

PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY | Spring 2017

mission CROSSROADS

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CELEBRATING RACIAL ETHNIC MISSION



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission

African-Americans bless the mission of God | Discerning God's call to mission | Mission at our doorstep

Celebrating racial ethnic contributions to transformative mission



On the following pages, you'll catch a glimpse of the rich legacy and continuing service of racial ethnic mission workers—men and women of color called to love God and love their neighbors at home and abroad. Since the beginning of Presbyterian international mission 180 years ago, these and other Presbyterian Christians have paved the way for mission from the U.S. to the ends of the

earth, and from the ends of the earth to the U.S. Their unique perspectives have helped transform the church from colonial mission to mission in partnership, the *missio dei*—the mission of God.

While we've changed our mission practice over the years, what has not changed is the 180-degree transformation of faithful mission servants who encounter Christ and accept the urgent call to share God's love with others throughout the world. We give thanks to God for their calling and commitment, and we give thanks to you for your ongoing prayers and support of them and their ministries.



Tony De La Rosa and Presbyterian Mission Agency team members get a firsthand look at rebuilding efforts in the Philippines three years after Typhoon Haiyan.

Mission Crossroads is a Presbyterian Mission Agency publication about God's mission around the world through the PC(USA) and our church partners.

Presbyterian World Mission is committed to sending mission personnel, empowering the global church, and equipping the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for mission as together we address the root causes of poverty, work for reconciliation amid cultures of violence, and share the good news of God's saving love through Jesus Christ.

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On the cover:

Mission co-worker Leisa Wagstaff discusses clean water at a school in South Sudan.

Photo by Sharon Kandel



A holistic witness

Early African-American missionaries bravely spoke out for justice

At an early age, I learned that Christ is concerned about every aspect of human life. This core tenet of the Reformed faith motivated people like John Witherspoon, a Presbyterian minister and college president who was instrumental in our country's founding, and Eugene Carson Blake, a General Assembly stated clerk who played a strategic and prophetic role in the Civil Rights movement. Our society and our Presbyterian witness still benefit from the contributions of Witherspoon and Blake and countless others who have followed God's call to shape a world consistent with gospel values. Indeed, every region of the globe has been touched by the good and faithful work of Presbyterians.

I have come to a greater appreciation of the international reach of Presbyterians since I started working for the Presbyterian Mission Agency. For example, I have learned about the ministry of William Sheppard, a Presbyterian missionary who in the early 20th century made a powerful statement for justice in Africa. One of the first African-American missionaries sent to serve in Africa, Sheppard and his white colleague, Samuel Lapsley, arrived in Congo in 1890 and established a mission in the village of Luebo. It was the first Presbyterian mission in Congo, which was then the personal property of King Leopold II of Belgium. Lapsley died of a fever less than two years after his arrival, but Sheppard continued alone until other missionaries arrived. He learned to speak the local language and explored regions of Congo never before visited by

a Westerner. He immersed himself in the culture, built relationships and preached the gospel everywhere he went.

In 1899 Sheppard's ministry took a different turn. He became alarmed at the exploitation of the Congolese by Leopold. The king used Congolese soldiers to enslave other Congolese, who were then forced to harvest rubber and build railroads. Many of the captives perished, and horrific atrocities were committed against those who dared to rebel. Sheppard and another missionary, William Morrison, documented the brutalities and wrote about them in Presbyterian publications. Their work drew international attention to the situation, and eventually Leopold's rule was revoked by the Belgian Parliament. Congo became a Belgian colony and remained so until its independence in 1960.

Sheppard and his wife, Lucy, whom he married in 1894 while on furlough, left Congo in 1910. Two years later, he became pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, where he served until his death in 1927. A newly revitalized affordable housing community, located less than two miles from the Presbyterian Center, has borne his name since its original construction in 1941.

The world is a better place today because of the commitment, brilliance and courage of William Sheppard. Our church is a more vital witness because this African-American man, born in Waynesboro, Virginia, just weeks before the end of the Civil War, answered God's

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Our church is a more vital witness because this African-American man [William Sheppard], born in Waynesboro, Virginia, just weeks before the end of the Civil War, answered God's call to mission.

call to mission. His example no doubt helped pave the way for other racial-ethnic people to follow God's call to mission service.

Today mission co-workers of various races and ethnicities serve at the invitation of global partners in ministries of poverty alleviation, evangelism and reconciliation. Informed by our Reformed theology, our mission co-workers bear witness to a gospel that addresses the needs of the whole person. It is a ministry of the whole church, a life-transforming ministry that is possible because of the faithful support of people like you.

Rosemary Mitchell is senior director of Mission Engagement and Support at the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Contact her at rosemary.mitchell@pcusa.org.

CONTINUE THE LEGACY OF WILLIAM SHEPPARD

Support all mission co-workers.
pcusa.org/donate/E132192

Decades-long missionary dream begins in Malawi

Tammy Warren

God's plans and timing are different from ours. Just ask the Rev. Dr. Donna J. Sloan.

Donna has packed her luggage, figuratively, more than once to answer God's call to mission—a call she has felt since she was 9 years old, growing up in Campbell, Ohio. Donna recalls that when a teacher at Campbell Christian Center asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up, she said “I want to be a missionary nurse.”

Now in her 70s, Donna has been commissioned by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to teach church history and ethics as a long-term volunteer in Malawi.

It is often said that God qualifies the called rather than calling the qualified. While Donna waited for God's perfect timing to begin mission service, she earned a diploma in nursing; a bachelor's degree in sociology; master's degrees in public health, divinity and theology; and a doctorate in interdisciplinary arts and sciences that focused on the inter-relatedness of religion and health. After each accomplishment, as well as after her ordination as a minister in the late '80s, she thought, “Now I'm ready. God will send me now.” Each time, however, she sensed it wasn't God's idea of the right time.

PROVIDE SUPPORT

Support Donna's mission in Malawi.
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After feeling a strong call to mission since age 9, Donna Sloan will begin service early this year as professor of church history and Christian ethics at Zomba Theological College in southeastern Malawi.

Throughout her careers as a registered nurse, ordained minister and college professor, Donna continued to work in New England, California and Ohio. She also cared for her aging parents for many years and taught philosophy and religious studies at Youngstown (Ohio) State University—courses she will also teach during her two-year mission as a professor at Zomba Theological College in South Central Africa. Students of ZTC represent all five Church of Central Africa Presbyterian synods: Blantyre, Harare, Livingstonia, Nkhoma and Zambia spread across the countries of Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

A few years ago Donna met retired

mission co-worker JoAnn Griffith, who served in Ethiopia for more than four decades. JoAnn's enthusiasm for mission was contagious and caused Donna to reflect on her childhood dream of becoming a missionary. Donna traveled on a short-term mission to Ethiopia with JoAnn and was excited to work with the Oromo people, especially because she had learned through DNA testing that her ancestral heritage on her father's side is 99.4% from the Oromo people of Ethiopia.

That trip prompted Donna to complete an online application for mission service at pcusa.org/onedoor. She attended an orientation in October 2015, initially planning to serve in

Ethiopia. At orientation she learned about the teaching position in Malawi. When she learned the courses she would teach at ZTC were the same as she had taught in Ohio, she became convinced that the timing of the position in Malawi was according to God's plan.

Since her retirement, Donna has been learning to play the harp—another long-time dream. She will take her harp with her to Malawi and continue lessons via Skype.

Even though several decades have passed since she initially recognized God's call, Donna remains excited and expectant about mission work. She's looking forward to all God has planned.

The Rev. Debbie Braaksma, Africa area coordinator, is pleased that Donna has answered God's call to mission. "She is a very special person. Her wisdom and life experiences are so needed in Malawi."

FAREWELL TO A DEDICATED AFRICAN-AMERICAN TEACHER

Retired mission co-worker **Sanford Taborn** passed away on November 28, 2016, at age 68 after a sudden deterioration in his health.

Sanford taught English in Okinawa and Nagoya, Japan, nearly four decades, earning him the distinctions of being the first African-American Presbyterian mission worker to serve in Okinawa, and the longest serving African-American Presbyterian mission worker anywhere.

He worked as a newspaper reporter in his hometown of Roanoke, Virginia, before accepting appointment to missionary service at the invitation of the United Church of Christ in Japan in 1973.

Sanford served with his wife, Emiko. Together they provided a ministry of presence to



Mission co-worker Sanford Taborn is survived by his wife, Emiko.

introduce others to Jesus through many church and community outreach activities. He continued to serve at Kinjo Gakuin University in Nagoya, Japan, even after his missionary service ended in March 2015.

Sanford's cross-cultural skills and dedication to teaching were highly regarded in Okinawa and Japan.

SOUTH KOREA

The Rev. Kyung-Chik Han, a legendary Korean Presbyterian pastor and a tireless advocate for refugees and the poor, was born in North Korea in 1902. He fled to South Korea to escape persecution. Though he considered himself to be a "typical Korean pastor," Rev. Han founded more than 500 churches worldwide, expanding the Presbyterian Church's mission outreach in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. In 1992, he received the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion [about 1 million dollars], which was presented by His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, in a private ceremony at Buckingham Palace. Commenting on his prize, Rev. Han said, "I was a millionaire for less than one hour, and then I gave the check to the pastor of the Young Nak [Presbyterian] Church to help with rebuilding churches in North Korea."

CONGO

In 1957, after more than a quarter of a century as faithful and joyous church leaders in the Congo, **Elder Isaac Kanyinda** and his wife, **Ngoya Esete Kanyinda**—the first Christian Congolese missionaries of the Presbyterian Church in the Congo—visited the U.S. to attend the World Mission Conference at Montreat and to speak in churches. Isaac was baptized as an infant and made a personal profession of faith at age 10. His parents took him to the **Rev. Dr. Motte Martin**, a Presbyterian evangelist and church builder in the Congo, for a service of dedication, saying symbolically, "We are putting our child in the offering plate of God, that he may do the work of God always." Isaac grew up to teach Bible and music at the Mission Theological School in the Congo. He could often be seen at daybreak writing exercises for his classes on the chalkboard. His wife served as president of the women's auxiliary of the church and taught two hours a day in the school for students' wives, in addition to caring for their 10 children.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Presbyterian missionary the **Rev. Paul Seto**, son of Japanese immigrants, served in the Middle East, in Syria and Lebanon, and remained at his post in Tehran—even through part of the Iranian revolution—facilitating Christian-Muslim dialogue without compromising his own faith. He found his calling in the mission field, devoting his life to crossing cultural, political and racial barriers. His 1944 interracial [Japanese-American] marriage to **Genevieve Reynolds** was illegal in the U.S. at the time. He was ahead of his time in many ways. His son, Ted, remarked, "For him, creation of a world in which all could feel included and cared for was what the church was about, and his life and ministry reflected that."

Life's classroom

My story of mission as a woman of Latina-Hispanic heritage

Matilde Moros



Photo courtesy Princeton Theological Seminary

Professor Moros led an ethics workshop at Princeton Theological Seminary in October 2014.

My call to mission is the result of mission work, mission schools, theological education and the rooting of the Protestant Reformation in Latin America where, since the 15th century, the largest numbers of historically and culturally Roman Catholics have lived. Ours is a religiously pluralistic region where popular religions—and now the fastest growing “nondenominational” Christian movements in the world—coexist with leading theologies of the future, as well as with Christian theologies many centuries old.

As a fourth-generation Protestant of the historic churches—an uncommon occurrence in Latin America—I wonder

if “mission in reverse” from the global south to the global north is something that needs to happen more?

As a person of Latina/Hispanic mixed heritage, I view my transnational identity as a gift and a challenge to the Presbyterian Church. After all, persons like myself represent a growing population in the U.S.

By 2050 the church, as well as the national population, will reflect society, regardless of how difficult it may be for a majority white denomination to change. It seems inevitable that the church will require mixed-heritage members in mission service to the church itself. I find that not only my Latina heritage but also my mix of family cultures give

me a different perspective and insight into our Trinitarian God and our global church.

For two years I was co-moderator of the special committee studying the Confession of Belhar, as commissioned by the General Assembly of the PC(USA). In June 2016, after many years of struggling with the Confession of Belhar, the commissioners voted (540-33) to approve this South African confession as our own. Belhar recognizes racial segregation as sin and rings true to my experience as a person of mixed racial ethnic heritage, both Latin American and Latinx-American, whose children are a further mix of who I am and their African-American

father. Theologically Belhar proclaims unity, reconciliation and justice, which makes sense as Reformed, decolonizing theology.

The work of mission has helped to spread and plant the seeds of the Reformed tradition in many places like South Africa and Venezuela. But it is justice that makes the work of the family of God possible.

My life story does not begin in mission, but perhaps it is because of mission that my life has a particular transformational message for our life together as a national and global church.

I was born in Maracaibo, Venezuela, into a household of global theologians. In 2011, I gave a talk at the Biblical University of Costa Rica, where the excited librarian found records and photographs belonging to past students who just happened to be my grandparents. In the early 20th century my paternal grandparents came from Venezuela and Guatemala to Costa Rica to study theology. My grandfather was trained as a pastor and my grandmother as a Christian educator. Their parents had converted to Christianity a generation earlier, and this Protestant rooting took shape through theological education. My father had been aided by Presbyterian missionaries in Venezuela so he could attend a Presbyterian college in the U.S., since the Venezuelan university he planned to attend had been closed by the government.

On the other side of my family, my maternal grandfather in Pennsylvania was an ordained Presbyterian elder, and my mother grew up in a Protestant family, with a Protestant worldview. Hers was a poor farming family, and Presbyterian pastors helped my mother financially to attend a Presbyterian college and later a Presbyterian seminary.

My parents met and married in college and attended seminary together to prepare for a life of ministry and mission. The month of my birth, my



Photo courtesy Princeton Theological Seminary

Matilde Moros is a theologian and professor in the Humanities Department at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.

father, a Venezuelan national, was ordained as a national pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Venezuela, his first pastorate. My mother, a U.S. national, waited more than 30 years after receiving her Master of Divinity degree before being ordained and sent into the mission field in Latin America, where she had moved in 1965.

My mother was a theological educator in Colombia and Venezuela, and later in Spain. My father served the PC(USA) in Colombia in the late '90s as an educator and rector of a seminary, which at that time was shared by Presbyterians of Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. My parents' official mission work continued to Spain, where for seven years they both taught at the Evangelical United Theological Seminary on the outskirts of Madrid.

When I was a teen we, as a family, lived in the U.S. for the first time because my parents were doing doctoral studies. I learned about Southern and Northern Presbyterianism, and the history of prophetic, post segregation ministry in the U.S. My mentors were pastors who led protests and gave prophetic sermons, and a Mexican-American Presbyterian leader who

guided me into leadership and mission.

Through the predecessor to the Presbyterian Mission Agency's Young Adult Volunteer program, my spouse and I were Diaconal workers in Colombia and Venezuela in the early '90s. Much of the mission happened after I was an adult, but my birth story and childhood and my mixed heritage identity were shaped by mission and ministry as well.

My story of how mission shaped my life and that of my family and church is a story of transformation. If mission has led me to a journey of transformation, transformation itself has been my journey. In God's family there is no hierarchy of power based on culture or country. We are all one in Christ sent to be in relationship with people—all people.

CONNECT WITH MISSION PARTNERSHIPS IN SOUTH AMERICA

Support the work of Dennis Smith, regional liaison for South America, and his wife, Maribel.
pcusa.org/donate/E200481

African-Americans bless the mission of God from past to present

For many, God's call to mission service is unmistakably clear and based on the universal love of Jesus Christ—a love so deep and so wide that it knows no boundaries.

William Sheppard Missionary to the Belgian Congo

Michael Parker

Early in our Presbyterian history of international mission, William Sheppard took on the challenge of evangelism in a distant, unknown land. His faith helped to build the church; his advocacy for the Congolese changed the world.

Though often neglected today, William Sheppard (1865–1927) was an important black leader and the first African-American to serve as a missionary in central Africa. He played a crucial role in exposing the scandal of Belgian King Leopold II's depredations in the Congo, a story revived in popular culture by Adam Hochschild's 1998 bestseller, *King Leopold's Ghost*.

Sheppard was born in Waynesboro, Virginia, about a month before the end of the Civil War. In 1880, at the age of 15, he attended the Hampton (Virginia) Normal and Industrial Institute (later Hampton University) and then Tuscaloosa Theological Institute (later Stillman College) in Alabama, graduating in 1886. After serving for a year at Calvary Presbyterian Church in Montgomery, Alabama, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. ordained him as a missionary.

The region of the Congo, which had only recently been explored, caught the attention of King Leopold II of Belgium. The Berlin Conference, held in 1884–85 to regulate European colonization and trade in Africa, officially recognized the

king's rule over the Congo Free State as a personal possession not subject to review by the Belgian government.

Sheppard, who arrived in the Congo in May 1890, was well aware that he was entering a region deadly to Westerners. The rivers and lakes were filled with crocodiles and hippopotami, and the dense forests with elephants and panthers. One was not safe at home, as the houses were invaded by scorpions, chigoes (small fleas or "jiggers") and snakes. Common illnesses included deadly "blackwater fever" and malaria. Sheppard suffered 22 bouts of malaria in his first two years.

The Congolese soon grew to love Sheppard, whom they referred to as Mundele Ndom. William Phipps, a recent biographer, translated this name as "black man with clothes." Sheppard learned Bushonga, the language of the Kuba, which he described as "highly inflected and musical."

Sheppard came to appreciate the culture, becoming a collector of Kuba crafts.

However, he was not a cultural relativist. He opposed belief in witchcraft and practices such as interring live slaves with deceased superiors and the "trial by ordeal" of drinking poison.

Ivory and slaves had been the Congo's main exports, but Leopold focused on rubber. The mass marketing of bicycles and automobiles in the 1890s greatly increased the demand for rubber and sent prices soaring. When a rubber producing vine was discovered in the rainforests of Congo in 1890, Leopold forced out the competition and acquired a monopoly on the scarce commodity.



Presbyterian Historical Society

The Rev. Dr. William H. Sheppard, his wife, Lucy, and their children, ca. 1900

By one estimate, the Congo was producing 20,000 tons of crude rubber a year at a 900 percent profit. The high return was due largely to cheap labor.

As word of atrocities leaked out of the Congo in 1896, Leopold responded with sham investigations and hollow promises of reform. The American Presbyterian Congo Mission (APCM) decided to become a whistleblower. In 1899 it directed Sheppard to investigate personally the villages that were purportedly being attacked by the Zappo Zaps, a subtribe of the BaSonga Menos that Leopold's agents employed in the Kasai district. They were cannibals who filed their teeth to a point, tattooed their faces, and carried poisoned-dipped spears and arrows. Leopold supplied these mercenaries with guns to terrorize the Congolese into harvesting rubber for him.

On encountering the Zappo Zaps, Sheppard feared for his life. He soon discovered, however, that they assumed all foreigners were allied to Leopold, so they did not hesitate to describe their activities to him. Sheppard carried with him a Kodak camera, which was



Presbyterian Historical Society



Presbyterian Historical Society

William H. Sheppard with his wife, Lucy Gantt Sheppard, ca. 1900

Annie Taylor, left, and Lucy and William Sheppard pose with a dead snake.

just then becoming popular. He took photographs of the atrocities and wrote a damning report.

The APCM hired William Morrison as its legal representative. Morrison, a Presbyterian missionary in the Congo, wrote letters, gave speeches and twisted arms in private. His actions led the British Parliament to pass a unanimous resolution calling on the signers of the Berlin accord of 1885 to take action to protect the Congolese.

In 1904, Sheppard returned home on furlough and, like Morrison, spoke out against the cruelties taking place in the Congo. President Theodore Roosevelt received Sheppard at the White House on January 14, 1905, to hear the case against Leopold. In 1906 the U.S. Senate gave unanimous support for a resolution introduced by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge that called on the president to take measures to end the atrocities in the Congo.

Sheppard returned to the Congo in 1906 and in 1907 wrote an article for a church journal in which he attacked the Kasai Rubber Company, a Belgian contractor, for the degradations occurring in the Kasai basin. The company brought libel charges against him, but these were dropped at the

1909 trial when the prosecution could produce no evidence to support its accusations.

The Belgian legislature ended Leopold's control of the Congo on November 15, 1908, and issued a new charter that placed the Congo under its control. Amid scandal and disgrace, Leopold died in 1909, several weeks after Sheppard's trial. During the 25

years of Leopold's rule in the Congo, the population declined by about 50 percent.

Sheppard returned to the U.S. in 1910 and soon settled in Louisville, Kentucky, where he served as pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church and helped to establish a highly successful settlement house for Louisville's black population. He died on November 27, 1927.



Presbyterian Historical Society

Sheppard, left, with two Congolese men and camels

Darius and Vera Swann

Answering God's call to India, China and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement

Michael Parker

Darius and Vera Swann used their skills as educators to spread the gospel in Asia and become an important part of the Presbyterian mission legacy. Growing up in the segregated South, the Swanns' mission service was shaped by inequities they knew firsthand. That perspective would lead them to show respect and tolerance for their interfaith students and eventually would call them back to the U.S. to seek change in the midst of our own racial division. The Swanns transformed the lives of students in India and China, in addition to founding the Maria Fearing Fund for African and African-American Partnership in mission to promote spiritual growth, education and cultural exchanges between and among African people on the African continent and those in the diaspora. Their journey in Mission has transformed them

personally by deepening their faith.

Darius Leander "Lee" Swann was born in Amelia, Virginia, in 1926. He was the youngest of 10 children, and his parents were poor farmers. Lee attended college and seminary at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, one of the racial ethnic universities founded by Presbyterians.

After graduation in 1948, the Presbyterian Church sent Lee to China as the first African-American missionary to a non-African country. Lee was teaching at Nanking University when the Communists captured the city in April 1949. He was allowed to stay, but when the Korean War began in 1950, he was politely urged to leave by his Chinese colleagues.

On returning to Charlotte, Lee met Vera Poe, who had been a freshman at Johnson C. Smith when he was in his third year in seminary. Vera had grown up in a segregated society in the small town of Cheraw, South Carolina. Raised a Methodist, she became a Presbyterian in college.

Lee and Vera married in 1952 and sailed as missionaries to India. Lee taught English and served as a chaplain at Ewing Christian College in the



Courtesy of Darius and Vera Swann

Darius and Vera Swann served the Presbyterian Church as the first African-American missionaries to a non-African country.

city of Allahabad. During this time, he organized the Christian Drama Program, using theatre to train pastors and teachers. Vera worked in the drama program with her husband and taught Bible classes at the college. She also helped launch the Jamna Christian Basic School and a home for vagrant boys.

When the Swanns returned to the U.S. in 1964, Lee taught practical theology, mission and homiletics at Johnson C. Smith. The issue of where their 6-year-old son, James, would attend school brought the civil-rights era home to the couple. Told to enroll him in a black school six blocks away when a white school was only two blocks away, they refused. Twenty-five others joined them as plaintiffs in *Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*.

The case wound its way through the courts from 1965 to 1971, when the



Courtesy of Darius and Vera Swann

Darius and Vera with friends in India, 1952



Courtesy of Darius and Vera Swann

Darius and Vera Swann flanked by family and friends at Burke Presbyterian Church in Lake Ridge, Virginia

Supreme Court ruled in their favor in a 9-0 decision that upheld an earlier federal court decision ordering the desegregation of Charlotte's schools. The landmark case launched the use of

busing to desegregate schools, a practice that soon became widespread in the South.

Lee earned a master's degree from Union Theological Seminary in New

York and then a Ph.D. in Asian theater at the University of Hawaii in 1971. Vera received an honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters (L.L.D.) from the Interdenominational Theological Center through Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary in Atlanta in 2013.

From 1971 to 1984 Lee was a professor at George Mason University in Virginia, and from 1984 to 1993 he taught at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Georgia. Vera served on the Board of Trustees of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, was the moderator of the National Black Presbyterians Women, and was president of the Greater Atlanta Presbytery's National Black Presbyterian Caucus.

They are now retired and live in northern Virginia.

Michael Parker, a PC(USA) mission co-worker in Egypt, serves as the director of Graduate Studies at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo.

A LEGACY OF SERVICE . . .

- 59 African-Americans served on mission in Liberia between 1833 and 1895. The first of these, **James Temple**, was appointed by the Presbytery of Philadelphia.
- Medical missionary **Althea Brown Edmiston's** term of service in Congo—35 years—is among the longest periods ever served by any black woman missionary of the U.S. Presbyterian Church.
- **Frances Camille** and **Robert Milton Williams-Neal** served in Brazil and Congo. Frances' ministry as a nurse-evangelist with expectant mothers earned her a Congolese name meaning "Mother Flower." Robert taught church history and English courses, and led worship services for congregations without pastors.
- **Acy Jackson**, an educational missionary at a school for young boys in West Pakistan, taught many Christian and Muslim students who had never before seen an African-American. He also served several years alongside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Iran as a teacher and program director.

- From house servant to student to teacher to missionary, at age 56 **Maria Fearing's** call to mission was so strong she sold her home and, paying her own expenses, traveled to the Congo where she worked tirelessly translating the Bible, promoting Christianity and helping orphans.



During her ministry in the Congo for more than two decades, Maria (pronounced Ma-rye-ah) Fearing's front porch at Luebo Mission Station became a gathering place for the Congolese people.

God, give me the faith to go

Answering God's call begins with a heartfelt prayer for faith

Leisa TonieAnn Wagstaff

Today, African-American mission co-workers continue the transforming work of God's mission, answering the call to service through Presbyterian World Mission. Leisa Wagstaff, currently serving in South Sudan, shares her personal reflection on this irresistible call. Like the mission workers who served a century before her, Leisa has found herself personally transformed. That is the essence of God's mission.

I always knew—as simple as this—that God was calling me to full-time ministry. Growing up in a rural and traditional African-American faith setting, however, I could not imagine opportunities for a future in ministry. The people who had answered God's call were all preachers—and all men. I remember begging God to not make me be a preacher, for I did not want to be the lone female. The only other option I was aware of was to become a nun.

From early on I enjoyed learning about other cultures, meeting people from diverse backgrounds and watching my family feed anyone and everyone, but I did not know how this was impacting my life. Greater clarity came during my college years when I participated in a work-study travel program in Africa. Being far from home, yet with another group of God's people, felt right. While gazing out at the point where the White Nile and Blue Nile rivers meet, I was told of the belief in the Sudanese culture that if one managed to put a foot in each river at the same time, one would return. Although not really holding to

this folklore and being terribly fearful of any body of water (I had almost drowned in a few feet of water just days earlier!), I wanted to do everything to ensure that I returned to a place where I felt God was calling me. Trembling with fear, I waded out to the spot where the rivers met and asked God to give me the faith to go in whichever direction I was sent.

Thirty plus years later I have returned to the area of South Sudan after having journeyed in faith with citizens in several other African countries. People often ask me in which capacities I have served. I respond: strengthening communities as they seek to provide education; training pastors, lay leaders and primary school teachers; administering schools and curriculums; training youth workers; coaching gymnastics, and so on. I believe my most important work to be the sharing of self—shortcomings

included—and the ministry of presence as I walk with the host community at their pace through the challenges of having been born in places where people have not been allowed to reach their fullest potential.

Some people are under the impression that I have given up much in order to be here. What is not understood is that in accepting God's call, I am receiving much more than I can ever possibly give. African communities have taught me the true essence of compassion and faithfulness, even in the midst of the most adverse of settings, and have welcomed me as a part of their extended families and cultures. This is the richness of the blessings of accepting my call.

Read more about Leisa's work in five African countries on page 20.



Sharon Kandel

GO INTO ALL THE WORLD

Support Leisa's work in South Sudan.
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In South Sudan, education helps young people recognize their potential and transforms generations to come.

Discerning God's call to mission

"We were starving for a church on the edge."

Rachel Yates

Scott Parker used the word starving to explain how he and his wife, Elmarie, chose to serve in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. Some may find it hard to believe the Parkers deliberately sought appointment to a location rife

Mission co-workers are not all teaching elders and seminary graduates. In recent appointments, we've hired a truck driver, a farmer, a teacher and an artist. In God's mission, the opportunities for mission service apply to all.

with violence. But such is the discernment process with World Mission, a ministry of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Candidates with a hunger to serve in God's mission apply out of varying senses of call. Some have substantial international experience already and want to formalize the capacity in which they've already been serving. Others apply timidly, not knowing whether they are ready for mission service. In all, we recognize the application is part of a three-way discernment process involving the applicant, World Mission and the global partner with which the mission co-worker will be serving.

The process can take many months. It includes the articulation of the applicant's sense of call, examination of the work experience and education, physical and psychological testing, and multiple interviews. Once accepted, the orientation phase begins. The process is designed to ensure that the candidates are equipped and prepared for service, typically four-year terms.

Mission co-workers are not all teaching elders and seminary graduates. In recent appointments, we've hired a truck driver, a farmer, a teacher and an artist. In God's mission, the opportunities for mission service apply to all. Our mission is both proclamation and service and focuses on the work that Jesus began: sharing the Good News, addressing the root causes of poverty and seeking reconciliation in cultures of violence.

We are grateful for the increasing racial-ethnic diversity of our mission co-workers and long-term volunteers. More than one-quarter of our mission personnel are people of color. Of the last nine appointees, only two were Caucasian. More and more, our mission personnel reflect the amazing diversity of the world

in which they are serving. We value the perspectives and experiences that diverse mission co-workers can offer. For instance, Cathy Chang writes in this issue of Mission Crossroads (pages 14–15) how she and her husband's separate, personal experiences of forced migration have helped them serve with people impacted by issues of migration and human trafficking. Our mission workers' various cultural backgrounds, language sets and race bring a richness to God's mission that we seek in our mission candidates.

For more information, visit pcusa.org/msr or contact Mission Personnel at onedoor@pcusa.org or 800-728-7228 x2530.

Rachel Yates is associate director for program in World Mission.



Del Braaksma

New mission personnel celebrate their appointments to serve World Mission alongside global partners. From left: Cathy Chang and Juan Lopez (Southeast Asia); Donna Sloan (Malawi); Josey Saez-Acevedo and David Cortes-Fuentes (Cuba) and Melissa and Charles Johnson (Zambia).

Mission at our doorstep

The Great Commission begins at home

Fahed AbuAkel

“... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of earth.”—Acts 1:8

Jesus is calling all of us to be his witnesses at home, work and every place we visit—to be his change agents and for the gospel to transform us and transform the people we are working with.

For me, two women transformed my life: Adlah AbuAkel, my mother, and Dr. Doris Wilson, a Scottish missionary serving in the Middle East. Because of their witness, they nurtured in me a calling to mission service.

I was born 25 miles northwest of Nazareth in Galilee to Palestinian Arab Christian parents in the village of Kuffer-Yassif. I was 4 years old in 1948 during the war that the Palestinian people call al-Nakbah, which means “the catastrophe.” The only thing I remember is running around with my father and five sisters and two brothers looking for my mother as Israeli troops drove us from our home. Suddenly, when I looked up, my mother was standing on the flat roof of our house waving goodbye. She stayed behind while we went up east to the mountain. We were put in makeshift tents in a Palestinian refugee camp. After several months we returned to our home and found my mother still alive. She said if the Israeli troops had wanted to kill her, they would have had to kill her at home. She wouldn’t leave our home, our land and our church.

Upon our return we discovered that five Palestinian villages next to our village had been completely destroyed. In 1948–49, the new state of Israel destroyed

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As a Palestinian Arab Orthodox Christian believer, my mother wanted her children to pray, read Scripture and take it to heart through memorization. She grounded my faith from the time I was young.
.....

another 530 Palestinian villages and towns, exiling nearly a million Palestinians who became refugees.

In the midst of war, destruction and occupation, what was the transforming power in our lives? It was the love of parents and family and my mother’s faith in Jesus Christ.

As a Palestinian Arab Orthodox Christian believer, my mother wanted her children to pray, read Scripture and take it to heart through memorization. She grounded my faith from the time I was young.

My faith and call to mission were deepened by my connection to Dr. Doris Wilson, a medical missionary from Scotland, who came with Ruth Lenox and rented the second floor in our home in Kuffer-Yassif. Doris worked with the Anglican church in our village and opened a medical clinic. Doris and Ruth transformed our village through their lives and witness.

Because we did not have any Bible college or seminary in Israel, I came to the U.S. to study, arriving in Lakeland, Florida, on January 29, 1966. After college I earned my Master of Divinity

degree at Columbia Theological Seminary (CTS) in Decatur, Georgia.

It was at CTS that I discovered the rich and long mission history of the PC(USA) and decided to join the Presbyterian Church. I attended an annual mission conference at Montreat and began to learn about the transforming power of mission worldwide.

That mission happens not only through professional mission workers but through everyone committed to playing a role in God’s mission. In 1973, through CTS, I was connected to First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta and began my ministry directing a church-sponsored after-school program for Spring Street Elementary students. I witnessed the transforming power of volunteers touching the lives of children every day as they took time to care, play and teach the children of our community.

.....
That mission happens not only through professional mission workers but through everyone committed to playing a role in God’s mission.
.....

I also witnessed the transforming power of the gospel when First Presbyterian began a Bus Ministry to assist older residents of our community with grocery shopping.

Then I saw the transforming power of the gospel in the lives of junior and senior high school students who traveled to Israel and Palestine with Herb and Mary Archer



The Rev. Fahed AbuAkel, front (center), founded the Atlanta Ministry with International Students (AMIS), a ministry of hospitality and friendship linking international and American students, nearly 40 years ago.

on a short-term mission. The Archers taught them to sing in Arabic.

Similarly, Atlanta Ministry with International Students (AMIS) is a transformative ecumenical “mission at our doorstep.” It was started nearly 40 years ago, in March 1978, to increase the number of international students drawn to Atlanta-area colleges and universities through a ministry of hospitality and friendship linking international students with American students. My life has been transformed by founding AMIS and serving as its executive director until 2012. Initially there were 2,500 international students from 100 nations involved. Today, 30 colleges and universities in Metro Atlanta minister to 14,000 international students from more than 175 nations through AMIS.

In 1955 there were approximately 35,000 international students in the U.S. Today that number has grown to more than 800,000 students representing 200

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God calls each of us to mission. Sometimes that involves a Scottish doctor coming to Palestine to be a witness of Christian faith. In my case, I am a Palestinian Christian who came to the U.S. to engage in a variety of missions.

nations. This means that every five to eight years, the U.S. educates one million leaders with bachelors, masters, doctorate and other degrees. These international students and scholars will be the future political, economic, religious and social leaders of their nations.

The struggle is for each PC(USA) congregation to consider the part it will play in God’s mission. Perhaps it is beginning a ministry of friendship and hospitality with international students. Maybe it involves assistance to the

elderly or children. God calls each of us to mission. Sometimes that involves a Scottish doctor coming to Palestine to be a witness of Christian faith. In my case, I am a Palestinian Christian who came to the U.S. to engage in a variety of missions.

We follow a rich legacy of mission workers, and we share a calling to be change agents so the gospel may transform us and transform the people with whom we work.

The Rev. Dr. Fahed AbuAkel, Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, is the first Arab-American to lead a major U.S. denomination. Fahed served as moderator of the 214th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (2002-03).

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

Support the work of World Mission’s facilitator for peacemaking and mission partnerships in Israel and Palestine.
pcusa.org/donate/E200516

Fanning the flames of faith

Missionary journey spans generations to reach migrants and victims of human trafficking

Cathy Chang

I am a Korean-American Presbyterian, but that does not define all I am,” were the opening lines of my seminary application essays, ordination process paperwork and grant applications. Those lines came at a turning point after serving as a Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) in Egypt in 2003. Those applications helped me re-evaluate my 20-something years of life, with special focus on short-term mission experiences as a high school student, college student and young adult. I sensed the stirrings of ministry that might look more multicultural than the boundaries of my familiar upbringing. At the same time, Korea was becoming more than a place to visit my extended family, a reason to wake up early Saturday morning for language school. As I learned more about my history, heritage and faith, I began to recognize and appreciate my calling to mission.

I grew up in central New Jersey with fond memories of visiting my uncle’s home filled with many books and faded pictures. Right around that time, my maternal grandparents moved to Stony Point, New York, from South Korea. This is when I first heard stories about my mother and how her family fled from communists. Had it not been for an aunt who insisted that her niece (my mother) stay with the family, my mother would have been left behind during that harrowing journey. Somehow in those difficult times, my mother’s family managed to escape and to survive. My maternal grandfather was a well-respected church elder. Their family was Christian and Presbyterian because of the efforts of a Presbyterian missionary.



Rosaline Maria

Front row (far right), Cathy Chang’s mother, Haewon Lee, with her parents and siblings in Korea (1950s).

As early as those ’tween years in my life, my uncle emerged as an important presence. He introduced my parents to each other in the early ’70s, and almost 30 years later, he introduced me to the PC(USA) through the YAV program. Serving in Egypt as a YAV, using survival Arabic, it was my uncle’s name that created an almost instant connection. With the simple introduction of “She is the niece of Syngman Rhee,” many older church leaders in the Synod of the Nile treated me with the same respect, as if he were right there with me. Having served previously with Presbyterian mission workers in the Middle East, my uncle still had many colleagues in the synod. Flashbacks to my childhood had come full circle after having lived in Egypt, when I realized who graced one prominent

photo at my uncle’s home: former Egypt President Anwar Sadat.

During that same year in Egypt, I learned about another country called Chile, through the experience of meeting Juan Lopez. He was from France but spoke Spanish. As a mission volunteer with Action Chrétienne en Orient, Juan taught French at New Ramses College. He also tutored young girls at Fowler Orphanage, created by missionaries with the Board of Foreign Missions. In French and broken English, Juan shared how his family was affected by Chile’s military coup in 1973. We also talked about the differences between communism in Chile and Korea. He seemed to know more about Chile than I knew about Korea, and this made me want to learn more about both of our countries.



Photo by Laurie Kraus

On a recent visit to southern Philippines with staff from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, mission co-worker Cathy Chang, regional facilitator for addressing migration and human trafficking in Southeast Asia, enjoys a lighthearted moment with a healthy pig.

Over next five years we dreamed about our life together in mission. After serving in Egypt, Juan moved back to France and worked as a social worker while I completed my seminary studies. After many years of waiting, in 2008, I was ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament, and we were married. While I served in pastoral roles in Presbyterian churches in Pennsylvania and Michigan and Juan worked as a social worker, we grew and matured as individuals and as a couple in our desires to serve others through mission.

From the recent news stories of refugees and unprecedented migration around the world, my family's history and heritage and faith, combined with Juan's, re-emerged into our awareness and prompted us to move toward another ministry. We prayed whether our personal experiences of forced migration might help us to serve the very people impacted



Photo by Laurie Kraus

Mission co-worker Cathy Chang tours rebuilding efforts three years after Typhoon Haiyan devastated portions of southern Philippines. The construction is being completed by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance in partnership with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

by the issues of migration and human trafficking. While our recent experience in the United States has focused on the local community and local church, we have strived to work with people who are crossing all sorts of borders and boundaries, because our families have made similar journeys.

Praying at that time about what our next steps might look like, I saw that my heritage, history and faith were taking on new meaning. After preparing our application for service with World Mission through the Presbyterian Mission Agency, I learned that my uncle was ill and dying. Although his earthly days were coming to a close, I was confident that his legacy of ministry and mission could continue through my calling. My late uncle's legacy, along with my maternal family's heritage, history and faith, are the flames of faith that I am fanning into fullness with Juan and our daughter, Aurélie.

This is why we accepted this calling to mission in the Philippines: We perceive

God was at work in our lives and still at work in the world. Since moving to Manila in March 2016, we know that we live among people and in a place that is both familiar and completely new to both of us. With common experiences of Spanish and Japanese colonialism, we are now learning more about communism and American colonialism, among many other things. We look forward to cultivating new connections and collaborative actions with our church partners in the Philippines and in Southeast Asia.

World Mission regional facilitators Cathy Chang and Juan Lopez help global partners address migration and human trafficking issues in Southeast Asia.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Support Cathy and Juan's work in Southeast Asia.

pcusa.org/donate/E200533



An invitation

Sessions and congregations

For your convenience, we are providing a few simple options for you to use in submitting your gifts. Congregations can send contributions through regular receiving channels, usually presbyteries, or send Directed Mission Support (DMS) gifts directly to the address below. Those gifts designated to DMS accounts will be reported to the presbytery. We urge you to report DMS contributions directly to your presbytery in order to keep them informed of your denominational support.

Individuals

Individuals should use the numbers beginning with E to provide financial support to specific mission workers. If you desire, you can also give online at presbyterianmission.org/supportwm. You may also write the name of the mission co-worker on the memo line of the check; mail it to the address below, and we will confirm your designation and intent.

Give to the sending and support of your mission co-workers:

- Visit pcusa.org/supportwm.
- Call 800-728-7228 x5611.

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P.O. Box 643700
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700
Please make checks payable to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

For additional information, please contact:

Nicole Gerkins
Mission Engagement Associate
Mission Engagement and Support
nicole.gerkins@pcusa.org

Melva Costen

Enriching the life of the church through global music and theological education

Pat Cole

Melva Costen exudes a faith that crosses borders through the sharing of songs and the shaping of pastors.

As a professor of music and worship at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, she shared the music of the world with future pastors and others. Melva, now retired, brought this passion to her work as a member of the committee that produced the first hymnal of the newly reunited Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Melva's love for the global music of the church was especially nurtured by Kenyans who studied at ITC. Melva and her late husband, James, who became president of ITC in 1983, began building relationships with Kenyan Presbyterians in the 1970s. At the time, James was dean of Johnson C. Smith Seminary, a Presbyterian seminary that was then part of the consortium of graduate theological schools that comprise ITC.

"When Jim and I made our first trip to Africa, we fell in love with the whole of Africa, especially Kenya," Melva says. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) was growing rapidly, and its lone seminary in Kenya was struggling to train enough pastors to serve its congregations. James and the PCEA arranged for dozens of students to come to Atlanta for study in a partnership endorsed by U.S. Presbyterian mission leaders, Melva notes.

Through Kenyans and other African students, Melva began to see more clearly the African roots of traditional African-American songs. "It was amazing how black Americans were hungry to find this," Melva recalls. "It broadened our perspectives as black Americans, and it

helped us understand God in a different light."

The music from Africa and other places around the world, she says, has enriched the entire PC(USA).

After James retired in 1997, the Costens joined with PCEA leaders to help develop the church's second theological school. Although it has evolved into the Presbyterian University of East Africa, theological education remains a key component of its mission, says Jon Chapman, who was the PC(USA)'s coordinator for East and Southern Africa when the school was founded.

The Costens' tireless fundraising helped put the seminary on a firm footing, says Chapman, who is now retired and living in Dover, Delaware. "There is no way the school would be where it is today without Jim and Melva."

James, who died in 2003, was moderator of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1982 when it reunited with the Presbyterian Church in the United States to form the PC(USA). Earlier, while James was a pastor in North Carolina, he and Melva worked to integrate schools and other public facilities. In Atlanta, the Costens helped form an interracial congregation. James was instrumental in moving Johnson C. Smith from Charlotte to Atlanta to join the ITC consortium, which had been formed by schools from historically African-American denominations.

For Melva, her motivation for service is summed up with a single question: "What can I do with what God has given me to facilitate the ongoing life of



As a musician and professor, Melva Costen shared a global perspective that continues to strengthen churches in the U.S. and beyond.



Melva Costen and her late husband, James, formed a ministry partnership that crossed racial, cultural and political boundaries.

others?" Her answer is leaving a legacy of good across her church and around the world.

STRENGTHEN MISSION PARTNERSHIPS

Support the work of Nancy Collins, regional liaison East Central Africa.
pcusa.org/donate/E200471

Seeing gray

Alyson Kung

The moment the teacher said they wanted to take pictures of the Americans, I got nervous. There was a Korean language contest that we weren't part of, but they wanted our pictures—or rather, I thought, my white housemates' pictures. This type of unabashed racial selection isn't uncommon in Asia, and for universities, I knew that looking international and showcasing their diversity was good for their reputations. The only problem was that in Korea my Chinese face didn't look diverse. My roommate, Emily, assured me she wouldn't let them leave me out.

When the day came for the photo shoot, after an introduction in the auditorium, my housemates and I lined up with people of various un-Korean looking ethnicities, which included an unusual amount of white people for the area. The Chinese students, who were a majority of our class, along with a few students of other Asian nationalities, were not invited to participate in these photos. I stood nervously, making sure I knew where my housemates were in case I got left behind, waiting for the other shoe to drop and for a teacher to call me out of line. But no one did.

We all went out to a grassy field between the university buildings, where they handed out signs spelling out a sentence in Korean. One section held nine squares that created a photo of King



Alyson Kung

A photographer sets up a photo to include Young Adult Volunteers and students of several nationalities to promote a Korean language contest.

Sejong, the ruler who created the Korean writing system. I was surprised they hadn't pulled me out yet, and thought perhaps it was just too awkward to call out one person. Perhaps I was just hyper-aware of race at this point, but I noticed that a dark-skinned Filipino man was asked to hold the very center sign which covered his face completely. It hurt to watch. After finally getting the shot they wanted, the photographers asked my roommates, Linda and Emily, to be in another photo shoot. They, along with a few other female students, posed with clipboards for a Korean language contest promo, despite not being part of the contest. Once all that was finished, we took photos with just our class without the fancy photographers—Chinese students included.

The Americans took some time to reflect on the experience together. These types of things happen everywhere, even in the U.S., though the roles may

be slightly different. I wasn't unselected as I feared and had the privilege of being in the photo, but my fears were not baseless. We had made none of the choices. It was outside of our control in a culture not our own. My roommates did not victimize me with their whiteness and had stood by my side through it all. They had a chance to experience what it was like to be exoticized—an experience that no doubt opened their eyes to being "othered." However, what they did not experience was a shift in power dynamics. They still carried their white privilege with them, getting preferential treatment for the color of their skin. This was a common theme throughout the year, and one common to most international YAVs.

In a predominately white program, my experience seems like the exception, but it is not. The greater Asian-American community has echoed many of my experiences of being abroad. I am not

EQUIP A YOUNG PERSON

Support the YAV program.
pcusa.org/donate/E049075



Alyson Kung (right), a Young Adult Volunteer in Korea, shares a meal with HyeonJu Yoon and other volunteers after chestnut picking.

always a minority, and I am not always the one on the lower end of the power dynamics, especially with an American passport. These kinds of experiences have granted me eyes to see shades of gray beyond black and white—to see the Filipino man hidden in the photo, and my Chinese classmates waiting alongside while we got our photos taken.

I appreciated my roommates listening to my fears and standing by my side, but most importantly, I appreciate when they too can see what I see. I'm proud to have been part of a program that values my experience and looks out for me as my roommates did, though the work is far from done. To create an inclusive space in missions will mean putting in the hard

work of listening and being constantly vigilant about others' experiences beyond our own.

Alyson Kung is an alumna of the Young Adult Volunteer program (Korea, 2015–16). To learn more and to apply for the YAV program, visit pcusa.org/yav.

BE A YAV!

ARE YOU DISCERNING GOD'S CALL?

Blake Collins

The Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) program—a year of service for 19- to 30-year-olds—continues to change my life. Living with my host family and partnering with local communities in Comas, Peru, through the power of presence is something that continues to transform me in my current ministry.

Through the YAV program, the work of the Joining Hands Network and the support of my home congregation, I witnessed God's people inspiring, equipping and connecting with one another to address the root causes of poverty. The YAV experience—living in intentional Christian community while deepening and developing



one's faith—is a phenomenal next step for young adults interested in discerning God's call in their lives. Please share this opportunity with young adults you know.

The YAV year is 11 months—August thru July. If you are interested in international placement, the final date to apply is February 1, 2017. Application season will remain open for national sites until June 1. Follow @yavprogram on major social media platforms for up-to-date info and an inside look at all YAV sites.

To learn more and apply, visit youngadultvolunteers.org/apply.

Presbyterian World Mission brings God's global family together to address the root causes of poverty, work toward reconciliation and proclaim God's saving love in Jesus Christ.

God's mission in South Sudan

Building peace through the Prince of Peace

PC(USA) mission co-worker **Leisa TonicAnn Wagstaff** has served in education-related mission assignments in five African countries for more than 30 years, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Cameroon and, since July 2013, in South Sudan, one of the world's most impoverished nations.



Leisa serves alongside the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS) to address the root causes of poverty through education and peacebuilding. She made her first visit to what was then Sudan as part of a college travel-study program.

"With the majority of the adult population in South Sudan having had no education due to the unrest, 70 percent of the children between ages 6 and 17 having never set foot in a classroom, only 12 percent of the teaching corps trained, and the dropout rate for girls being highest in the world according to UNICEF, there is much to be concerned with," she says.

While thousands of miles separate Leisa from Presbyterians in the United States who support her ministry, Leisa assures supporters back home that they are never far from her mind. "I serve as your representative, your mission co-worker, and the embodiment of your desire to share the good news of Jesus Christ in every corner of the earth," she says.

Civil unrest in South Sudan resulted in Leisa's safe evacuation in July 2016. She has since returned to continue God's mission through the ministry of education.

.....
Support Leisa in South Sudan.

pcusa.org/donate/E200501

God's mission in Hong Kong, China

Bringing glory to God by caring for one another and creation

The **Rev. Judy Chan**, a PC(USA) mission co-worker, serves as executive secretary for communications for the Hong Kong Christian Council. She coordinates production of the council's ecumenical broadcasting ministry and is editor of the council's English-language publications. She also works to address refugee and asylum seeker advocacy issues through the council's refugee concern network.



Hong Kong, now a special administrative region of China, retains some autonomy for the present due to its one-time status as a colony of Great Britain. Judy, who serves there at the invitation of the PC(USA), the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), considers her work a privilege and a journey of discovery.

"I thank the Lord that we can connect the body of Christ in the U.S. and Hong Kong through our stories, not only in pain and suffering, but also in the hope of forgiveness and reconciliation," she says.

Churches in Hong Kong are playing a significant role in building a more compassionate and just asylum seeker and refugee system, Judy says. "They do so by providing friendship, pastoral care, material aid, and social advocacy to this vulnerable population sorely in need of a word of grace and a sign of hope.

"Whatever challenges we face, God's mission remains the same," she says. "We are to witness to God's peace, justice and compassion through the cross of our Savior Jesus Christ."

.....
Support Judy in Hong Kong, China.

pcusa.org/donate/E200323

God's mission in Europe

Making a life-giving difference for refugees

PC(USA) mission co-workers **Ryan and Alethia White** work alongside the Iranian Presbyterian Church (IPC) in Berlin, Germany, to reconcile relationships across cultural, religious and political divides. The IPC serves as a point of contact for migrants from Afghanistan and Iran and provides opportunities to share God's love for all people.

Recently a few area churches have joined IPC in collaborating to open a "Connections Café." Although the café is new, Alethia says it holds great hope. "We are optimistic the café will provide space for people from the church, a local refugee camp and members of the German church communities to connect, build relationships and better understand one another."

Being the hands and feet of Christ by connecting migrants and refugees with pastoral care, medical and social services and legal help is a passion of the Whites, who have served in

Berlin since 2013.

In the midst of uncertainty for asylum seekers, Ryan and Alethia see small signs of hope, such as joy expressed when individuals share testimonies of feeling peace and calmness during their lengthy asylum interview, which they attribute to the presence

of Jesus. Of course, the Whites also

see discouragement of asylum seekers, given the length of time they must wait for a decision and the challenges of life, language, housing and employment in another culture. Despite the challenges, most asylum seekers are eager to begin a new life.

.....
Support Ryan and Alethia in Germany.

pcusa.org/donate/E200500



God's mission along the U.S.-Mexico border

Putting faith into action

Omar Chan serves as facilitator for the Presbyterian Border Region Outreach (PBRO), assisting in faithful, effective mutual mission to address the root causes of poverty, to work for reconciliation amid cultures of violence, and to share the good news of God's saving love through Jesus Christ at ministry sites along the nearly 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border.

During Lent last year Omar and his wife, Amanda Craft, were asked to help plan a binational communion service at Anapra Crossing, in Anapra, New Mexico—a site of historic significance where families and loved ones on both sides of the border come to be present for one another and to touch each other between the links in the fence that separate them. The U.S. Border Patrol monitored the gathering but did not once interrupt the respectful worship service of prayer, singing, Scripture reading and communion. Communion was served in both Spanish and English as two worlds came together in that transformative moment.

Omar and Amanda have learned that true mission isn't born out of a sense of charity, but rather in speaking with truth and love. "We want to work with our ministry partners to find how God's justice can be realized," they say.

.....
Support Omar on the U.S.-Mexico border.

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A vibrant movement of God's Spirit marches forward

More than 94 million people belong to churches founded or cofounded by Presbyterian missionaries. The Presbyterian movement that started these churches began 180 years ago, and the same Spirit that gave birth to these churches continues to work through Presbyterian World Mission. The way we do mission has changed over time, but we continue to see God's reign expand. Poverty is being alleviated, Christ's good news is being shared, and adversaries are being reconciled. Serving alongside global partners, Presbyterian mission co-workers lend hearts, hands and voices to this movement. Your gift to mission co-worker support will help transform lives in the name of Christ. Please give generously.

Give by check: Make your check payable to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and use the envelope provided in this magazine.

Give online: pcusa.org/donate/E132192

