

The Mission of God and Global Partnership

Case Study: International Missions Association (IMA)

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The International Missions Association (IMA) is an association of Anabaptist mission bodies established for prayer, mutual support, and partnership in carrying out the Great Commission. Four member groups created the association in 1997: Pengutusan Injil dan Pelayanan Kasih (PIPKA) of Indonesia, Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) of Ethiopia, Amor Viviente of Honduras, and Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) of the United States. It has since grown to a membership of twenty-four and includes mission and church groups from the United States, the Philippines, Tanzania, Kenya, Nepal, Singapore, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.

In 1997, Richard Showalter became the first IMA President. We thank God for his servant leadership of treating all members as peers in mission, a model that we have continued to use. Tan Kok Beng, a mission leader from Singapore who has trained and sent thousands of missionaries from many countries, almost all over the world, through Asia Pacific Mission, Ltd., once remarked, “I have attended many international mission meetings, but I never quite felt I was accepted as a peer of the Western leaders until I came to the IMA. Here we all stand side by side and shoulder to shoulder.”

In 2010, Richard expressed his desire to pass the baton to another person. When the nominating committee contacted me (Yesaya Abdi), wanting to recommend me to the general assembly of IMA as the next president, I struggled very much. But as I spent time in prayer, the Lord impressed upon my heart that IMA is God’s instrument and that God is its head and I should not hesitate to accept the call. Subsequently, I was elected by the assembly at IMA 2010 in Kenya, then re-elected for a second term in Singapore in 2013 and a third term in Germany in 2016.

When IMA met in Medan, Indonesia, in 2011, all participants received a carving made of wood in the form of three persons carrying a globe with three words written at the base: “Pray, Play, and Pay” together. It reflected the

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conviction of all IMA members to relate to each other equally and interdependently. We need each other's support, fellowship, and partnership to carry out the global mission God has entrusted to us. Based on this understanding, the Executive Board of IMA does not hesitate to encourage its members to share whatever they have. Over time, the IMA members have reached a level where they have to cover their own airfares to come to the annual gathering, and some even go beyond that and give contributions toward the general expenses of the Association.

The Executive Board and all IMA members are very excited to see how God is working among us as more and more members catch the vision from the Lord. The three stories listed below attest to the stirring of the Spirit among us.

After attending the 2005 annual gathering in Indonesia, Mosa Tamang from Nepal said: "If God could bring me to Indonesia, God can certainly send and use me anywhere." He is now engaged in doing God's mission.

Kennedy Mbatia of Thika Deliverance Church, Kenya, after attending the IMA Conference in Indonesia in 2005 and impressed with what PIPKA was doing, planting many mission posts, wanted to have a mission outreach but had no resources to do so. God spoke to him, saying, "Spend your church building funds to buy a bus to take friends to do outreach somewhere. When you take care of the lost spiritual 'stones,' God will take care of the bricks for your church building project."

Brother Kennedy obeyed. That year he bought a bus of 52 seats and took his friends to do mission. He did it faithfully, year by year. As a result of this obedience, his church became alive—vibrant in prayer and generous in giving—and many lost souls continue to flock into the Kingdom. In the meantime, a church building of 1,600 seats was constructed; it was completed and dedicated to the Lord in December 2014.

To accommodate the significant progress of mission movement, he then forming Global Outreach Missions. Last year, he mobilized and went with 700 soul-winners in 34 buses. And this month, August 19 to 27, 2018, they will go to the South counties, with thousands of missionaries in 60 buses. This has now become a yearly tradition, attracting more and more persons for the annual outreach and the salvation of many.

Bishop Henry Mulandi of African Christian Mission International, Kenya, heard from God as he was praying at IMA 2012 in the lakeside of Hawassa, Ethiopia. God spoke to him, saying that he had been unfaithful to his calling and that within the last eight years there had not been any new church plant. So Brother Henry asked God's forgiveness and changed his ways. Since then, some four churches have been planted. Today his church has an open-air evangelism rally and also reaches out to high school students with the message of the gospel once a week. They are seeing some amazing results. God provided them with a long trailer truck for the purpose of this outreach.

So what really is IMA? It is an Anabaptist mission association in which all members are co-equal, walking in partnership with one another. The IMA Executive Board is just a facilitator as we seek guidance and direction from the Lord and walk in obedience. Our tool and what holds us together as we seek vision from the Lord is *prayer*. We have dedicated the first Friday of each month for our joint prayer and fasting day. That day we share our joys, praises, burdens, and needs as we hold hands in prayer around the globe. It has been a blessed and rewarding journey where we could truly say along with Paul that we have not been “disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19, NRSV). And even in this, we depend totally on His mercy and grace alone.

All glory to God!