

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WORLD MISSIONS

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As followers of Christ who diligently and responsibly grapple with the Savior's command to take His gospel to the world, we must keep both past and future in view as we navigate the present. Looking to the past, we place ourselves with that privileged group of brothers and sisters who witnessed our resurrected Lord's return to heaven. His final words to them in the first century ring out to us in the twenty-first century as well: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NIV).

Since its very foundation, the Assemblies of God has prioritized the task of world evangelism and pursued that goal with a clear Pentecostal distinctive. We are Christ's witnesses in the power of the Spirit of Christ. I can report our ministries in 193 nations around the world have ever-deepening roots and continue to grow. In most of these nations, local Assemblies of God fellowships partner with our missionaries and multiply the spiritual harvest. In addition, World Assemblies of God Fellowship members have sent out over 4800 missionaries from their nations to reach the lost and the unreached.

We must also look forward, keeping our eyes on the horizon of Christ's Second Coming as we share the gospel with the lost and unreached around the globe. The task before us has never been greater. When you visit our AGWM display and pick up your copy of this year's *Passport* notebook, or as you read the special edition of *WorldView* magazine distributed at this General Council, you will see that the world's harvest field continues to grow exponentially. The numbers of lost and unreached are staggering—3.2 billion people! Of that number, 86 percent *have never met a believer!*

In our continued response to world need, we must position ourselves for growth. We are connecting with some 345 unreached people groups, with plans to quickly grow that number to 369. To respond to this need, we need personnel—workers for the harvest fields. We are praying fervently that the Lord of the harvest will sovereignly multiply the numbers of missionaries and missionary associates we approve and send out.

I can joyfully report a groundswell of missions-hearted next-generation candidates. At the fourth World Missions Summit in January 2017 in Houston, nearly 2000 college and university students responded to an invitation to "give a year and pray about lifetime" of missions ministry. My heart is that we prepare ourselves through operations and programs that support our missionary body so we are up to speed and have the infrastructure to invite and equip these newest participants in our worldwide mission.

I am deeply grateful every month as I review the financial support of our worldwide missionary family and write to our Fellowship's many contributors—both individual and congregational. The Assemblies of God continues to faithfully acknowledge its stewardship responsibility to reach the lost and unreached. As we look to the future, I pray we will continue to experience a healthy and growing revenue stream to support the missionaries God is calling.

Some of our newest doors of opportunity are some of our greatest challenges. Across the Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, secular, animist, and Jewish populations and in other spiritually dark regions, we face incredible restrictions on missionary and Christian activity. We must respond wisely and proactively, developing creative-access platforms that allow us to stay and minister. Business as Mission continues to ramp up, with Christ-focused entrepreneurs partnering with and training our personnel to open and operate service industries perceived as vital in their host nations. Last November the AGWM Executive Committee committed to work together to create an umbrella organization to take this initiative to a new level. We are absolutely committed to keeping business secondary to mission, while promoting the gospel going forth in new and creative directions.

As you read our special edition of *WorldView*, take to heart our continuing commitment to reach refugees and internally displaced people. People are connecting with our missionaries and partner churches across Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, creating an unprecedented avenue for gospel witness. Some of our churches are now houses of worship for literally hundreds of former Muslims. Paul Trementozzi, AGWM Europe regional director, reports that over 20,000 Muslims have turned to faith in Jesus Christ across Europe *just in connection with our affiliated outreaches*.

The continuing realities of missionary life keep all of us praying. Visa restrictions, for example, are a concern. To be an effective missionary requires a Bible in one hand and a visa in the other. Many of our missionaries regularly share prayer requests regarding visa renewals, and I would invite you to join us as intercessory partners.

Missiologically, AGWM remains grounded and growing within our framework of reaching, planting, training and serving (RPTS) as expressed through eight core values, all toward one purpose: *so all can hear*. Across our districts, our constituency has supported us and remains faithful to the cause of Christ worldwide. I trust the Lord to honor our current efforts and prayerful proposals and believe a wonderful harvest of souls will emerge in the next five to ten years.

Our Executive Committee faithfully demonstrates great unity and camaraderie. Whether the goal is a growing emphasis on unreached people groups, new partnerships with national AG fellowships, or our expanding gospel influence across the refugee community, we we know the best is yet to come.

Former AGWM Executive Director Loren O. Triplett made famous this statement, “We dare not measure our success against anything but the unfinished task.” J. Philip Hogan, another former executive director and missionary statesman, said, “Success...would be measured by our gains in churches, not endeavors.” With over 367,000 churches planted throughout the World Assemblies of God Fellowship, we continue to move forward with a holy dissatisfaction, always desiring to be used in greater ways by the Holy Spirit to reach the lost, plant the church, train believers, and serve the poor and suffering.

Will you join us in believing for a succession of church planting miracles? Will you envision with us multitudes of former Muslims, Hindus, animists, secularists, Jews, and Buddhists acknowledging Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and being integrated into these church miracles?

So all can hear!