



# EVERY CHURCH HAS A MISSIONARY

## *Affinity Stateside Associates (ASAs)*

This spring, the International Mission Board (IMB) did something that may at first seem counterintuitive. Eight missionary families, one from each of eight global affinities (North African and Middle Eastern Peoples; American Peoples; South Asian Peoples; Central Asian Peoples; European Peoples; Sub-Saharan African Peoples; East Asian Peoples; and Southeast Asian Peoples), packed up their belongings and moved to Richmond for a new assignment as Affinity Stateside Associates (ASAs). They came off the mission field to help facilitate a more intentional effort on the part of IMB missionaries to relate to Southern Baptist churches.

### **Send and Serve**

The IMB is driven by the biblical vision of a multitude from every language, people, tribe, and nation knowing and worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ. The IMB recently retooled its mission statement, now touting a desire not just to send but to serve Southern Baptists in carrying out the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. And every Southern Baptist church has a part to play in this mission of global disciple-making.

### **Connect with Missionaries**

For years, churches have often said, “We

don’t know any IMB missionaries.” But with the help of the ASAs, new initiatives are being put in place to connect your church with your IMB missionaries. The ASA for South Asia, \*Greg Cargill, has been partnering closely with SBC of Virginia churches for the past two years from in the field. He and his family have now accepted the call to help reconnect missionaries to churches and churches to missionaries. Cargill said, “The IMB ‘sent ones’ are an extension of the Southern Baptist church, reaching into the far corners of the earth with the Gospel. It is imperative that the ‘sent ones’ not be disconnected from the larger body to which they belong. To operate in this way is to limit our effectiveness as Southern Baptists, both at home and abroad.”

While the ASAs will not themselves be your church’s primary contact with the mission field, they are working within the IMB to train and equip IMB missionaries to reconnect with churches back home. The results are already being felt. The ASAs started their assignment just as COVID-19 began to shut down the world. Many missionaries were displaced, and many came back to the States for a time. This has accelerated the process of reconnecting with churches. Right now, about 10% of IMB missionaries

have received a list of churches with whom to connect. Missionaries will be making phone calls, sending emails, and writing letters to churches. So don’t be shocked if a missionary calls your church to pursue a relationship with you!

### **Relationships Are Built and Strengthened**

Over the next 18 months, the goal is for every Southern Baptist church to be contacted by one of your 3,700 IMB missionaries. The ASAs want your church to know that your IMB missionaries are praying for you, that they appreciate your continued support through prayer and giving, and that they are committed to keeping you updated and building relationships with your church. And as relationships are built and strengthened between IMB missionaries and SBC churches, they commit to celebrating with you as God’s glory spreads to the nations. ■

*\*Name changed for security purposes*

### **RESOURCE:**

To connect your church with a missionary, visit:



or contact your SBCV Mobilization Team:

