

“Come Together” is the cornerstone of missions. Accomplishing God’s mission together has been a unifying force for differing churches and denominations over the centuries. Coming together is also the only way we can truly engage in the Great Commission. Missio Nexus’s trademark says it well: “The Great Commission is too big for anyone to accomplish alone and too important not to try to do together.” This is how UB Global approaches missions.



Frank Yang
Executive
Director of
UB Global

Five-Year Plan

We are in the process of finalizing strategic priorities for UB Global in the next five years. This is part of a board process of dreaming what UB missions could look like in 50 years. We pray that these areas of focus will also enable the broader UB church to more effectively engage in strategic missions of the 21st century. We’re seeking greater spiritual vitality for the staff of UB Global, a vibrant UB Global prayer network, and clear on-ramps for local churches. In addition, we are focusing on these areas.

Unreached People Groups (UPGs)

The people who need the Gospel *the most* have *the least* amount of the church’s attention. Less than 3% of all missionaries serve among unreached people groups. So, as we start new mission efforts, UPGs will be a continued focus. Among more-reached people groups, which receive 97% of all missionaries, there are certain roles for foreign missions to be involved. However, Jesus’ Great Commission calls us to be strategic and intentional. It is sobering and compelling that over 40% of the world (3.4 billion) belong to an unreached people group—one that is less than 5% Christian and doesn’t have enough believers to evangelize its own people without external help. As a denomination which has been taking the Gospel to the frontiers from the beginning, we believe the United Brethren Church has a key role to play among UPGs of our age. (ubglobal.org/unreached)

Disciple-Making Tools

We desire to equip our current and future missionaries with the best disciple-making tools. Along with pastors and Huntington University professors, we took part in three disciple-making trainings to bring together best practices and synthesize an optimal method for UBG missionaries. We’ll be working with experienced trainers to roll out this training across various mission fields. We also look forward to coordinating with US church planting efforts and approaches, and to collaborating to assist our North American churches in making disciples.

Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability is critical for us to serve UB churches. UB Global is funded by direct gifts to us. While we’re improving overall, UB Global closed out 2022 with a deficit of \$20,133. In 2023, we anticipate

a deficit of close to \$40,000 (with a budget of \$424,060). You may be wondering why. This is due in part to increased costs (in our world hit by inflation, it simply costs more to travel, do business, etc.). Post-Covid travel has resumed, so we're spending more as we lead more short-term teams and speak in more churches. We're also giving our UBG staff minor annual salary increases (average of 1%, which is well below cost-of-living increases). We'd appreciate your advocacy of donations directly to the ministry of UB Global Team. This will enable our team of five to serve UB churches toward better missions together.

Resources for Churches

One way we can serve UB churches in North America is by creating missions resources and providing avenues of learning and engagement (ubglobal.org/resources). Here are some examples:

Celebrate

Our first regional family-friendly missions event called "Celebrate" was a success! Over 175 people of all ages gathered to try international snacks, learn about missions through booths, network, and inspirationally celebrate what God is doing in our neighborhoods and among the nations. All of this took place in 90 minutes! Not only did we have folks who took steps to engage further in missions from this event, it fostered unity and collaboration among believers in the northeast Indiana region. If you're interested in hosting a Celebrate event along with other UB churches in your region, we'd love to come out and partner with you to make it happen.

UBG Prayer Network

We are excited about the UBG Prayer Network that has been forming over the past year. Four lay leaders from Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio are growing this grassroots effort to bring together those with a passion for prayer and missions. They facilitate monthly prayer calls on the third Tuesday of every month, at 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. They have also led regional in-person gatherings in Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. Not only do missionaries and the UBG Huntington team desperately need the Spirit's empowering and guidance, but this is another practical way we facilitate coming together as UBs from different churches and regions.

Children's Curriculum

We've been creating engaging missions lessons for kids' ministry through a Minecraft world and puppet/live-action videos. These are available to UB churches.

Partnering Well

We are in the process of working with an experienced practitioner to develop a curriculum called "Partnering Well." This is intended to help UB churches, and especially mission leaders, more effectively engage with international partners through best practices. These lessons can be done as a part of a mission team's continuing education, Sunday school, or retreat.

Ways to “Go”

For members in local churches who have a heart for missions, we have a variety of avenues for them to get involved (ubglobal.org/go). We always love to talk to persons who have an interest in serving overseas longer-term. In fact, people who are working in seemingly non-ministry related roles (such as business, education, project management, stay-at-home parent, etc.) are able to serve with us on key mission fields. For shorter-term options of a few weeks to a few months, here are avenues.

Digital Nomads

For those who work remotely full-time, they can work-from-home (WFH) while participating in missions. Here’s an example: a digital nomad can live in Thailand, working their job, and be a part of the UBG Thailand missionary team in reaching out to their local neighbors. Some choose to do this full-time, while others may live overseas for a few months at a time.

Mid-Term

There are believers who serve overseas for a few months at a time as a part of the long-term missionary team. Some may have a flexible job which gives them the option to go internationally a few times a year. Others are retired and are able to serve in missions while being a part of the lives of their kids and grand-kids. Mid-termers are able to bring their abilities to amplify missions and deepen local friendships over time and help make disciples among unreached people groups.

Student Interns

Students may look for meaningful opportunities during gap years or semesters off. We have avenues for approved interns to serve in missions, explore God’s calling, and become more equipped for whatever God has for them in the future. These avenues may be overseas as well as in our Huntington, Ind., home office.

Short-term Mission Trips

We offer opportunities for your church to send one person or a full team, youths or adults, on trips to places like:

- Greece.
- Germany.
- Thailand.
- Sierra Leone.
- Macau.
- New York City.
- San Francisco.

UB Global is blessed with missionaries who are approaching 40 and 50 years in serving with us in overseas missions. Today, more avenues of various time horizons are available than ever. We look forward to

seeing more UBs engage in the strategic mission efforts of our time.

New Fields

As we start new mission efforts, it will be among unreached people groups. The need is too great (over 40% of the world) and the workers are too few among them (less than 3% of global missionaries). We do not start new work for the sake of starting something new; our resources are limited. Nor do we do so at the expense of the current important UB Global mission efforts; we desire to be focused. However, as God brings UB connections and people who are engaged, we prayerfully discern with them in coming together to make strategic impacts.

Shoptar

A UB couple invited us into a small network of mission organizations which are focused on this tribal Muslim people group (ubglobal.org/shoptar). As we learned more, we were staggered at the great need among the Shoptar (not their real name).

- This is a people group of 79 million people, which is larger than the populations of Australia, Canada, and Haiti *combined*.
- To say that they are “unreached” is an utter understatement. They are only 0.003% Christian.
- Very few workers focus on them. In one particular country, there are over 50 million Shoptars but a paltry ten missionaries total working among them.
- They are found in large numbers in a few countries. Some locations are dangerous while others are safer than the US or Europe.
- There are many opportunities to send short-, mid-, and long-term teams. We can take go-ers of nearly any background.

As the United Brethren, we are making a commitment to be a part of the broader Shoptar missions effort. The need is clear and the pathways are open, but we need UBs who are willing to go.

Another Large People Group in Asia

A young UB is working among a large unreached people group (nearly 120 million) in Asia. We have been informally walking alongside her as a friend over the past few years. We are in the process of discerning whether we will formalize a relationship and intentional work among this UPG.

Refugee Resettlement

An Afghan refugee family of five was resettled in Huntington thanks to the hard work of a team of local believers, led by David Kline, an associate director of UB Global. The father was a driver for the US military during the war, and his family was displaced after the Taliban takeover. UBs from area churches served this family from one of the least-reached people groups in tangible ways. We pray that not only will this family and the believers involved experience God’s blessings, but that it will inspire other UB churches to step into

refugee resettlement.

Serving among unreached people groups is not easy. It requires a long-term commitment. It takes sacrifice. Even communicating with the broader UB body is hard because of security realities. However, as UBs, being involved in hard but worthwhile missions efforts has been a part of our DNA for centuries. We must come together so that all people groups will know their worthy Savior.

Current Missionaries and Mission Fields

We are proud of these brothers and sisters who have gone out from among us to serve on the frontlines of global missions.

Thailand

This international UB effort is making headway, with a team comprised of Americans, Hondurans, Thais, and an unnamed UB conference due to government scrutiny. UB efforts started in 2015 to bring the Gospel to the 55 million Thai Buddhists who are only 0.4% Christian. Today, through the Good Soil Community Center in the city of Chiang Rai, local friends and neighbors are expressing serious spiritual interest. Their outreach efforts are impacting dozens of participants and families on a weekly basis. They also host 3-5 short-term teams a year from Asia and North America.

- *Brian and Rachel Glunt* and their children (now five) have served in Thailand since 2016. They are from Emmanuel UB church in Fort Wayne, Ind.
- *Chloe Makley* finished high school and was an intern in 2022. She will return as a mid-term staff serving for one year in late 2023 while working toward her TESOL certification at Huntington University.
- *Alex and Cristina Nunez* and their three children have been preparing to serve in Thailand over the past two years. They are commissioned by the Honduras UB churches. We wanted them to come to the US to complete their support raising. However, despite multiple attempts, including even advocacy from members of the US Congress, they have repeatedly been denied tourist visas. In faith, we are sending them to Thailand when the Pacheco family returns.
- *Milton and Erika Pacheco* have been in Thailand since 2017. They are commissioned by the Honduras UB churches. Over the past year, they have been completing their Honduran adoption process to welcome Lucas into their family. They have run into significant barriers due to government delays in paperwork.
- *Caleb Weaver* is preparing to be a ten-week intern. He is from Fowlerville UB in Fowlerville, Mich.
- The Thai staff at the Good Soil Center include John, Som Ying, and Faa.

Macau

In the mid-1980s, an Asian UB conference and UB Global partnered to start a mission effort in Macau (1.8% Christian). Today there are two UB churches on these 13 square miles. It's always the goal in missions to have local leaders take over. This is the case at Living Stone Church, which Kenji is now pastoring. Covid significantly impacted the local economy, and this has affected our missionary team as well.

- *Jennifer Blandin*, in Macau since 1996, is from Mainstreet UB church in Walbridge, Ohio. Jen has been

faithfully serving as interim pastor at Living Stone Church, and is now supporting Kenji in the transition.

- *Jenaya Bonner*, in Macau since 2010, is from Emmanuel UB church in Fort Wayne, Ind. Despite trying for over a year, Jenaya is finding it very difficult to obtain a work visa to return due to Covid's impact on the local economy.

Undisclosed

We can't write in detail about these missionaries due to security concerns.

- *Asia location 1*. She is forced to change jobs due to Covid impacts on her local employer. Nevertheless, she continues to see spiritual inroads among local friends.

- *Asia location 2*. Government interference makes ministry hard. However, she is seeing fruit through church and business efforts.

- *Asia location 3*. She is taking an academic leave to complete a graduate degree to better serve on field.

Sojourn

These UB missionaries are legally UB Global staff, but are seconded to serve with another mission organization.

- *Nicole "Nichie" Stonall* serves with Impact Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa. Nichie is from McCallum UB church in Delton, Mich. While serving, she met her husband, Chris, a native of South Africa. They were married in July 2019, and in December 2020 welcomed their first child, Adelaide.

- *Christopher Wimer* serves with Alliance Academy International in Quito, Ecuador. He is from Jerusalem Chapel UB church in Churchville, Va., and was just married in 2023.

Honduras

Ruth Rivera is a missionary commissioned by the Honduras UB churches. She was serving as a dentist at Matru Hospital in 2021, but had to relocate back to Honduras due to team transitions in Sierra Leone. For now, she is assisting the Honduras UB conference through mobile dental clinics.

International Collaboration

The United Brethren church is a global movement located in 18 different countries. Not all of them have or need missionaries. Here are a few ways UBs are working together.

General Conference

Due to Covid, it had been five years since the last General Conference. This triennial international gathering of UB leaders took place in Jamaica March 18-23, 2023. For one day, the group joined about 1,000 members of UB Jamaica for the closing services of its National Conference. Delegates stayed, met, and prayed in the dorms of Regent College of the Caribbean (a Christian college) in the mountains of Mandeville. Doug Birdsall conducted training on leadership and integrity. Additionally, the group was able to initi-

ate collaboration across the Central American UB region.

Assisting Internationally

When it comes to international UB churches, UB Global seeks to strike a balance in helping in tangible ways and increasing local leadership capacities, while being very cautious to not create unhealthy dependencies.

- We regularly receive requests for funds from various international UB churches. The international projects process allows us to bring greater transparency to these efforts and allow us to help without hurting the broader Jesus movement in the region.
- We have been asked to mediate a leadership dispute in an international UB conference. Rather than presumptuously coming in without cultural or language expertise, we have facilitated UB leaders from a neighboring country to assist in the peace-making process. We hope this will help develop empowerment and connectivity among regional UB leaders.

Mission Efforts

As mentioned earlier, Thailand is an example of several UB countries coming together to reach an unreached people group. We look forward to how the Lord of the Harvest may open future doors through global UB collaborations.

Staff

UB Global Home Office

UB Global's Huntington office supports all of the above UB mission efforts. Here are some recent personnel changes.

- *Michelle Harris* stepped away from UB Global in August 2022 to focus on pursuing and completing her doctorate. She joined the team in 2016 and served for six years.
- *Courtney Waterman* joined as an associate director in November 2022. This member of Emmanuel Community Church (Fort Wayne, Ind.) left her role as a director at Salesforce. Courtney brings with her rich ministry experiences from decades of non-profit and missions leadership roles as well as critical project management capabilities.
- *Angela Vincenti*, who had been our administrative assistant since January 2021, transitioned to Emmanuel Community Church's new school in January 2023.
- *Teresa Roberts* joined as administrative assistant in March 2023. Teresa is a member of Emmanuel and brings with her five years of on-field missions insights from serving with her family in Honduras with Cornerstone.
- *Steve Fish* completed his interim pastorate at Morning Star Church (Kokomo, Ind.) in November 2022 and returned full-time to UBG in January 2023.

Interns

Over the past year, UB Global has been blessed by talented interns from both Huntington University and Indiana University. We've given them opportunities to learn and grow their skillsets while they have helped us in tangible and impactful assignments. We will continue to seek young people to disciple and serve through internships.

Deaths in the UB Missionary Family

These former UB missionaries have passed away since the 2021 US National Conference.

May 4, 2022. Marion E. Burkett, 100, was a UB minister since the 1940s who served as a pastor, church planter, evangelist, and missionary in Sierra Leone. He and Frances served in Sierra Leone 1951-1958 and 1971-1974.

August 1, 2022. Harold Hancock, 83, was a UB Global missionary for eight years in Jamaica, 2012-2020.

November 1, 2022. Randy Fennig, 67, was a UB pastor in Ohio for ten years and missionary in Sierra Leone for three years, 2008-2011.

January 16, 2023. Nellie Birdsall was a missionary for 11 years in Sierra Leone, 1957-1968. In retirement, she and her husband, Russ, who died in 2021, served seven short-term stints in Macau between 1994 and 2006, always going at their own expense.

January 26, 2023. Phil Fiedler, 85, was a missionary in Sierra Leone during the 1970s as maintenance superintendent. He and Carol returned to Sierra Leone in the 1990s to teach at Sierra Leone Bible College. They, along with nurse Sara Banter, were the last UB missionaries to be evacuated during the country's civil war of the 1990s. It would be another 15 years before UB missionaries were once again sent to Sierra Leone.

March 10, 2023. Dr. Ron Baker was a UB missionary doctor at Mattru Hospital for 16 years, and until his death, led many short-term medical teams. He grew up partly in Sierra Leone as a son of missionaries DeWitt and Evelyn Baker. He graduated from Huntington College and Indiana University Medical School, and then, in 1974, returned to Sierra Leone, along with his wife, Jane. Ron became Chief Medical Officer at Mattru Hospital. During the next 16 years, Mattru developed into a thriving, well-known hospital with a strong spiritual foundation.