

Wanda Lee announces plans to retire from WMU

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Wanda Lee told the national Woman's Missionary Union board of directors she plans to retire as the Southern Baptist missions auxiliary's executive director-treasurer.

WMU will appoint a committee to seek Lee's successor. Similar searches for a chief executive of the organization in relatively recent history suggest the process likely will take about a year, but no specific timeline is set, WMU officials said.

Lee pledged to continue to lead WMU until a new executive is named and to help facilitate a smooth transition.

"It is my duty to give sufficient notice, and it's my desire to ensure a seamless transition as the committee seeks someone with a fresh vision for our future," Lee said. "May God bless the new leader of national WMU as he's blessed me on my leadership journey."

Lee was elected executive director of national WMU in January 2000. She is the only woman in the history of WMU who also served as national president, an office she held 1996 to 2000. Lee served as president of Georgia WMU from 1993 to 1996. She and her husband, Larry, served as missionaries with the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board—now International Mission Board—from 1979 to 1981.

Assisting missionaries returning to the U.S.

During the board meeting, WMU also addressed ways it is assisting IMB personnel who have elected to take a voluntary retirement incentive since

the mission board announced efforts to address budget shortfalls.

“We have grieved these missionaries coming home as a WMU family, with IMB and with our churches,” Lee said. “But the world has come to our nation, and God, in his sovereignty, is bringing home one of our greatest resources—experienced missionaries who know various languages and cultures—and we need to help them during this transition.”

National WMU maintains a database of available missionary housing made available by churches, associations and individuals and make that information available to IMB to share with their personnel.

In addition, many state WMUs are assisting missionaries as they return through special retreats, counseling, networking, updating resumes and monetary gifts.

“I pray this (reduction of field personnel) will wake us up out of our complacency, that we will truly understand the depth of lostness in our world and embrace our responsibility to share Christ,” Lee said.

In other business, the Executive Board of national WMU:

- Awarded nearly \$184,000 in endowments, grants and scholarships in partnership with the WMU Foundation.
- Approved \$155 million as the 2016 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions goal.
- Approved \$70 million as the 2017 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions goal.