

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WORLD MISSIONS

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The apostle Paul said in relationship to the body of Christ, "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Corinthians 12:26, ESV).

Many of us are familiar with the story of Adoniram Judson, the first Protestant missionary sent out from the United States. Judson's goal, shared with his young wife, was to go to India and preach the gospel. Prohibited by the East India Company from evangelizing Hindus in India, they were redirected to Burma (modern-day Myanmar). His first and second wives died there, along with several of Judson's children and team members. He was stricken with all kinds of physical issues, was imprisoned, and suffered for his faith; but through it all, he stayed faithful to his calling.

His son Edward wrote this about his father: "Success and suffering are vitally and organically linked. If you succeed without suffering, it is because someone suffered for you; if you suffer without succeeding, it is in order that someone else may succeed after you."

Today, around the world, the Church is suffering. Franklin Graham stated in 2017 that "reports show that 215 million Christians experienced high or extreme levels of persecution last year" in the top 50 World Watch List countries. One writer puts the truth of persecution and suffering this way: "The truth is two thirds of the 2.3 billion Christians [evangelical and nominal] in the world today live...in dangerous neighbourhoods. They are often poor. They often belong to ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities. And they are often at risk" (BBC, 11/12/2013).

The Assemblies of God around the globe is experiencing persecution and suffering. This year flooding in Africa, India, and Bangladesh caused immense damage and loss of life. This year over 200 non-AG churchgoers in Sri Lanka were killed in coordinated explosions on Easter Sunday, causing a loss of attendance in AG churches. This year the shooting of an AG pastor and his son along with four others in a church service in Burkina Faso brought international media attention. This year the ongoing economic and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela escalated. This year the crackdown on the growing and thriving Cuban church put believers, who are already targeted, even more in harm's way. This year an AG missionary was arrested and detained for more than 30 days, and others have been forced to leave their countries. This year the most-populated country in the world is mounting a campaign of intimidation on our personnel. The stories go on and on.

But there is good news! The churches of the Assemblies of God are persevering. They are growing. They are marching on. They are preaching the gospel. They are seeing healings, water baptisms, and Spirit baptisms. They are defying the gates of hell.

This year AGWM is declaring its mission with courage and boldness: **We will establish the church among all peoples everywhere.** We will do this by reaching, planting, training, and serving. We will utilize creative means, such as Business As Mission. We will move forward with passion, fervor, and vision. We will persevere in spite of hostility, danger, and demonic strongholds. Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18, ESV). AGWM is all in, fully committed to serve our Savior in the completion of His mission. **We will establish the church among all peoples everywhere.** No people group, no country, no

language, no demonic stronghold, no man-made barriers can prevail. Jesus, build Your church—and use us!

I ask you to hear the words of this hymn that calls us to humble commitment to our part in the Great Commission:

The Songs of the Reaper
By W. A. Spencer, 1886

Verse 1

The seed I have scattered in springtime with weeping,
And watered with tears and with dews from on high;
Another may shout when the harvester's reaping,
Shall gather my grain in the "sweet by and by."

Verse 2

Another may reap what in springtime I've planted,
Another rejoice in the fruit of my pain,—
Not knowing my tears when in summer I fainted
While toiling sad-hearted in sunshine and rain.

Verse 3

The thorns will have choked, and the summer suns blasted
The most of the seed which in springtime I've sown;
But the Lord who has watched while my weary toil lasted
Will give me a harvest for what I have done.

Refrain

Over and over, yes, deeper and deeper
My heart is pierced through with life's sorrowing cry,
But the tears of the sower and songs of the reaper
Shall mingle together in joy by and by.
By and by, by and by,
By and by, by and by,
Yes the tears of the sower and songs of the reaper
Shall mingle together in joy by and by.

For our international AG partners and our missionaries who are on the front line in the battle for souls and the establishment of the Church and for local congregations who are suffering for their faith, I ask us to pause and bow in intercession for them. I ask us to pray for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to encourage them to be bold in their faith and witness.