

Africa journey inspires SBC president to missions challenge

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UGANDA (BP)—The sun hung low on the horizon as the boat slowly chugged to the banks of the remote Buziri Island in Uganda’s Lake Victoria.



SBC President Fred Luter on the way to an island village on Lake Victoria. (Photo by Joseph Rose/BP) Weary from the six-hour ride, six American pastors, including Southern Baptist Convention President Fred Luter, and a handful of International Mission Board personnel, looked with anticipation to the nearing shore.

The sturdy wooden fishing boat had looked comfortable enough at the beginning of the journey at a muddy river’s edge after an hour-long bus ride from the town of Jinga. But the boat packed with supplies became more confining to its passengers the longer the journey across the water lasted. Southern Baptists provided the supplies, boat and its motor through gifts to the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, noted the immediate impact of being in such a remote location.



Daniel Park, pastor of New Song Korean Church in Carrollton, trains a group of Ugandan Christians on an island on Lake Victoria in Uganda. (Photo by Joseph Rose/BP) “It’s just hard for me to believe in the day and time that we’re living in, people are living in such conditions,” he said of the isolated island without electricity. “And, to get off the boat and to walk among the people—how receptive they were to us.

“That says a lot about the missionaries who are here ... the relationships that they have made. It was a very humbling time to walk around that village.”

Luter joined an ethnically diverse team of pastors visiting Uganda and the Horn of Africa—Daniel Park of New Song Korean Church in Carrollton; Alan Chan of Mandarin Baptist Church in Los Angeles; Ramon Medina of Champion Forest Baptist Church’s Hispanic ministry in Houston; James Dixon of El-Bethel Baptist Church in Fort Washington, Md.; and Ron Lentine of Myrtle Grove Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla.

The team met a handful of local Christians on the island to worship and

pray together. Then, Park led a session of Training for Trainers, a church-planting course on how to disciple new believers to reach and train others.

“I want our church to be fully engaged to spread the gospel, the Living Water, and that has been my burden throughout this trip,” Park said.



Missionary Richard Lee

from California (right) prays for a woman on an island on Lake Victoria in Uganda. Lee visited the island with other missionaries and visiting American pastors to prayerwalk and share the gospel. (Photo by Joseph Rose/BP) During the 10-day journey, the challenges of reaching people groups in the Horn of Africa with the gospel became a reality to the pastors. They experienced travel difficulties in accessing remote areas. For instance, after waiting more than five hours for a connecting flight into one of the most unreached parts of the Horn of Africa, the group's flight was canceled.

But pastors Park, Chan and Lentine used that time to share their faith with several Chinese business professionals, a Korean woman and a Ugandan man also waiting for flights.

Chan “engaged in a conversation with a Chinese man who just happened to be there and needed to hear a word from God,” Lentine said. Park “ended

up meeting someone who spoke Korean and also needed to hear the gospel. We soon realized that what we thought was a delay in our schedule was actually a God-ordained event because God had a schedule of his own.”

After sleepless nights in the African heat, canceled flights, exhausting boat rides and many hours of travel on bumpy roads, Luter told the pastors: “There just needs to be more of a commitment from myself as a local pastor, from my church as a local church, but also from members of our convention that we really need to do all that we can to dig deeper to support the International Mission Board. There is such a great need in the Horn. There is such a great need in Uganda. And in order to meet those needs, we really need the members of our churches and the members of our convention to step up to the plate.”

A “great harvest” of people need to hear the gospel, he said. “But we need the resources in order to reach them. So, I’m going to take that as a personal challenge back to my church and to my congregation. I trust and pray that other congregations throughout the Southern Baptist Convention will do the same thing.”