

REV. DR. Wilbert Gough shares how he has planned to make a lasting impact for the mission work that is important to him today.



“I have been concerned with mission all of my life,” said Rev. Dr. Wilbert Gough, who celebrated his 102nd birthday in June 2020. Rev. Gough has been a long-time friend and supporter of IM Global Servants Ann and Bill Clemmer, who currently serve in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

While in high school, Rev. Gough considered becoming a missionary to Mexico and studied Spanish in preparation for that possibility. After serving in the military during World War II, Rev. Gough felt led to go into pastoral ministry and pursued theological education and training. He and his late wife Florence both graduated from Philadelphia College of Bible. Rev. Gough also holds a doctorate of divinity from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and a doctorate of theology

from the Burton Theological Seminary in Colorado Springs. Prior to his retirement, he had served as a pastor for over 75 years—in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Iowa, West Virginia, New Hampshire, and Maine.

In 1974, while pastoring a church in West Virginia, Rev. Gough was invited to go on a preaching trip to Haiti. Along with his wife and members of his church, Rev. Gough spent ten days in Port au Prince, the capital of Haiti. “The trip heightened my interest in mission,” he said. In the years following that trip, Rev. Gough and his family and church community sent computers, books, and other resources to the Christian University of Northern Haiti, the Haitian Baptist Theological Seminary established by American Baptist missionaries.

Through his support of American Baptist missionary work in Haiti, Rev. Gough came to know the Clemmers, who had served in Haiti before moving to their current field of service in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Rev. Gough financially supported the Clemmers’ work in both regions, as well as other mission work around the world.

“My wife was a great believer and also a mission-minded person,” he said. “We prayed for missionaries, hosted them in our homes, and visited and corresponded with many of them. We lived frugally so that we could give to God’s mission and the work of the Lord.” Over the years, Rev. Gough’s churches received visits from many missionaries. “These visits meant a lot to the whole church community,” he said. “Interacting with the missionaries enriched our minds, encouraged members of the church to give, and planted the desire to contribute to mission.”

When making plans for his estate, Rev. Gough decided to leave a gift for International Ministries in his will. “I have always asked for God’s leading and direction in my life, day by day, in my giving and in my ministry,” said Rev. Gough. “This is the way the Lord has led me. I want to do more and more for mission.”

Rev. Gough hopes that his gift will help more people answer the call to go out as missionaries, so that more people can come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. “That is the most important thing,” he said. “Missionaries are very important in sharing the gospel. They work in difficult environments and go through suffering and challenges to bring people to Christ. We thank God for them.”

Rev. Gough also encourages believers to look for mission opportunities where they are. “You don’t have to go over to Congo,” he said. “You can be a missionary where you work, where you live, in your classroom, in your neighborhood. You can be of use to the Lord by showing that knowing the Lord in your heart is the best way to live.”

