

# WMU celebrates 125 years of missions

June 13, 2013

HOUSTON (BP)—Missions stories from Africa, Asia and the Americas highlighted the 125th anniversary celebration of national [Woman's Missionary Union](#) during the group's 2013 missions celebration and annual meeting in Houston.



Laura Thompson, left, opens the final session of the Woman's Missionary Union's 125th anniversary celebration June 10 at the Hilton Americas Hotel in Houston with the Lord's Prayer. (BP Photo by Bill Bangham) With the theme "The Story Lives On," the meeting featured testimonies of missionaries from the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board and North American Mission Board, along with video greetings from WMU partners throughout the world.

Gregg and Donna Fort recounted stories of God's work in an area of Zimbabwe where until recently no evangelical churches existed. Now 14 churches worship in the region.



Wanda Lee, executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union, speaks about the legacy of developing women leaders.



(BP Photo by Bill Bangham) "With over 200 years of missionary experience in our immediate family, (the Forts) owe a tremendous amount to WMU," he told the annual meeting. Fort's parents are Wana Ann Fort and the late Milton Giles Fort Jr., who served as medical missionaries in Zimbabwe nearly 36 years.

Randy and Debbie M., IMB missionaries in South Asia whose last names are withheld for security reasons, told how they distribute audio devices with recordings of the Bible in the country's native languages and follow up

with discipleship training. As a result, they have seen more than 600 people “come into the kingdom and 60 people become pastors,” he said.

“So even in the darkest places among the unengaged where it is very difficult to work, we feel we are in paradise, because God is doing a work that is bigger and so far beyond us,” he added.



Kevin Ezell, (at podium) president of the North American Mission Board and Tom Elliff, president of the International Mission Board, give birthday greetings during the morning session of the 2013 Woman’s Missionary Union. (BP Photo by Bill Bangham) Patrick Coats, a church planting missionary in Homestead, Fla., said God “tackled” him into the ministry. Coats started a community Bible study at a local theater that eventually turned into a church as more people began attending. Eventually, he baptized 30 people.

In addition to the 125th anniversary of WMU, 2013-14 marks the 100th anniversary of missions education programs for girls, as well as the 25th anniversary of WMU’s Second Century Fund, which was birthed at WMU’s centennial to fund leadership training for women worldwide.

In honor of the anniversaries, several denominational leaders offered birthday greetings and presented gifts to WMU. They included Frank Page,

president of the SBC Executive Committee; IMB President Tom Elliff and NAMB President Kevin Ezell; and Raquel Contreras, president of the Baptist World Alliance women's department. Five leaders from Korea Baptist Woman's Missionary Union extended birthday greetings from the Asian Baptist Women's Union.

Missionary Jackie Bursmeyer, who has served in Chile 35 years, attended the 50th anniversary of Girls in Action when she was 13. Now celebrating the 100th anniversary of the missions group, she said, "I don't think I'd be on the field today if not for your prayers and missions education."

Bursmeyer connects with Chileans through children's and women's ministries and through a ministry in which she bakes celebratory cakes for people who have never had birthday cakes in their honor.

#### **In other business:**

- Sook Jae Lee from the Korea Baptist WMU received this year's Dellanna West O'Brien Award for Women's Leadership, named in honor of the past WMU executive director.
- Jay Dennis, pastor of First Baptist Church at the Mall in Lakeland, Fla., introduced an anti-pornography initiative named Join One Million Men, which asks men in churches of all denominations to make a commitment to live pornography-free lives. Dennis and his wife, Angie, are challenging 1 million Christian women to pray for 1 million Christian men to fight pornography.
- WMU representatives re-elected Debby Akerman of South Carolina as WMU president and Rosalie Hunt of Alabama as WMU recording secretary for 2013-14.

Next year's WMU annual meeting is set for June 8-9 in Baltimore, Md.

