

New Southern Baptist missionaries commissioned

GLEN ALLEN, Va. (BP) – Southern Baptists' International Mission Board (IMB) celebrated the appointment of 33 missionaries representing 12 states in a virtual Sending Celebration Feb. 3. The new missionaries will serve in eight of IMB's nine affinities.

The Sending Celebration was streamed from the sanctuary of Mount Vernon Church, Glen Allen, Va. "While we are very sad that we can't gather together for this Sending Celebration in person, we are also very grateful that we can continue the work, continue to send, and even celebrate online," said IMB President Paul Chitwood.



Coales

IMB has categorized the world into nine major "affinity groups." Every IMB-appointed missionary works among a designated affinity group, which is a population that shares a language, history, or culture.

Eric and Lauren Coale responded to God's call to serve in the European Peoples Affinity Group. "We had our American dream all planned out, but through short-term mission trips and studying God's Word, He made it clear to us the lostness in this world and the great need for the Gospel among the nations," Eric

said, in a recorded message shared during the online event.

“God has given us a heart to live amongst and share with those who might not yet realize their need for Him,” Lauren added.



Hirts

The Coales are being sent by First Church, Arnold, Mo., to serve as church planters in the Czech Republic.

Matthew and Heather Hirt will work in the Sub-Saharan Affinity Group, alongside the Nigerian Baptist Convention to train and equip believers to make disciples. Matthew will also serve as a seminary professor.

The Hirts are being sent by Bethel Church, North Vernon, Ind., and Faith Church, Youngsville, N.C., to serve in the Sub-Saharan Africa Affinity Group.

Daniel and Tara Rice were both called to serve on the mission field before they were married, and are now living out their callings together in the East Asia Affinity Group. The couple wrapped up their first three-year term with IMB and are excited to return to the field.



Rices

“When we return, we will be serving all of our teams across Japan through project management and administration,” Tara said. “We will also partner with local Japanese churches through ministry and church planting. We just can’t wait to see what the Lord will do in Japan in the next years.”

The Rices are being sent by North Wake Church, Wake Forest, N.C.

Available job positions for each affinity were shown after the individual missionary testimonies. Current openings include: missions mobilizer for the European Affinity Group; media strategist for the Central Asian Affinity Group; and church planter for the Deaf Affinity Group.

Chitwood concluded the Sending Celebration by asking those watching to consider their role in fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20), and offering gratitude for Southern Baptists’ partnership in sending the 33 newly-commissioned missionaries.

“Thanks to your generosity through praying and giving [to] the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, we’re able to send and sustain missionaries serving all around the world,” he said.

Visit <https://www.imb.org/send/> to learn how churches can send missionaries like the Coales, Hirts, and Rices. Downloadable missionary prayer cards are also available.