clear that the ministries that Kim founded have come to fill important roles in their communities. Although there are many care centers for children in Thailand, the House of Love is the only home that accepts deaf and HIV-positive children. Additionally, the IMEMF is uniquely positioned to serve urban communities.

Kim explains, “Because of our work with the House of Blessing daycare center, people trust us in the city slums and come to us with problems and we’re able to take children out of situations where they’re at high risk.

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A MESSAGE FROM
SHARON KOH

Dear Friends,

It's difficult to believe that six months have passed since my installation as CEO of International Ministries (IM). The "IM Around the World" trip was a wonderful way for me to begin this ministry, because it allowed me to meet all of our global servants and many of our international partners over the course of a month.

I also had the privilege of joining many of our American Baptist Churches USA regions at their annual gatherings this fall. I was especially touched by the sacrificial gift that the American Baptist Churches of the Great Rivers Region announced when I finished addressing regional leaders at their mission banquet. (See the full story on page 3.)

Since the inception of this foreign mission society 202 years ago, many have left behind homes, families, jobs and friends to cross cultural barriers and enlarge the work of IM. These foundations will never be forgotten by those of us who are answering God's commission to bring the gospel "From Everywhere to Everyone."

In order to accomplish this charge, we need more people to speak out about how IM is *Responding to the Call*. Your voice will help us enlarge our base of financial support so that we will be well positioned to answer God's call long into the future—until the Lord shall come.

As we pursue this goal together, I will endeavor to share with you openly and honestly about our progress. I will also be transparent about the needs that can only be met through your kindness and sacrificial giving.

Before the end of the first quarter of 2017, we still need nearly \$500,000 in gifts to IM's general fund, which provides program support and covers the entire work of IM. We trust you will be sensitive to God's leading as to what

your share in this mission will be, and we thank him for each one of you.

We were so encouraged to have been able to start this year's World Mission Offering (WMO) with a \$200,000 matching opportunity. Now every dollar you give to the WMO will be matched and doubled up to that amount!

You might rejoice to know that our vocational development staff and area directors are in conversation with over 300 people who are praying about joining IM as career missionaries. Thanks to your generous gifts to the WMO, we can work personally with each of these individuals and couples through times of discernment, provide pre-assignment training and offer continued support to those who go on to become full-time global servants.

Every day is an opportunity to respond to the call, and every day we are sincerely grateful for you who are an expression of God's bountiful grace. The whole world needs redeeming, and we need your help to send more workers.

By God's grace,



Sharon T. Koh
Executive
Director/CEO



The ABC Great Rivers Region Makes a “Reverse Tithe” for Global Mission

by Catherine Nold

In an act of sacrificial generosity, the American Baptist Churches of the Great Rivers Region (GRR) in Missouri and Illinois earmarked more than \$600,000 for the global mission and church planting work of International Ministries (IM). This unexpected action was taken at the September 23 and 24, 2016, meeting of the GRR.

The Rev. Sharon Koh, CEO of IM, calls the gift “radical kingdom generosity.” Though final distributions have yet to be determined, the bulk of

This generous gift comes as a reversal of the GRR’s original plan to keep 90% and give away 10%.

The Rev. Paul Gibson, executive director of the GRR, explains, “It all started a little bit before the World Mission Conference at Green Lake. After listening to missionary after missionary and hearing stories of great need, opportunity and challenge, God started me thinking a little bit differently. I felt God telling us to keep the tithe and give Him the 90%, all of it going to missions. I tried to work out something else, but each time I felt God saying, ‘you keep 10% and give me 90%.’”

GRR Board President the Rev. Elaine Bolen led the board in unanimous support for this decision. “To see the regional support for the board’s decisions regarding the use of the great gifts the Lord has blessed us with is very uplifting,” she says. “May we be the region that starts a revival in our support of our missionaries worldwide!”

The Rev. Wally Holt, vice president of planning and review, adds, “It is time for American Baptists of the GRR to unite and reach out to the world. We are praising God for the special gifts He has sent us and want to honor Him by sharing with our friends around the world.”

The funds will come from two sources: an estate gift and a property sale.



Paul Gibson introduces Sharon Koh at the GRR mission banquet.

After the estate was settled earlier this year, the GRR board analyzed local and international opportunities and decided to keep only 10% for use in Illinois and Missouri. The remaining 90% will be invested in IM’s missionaries, the World Mission Offering and American Baptist Churches USA’s One Great Hour of Sharing.

In addition, the proceeds from the property sale, which are earmarked for church planting, and will be used to support new churches in the U.S. as well as internationally. According to Paul, “We made the decision that, for every dollar that is set aside for church planting here, we would invest a dollar for church planting with IM. So in a couple of months we will have approximately \$700,000 in our church planting fund, and half of that will go to IM for planting churches.”

“We are deeply grateful for the ABC Great Rivers Region’s response to God’s call and this transformational gift that will have long-lasting impact for those served through IM and our partners.”

this gift will be invested in the ministries and personalized support of about a dozen IM global servants who have ties to Missouri and Illinois.

“We are deeply grateful for the ABC Great Rivers Region’s response to God’s call and this transformational gift that will have long-lasting impact for those served through IM and our partners,” says Sharon.



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by Laura and Rich Freeman, associate missionaries

The two young men were appalled by what they saw: multiple families jammed into makeshift housing on the roofs of crumbling apartment buildings. Three generations were packed tightly into lean-to shelters without running water or toilets and lacked the most basic supplies. Refik and Demokan, Turkish pastors and friends, had come in the name of Jesus to bring help to some of the thousands of Syrian refugees who had crowded into Turkish cities and villages in search of safety after ISIS terror drove them from homes.

Over two million refugees have flooded into Turkey, running from civil war in nearby Syria and Iraq. That number is projected to reach three million by the year's end. While the Turkish government has set up refugee camps in the rural southeastern region in order to help these terrified newcomers, conditions are difficult at best. Long-term needs such as jobs, permanent housing and education for children have been slow to be addressed, as policy is still being worked out to deal with the overwhelming shortages. Many refugees have slipped out of the camps to make their way toward Europe or the large Turkish cities farther west.

This dire situation has given Turkish believers like Refik and Demokan an opportunity to bring much more than a cup of water in Jesus' name. Moved by compassion and the love of Christ, they and their small, humble congregations have stepped up in a mighty way.

Refik and Demokan are evangelical church pastors in their home city, and they work together to run a Christian camp ministry. In addition, they have secular jobs to support their young families. In the midst of these busy schedules, these men feel God calling them to reach out to help the human flood. They started by leading their congregations in giving out of their



Small Congregations in Turkey Step Up in a Mighty Way to Help Syrian and Iraqi Refugees

By Laura and Rich Freeman



few resources to help those in their own neighborhoods in Ankara and Istanbul.

Teams from the churches then began to fill truckloads of supplies for the long trek south to the refugee camps. Soon, a nonprofit foundation was formed to enlarge the work and seek other funding sources.

These faithful Turkish Christians have gained the trust of refugees and camp leadership alike, and they are now working with the blessing of onetime government officials as they fill and deliver truckload after truckload to the camps. Refugees include Muslims, Christians, and members of minority sects such as the Yazidi who are reviled by those who follow fundamentalist Islam and who suffered unspeakable treatment at the hands of ISIS in their home villages. The Turkish Christians have brought tender care to all of these people, regardless of religion. They are also helping Syrian and Iraqi Christians to start church services and settle into more permanent housing.

As Refik and Demokan visited the rooftop refugee village, Muslim mothers gratefully accepted food, clothing, diapers and baby formula. Fathers were helped to set up water tanks for showers and toilets. Children who had been robbed of their childhood were given toys that brought light to their sad eyes and they happily joined impromptu soccer games with team members. Each family was offered an Arabic language Bible, which nearly all accepted.

Demokan, Refik and the team of believers left that day knowing they had made life a bit better for these precious ones, breaking down barriers and opening hearts to one day receive the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ.

For more information about this refugee work in Turkey, contact Rich and Laura Freeman, associate missionaries, at rich.freeman@internationalministries.org or laura.freeman@internationalministries.org

IM Seeks a Successor for Kim Brown

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... For example, two girls came in whose parents are in jail and their relatives didn't know what to do with them. The girls were 13 and 14. Their relatives took them to different men, asking the men to sleep with them to see if they wanted them for a wife. And they kept getting rejected. So they're at high risk if they stay at home."

The next program director for the IMEMF will be entering into a crucial ministry that is still growing and evolving to better meet the needs of its community. The children who have grown up in the House of Love will need support as they move out and begin careers and families of their own.

The staff members will need continued discipleship and training as the foundation moves toward the goal of full leadership by Thai nationals.

There are also ongoing challenges, such as teaching grace in a shame-based culture, which has been a particular concern for Kim. "It's hard because in Thai culture the way you can control people is to shame them rather than to share grace with them," she says. The children expect this sort of discipline, and the staff members easily fall into the habit of it. But when the children are disciplined in a way that shows Christ-like love, "if people recognize that it's grace and not weakness, then it tends to break through to them."

Kim has been blessed to see many breakthroughs in her 20 years with the

To learn more about the IMEMF program director position and how to apply, visit the opportunity profile page on the IM website or contact Jim Bell at jim.bell@internationalministries.org. More information on Kim Brown is available on her profile page on the IM website. To send words of encouragement or support, contact her at kim.brown@internationalministries.org.



IMEMF, and the House of Love is clearly very close to her heart. In fact, even as she prepares to leave Thailand, she is still planning to continue supporting this ministry. She says, "For a long time I thought of retiring in Thailand, and the children really want me to, but I think I will come home. Hopefully I can help with some fundraising for the projects there."

And to the person whom God is preparing to pick up where Kim leaves off, she offers these words of advice: "Be centered in prayer. Be aware of where the Holy Spirit is leading you. And know that God provides."



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