



WEEK OF PRAYER *for International Missions*

November 29–December 6, 2026

Southern Baptists observe the **Week of Prayer for International Missions** each year in preparation for the **Lottie Moon Christmas Offering®**. God works through your prayers and generosity to take the gospel to the nations — a gospel that changes everything.

This collection of stories not only introduces you to a few missionaries but allows you to go deeper. You'll see their daily ministries, gospel impact, and current prayer requests.

Will you join in prayer and giving as He continues His work through you?



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PRAY FOR

- + The Murphrees and their team to learn and teach strategies for sharing the gospel.
- + The outreach and church-planting efforts of the local Peruvian church.
- + The good news of Jesus to transform lives in Peru.

Josh and Crystal Murphree, IMB missionaries in Peru, already have a long list of praises and answered prayers since their move last fall to a new city. They aren't novices when it comes to missions or even extreme living, but moving to lead a new missionary team in the city of Cusco came with some initial challenges.

As the team launched, they began praying for immediate needs and asked others to join them:

Housing for their team — Provided within a month.

National church partners — The first church they visited was a gift from God, and they've found a sweet community of believers with whom they can learn and grow and make disciples.

Team unity — "It's kind of like a dream come true," Josh said.

Opportunities to reach people in jungles and mountains with the gospel — God is making a way.

Before this new team moved to Cusco, it had been more than 20 years since the IMB had a long-term presence in this region. This missionary team is an answer to prayer. But God has done more than move them to a new place. He's given the Murphrees and their teammates a vision for how orality as a Great Commission strategy can transform the lives of people who have never heard the name of Christ.

Josh and Crystal explained that, like much of the world's population, most Indigenous peoples of Peru have low literacy rates. Oral strategies involve teaching the Bible in a way that most people prefer to learn. Specific to their context, Josh said, "Rather than focus on literate methods, why don't we teach them how to learn God's Word orally so they too can reproduce what they learn, among others? Because it is a tool they can share with anyone, anywhere, no matter someone's ability to read."

The whole team is passionate about seeing the gospel move into unreached regions by sharing stories from the Bible through oral teaching. Their vision is for an oral training school for Peruvians to learn the Bible and share it, even across cultures — far into jungles and up into the least-reached mountain villages.

The team recently developed an oral training curriculum for local church leaders. Their church warmly received this kind of preparation and is being prepared in a joint effort to reach the lost. God provided partnerships with Peruvian missionaries committed to reaching the unreached. Their IMB team is growing, and U.S. church volunteers are joining the effort. The work in and around Cusco offers opportunities for both short-term and long-term partners, and prayer is always needed.

VICTOR AND MADELINE
HAWTHORNE

PRAY FOR

- + The equipping of Deaf leaders at the Asia Deaf Theological Training Center.
- + Deaf communities to "see" the gospel and believe.
- + More missionaries to join the Hawthornes in serving among the Deaf.

When Victor and Madeline Hawthorne arrived in Chiang Mai, Thailand, they found a handful of Deaf believers worshipping in a noisy market square because they had no building of their own. The International Mission Board missionaries encouraged the group to work, save, and secure a space where they could gather.

Within months, the determined believers rented a modest building. That space became the Asia Deaf Theological Training Center, which, for the past four years, has welcomed Deaf leaders from six nations to study church planting, biblical exposition, and visual communication.

"We didn't think the building could be funded," the Hawthornes said, "but God provided faster than we imagined." Each year the center adds new classes, creating a network that supports Deaf ministries across multiple countries.

Victor lost his hearing when he was 16 months old. He and Madeline first crossed paths in elementary school, but she didn't truly know him until high school. "I saw a group of Deaf kids (including Victor) signing and laughing at lunch," she recalled.

Determined to meet with the group, Madeline taught herself sign language and approached them in the cafeteria, fingerspelling at breakneck speed. Victor stopped her, laughing, "You're giving us whiplash," and the group patiently taught her the proper signs. Their friendship grew, blossomed into courtship, and they married shortly after graduation.

For more than 13 years, the Hawthornes have served with the IMB, passionately reaching one of the world's most overlooked people groups: the 80 million Deaf worldwide, many of whom have never "seen" the gospel.

Their commitment was on full display last year at the Deaflympics in Tokyo. The Hawthornes joined 50 IMB workers and volunteers to engage more than 1,500 participants, sparking 492 gospel conversations. Thirteen people professed faith, and 245 expressed interest in knowing more about the gospel.

After the games ended, a volunteer couple stayed a few days in Tokyo and met a group of Deaf athletes. One athlete asked about a trading pin, "How did you get it?" The volunteer explained the pin's gospel-sharing purpose and handed one to each athlete. Two were moved by the clear visual message, prayed, and followed Christ.

Deaf believers often "see" Jesus before they hear Him. Their visual minds need more than a signed name; they need pictures of the cross, dramatizations of the resurrection and sign-rich liturgies they can watch, feel, and reproduce. Victor now leads others to use "visual gospel" resources — photos, videos, dramatizations, and even simple trading pins — to convey the message in a way the Deaf can truly grasp.



- + Hearts to open to the gospel and for lives to be transformed.
- + Wisdom and boldness for local believers in sharing the good news amid persecution.
- + More laborers to the harvest field.

Dan Fielding sometimes felt like Noah. He labored for months building a dam in the desert, and it often felt like he was living in an Old Testament story. "People were looking at me, and all the village elders thought I was crazy," Dan told his wife, Hope.

Dan and Hope serve in the Horn of Africa with the International Mission Board, meeting great needs among a hard-to-reach people group.

Abdi, Dan's closest friend, shared that he wanted to help his father's village with access to water. Adhan, Abdi's father, lives in a remote desert region. People walked between 12 and 15 miles for water. The area at the time was experiencing a drought. Abdi and Dan determined that a dam would greatly assist the village.

People in the area do not quickly trust outsiders. "You're not just starting from zero with people in this area of the Horn of Africa, you're starting from -3," Hope said.

It took months of Dan working on the dam in the back-breaking heat to prove he was truly there for the people. He lost 30 pounds over four months. Villagers saw how he poured his time and life into the project, and that built trust.

A rumor spread that every day Dan went out to work on the dam, it wouldn't rain. Adhan asked Dan if this was true, because he'd noticed Dan praying, and that it didn't rain on the days he worked on the dam.

Dan told him that God had been gracious, and yes, he had been praying. "But you're going to pray for rain when you're finished, right?" Adhan asked. Dan assured him he would.

"Every day he went from doubting who I was to saying, 'Are you going to pray that it doesn't rain today? Because we need you to pray that it's not going to rain today,'" Dan said. Even in a desert, dry days are appreciated when there is work to do.

Most people didn't think the dam would be successful. But the first time it rained, and the dam held water, their doubts evaporated. The Holy Spirit softened hearts.

The dam supplied water for 800 families in the area.

"Everything was made dependent on water for life," the chief said, expressing his gratitude.

Quoting a common proverb, he added that, "A thirsty man can only be satisfied by water." The dam opened opportunities for the news of "Living Water" to reach this spiritually dry region.

"Living and working in the Horn of Africa feels like the Old Testament," Dan said. "Those stories aren't just stories. We feel that here in this place, where the church is developing. We feel that tension of people who lived in the Old Testament, but we, as Christians, live in the New Testament."

Though Abdi and Adhan haven't committed their lives to Christ, their hearts have softened, and gospel conversations continue.

CAL AND ERIN HIEBSCH



- + This digital engagement ministry to reach more of Poland.
- + More opportunities for the Hiebsches to share the gospel.
- + Poland to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In May 2020, Cal and Erin Hiebsch arrived in Poland as International Mission Board missionaries. They first planted roots in Kraków, a historic university city famed for its cobblestone streets and one of Europe's oldest universities. By January 2021, they traded the medieval charm for the industrial rhythm of Katowice.

While Kraków's cultural cachet was evident and Katowice was a powerhouse of steel and coal, both cities demonstrated societies rapidly slipping from faith. "Poland is the fastest secularizing country in the world," Cal noted, pointing to census data that now shows more agnostics and atheists than ever before.

Cal and Erin turned this cultural shift into an opportunity for digital ministry. Using Facebook as a "gospel radio transmitter," they launched a full-scale social media program in June 2021. Within days, the platform shut them down for breaching "community standards." Undeterred, Cal rebranded the effort, calling the ban "modern persecution" and using the setback to deepen his resolve.

The online work soon bore fruit. On average, they reached more than 600 people a month. Their Polish partner, Conrad, discovered faith in high school, and he leveraged the digital broadcasts to organize street-side evangelism meetings and prayer walks. "It turned a video chat into pavement ministry," Cal said, proving that pixels could lead to personal discipleship.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, the Hiebsches pivoted instantly. They helped launch a Ukrainian digital outreach, fielding thousands of messages in the first weeks. "Facebook breaks down walls of distance across Poland," Cal explained, "letting us reach people we could never otherwise interact with and minister to Poles seeking to gain biblical literacy."

Today their online community lives out the same mission daily, connecting seekers to the Polish Bible League's disciple-making network, praying for requests and guiding people step by step toward understanding Jesus. One chat summed up the ministry's outreach. "A woman asked how to know God's will," Cal shared. "Our moderator replied, 'Do you have a Bible? Read it.' It was only a couple of exchanges, but she left encouraged."

With a population comparable to California's — about 38 million — Poland is dotted with Catholic churches, yet Protestant believers remain few, and many still reject the gospel. "The challenge is not just numbers but perception," Cal said. "People don't understand their need for the gospel."

Amid the hustle, Erin balances this digital ministry with motherhood. "We have two young kids now, so much of my ministry is internal — language coaching, supporting new staff, and trying to start a 'moms in the park' group," she said.

Cal and Erin's story is a testimony to adaptability where ancient universities, modern factories, and social media algorithms converge, yet they still find ways for the gospel to be shared.



PRAY FOR

- + Owen, Mila, and their four children.
- + Wisdom as they mentor local believers.
- + Stamina and grace for leading teams and local leaders in a region resistant to the gospel.

After two decades of raising children and planting churches in South Asia, it was time for International Mission Board missionaries Owen and Mila Stoddard to move their youngest to college in the U.S.

But as they prepared to return to South Asia, they confronted the unsettling reality of their family now scattered across two continents. Yet, just as He did 23 years before, God affirmed Owen and Mila's call to go.

"We became convinced that God wants all people in all places to hear about Jesus Christ," Owen said of their first call. "When that sank in, it wasn't should we be a part of this task, but how? At what level? And as we prayed, we became convinced that we should go."

They packed up their suitcases and young family and landed where they focus on Muslim communities in one of the fastest-growing cities in the world.

To maintain their presence in a region of deep gospel resistance, the Stoddards organize development projects, like putting in wells for clean water or raising small agricultural animals. But the "development work" they treasure most is that of discipling local believers and cultivating leaders.

"I open up my life so they can walk alongside me," Owen said. "We have ways we teach sharing the gospel, but really, I want to do it alongside them. I want them to see me doing it."

Owen was recently encouraged by a message he received from a young man he disciplined named Ronnie.

Ronnie had been sharing the gospel with a Muslim friend for some time, and recently his friend made a profession of faith. Now, Ronnie is spending time investing in this new believer, the same way Owen modeled for him.

After more than 20 years, the Stoddards still find one of their greatest joys is seeing South Asian believers develop into mature leaders who own their faith in Christ and are committed to taking the gospel to their own families and friends and neighbors.

And yet, with billions of souls in South Asia, there remains a critical need for missionary presence.

As the Stoddards navigated the weight of leaving their children behind in the U.S. and adhering to God's calling on their lives, Mila sought God repeatedly in prayer.

"The Lord was so compassionate," she recalled. "He didn't hit me over the head. He gently asked me, 'Am I not still worth it?'"

And she replied:

"You know You are. My answer is yes. You are still worth it."

JOSH AND JESSICA COBB



PRAY FOR

- + The Cobb family sharing the gospel with their community.
- + Healing for their patients as they feel God's compassionate presence.
- + Guidance in raising children away from family in the U.S.

Josh and Jessica Cobb arrived in England as International Mission Board missionaries in 2021, first settling in London before moving to Surrey to run a counseling ministry. Jessica holds a master's in biblical counseling; Josh is a physician assistant specializing in psychiatry.

Because British and American cultures are similar and there is no language barrier, the Cobbs experienced less culture shock than many IMB missionaries. Yet Surrey is a mosaic of immigrants, refugees, Christians (mostly nonevangelical), atheists, Hindus, Muslims, and other ethnic groups. Among younger residents, interest in spirituality — often expressed through modern pagan practices, like Wiccan — is growing.

Since the COVID 19 pandemic, the Cobbs' counseling services have been in high demand. Stigma around mental health is waning, and more people are seeking therapy. Josh and Jessica offer free counseling sessions, allowing clients a safe place to talk, process trauma, and heal. Caseloads are overflowing, and they're overwhelmed by word-of-mouth referrals.

One client — a young woman with severe childhood trauma — had repeatedly attempted suicide. Through counseling, medication, and applying the biblical truths Josh taught, she has been much healthier for the last four years and now helps others who receive counseling from the Cobbs.

Jessica leads trauma-informed fitness workouts where she shares the gospel and speaks to the abundant care God provides. And their care isn't just directed at adults. Both Josh and Jessica minister to children from six years old to adolescence. They help young people learn their identity in Christ and the importance of faith and courage during adversity.

While many of the Cobbs' clients are young adults dealing with trauma, Josh has observed a rising need among Europe's aging population. Retirees who once were providers are now facing loss of purpose, depression and anxiety.

"Loneliness and the search for meaning among seniors create fertile ground for the good news of Jesus," Josh said. "Even a brief, compassionate listening moment can open the door to deeper spiritual conversations."

The Cobbs hope to attract missionaries and volunteers with experience in senior care to join the work in Europe. Josh proposes forming healthcare mission teams to host clinics and workshops, providing gospel centered conversation tools across European countries.

With strong religious pluralism and growing resistance to the gospel, Europe is "hard soil" for evangelism, Josh explained. The Cobbs trust that compassionate listening and timely, caring conversations will continue to make a lasting impact.

"We appreciate the generous support of Southern Baptists, especially to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering[®]," Josh said. "This faithful financial giving equips missionaries, like us, to share the gospel, help transform lives, and advance God's kingdom across every culture."

JUDE AND LEANNE STACK



- + Deepening relationships with this egg vendor and her people group.
- + Pastoral training for local churches in evangelism.
- + More gospel interactions along the Stacks' "evangelistic route."

Several years ago, Jude and Leanne Stack had to evacuate the country where they served. Six months later, they once again had to evacuate their new home, this time moving to another country in Europe.

They planted their lives, and a church, among refugees. Three years later, it was time to uproot. The church was thriving, with local leadership in place. The church had begun looking outward, asking themselves how they could reach their community and beyond.

The Stacks knew there would always be a place for them in the church. But if they were there, other members may not have stepped up and taken initiative. It was time for local leaders to take their place.

In the beginning of 2026, the Stacks moved to a Central Asian country. In the past, medical concerns had prevented them from moving to certain countries due to lack of care, but the door finally opened.

The refugee church in Europe continues to partner with the Stacks in their new ministry. The church provides financial aid to a national partner, who is serving cross-culturally in an area that is impossible for Westerners to access.

The Stacks now minister in two countries, serving both IMB workers and local pastors. They travel to remote regions in the area, visiting IMB workers who are faithfully serving. They plugged into a diverse church that trains pastors in the city and beyond. The church also has an internship program.

While the church excels in leadership development, evangelism is an area of growth for the church. Jude and Leanne bring believers in the church along with them as they share the gospel and training on missiology.

Wherever they've lived, the Stacks establish what they call "evangelistic routes" near their home. They search for vendors who sell small items they can purchase repeatedly and begin to form relationships.

One of these vendors, who sells eggs, is from an unengaged and unreached people group (UUPG). After several weeks of becoming friends and sharing the gospel, they were invited to a family event of 150 people, most of whom were from the UUPG. As the matriarch of the family, the egg seller is influential and opened the door for further relationships with her UUPG.

In between the dancing and dining in the elaborately adorned banquet hall, Jude had gospel conversations with several of the men who were taking smoke breaks outside.

An elder in the family pronounced blessings and prayers in the name of Allah. Jude and Leanne had the opportunity to pray Numbers 6:24-26 over the family — "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."



- + The Steelmans and their two daughters returning to Kenya after furlough in the U.S.
- + New partners and projects that will show Christ's compassion.
- + God to send U.S. partners with experience in counseling and emergency management.

A few years ago, Kenya experienced a severe drought. The rainy season failed, crops didn't grow well, and cattle couldn't survive. The country faced a devastating hunger crisis. Today, many Kenyans are still rebuilding their lives amid prolonged hardship.

That's why Clay and Lydia Steelman, International Mission Board missionaries who live in Nairobi with their two daughters, started a project to provide goats.

"One of the greatest things about goats is they can live through just about anything," explained Clay, the associate area director for Send Relief in East Africa. "And while it is awesome that these goats give people milk, food, and a way to make additional money, what they really give is hope."

A hope that there will be food on the table. A hope they can pay to educate their children, and a hope that tomorrow will be okay.

"In the same way," he continued, "Jesus gives us hope not just for tomorrow but forever."

Through the generosity of Southern Baptists, struggling families are given one male and two female goats. The Steelmans have seen goats change families' lives.

But it's not just goats.

Their work encompasses numerous projects addressing physical and spiritual needs across Kenya. Lydia, a family medicine doctor by trade, explained how compassion ministries open doors for the gospel.

"We want to feed the hungry, help the poor and give hope to those who need it, just like Jesus did," Lydia said.

Working closely with other IMB missionaries, the Steelmans organize things like water deliveries and feeding programs and provide trainings for refugee work and trauma healing.

Lydia related the story of one colleague — who is also a doctor — who began visiting the sick and elderly in his community.

In one village, the doctor was met with stiff resistance until the village chief needed care. The chief, a Muslim, was deeply moved by the care the missionaries provided for him. Soon, he became a follower of Christ and welcomed them into his village to share the gospel freely.

Clay recognized a desperate need for mental healthcare workers after a flood that killed several hundred people. He described one father who recounted the harrowing moments he lost his son.

"Being able to have someone trained to deal with grief to interact with him, instead of him just holding on to it and not having an appropriate way to process, was so powerful," Clay said.

It inspired a chaplaincy program to help people process trauma after disasters. They have also begun mental health training for teachers.

Ultimately, the Steelmans pray the people of Kenya find hope in Jesus as they experience compassion through the body of Christ.