

IMB announces 1,132 missionaries and staff retired or resigned

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NASHVILLE (BP)—The Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board announced 983 missionaries and 149 stateside staff have left the organization during the past six months as a result of its voluntary retirement and resignation programs.

IMB President David Platt told trustees the organization now expects to operate a balanced budget for 2017 due to its 2015-16 organizational "reset" processes and Southern Baptists' generosity.

"The IMB is now in a much healthier financial position," Platt said during the board's Feb. 22-24 meeting near Richmond, Va. "Due to increased giving from Southern Baptist churches, Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering giving are trending upward."

The number of missionaries on the field now is around 3,800, according to IMB figures. The last time the number of missionaries dropped below 4,000 was in 1993, at 3,954, according to reports in the SBC Annual.

"While this news is disappointing to all of us, we know we have prayed for God's leadership. Therefore, we will trust God in this season and with our future as Southern Baptists," SBC President Ronnie Floyd said.

"This reset is not regress or retreat. Southern Baptist churches must see this as a fresh calling to reaching the world for Christ. Now is the time to go forward with a clear vision and an aggressive strategy to make disciples of all the nations for Christ."

Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, expressed grief over the staff cutbacks.

“My heart is broken to hear of the large number of missionaries and staff who are leaving the IMB. My prayers are with them as they transition,” Page said.

“However, most of all, my prayers are focused on the fact of the massive lostness in our world. May God bless Dr. Platt as he leads us in a new strategy to see a new day of intentional evangelism around our world.”