

FALL-WINTER  
2018

# on location



## WEST VIRGINIAN VIDEO GAME DESIGNER EXPLORES CALL TO MISSION SERVICE IN JAPAN

BY CATHERINE NOLD

**WHO DO YOU THINK WOULD BE AMONG THE LEAST LIKELY** to hear God's call to ministry? How about a bright young video game designer? If that might fall anywhere on your list, you need to meet Ben McCloy.

Ben, age 21, is a 2018 graduate of Marshall University in West Virginia with a Bachelor's Degree in Video Game Design. He lives in Elizabeth, West Virginia, and serves with the West Virginia Baptist Convention as video editor for the Convention's new online School of Christian Studies. In his free time, he enjoys creating

small, arcade-style video games.

Ben never expected to end up in ministry. "I was always very shy and could never speak in public, so I kind of ruled out being a preacher," Ben explains. "I thought preaching was the only option in ministry, and that was way beyond me. I decided to design video games instead, so I pursued my undergraduate work in that field."

The move from video game design to ministry might seem like quite a leap, but Ben's call had been

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A MESSAGE FROM SHARON KOH

Dear Friends of IM,

Greetings in the name of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

The leaves on the trees by the mission center (affectionately known as the "Holy Donut") in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, have changed color. For me, as a relatively new transplant from the West Coast, I have come to embrace the change in seasons. The crisp fall air makes me think of God's faithfulness, and I enjoy running with the crunchy leaves under my feet. While his love is unchanging, somehow God always knows exactly what we need. And God gives to each of us in God's perfect timing.

I am writing to you from the conference room in the new International Ministries (IM) offices, less than a mile from the beloved mission center. God knew exactly what we needed when he provided us with this space, and I celebrate with each of our American Baptist family members as they settle into their own new offices in the same neighborhood.

Our global servants have been responding to God's call for 204 years, and in each chapter of history, IM has been asked to rise to the challenge of the day.

On the following pages, you will read about how Drs. Laura and David Parajón's ministry, AMOS Health and Hope, is providing vital health care to Nicaraguans who were impacted by the violence in Nicaragua earlier this year. You'll read about the first graduating class of the groundbreaking online Masters of Theological Studies in Latino/a Ministries program, launched in 2016 in partnership with Palmer Theological Seminary, where IM Regional Consultant J.D. Reed serves as administrative coordinator. Finally, you'll meet Ben, a young man from West Virginia with a heart for mission as he explores a possible call to serve with IM.

As you consider your contribution to this year's World Mission Offering (WMO), please understand that what you give undergirds the entire work of IM. Whenever global servants' funding falls short, your WMO gifts make it possible for them to stay in the field temporarily and for their ministry to continue. WMO gifts also fund the training and mobilization of those who are discerning God's call and prepare the next generation of missionaries.

Thank you for joining with us, God's agents, in facilitating mission and in bringing about God's kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10, NIV)

In Christ,

Sharon Koh  
Executive Director / CEO

**on location**

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We welcome comments on Facebook at International Ministries—American Baptist.

For more information, contact [catherine.nold@internationalministries.org](mailto:catherine.nold@internationalministries.org)



## GROUNDBREAKING MTS PROGRAM MEETS LATINO/A LEADERS WHERE THEY ARE

BY J.D. REED AND CATHERINE NOLD

**IN AN INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP** between International Ministries, the American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) and Palmer Seminary of Eastern University, a new and groundbreaking online Masters of Theological Studies (MTS) in Latino/a Ministries program was launched in 2016.

Geared primarily toward pastors and church leaders serving Spanish-speaking communities, the MTS program offers an advanced degree in Theological Studies from Palmer Seminary. Each year, three cohort groups participate—two from Iberoamerican countries and one from the U.S. IM global servants serve as professors, advisors and mentors.

"The MTS program is different and valuable because it meets pastors where they are, allowing them to work and serve in their local communities while taking classes fully online and fully in Spanish," explains the Rev. J.D. Reed, IM regional consultant for Theological Education in Iberoamerica and the Caribbean and administrative coordinator for the MTS program.

Unlike most traditional seminary education, this program is designed for current pastors and those who already hold leadership roles in their churches.

"So often skilled, passionate servants of Christ are promoted into leadership positions that they have not been trained for," J.D. says. "Friends, family and colleagues affirm that person and elevate them to a leadership role, assuming that somehow the necessary skills and abilities to be successful will magically appear. When things don't work out as planned, well-intentioned people scratch their heads and wonder why."

J.D. adds, "We developed the MTS program to help people build on their love for Christ and successfully take on leadership roles in the church."

"What a joy to witness how women and men alike are empowered, inspired, educated and energized throughout this program," says IM Area Director for Iberoamerica and the Caribbean Adalia Gutiérrez-Lee. "In spite of it being an online program, the students have intentionally encouraged and supported each other not only during their two years in the program, but also in their ongoing church leadership and discipleship."

In May 2018, at Palmer Theological Seminary's commencement ceremony, the MTS program celebrated its first graduating class. The 26 graduates represented countries throughout the Americas, including Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Mexico.

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# SHARING HEALTH AND HOPE IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT IN NICARAGUA

BY LAURA PARAJÓN, MD, IM MISSIONARY IN NICARAGUA

**MY HUSBAND, DAVID, AND I HAVE BEEN SERVING IN NICARAGUA** for the past 17 years as medical missionaries through International Ministries. We have raised our three children in this small nation and, in the process, we have learned to trust in God for all things.

In the time since we founded AMOS, A Ministry of Sharing Health and Hope, our work has been able to grow thanks to the support of those who have served on mission teams and given their prayers and financial gifts. AMOS trains and provides ongoing assistance to Health Promoters, who are local people selected by their own communities to provide basic health care, screenings and awareness education. Today, this program serves more than 60,000 people with empowering healthcare.

Over the years, we have grown to love the people of Nicaragua. The nation is only about the size of the state of New York and it is the second poorest country in Latin America, yet it used to be reported to be among the safest.

But on April 19, 2018, everything changed.

## A NEW CRISIS

It all started very calmly, with peaceful marches in protest of changes in the country's social security policy. But the protests quickly turned violent as clashes between police and protestors resulted in numerous deaths. As the conflict escalated, protestors built roadblocks on major highways, causing acute food and medicine shortages and crippling the nation's economy. After three months, more than 350 people had died, more than 2,000 had been injured and 215,000 had lost their jobs.

Although U.S. citizens were not targeted by the violence, our 2018 mission teams were forced to cancel their trips to Nicaragua, reducing our ability to serve rural Nicaraguan communities in this critical period. At times, the roadblocks stood between us and the cities where we purchase medical supplies, and AMOS staff have made the dangerous journey in order to bring back the essential



“Our prayers and concern are constantly with our brothers and sisters in Nicaragua. May God give them the strength and wisdom to overcome the violence and conflict that the country is facing once again.”

*Adalia Gutiérrez-Lee, area director for Iberoamerica and the Caribbean*

medications that can save children from dying of easily treatable illnesses like diarrhea and pneumonia.

## THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

While the crisis in Nicaragua has made daily life difficult, tragic and uncertain, David and I are committed to continuing to share health and hope, which are needed now more than ever. Health Promoters are at the very heart of these efforts. For the most part, these individuals have no formal education but are driven by a deep desire to serve vulnerable women and children. They are trained to work in small local clinics and in their own communities to save lives using simple guidelines to treat acute and chronic illnesses and to provide first aid, prenatal and postpartum care and ongoing health education that helps ensure healthy behaviors like handwashing.

The AMOS Health Builders and other community leaders are eager to help their nation recover from the physical and mental trauma caused by the current conflict, but to do this they will need additional training and

tools. To make this possible, we have created the Nicaragua Clinic Relief Fund, which will finance a four-part initiative:

1. Humanitarian aid, including medication, food supplies and transportation, for those most affected by the crisis
2. A psychological first aid program for our patients and staff who are experiencing trauma, anxiety and distress related to the violence
3. Conflict transformation training for community leaders and churches to help them work toward a sustainable peace for the future
4. Training in our Parenting for Peace Curriculum for community health care workers to diminish the long-term impact of the violence

We are looking forward to our U.S. assignment in 2018 and 2019, when we will visit as many of our churches and friends as we can, spreading awareness of the situation in Nicaragua and what AMOS is doing to help. Please continue to pray for peace in Nicaragua and healing for all those who are tragically affected by the continuing violence.

**TO LEARN MORE** about this project and support the relief efforts, visit [www.internationalministries.org](http://www.internationalministries.org).

**TO READ** more about Laura and David Parajón and to support their ministry, go to [www.internationalministries.org/author/dl-parajon](http://www.internationalministries.org/author/dl-parajon).



Among those graduates was Jae Stockton, endorsed IM missionary to Mexico. She states, “I was truly humbled when Dr. Adalia asked me to join our first MTS U.S. cohort. Combining the MTS theological training with my professional experience as an IT professional, I will feel equipped to provide technical support to the MTS students as an IM missionary to help them be more prepared for Christian leadership.”

The MTS program has largely been made possible through the joint support of IM, Palmer Seminary and the ABHMS. “We are grateful for the funding provided by Palmer Seminary and IM to launch this program,” says J.D. “However, additional funding is urgently needed in preparation for the 2018–2019 academic year. We are anticipating new classes in Mexico and Brazil. Groups in the Dominican Republic and Cuba will be coming on board the following year. Even after a significant scholarship from Palmer, the tuition is still more than most students’ monthly salaries.”

IM has launched a project to raise funds for student scholarships so that more leaders can be a part of this amazing opportunity.

Adalia says, “I am a product of American Baptist women and men who, without knowing me, invested in my seminary training when I came to Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary many years ago. I encourage you to continue investing in the training of Latino/a students so that they are better prepared to serve their people.”

**PLEASE VISIT** the [Latin America – MTS Scholarships in Latino/a Ministries](http://www.internationalministries.org) project page on [www.internationalministries.org](http://www.internationalministries.org) for more information and to take part in building up congregations throughout Latin America.



simmering in him since childhood. Both of Ben's parents are pastors in West Virginia. His mother, the Rev. Dr. MaryBeth McCloy, is pastor of Lifespring Community Church, an ABCUSA church, and his father, the Rev. Dr. Mark McCloy, is area minister for the West Virginia Baptist Convention. Ben learned about IM at the World Mission Conference<sup>1</sup>, which he attended several times with his parents.

"I first felt a call to mission in 2014 at Camp Cowen in West Virginia," says Ben. "During a campfire on the last night, I heard the word 'missionary' for the first time. It was like getting a song stuck in your head and it plays over and over again. Two years later, I attended the World Mission Conference again. I met the Rev. Leslie Turley [IM area director for Southeast Asia and Japan] and I asked her about mission work in Japan because I had become very interested in anime<sup>2</sup> and Japanese culture."

That was just the spark that was needed to get things moving. Leslie arranged for Ben to take his first short-term mission trip to Japan in 2017. "God really worked in my heart and I realized that he wants me to be a missionary in Japan! What a revelation!" Ben says.

The Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil, director for Short-Term Mission for IM, is impressed by Ben's ability to adapt to a new and very different culture. "It was amazing how Ben was able to grasp some of the cultural subtleties very quickly," she says. "When the team returned from Japan, it was evident to me that the call to serve in Japan is strengthening in Ben's heart. His face lights up as he recalls encounters, conversations and moments shared while he was there."

People who join IM on Short-Term Mission trips often find that their faith grows when they participate in the work of the Lord in a new cultural setting. Sometimes, this leads to a call to long-term global mission service.

"We who serve in Short-Term Mission at IM love to help people of all ages and backgrounds identify their call to mission," says Sandra. "The great benefit to individuals and groups is that they get to experience, firsthand, the life of a global servant, with its joys and challenges, and participate hands-on in the work of the Lord. This is not theoretical learning; this is real-life experience that is transformational, whether or not future missionary service occurs. It is where God links the head and heart experience for each individual."



Second from left: Ben McCloy

“We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives. (Colossians 1:9b, NIV)”

During his recent short-term trip to Japan, hosted by IM global servants Lee Ann and Gordon Hwang, Ben learned quite a bit about the challenges of serving in ministry in this secular country. "The Japanese are often very reserved as a people," he says. "They don't open up very easily, and it takes them longer to feel comfortable with foreigners. This would make discipleship very difficult.

"Thankfully, the youth are more open to foreigners and engaged with us a lot. They were totally into it when I told them that I got a degree in Video Game Design! I'm finding that the best way to demonstrate God's love for them is to build loving relationships with them. When the youth see that God is powerful, loving and compassionate, they see that Christians have something different and amazing."

God has always been the greatest encourager for Ben. He explained, "Whenever I am discouraged or confused, God comes beside me and shows me that he has everything under control. My parents and my girlfriend, Abigail Harman, who traveled with me to Japan, have also been amazing encouragers and have supported my call to mission."

Next year, Ben plans to take more short-term mission trips to both Haiti and Japan to help him get a clearer idea of his calling. "I want to visit new areas and meet new people to explore more of my passions."

1. IM's biennial gathering of global servants, international partners, staff and mission supporters at the Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake, Wisconsin
2. A style of Japanese animation that has become popular around the world among children and adults alike





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## YEAR END: A SEASON OF POSSIBILITIES

BY ZOFIA DRIPPS, ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ADVANCEMENT

**THE CYCLE OF SEASONS**, which we see so clearly in nature, is also in evidence at International Ministries as we enter a new budget season on October 1 and approach the end of the year. During this time, the question of how to fund and grow IM's mission presents real challenges. How far can we go to do God's work? Should we take on financial deficit to serve "the least of these"? (Matt. 25:40, NIV)

Again and again we have seen God multiply your gifts to sustain this global mission. He opens a way through your kindness, for which we are very thankful.

As 2018 winds down and each of us prayerfully considers what our portion will be, we invite you to respond generously to God's leading. New and increased support can open up more possibilities for global mission. The impact of your gifts is immeasurable.

For example, you have touched the hearts of 70 children served every day in Panama by Ingrid Roland-Roman, conflicts are being averted through the Buttry's peace and justice training, children have access to education

and pastors receive theological training through the work of Becky Stanton and Carmella Jones in Hungary and children with special needs have dignity restored because of Patti Long's ministry in Tijuana. Thank you for making these and many other ministries possible.

Between now and December 31, IM seeks to raise over \$375,000 for the General Fund to be on pace for 2019. We pray that the love of Christ would guide you and embolden you with assurance that God will use your gifts to impact the world with the Gospel.

“to bring good news to the poor . . . to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. (Isaiah 61:1, ESV) ”

The possibilities are great when you place your gifts in God's hand. If we can help by providing further information, contact Mission Advancement at 610-768-2311.