

# Missionaries commissioned in Annual Meeting celebration

NEW ORLEANS (BP) – Rachel grew up with a deep understanding of what the missionary life looked like. She didn't learn it at church, though. She learned it as she played with her cousins and sat around a family holiday table and heard her aunts and uncles share their adventures of watching God work across the globe.

Her grandparents, though not missionaries themselves, had instilled in her parents, aunts, and uncles a love for the nations. Of their four children, two became missionaries with Southern Baptists' International Mission Board (IMB).

In college, Rachel met Tyler English. He grew up on the mission field. While the IMB missionary kid life held many adventures and ways for him to plug into his parents' ministry, he always loved seeing how his parents approached ministry as a team.

“For years, I was able to witness the Gospel being shared firsthand, all while playing a supportive role in my parents' work,” he shared. “Through this experience, I became confident in my calling to serve Jesus on the mission field.”

Now, Tyler and Rachel are headed to Guatemala, using their experience as parents and passion for orphan care to serve in the Americas and “empower the local church to raise up the next generation for Christ.”

They're excited to raise their three daughters, Asher (age five), Graycen (age three), and Wrenley (age one) on the mission field, continuing the tradition and instilling a love for the nations in their children.

Tyler and Rachel are two of the 79 missionaries recognized at

the IMB's Sending Celebration in conjunction with the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. The Sending Celebration took place June 13 directly following the IMB report to the SBC.

D. Ray Davis, IMB's church mobilization manager, former missionary, and Rachel English's uncle, knows the value of a missions legacy.

"We are part of a big Southern Baptist family, and we have a responsibility to live out the vision and mission of our bigger family," Davis said. "By sharing my love for the nations with Rachel, I was just playing my part in my family for the Kingdom."

Both he and Rachel agree that having a family connection personalized the call to missions. Her Uncle D. Ray and Aunt Kim, who served in Sub-Saharan Africa, and her Uncle Daren and Aunt Shawna, who currently serve in Sub-Saharan Africa, were just normal people who followed the call of God on their lives.

The Englishes weren't the only new missionaries with a legacy of reaching the nations through IMB. Of the 79 newly appointed missionaries present for the Sending Celebration, seven have parents who have served with the IMB on the mission field and 42 have served in some capacity with the IMB.

As the Sending Celebration began after transitioning from the report portion of the morning, Southern Baptist Convention President Bart Barber, senior pastor of First Church, Farmersville, Texas, noted, "What we're about to do is the business of the Convention."

This was affirmed in applause and cheers from messengers. After the missionaries gave short testimonies the crowd stood to their feet, applauding those willing to take the Gospel to the nations.

The IMB celebrates a rich history of reaching the nations. Over its 178-year history, the IMB – previously known as the Foreign Mission Board – has sent more than 25,000 missionaries to the nations. Currently, more than 3,500 are on the field, taking the Gospel to the least reached.

IMB President Paul Chitwood celebrated the 44 churches in 19 different states that the new missionaries represent. They will soon move to 33 countries, “taking the Good News with them, willing to leave behind comforts, friends and family, to answer God’s call upon their lives,” Chitwood said.

“Day in and day out, they’ll trust that God is good and will do good as they labor in the harvest fields where God has called them,” he continued. “They will also trust that you and me, Southern Baptists, will hold the ropes for them as we pray and as you give and send more reinforcements to walk alongside them.

“They’ll work in cities and deserts and mountains. They go to the hard-to-reach places to work among the displaced and dispersed, the forgotten and forsaken by the world, but not by their Creator.

“The stark reality today is that lostness is growing. It’s increasing rapidly – here in our own country and especially in our cities, where we face division and hopelessness but also among the 8 billion people living on Earth today,” Chitwood reminded messengers and guests at the annual meeting, as he urged them to consider the work that has yet to be finished.

Chitwood added, “Together, we will reach every nation, no matter the cost.”

His wife Michelle along with IMB staff members praying in different languages joined him on stage for prayer. He asked attendees online and in person to also be in prayer:

– Pray for these missionaries as they answer God’s call on

their lives and go to the nations.

– Pray that we count those who are hurting and hopeless more significant than ourselves.

– Pray for unity in the Great Pursuit where we count the lost as our highest priority.

– Pray for God to do a mighty work among the nations.

A choir leading worship following the celebration was joined by a virtual choir of missionaries. The next IMB Sending Celebration will be Sept. 27 in Richmond, Va.