

# WMU ministries touch countries ‘from A to Z’

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala.—National Woman’s Missionary Union leaders emphasized the organization’s global reach during reports to the WMU board meeting in mid-January.



Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director-treasurer of national WMU, told the board: “As long as we surrender wholeheartedly to the cause of Christ, we will have a future in kingdom work.” (Photo by Van Payne)

WMU ministries touched 39 countries “from A to Z—from Afghanistan to Zambia” in 2019, Executive Director Sandy Wisdom-Martin told the board.

“When you include ministry partners here at 100 Missionary Ridge

(location of WMU building), the number of countries touched moves from 39 to 65. And then factor in what each of you are doing in your states—it's astonishing," she said. "The breadth and scope of global kingdom impact is stunning and beautiful and humbling."

Wisdom-Martin acknowledged ministry is not always easy, but she insisted it is evident God is at work.

"We need to all commit daily to serve humbly and lead courageously," she said. "As long as we surrender wholeheartedly to the cause of Christ, we will have a future in kingdom work."

"It's not about me or you. It's not about WMU. It is about taking the gospel to those who have never heard. I just happen to believe engaging Christ followers in missions discipleship is critical to the Great Commission. And we are Great Commission people."

## **Banner year for international missions**

Linda Cooper, president of national WMU, said 2019 was a banner year for the organization's international missions efforts.

"We are a national company with a global reach," Cooper said. "Through Pure Water, Pure Love, we provide all (International Mission Board) missionaries with water filters and funded water projects in 12 different countries, including Cuba, India and Liberia—providing clean drinking water for people in need and the opportunity to experience the Living Water."

Cooper reported "more than 1,800 impoverished artisans in 22 countries earned a sustainable wage and find real hope through WorldCrafts," the WMU-sponsored initiative to develop fair-trade businesses among people in poverty around the globe.

“In addition to nearly 200 Christian Women’s and Men’s Job Corps sites in the United States, there are Christian Women’s Job Corps sites in Mexico, West Africa, South Africa, and soon to be Thailand with IMB personnel,” she continued.

Shifting to WMU’s online leadership development opportunities, Cooper reported: “Women from around the world—including Afghanistan, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and Ukraine—take WMU’s Christian Women’s Leadership Center classes, and a second international student just finished all nine courses representing 150 hours of coursework.”

**Cooper and Wisdom-Martin continued to recap some OF the year’s highlights, including:**

- Milestones marking decades of changed lives. Mexico WMU and Nigeria WMU both celebrated 100 years and Taiwan WMU celebrated 60 years. Brazil celebrated 70 years of Royal Ambassadors.
- Following an 18-month collaborative process that included three national WMU staff members traveling to South Korea, WMU signed an historic agreement with Korean nationals on the campus of IMB’s International Learning Center. Koreans will have the rights to WMU’s chronological Bible storying resource, *Tell the Story: Bible Storying for Kids*, to sell in Korea. In exchange, Korea Baptists will translate *Tell the Story* into Korean and gift the translation to WMU.
- After leading Korean WMU for 30 years, Angela Kim passed the mantle of leadership to Joy Lee.
- WorldCrafts welcomed four new U.S.-based artisan groups: Refugee Sewing Society in Clarkston, Ga.; Baptist Friendship House in New Orleans, La.; Christian Women’s Job Corps of Monroe, La.; and Christian Women’s Job Corps of Madison County, Ala.

- National WMU staff members participated in numerous podcasts, panel discussions and task force meetings with various Southern Baptist agencies and entities to discuss strategies to address the needs of refugees and displaced people.
- In addition to encouraging ongoing support of Southern Baptist missionaries through prayer and giving to the missions offerings, WMU maintains a database of approximately 650 available housing options for international missions personnel while on stateside assignment, partners with IMB to host an annual MK Re-Entry retreat, and awards a host of scholarships. WMU also partners each year with NAMB to promote Christmas in August, in which WMU missions groups gather, pack and send needed supplies to North American missionaries.

## **Emphasis on missions discipleship**

“It can get complicated when you try to explain all that WMU does,” Cooper acknowledged. “But when you think about it, we only do three things—compassion ministries, leadership development and missions discipleship. Everything we do fits under one of those three areas ... all with the purpose of making disciples of Jesus who live on mission.”

Cooper offered an example of missions discipleship from a Girls in Action leader in California who told about an outreach event that draws thousands to their church each October.

The GA leader wrote: “Because of the size of our event, we are required to have several paramedics on stand-by. My favorite image of that night was definitely the sight of those GA girls sharing the gospel with the paramedics assigned to our church event. Those things happen ... when we share with our children the importance of the gospel and then model a lifestyle of faith ... living it and sharing it.”

Cooper said one of her dreams is for every church to offer missions discipleship through WMU.

“I believe with everything in me that it is life-changing,” she said. “It sure has changed mine!

“My biggest dream is for everyone on the planet to have a chance to hear and respond to the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, and I believe WMU can play a big role in seeing that come to fruition. We must raise up a generation that will continue to tell the wonderful story of Jesus so they can tell others, who tell others, and on and on until his return ... making disciples of Jesus who live on mission.”

## **Thanks from the mission boards**

Gordon Fort, senior ambassador for the International Mission Board president, thanked WMU for the group’s support and partnership for the cause of missions before introducing his daughter, Lizzy, who served as a journeyman in Central Asia.



Lizzy Fort tells of serving as a journeyman with the International Mission Board in Central Asia, sharing her faith and praying for her new friend, Mary. Her father,

Gordon Fort, senior ambassador for the IMB president, listened along with others gathered at WMU's board meeting. (Photo by Van Payne)

While there, Lizzy told about meeting Mary, who said she had dreamed about Jesus. The two became friends and began studying the book of Luke in Kurdish. However, Lizzy said, Mary began to worry she would be persecuted if she accepted Christ and decided it was too risky, so she quit coming to their Bible study sessions.

"I prayed for her," Lizzy said. "And Mary came back one day and said she felt so lost. We began studying the Bible again. When we read Romans 10:9 about confessing with your mouth that you believe in Jesus, she prayed to receive Christ. ... The lost need to be found."

Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board, thanked WMU for the organization's partnership in helping to raise a record \$61.4 million in 2019 through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions and presented updates related to Send Relief ministry centers and outreach efforts.

The WMU board set \$175 million as the goal for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and \$70 million as the goal for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

WMU's next board meeting will be June 6-7 in Orlando, Fla.