

Missionary Connections

A beautiful sight walking from the sanctuary to the Fellowship Hall is the slate hallway looking onto the courtyard and fountain. This walkway is filled with flags representing the many countries where our church has friends or family members working as Christ's ambassadors. A map displays their names and a printed list of names and birthdays is available there. St. Matthews Baptist Church has a heritage of commitment and passion for international missions.

Our church has been blessed with many opportunities to be involved in the lives of international missionaries. Former seminary students, residents of our missionary house or family members -- we have embraced many in our church family who are now serving the Lord overseas. There are 52 families in active service, a total of 185 people, plus 12 retired missionaries with close ties to SMBC. They work in over 30 different countries on every inhabited continent. Of these 185 Christian representatives abroad, 85 are children or 'missionary kids'. These adults and children depend on us for support including prayer, personal contact and financial offerings.

Frequent prayer requests are for personal safety and health, strength and guidance in daily responsibilities, emotional and physical health of family in the States, and the strong working of the Holy Spirit in their lives and ministries. Families routinely send updates with specific requests for prayer and other help. These missionary newsletters are posted on the bulletin board next to the Media Center on the second floor of the Christian Life Center building.

When the Lord calls a person to international mission service, then the person must choose a method of support. Missions sending and support agencies include the International Missions Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Global Missions Board of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). These agencies provide help with training, travel, health care, expenses on the field and retirement benefits as well as links to co-workers on the field. The mission boards are also responsible for transmitting financial requests from the field to local churches and for relaying our offerings to the mission ministries abroad. Of our families in full-time active service in international mission ministries, 6 chose to be sent and supported by CBF, 40 by IMB and 6 by other support agencies.

We support international missions by our offerings to the CBF and the IMB especially at Christmas time. Over 5,400 full-time international missionaries (103 in CBF, 5,376 in IMB) working through these and other 'sending agencies' depend on churches like ours. By our prayer and financial support we are able to reach out to over 1,470 people groups for Christ. But over 5,000 ethnic people groups are still unreached with any Gospel witness according to latest estimates. For more information on these missionary support and sending agencies, please visit their web sites: www.IMB.org and www.CBFonline.org.