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Missionaries in Sub-Saharan Africa support NAMB missionaries

by Caroline Anderson*, posted Thursday, April 09, 2020 (18 days ago)

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) -- This week, the International Mission Board's Sub-Saharan Affinity has committed to pray for and encourage missionaries serving with the North American Mission Board in the week leading up to Easter Sunday and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

Just as the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering supports IMB missionaries, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering supports North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionaries. One hundred percent of each offering supports Southern Baptist missionaries.

This Monday, Daren Davis, the IMB leader for Sub-Saharan Africa missionaries, introduced their weeklong emphasis in a weekly devotional. Davis urged the group to keep their focus during this season on a gracious God who desires for the message of the Gospel to penetrate thoughts and actions. Missionaries were encouraged to read Galatians 6:9: "So we must not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up" (HSCB).

Using the chapter and verse number, personnel in Sub-Saharan Africa were challenged to pray for NAMB missionaries at 6:09 each day.

Leadership also encouraged missionaries to reach out, by email or phone, to a NAMB missionary to pray for and support them in the days leading up to Easter.

Many missionaries in Africa already had connections with NAMB missionaries. Those who didn't were directed to NAMB's website to find contact information.

Andy Pettigrew, the affinity stateside associate for Sub-Saharan Africa, said as fellow church planters, they want to stand in support and solidarity with missionaries in North America.

"In times of great struggle, I can't help but think about the scene in 'Lord of the Rings' when the beacon of Minas Tirith is lit. When they sound the cry for help, the others around Middle Earth answered," Pettigrew said. "As co-laborers in other parts of the globe, we want to say that, as we labor for the furtherance of the church around Africa, we are with our fellow workers in North America as well."

IMB President Paul Chitwood echoed the need and desire to stand together.

"I am beyond thrilled to see so many of our overseas missionaries, of their own initiative, giving to the Annie Armstrong Offering, especially this year," Chitwood said. "Never has the need for the Gospel been greater in our nation and we are seeing evidence that [the coronavirus] is creating a new openness to the Gospel."

Stories of how the COVID-19 pandemic is opening doors to the Gospel are emerging from around the globe. NAMB President Kevin Ezell said the Gospel is advancing in virus epicenters in the U.S.

"Every day I'm hearing about how our missionaries are serving their communities and bringing the hope of Jesus in times of such uncertainty," Ezell said. "Many are at risk themselves because they serve in some of the virus hotspots like New York City and New Orleans. We are doing everything we can to support them and keep them on the field. ..."

"It's so encouraging to hear about the prayers and support coming from brothers and sisters in Christ in Sub-Saharan Africa. Our Southern Baptist family is so incredibly faithful, and we are grateful for each one of them."

Pettigrew said though it might be tempting for Christians, both in the U.S. and in Sub-Saharan Africa, to look inward and tend to their own needs, the call to rally together and work toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission still remains.

"When we think about the spread of the Gospel among the nations, we believe that comes in and through the local church," Pettigrew said. "There has never been a greater time for collaboration."



Pettigrew recognizes it is hard for churches to meet, and it's even harder to think about launching a church when public gatherings are prohibited. But he said even though the pandemic presents many challenges to church planting, evangelism and discipleship, both in the U.S. and in Africa, incredible opportunities are opening.

Digital connectedness has made evangelism and discipleship possible. Even in these unprecedented times, God has a plan to advance His church and His Kingdom.

"Ultimately, we want to send the message that we do want to see the work of the Gospel propelled with even greater intensity during this time of great global challenge," Pettigrew said. "We believe that God wants the spread of the Gospel to take place in and through local churches. We're believing this will happen."

Southern Baptists have faithfully prayed and given financially during crises. Pettigrew said this pandemic is another historical marker where the Lord will use His church to advance His Kingdom both in North America and around the world.

Chitwood emphasized the importance of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

"Even in this difficult time, I'm praying that Southern Baptists will still give generously through the Annie Armstrong Offering to support mission work through the North American Mission Board," Chitwood said. "NAMB is no less dependent on the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering than IMB is dependent upon the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Because of the extreme generosity of Southern Baptists as they give through these offerings to see our nation and the nations reached for Christ, thousands of Southern Baptist missionaries are supported, and thousands of churches are planted in North America and overseas."

Learn more and give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering to support Southern Baptist missions in North America.

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