

IMB Appoints 101 Missionaries in Tennessee

Nate and Joanna Whitmire* told God they would go anywhere if He called them to missions. "It's not like He'd ever call us to Africa," they thought.

But He did.

"We had a heart that was, in theory, open to whatever God wanted to do—we wanted to be in His will, but for whatever reason ... Africa was this big, black hole that was just not a place that we would consider," Nate said.

After the Whitmires, both from South Carolina, attended a Catalyst conference five years ago, however, their outlook changed.

"God really just hit us with the realization that our hearts had been hard in that area and that we didn't love who He loved," Joanna said.

The Whitmires, along with their four children, will serve in sub-Saharan Africa.

They are two of 101 International Mission Board missionaries appointed May 23 during a service at Brentwood (Tenn.) Baptist Church. Forty-one of the missionaries have served previous terms, bringing the current missionary count to 4,919.

The call to be God's heart, hands and voice to unreached people groups overseas is not an easy task, but these new missionaries have committed to be obedient to the Lord—no matter the cost.

From Fear to Joy

Both Mike and Rachael Kim's* parents immigrated to California from Korea to give their children the "American Dream"—a

better education, good jobs and lots of money. God gave Mike and Rachael another dream: to share the gospel with those who have never heard.

Raised in a Southern Baptist church, Rachael was fascinated—and horrified—by missionaries' stories. She associated suffering, hardship and martyrdom with missions.

But when she was in high school, a missionary spoke at her church about the number of unreached people groups, and Rachael's heart became burdened for the lost. After a short-term missions trip to South America, she felt God's calling loud and clear.

Mike did not submit so easily to God's call. Among other things, he did not want to leave the comfortable lifestyle his parents had worked so hard to provide for him.

"My biggest fear in life was becoming a missionary," he said.

But on a missions trip to East Asia during college, Mike was troubled when he saw people worshipping false gods. For the first time in his life, he became angry with God—how could He let these people who had never heard of Him go to hell? Who would God send to tell these people about Jesus? God clearly answered that it was Mike's own task.

"My biggest fear has become my greatest joy—just sharing the gospel and taking it to people who have never heard of Jesus Christ," he said.

The Kims, along with their two children, will serve in East Asia.

Feels Like Home

In high school, Aaron Meyers* questioned his Christian faith. When he miraculously survived a serious car accident, he created his own reasons for why he had survived. But when another wreck just nine days later landed him in the hospital,

he began to seriously think about his life—and his faith.

“I didn’t really experience life until I almost experienced death,” Aaron said. “In that moment, I said, ‘God, whatever You want me to do, wherever You want me to go, I’m willing.’”

Missions is what God laid on his heart. Years later when he and his wife, Sheila,* were serving in Europe as short-term missionaries, their call to missions was severely tested.

During their first year of service, they were forced to spend 90 days in a neighboring country due to visa issues, Aaron had to have emergency surgery and two family members back in the U.S. died. During those trials, Sheila said they doubted their call and just wanted to return home to California.

But when they were able to go back to their country of service, God had truly solidified their call to that country.

“We were able to push forward because we knew that God has us there for a purpose,” Aaron said. “God has called us there, and until He calls us to go somewhere else, that’s where He has us.”

The Meyers family will return to Europe to serve.

The Cross

Brentwood’s senior pastor, Mike Glenn, challenged the appointment service audience to respond to God’s call on their own lives.

“As our world keeps getting smaller and we keep saying technology will do this, and technology will do that, we still cannot replace the significance of a person telling the story of Jesus to another person,” he said. “As you see those celebrating their calling and their placing, don’t forget you’re called, you’re placed, just like they are.”

Basing his message on 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, IMB President Tom Elliff noted that the cross is a “dividing point”—everyone in

the world is simply either saved or lost. This realization, he said, will shatter prejudices and simplify our purpose. "You'll just see that you have one responsibility, and that is to share the Gospel with everybody."

The cross is also a "demanding possession," Elliff continued. One is not a missionary just because of his or her geographic location or by living a good, Christ-like life.

"Being a missionary is about confessing—not just carrying the cross, but confessing the cross: 'I am a blood-bought child of God,'" he said.

The next appointment service is scheduled for Sept. 12 at First Baptist Church in Hendersonville, N.C., during the trustee meeting Sept. 11-12 in Ridgecrest, N.C. Both will be held during Emeritus Recognition Week, Sept. 7-13, at LifeWay's Ridgecrest Conference Center.

**Names have been changed.*

Laura Fielding is a writer for International Mission Board.