

Church with mission roots in Brazil helps missionaries

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By Laura Frase

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WorldconneX and Texas Baptists are helping Don and Angie Finley return to Brazil after a prolonged absence from their 11-year mission home. And in the process, the missions network located a Corsicana church rich in Brazil's missionary history to fund part of the couple's mission.

The Finleys originally were appointed as missionaries by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board but had to leave the mission field when they refused to sign the controversial 2000 Baptist Faith & Message statement.

"We never wanted to leave," Mrs. Finley said. "We came back to the United States with the call of God stronger than ever back in Brazil and no way to get there."

The Brazilians offered an open invitation for the couple to return, but the Finleys had to find a way to finance their mission.

Mrs. Finley acknowledged they felt intimidated about raising their own money for the mission trip. As IMB missionaries, they did not have to

appeal to individual churches for financial support.

“Friends would say we were so lucky to not have to worry about it, but would also add that we were missing a blessing,” she said.

The couple would always laugh it off and not understand how it was a blessing.

“It really was such a blessing to meet people,” they discovered. “We now have a close relationship with churches all over.”

WorldconneX helped the Finleys make the connections they needed.

After an interview with the Finleys, “it was all about what is the next step,” said Bill Tinsley, the missions network’s leader, explaining the typical procedure WorldconneX follows. “We look at what’s God’s vision for you, and how can we get you there.”

Tinsley then sought churches for an appropriate match. WorldconneX activates churches by “taking all the resources of a church—their professions, passions—and looking at what God is doing in the world strategically to decide where to send people,” Tinsley said.

That led to First Baptist Church in Corsicana.

William Bagby, Southern Baptists’ first missionary to Brazil, was an early pastor of the Corsicana church. Because of the church’s historic connection with Brazil and a personal connection with Tinsley, First Baptist in Corsicana pledged \$8,000 to get the Finleys back in action.

First Baptist Church in San Angelo, First Baptist Church in Amarillo and Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston also will support the couple, along with some Baptist General Conference churches, Baptist churches in Kentucky and several individuals.

Once the Finleys are in Brazil, WorldconneX will continue helping through frontline services, including international money transferring and insurance.

Before they left Brazil, the Finleys had implemented a center that trained career missionaries and lay leaders for churches. They began the program because the number of Brazilian missionaries was growing rapidly, but they were having problems, largely due to lack of adequate training, Mrs. Finley said.

The Brazilians also developed programs to send Christians out internationally to “live incarnationally” in other cultures, she noted.

“It’s exciting, because we’re not only sending missionaries into Brazil, but we’re helping Brazilians send missionaries to Muslim countries where we would never be welcomed or accepted, but Brazilians are accepted,” said David Edwards, pastor of First Baptist Church in Corsicana.

The Finleys are eager to return to Brazil and will have plenty of work to do because “the Brazil mission movement is exploding,” Mrs. Finley said.

“I sometimes feel overwhelmed to be part of God’s plan through the Brazilian Baptist movement,” Finley said. “We feel this is a multiplying ministry.”

With a gift of \$250,000 from the BGCT, WorldconneX will continue connecting, activating and providing frontline service for others like the Finleys.

“We are just so grateful for WorldconneX and Texas Baptists for making it all possible. We hope to be connected to them for a long time,” Finley said.

in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.