

# WMU urged not to grow weary in doing good

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ST. LOUIS, Mo. (BP)—Missionary Sabastian Vazquez couldn't fight back the tears as he stood before a group of women whose legacy led to four generations of pastors in his family.

Speaking to the 2016 Woman's Missionary Union missions celebration and annual meeting, Sabastian told how a Southern Baptist missionary a century ago handed a Spanish-language evangelistic tract to an illiterate baker named Angel Vazquez, his great-grandfather.

The baker became a Christian and asked the missionary to teach him how to be a pastor, too. His son, grandson and great-grandson followed in his footsteps.

"My family is your legacy," said Sabastian, who serves as a church planter among college students in Toronto. "I tell you that story so you know to never give up. Don't grow weary in doing good, because somewhere out there, there's a baker waiting for a missionary.

"Somewhere ... there's a baker waiting for someone to tell him about the gospel—and that missionary needs someone like you to support him and pray for him, to raise money for him, to give him a water filter, to give him a home to stay in when he goes stateside. He needs you."

**Build on the legacy of women who went before**



Linda Cooper, president of the national Woman's Missionary Union, gives her president's address during the annual WMU missions celebration and annual meeting Monday, June 13 in St. Louis. Cooper encouraged the group of more than 500 women to share Christ "by all means." (Photo by Van Payne) National WMU President Linda Cooper urged WMU to build upon the legacy of the women who had gone before them, such as Annie Armstrong, Fannie E.S. Heck and Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend.

"We are blessed in WMU today because of their contribution, and we are very thankful for the strong foundation they laid for us," Cooper said. "So, now it's our turn to lead WMU forward."

Cooper, elected to her second term as WMU president, noted the retirement of Wanda Lee as executive director and said she had appointed a committee "to find the person whom God has already prepared who will lead WMU forward."

While WMU searches for that person, Cooper told attendees the missions organization would continue to do its work, including missions discipleship, raising support for International Mission Board and North American Mission Board missionaries, job training, providing clean water for missionaries and publishing missions-related books through New Hope Publishers.

## **Continued commitment to WMU**

Lee emphasized her continued commitment to WMU and its mission.

“I believe just as strongly today as I did 16 years ago that WMU is important to the kingdom” of God, Lee said. “We have the opportunity to make a difference. Our charge first and foremost is to be a light to the nations. There is strength in our union. There is strength in our collective purpose of missions. May our song truly be a song for the nations.”

Lee recalled working as a nurse when God called her to missions. When she returned home to serve in the United States, her call to missions did not end, she noted.

“My calling was to go wherever God leads,” she said. “My call has not changed, only the place. No other ministry in Baptist life devotes itself exclusively to missions. What we do matters because we are shining a light.”

## **Keep those birthday cards coming**

Missionary Travis Kearns told participants at the WMU annual meeting about his work among Mormons in Salt Lake City, serving with the North American Mission Board. He noted the loneliness that often comes while serving in a city where he is one of the few evangelical Christians.

He also expressed gratitude for the support of WMU—particularly the hundreds of birthday cards he recently received from WMU groups throughout the country.

“Thank you so much for your support, WMU,” Kearns said. “Thank you for your love. Thank you for your generosity. I want to encourage you to continue to do that, because with your help—by all means—we can reach people, even in our nation, who are lost and don’t know Jesus.”

## **Challenge of staying focused**

Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, told conference participants the hardest part of being a seminary president is keeping the seminary focused on its mission.

“While that is true of a seminary, it’s also true of your church and you personally,” Iorg said. “Our mission is refined by our circumstances. It is not defined by our circumstances. The circumstances you are facing do not define your mission that God has given you. Your mission is to share the gospel.”

## **All Christians called to share the gospel**

Circumstances could refine how and with whom a Christian shares the gospel, but “do not let your circumstances decide whether or not you will share the gospel. Our mission focus must be on reaching people.”

Every Christian is called to share the gospel, he insisted.

“When you accepted the gift of salvation, in that moment you accepted the responsibility to share the gospel,” Iorg said.

Often, Iorg noted, he asks students at the seminary what they plan to do after graduation.

“Sometimes they tell me they want to serve overseas,” he said. “I remind them that we have a large ethnic population right in our area, and I tell them, ‘You have the capacity to plug yourself into the people you think God has led you to serve right here.’”

Spreading the gospel is not about changing locations, he insisted. It’s about reaching people.

“If you will not go across town to minister to Chinese who need the gospel,

you have no business getting on a plane and traveling to a country to serve," he said. "When we share the gospel, we involve our lives in God's eternal purpose. When you involve yourself in sharing the gospel with another person, you connect to God's eternal purpose for the universe."

### **Feeling overwhelmed sometimes**

Goldie Frances, a Southern Baptist missionary serving in South Asia, told participants at the annual meeting she was working as a journalist when she felt called to missions. Now she works with about 20 girls in an educational center.

"Three years ago, these girls could not read or write," she said. "Now they study the Bible. Time is short, and I learn it every day from a different level."

Frances serves in a city with a population of nearly 2 million, which sometimes can feel overwhelming, he acknowledged.

"People ask me, 'How do you do it?'" she said. "I tell them, 'By his (God's) strength and one person at a time.' We rejoice in what God is doing. I thank you all for teaching missions, for being an example for missions. Time is short; life is short."

### **Also at the WMU annual meeting:**

- Mindy Jamison of Friendship Baptist Center in Des Moines, Iowa, received the Dellanna West O'Brien Award for Women's Leadership Development.
- Tana Hartsell of Concord, N.C., was elected recording secretary of WMU.
- National Acteens panelists Sarah Golden of Eastern Hills Baptist

Church in Montgomery, Ala., and Ana Sandoval of Freeman Heights Baptist Church in Garland, presented personal Christian testimonies and prayed for missionaries with birthdays.