

# on location

SPRING – SUMMER 2021



Amy and Joseph Vo



Aaron and AmyEstelle Trout



Eric and Yuree Lembke



Deliris and Moise Carrión-Joseph



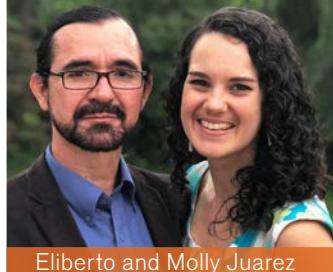
Tim and Stacy Reese



Faye Yarbrough



Jae Stockton



Eliberto and Molly Juarez

## EMPOWERING God's people for mission

"I like to see all of God's people a part of God's mission," says IM's Director of Mission Mobilization Rev. Dr. Rodney Ragwan.

Through his role at IM, Rodney spends the majority of his time walking alongside those prayerfully considering and preparing for full-time cross-cultural ministry. (You can see the global servants preparing to go out in 2021 above.)

Rodney joined IM almost three years ago with a family heritage in Baptist mission that stretches back into his childhood in South Africa and to the Christian faith of his ancestors in India. Generations ago, Rodney's family heard

*As God calls a new generation of global servants, Director of Mission Mobilization Rodney Ragwan is walking alongside them on their journey.*

the gospel through American Baptist and Canadian Baptist missionaries to India. Out of that work, an Indian missionary responded to God's call to serve in South Africa and helped birth the Indian Baptist church in South Africa.

As Rodney grew up hearing the gospel, he clearly remembers the moment when he shifted from "hearing" to truly "listening" to it. As he listened, Rodney gave his life to Jesus.

Curious to learn more about God's mission, Rodney watched the example of a young minister who not

*Continued on page 3*





## a message from

**SHARON KOH**

Dear IM Family,

The global pandemic caused by COVID-19 has gone on for more than a year now, and many of us are wondering when life will "go back" to how it used to be. But what if we are called to treat this unprecedented time not as a temporary disruption to get through, but as a season of life that deserves our full attention and investment?

The Babylonian exile that the Hebrew people in the Old Testament experienced has surprising parallels to our present time. The Hebrew people experienced one disaster after another. In the midst of these overwhelming devastations came a letter from the prophet Jeremiah in Jerusalem (the familiar home and capital city of the past) to those in exile:

This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters... Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

In other words, make the most of your life as it is now. Be present where you are at this time—where "I [the Lord!] have carried you"—instead of pining for a return to how life used to be. If this is God's word for us in this present moment, what would it look like to accept this instruction and to live accordingly?

The IM family has lost former Area Director Stan Murray, former Executive Director John Sundquist, and several legacy missionaries, including some to COVID-19. It has felt like loss upon loss and grief upon grief, like there is little we can count on these days. We, too, have had to ask ourselves what it would look like to respond to God's calling for us to continue to participate in God's mission in this present moment.

In these pages, we share the creativity and the resilience of our IM community. God is inviting all of us—the extended IM family—to seek the peace and prosperity of all people, even when we may feel exiled within our own "home." Indeed, I am certain that God is inviting us to make every setting our "home" by seeking its peace and prosperity. That's the heart of the cross-cultural mission work to which God has called IM.

I pray that you will be encouraged by the stories in these pages of God's people fully living in the places and times to which God has called them.

Gratefully,

Rev. Sharon Koh  
Executive Director / CEO



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

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

on location



Rodney Ragwan

## EMPOWERING God's people for mission

*Continued from cover*

only talked about the gospel but lived it—reaching out to people who had been marginalized and crossing borders into neighboring countries to show Christ's love.

Then, in the early 1990s, Rodney listened as Nelson Mandela spoke to a South African crowd to promote an inclusive society. "I was living in an apartheid state—I lived through that. I saw the danger of segregating the population. It really made me think about how faith in Jesus Christ is a faith that empowers everyone, and everyone can participate in God's mission." As Rodney looked at those in mission leadership, he didn't see people who looked like him. The question weighed on him: "Why aren't we involved in God's mission? No one said, 'You can participate—God can empower you to do that.' It was not empowering being within a theology that kept you at one level."

This question pushed Rodney into further study. He completed two master's programs, a Doctor of Ministry, and a PhD in Church History, even as he served with the Baptist Association of South Africa (BASA) as the Christian education director, then as the mission director, and finally as the president. As president, he led the association into a partnership with International Ministries through Charles Jones, IM's area director for Africa at the time. He also led the BASA into membership with the Baptist World Alliance.

"IM's approach to mission is unique, and very compatible with my understanding of mission," Rodney says. "It's not about IM going to a place and setting an agenda. IM works with partners overseas, provides them with the support to flourish and grow. The nationals and IM's global servants use their gifts together to advance God's kingdom. God

## MEET THE global servants PREPARING TO GO OUT IN 2021

**Faye Yarbrough**, began serving in King William's Town, South Africa, in February

**Deliris & Moise Carrión-Joseph**, appointed for Tijuana, Mexico

**Stacy & Timothy Reese**, appointed for the Dominican Republic

**Jae Stockton**, appointed for Baja California, Mexico

**Elberto & Molly Juárez**, endorsed for El Salvador

**Eric & Yuree Lembke**, endorsed for Thailand

**Aaron & AmyEstelle Trout**, endorsed for the Philippines

**Amy & Joseph Vo**, endorsed for Vietnam

is already at work, and we join God in advancing God's mission in the world. We never advance our own agenda—the partner sets the agenda."

Now, in IM's home office, God is working through Rodney to empower the next generation of global servants.

"I see the diversity of the candidates coming through IM, and I see how God is providing for them despite the pandemic," he says. "Among them are some who came to the U.S. as children, who were impacted by global mission, and now they are becoming part of a global mission force. I have walked alongside someone who came to the U.S. as a little girl from Guyana, who is now an engineer going to South Africa. Or someone else who was once a refugee and is now endorsed as a global servant and preparing to go to Thailand. Being part of God's plan for those being called really excites me. I get to play a small part in God's will for their lives. I am working with a group of people who reflect the global community of faith. Revelation 7:9-10 really inspires me—the picture of a great multitude from every tribe and nation before the throne. I keep that picture as I work. We are trying to reach all of God's people, and we all come from different backgrounds."



Residency week for the MTS program in the Dominican Republic

## creative ministry THROUGH COVID

**“God is not limited,” says IM’s Director of Short-Term Mission (STM) Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil. “God is limitless. He truly took down the walls and asked us to step out in faith in 2020. Despite COVID, we were able to think creatively on how best to come alongside partners and global servants and strengthen relationships.**

### Virtual Trips and Podcasts

When short-term mission trips outside the U.S. became impossible, Sandra and STM Associate Nicole Cox learned how to create virtual short-term mission discovery experiences. This meant that, during the pandemic, more than two hundred people “traveled” to the Dominican Republic, Hungary, Zimbabwe, Thailand, Japan, Liberia, the Middle East, Latvia, Ukraine, and Russia. These interactive events as well as five-day Mission Express Discovery trips allowed participants to see cultural sights, engage with IM’s global servants and local ministry partners, and gain a first-hand look into what God is doing in that country—all from their living rooms. “We could never have done this many trips in a normal year,” Sandra explains.

*During the pandemic, technology has not only enabled ministry to continue, but it has connected God’s people in new ways.*

In 2020, the STM office also expanded into the realm of podcasting. Now, after only a few months, the Bridges for Mission podcast invites nearly nine hundred subscribers from countries that include Nepal, Serbia, Australia, New Zealand, and Russia to learn more about short-term mission.

### Increased Accessibility

At first, Global Servant Barb Bolick thought the pandemic would shut down the new Talita Cumi mentoring project that she and Global Servant Sarah Matos were preparing to pilot in Bolivia to foster self-worth among girls. Then they realized the pandemic had provided them with the space to develop materials for the club that could be offered online in any Spanish-speaking context. They invited consultants from the primary regions of Latin America to review the language and cultural context of the materials, so that more Spanish-speaking churches can offer the program beginning this spring.

“The virtual platform highlights a reality that is central to IM’s missiology,” Barb explains. “The skills that we bring are transferable skills. The skills that the local leaders bring—relationships, profound cultural understanding, knowledge of social dynamics—those are irreplaceable. Training local leaders is the only way this program can succeed, and training online could allow the program to grow exponentially.”

Similarly, in Ghana, Global Servant Rovaughna Richardson found that the pandemic pushed her forward in an eCounseling ministry project that could reach disadvantaged

girls and survivors of trokosi slavery (or “ritual servitude”) regardless of the pandemic or limitations such as physical distance. “COVID-19 greatly influenced the need to do things differently as I couldn’t connect in person with the girls in Accra nor with the social work interns who had been supporting the program,” she says. “‘Counseling without walls,’ which is how I like to refer to it, allows this ministry to provide services to young ladies who may not normally participate in the counseling process.” The eCounseling program aims to decrease potential long-term effects of trauma and abuse, foster spiritual and educational growth and mental health, and develop life skills. The pilot program launched in October 2020 with its first group of nineteen girls from three of the sixteen regions in Ghana.

### Online Teaching

In Iberoamerica and the Caribbean, the Master in Theological Studies (MTS) program for the training of church leaders has grown during the pandemic. Because the course content is given online, students continued to learn through lockdowns, with professors hosting Zoom calls to give students a place to process and pray together. “The pandemic has caused a lot of challenges to ministry,” says Regional Consultant Rev. J.D. Reed, who coordinates the program, “especially in countries that are already dealing with health care issues and wide-reaching poverty. Though the MTS program was not initially designed to be online for this reason, it has been able to stay active. Since the pandemic, we have started new groups in Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and the U.S.”

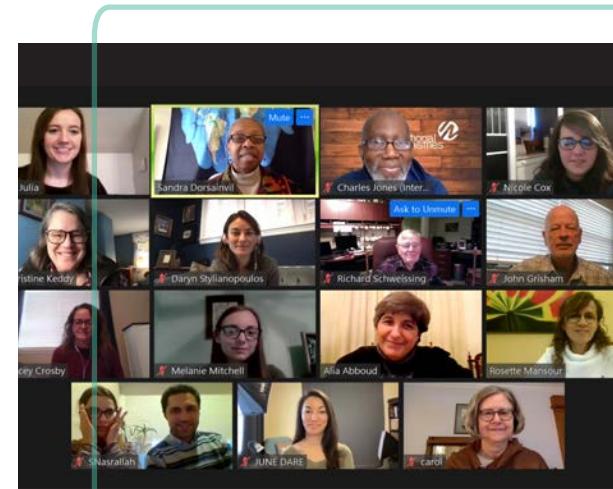
Global Consultant Rev. Dr. Ann Borquist worked with IM’s Short-Term Mission office and STM volunteer Kadie Henry on a new teaching initiative during COVID: three months of daily English classes offered through Zoom. Kadie, an English as a Second Language teacher from Ohio, raised support to teach through the Asociación Amigo in Spain under the leadership of two cross-cultural workers from IM partner JAMI, the mission agency of the National Baptist Convention in Brazil. “This is a beautiful example of God’s people working together in three-way partnership among Brazil, Spain, and the U.S.,” Ann says. “The model was so successful that we’ve already had a request to replicate it in Cambodia. God is preparing us for new ways to do ministry in a world changed by the pandemic. We look forward to being able to visit our partners in person again once travel restrictions are lifted, but these new online capabilities will continue to be a valuable part of our ministry in the future.”



BARB BOLICK & SARAH MATOS



ROVAUGHNA RICHARDSON



STM VIRTUAL TRIP TO LEBANON



## SAVING MONEY TO give more to God

by Glenda McNew

“

Trafficking is slavery, and sex trafficking of young girls and boys is the most horrible type of slavery that I can imagine! I may not be able to do anything physically to stop it, but I can give financially so others can.

”

Our American Baptist Women's Ministries had an emphasis for several years on human trafficking, and I became aware of how prevalent it is—even in Wichita as it is intersected by two major highways. Trafficking is slavery, and sex trafficking of young girls and boys is the most horrible type of slavery that I can imagine! Trafficking includes coercing persons into bonded labor and domestic servitude, the enslavement of persons in agricultural work and in factories, the capturing of children to be soldiers, and the buying and selling of human beings. I may not be able to do anything physically to stop it, but I can give financially so others can.

I was raised by parents who believed that God created everything, therefore everything belongs to God and giving a tithe back to him is the least that we can do. In appreciation of how God has blessed us in so many ways, we give more.

My father was a blue-collar worker and my mother was a homemaker. The first payment out of every paycheck was the tithe to our local church. Not only did they give financially, but they also gave freely of their time and

talents. The lot around our house was never a pristine, manicured lawn with gorgeous flowers, but rather a massive garden of tomatoes which were sold to pay for summer utilities as well as sharing some with the church family. It was a lot of work but was their way of making some extra money so they also could give more back to God.

They taught me to prepare for the future through wise investments. When I became a teacher, I invested heavily in my retirement plan and lived modestly as my parents had. I gave my tithe to the local church and then gave additionally to help those less fortunate than myself.

I don't want my giving to the work of the Lord to end with my life, so I have done my estate planning and designated assets to help ministry continue. IM's global servants bring the gospel of Christ to the world, but they also do more than that. They go and work with people and help people in practical ways. I'm so glad IM has that emphasis—they really care about the people.

Through the years, I've found that the more I give to the Lord's work, the more God blesses me—spiritually and financially. It deepens my faith in Christ to see how much he loves not only me, but everyone, and if I can be even a small part of sharing that love, I am truly blessed.

*Glenda McNew is a lifelong American Baptist who lives in Wichita, Kansas. You can include IM in your will or give a gift that will produce life income for you while supporting global mission. To learn more, call Zofia Dripps at 610-768-2311 or email [zdripps@internationalministries.org](mailto:zdripps@internationalministries.org).*



## project SPOTLIGHTS



### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: FOOD AND MEDICATIONS

Supply monthly groceries and medications for 350 Haitian children, men, and women. This project, led by Global Servant Madeline Flores-López, seeks to raise \$10,588 to reduce malnutrition and improve the literacy rate of Haitians living in the bateyes of the Dominican Republic. Through White Cross, the Church in Action in Santo Domingo supports Haitian families by providing food, offering preventive health care, and facilitating a tutoring program. \$1,000 buys the community deworming medicine and vitamins for a year.

### THAILAND: MEALS FOR GIRLS AT NEW LIFE CENTER FOUNDATION

Supply nutritious meals for tribal girls ages 11 to 22 who have survived exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking as they live in the restorative environment of the New Life Center Foundation (NLCF). Global Servants Jeni Pedzinski and Kit Ripley serve at the NLCF, which offers safe housing, education, therapeutic services, balanced nutrition, and helps these young women thrive. \$4.50 provides one girl with a full day of meals.

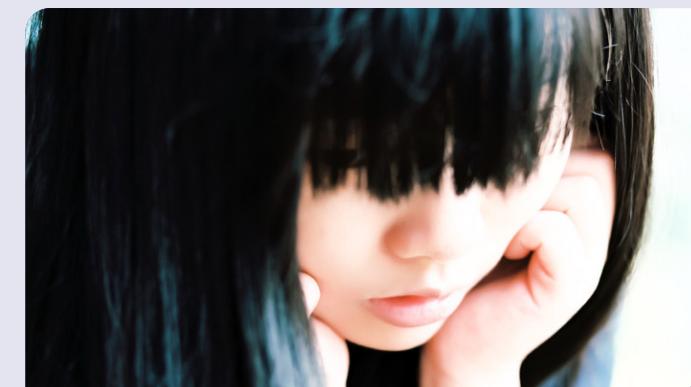


### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: MITENDI WOMEN

Provide scholarships for 65 at-risk women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Mitendi Women's Center, in collaboration with IM Global Servant Jill Lowery, provides education and job skills training to reduce the likelihood of a young woman falling prey to exploitation or prostitution. Help build a strong foundation of faith and hope for a better life. \$500 gives one woman a scholarship.

### LEBANON: MEDICAL CARE FOR SEMINARY STUDENTS

Support 37 seminary students and their families at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS) with basic medical care through this White Cross project. For more than 50 years, ABTS has offered a unique Arabic-language curriculum tailored to develop Christian leadership across the Arab world. As part of its holistic theological formation, ABTS believes it is important to provide for international students' physical needs. \$100 supplies a first aid kit, school uniforms and books. \$80 will provide one child with a school uniform and the books needed for classes.



### CHINA: STEP

Enable the STEP project to raise the \$34,000 needed to expand from supporting 18 to 100 children. Honghong and his brother Zhouzhou live with their elderly grandparents. Their small income makes it difficult to provide what the boys need to stay in school without the help of STEP, the Student Tuition Education Program. STEP funds provide clothing, food, and school supplies so children can break free from the cycle of poverty. \$260 pays for a year of elementary school.

You can give to support these and other projects by sending a check or going to the project page on the IM website: [www.internationalministries.org](http://www.internationalministries.org).



SPRING – SUMMER 2021

**INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES**

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*apology* FOR DELAY OF MAIL  
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We value your faithful support. Timely processing and receipting of your generous gifts are priorities for us. During the pandemic, our offices have remained open, and IM has continued to process gifts as usual. However, the mail delivery is beyond our control, and we have received postmarks of December 31, 2020, and earlier through the end of January. As soon as checks are posted, receipts are available in your donor portal, emailed the next day, and mailed within a week. Please accept our apology if you've experienced any concern over delayed receipts. Because of the late date of mail delivery, annual tax receipts have also been affected. Please know that your generosity is vital to the ongoing work of sharing the gospel. We hope you will accept our sincere thanks for your patience during this trying time. If at any time you have questions about your giving, **contact donor services at 610-768-2323.**

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