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# SEED TIME & HARVEST

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God is at work in the world through the local church!



The Missions Ministry of First Baptist Church Athens, Texas

***“...God’s Word changes hearts  
when it is in a form that is  
understandable and accessible.”***

*Chuck & Alisha Donet  
Scripture Engagement in the  
Caucasus Region*





# What does it mean to say, “*Loving the World*”

STEVE AKIN

**I**t happened again the other day. Someone asked me to explain why we chose the term “Loving the World” as our website name. “Didn’t we know that 1 John 2:15 says we should not love the world?”

My answer was simple, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him might be saved.”

No, we don’t love the things of the world: the sin, the hatred, the war, the prejudice, the genocide, the ethnic cleansing, the hunger, the untreated sickness, the lack of clean water, the infant mortality, the child abuse, the broken homes, the modern-day slavery, the child soldiers, the social and economic injustice.

But we do love the world that God sent His Son to die for.

We love people that God loves. We love boys and girls, men and women, as God loves them. We want to do anything in our power to share the saving message of Jesus Christ and demonstrate His love by ministering to the hurting people of the world. “Loving the World” is exactly the right website name for our church.

Your gifts to the Global Missions Offering and to the Budget of First Baptist Church support missionaries around the world and allow the people of the local church to become missionaries as well. Our mission field is Athens, America, and the World.

Sincerely,

Steve Akin  
Minister of Missions



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# What is the Global Missions Offering and how does it work?

The Global Missions Offering is the principal way First Baptist Church, Athens supports missionaries around the world. In each case, these missionaries are partners with FBCA to share the saving knowledge of our Lord by using both the spoken Gospel message of salvation in Christ and sharing the love of God through acts of kindness.

At the time of this writing, FBC Athens supports seventeen missionary families in the United States and around the world. Each month, these missionaries receive a specific monetary gift to help meet their budget needs to remain on the mission field.

It is the goal of the church that each missionary family has an Advocate Team, made up of church members who commit to three things:

1. To pray for the missionary family regularly
2. To encourage them through appropriate communication throughout the year
3. To give regularly to the financial support of that missionary family

Many church members choose to give undesignated gifts to the Global Missions Offering (GMO) and allow the Missions Committee to direct these gifts where needed. One hundred percent of all GMO funds go to support missionaries and none are used to fund other mission projects throughout the year. The Global Missions Offering is separate from the general church budget and the mission budget of the Church.

*Please give to the Global Missions Offering*



# Local & International Ministries

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## Construction Ministry

One of the most encouraging spiritual principles a person can learn is that God wants to use all of the gifts and abilities He has given them. Men and women have learned the joy of serving with their hands to minister by rebuilding a broken home or helping construct a new church building. Maybe they will be asked to replace a church roof such as was done in Rockport after Hurricane Harvey. FBCA has a wonderful, skilled and dedicated group of people who have learned the value and satisfaction this brings.



## Optical Ministry

For years FBCA has seen the great need of helping people in remote regions of the world to see better. It began by simply giving reading glasses so someone could see clearly how to read their Bible, or even do simple daily chores such as sewing or preparing food. But the Lord blessed and we developed a program using advanced optical equipment and the skill of willing doctors and technicians. We are now able to travel anywhere in the world and fit prescription eye glasses in one day. This expanded ministry has blessed people in Mexico, China, Morocco, Nicaragua, and even at homeless ministry sites here in Texas.





## Bedding Ministry

NO ONE SLEEPS ON THE FLOOR

“**N**o One Sleeps on the Floor” is the motto of the Bedding Ministry. In 1999, FBCA began this ministry through the generosity of a local realtor who contributed all of the furniture left in the houses he had either sold or rented. Then he donated a building to serve as the furniture warehouse.

The Bedding Ministry has helped hundreds of families in Henderson County, but the needs are ever increasing. Each year, the church buys dozens of new bed sets and frames to give, free of charge, to families in need. New beds are given to women and children who have escaped abusive homes, families who have been the victim of house fires, and people with no other resource to purchase beds needed for their families. The ministry provides new mattress sets, new sheets and pillows, and new metal bed frames.

*The Bedding Ministry works with other services in Athens such as the Family Peace Project, Athens Crisis Center, Love in Action, and the Henderson County Help Center to be guided to families in crisis.*



# Early Bird Rescue Project

SCHOOL BASED DEWORMING



## Medical/Dental Ministry

The ministry of hosting medical and dental clinics advances the Gospel in two ways. First, they minister to the immediate physical needs of people modeled for us by the Great Physician. Second, they provide a vehicle with which new churches can be established to share the ultimate healing of eternal life. Over the years, this ministry has ministered to thousands of people and helped launch dozens of new churches.



Several years ago, the World Health Organization declared that the most cost-effective anti-poverty measure is school based deworming. Jim Palmer (former IMB Missionary) led First Baptist Church, Athens to begin this ministry to help one of the poorest communities in Ethiopia. The children of the Bantu, Tollee suffer from chronic illnesses caused by intestinal parasites. Children can miss up to 35% of school days due to diarrhea and dysentery due to worms transmitted through impure water and contaminated soil. The long-term answer is pure water and shoes. A pill twice a year will help eradicate intestinal worms in a child for less than 50 cents. We decided that something must be done. The “early bird catches the worm” is a common idiomatic saying in the US. It is something you would say to someone to communicate that to be successful they should do something immediately. The Early Bird Rescue Project provides continual de-worming treatments and health education to 6,800 students in 8 elementary schools in the Bantu region. The project is carried out in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and conducted by the local evangelical churches in the region. First Baptist Church, Athens, along with partner churches continue to lead this ministry.



## Disaster Relief

CHAINSAW MINISTRY

**W**hen the tornado suddenly appears or a hurricane reaches land, destruction follows in their paths. Sometimes it is beyond belief! Before electric service can be restored to a damaged home the utility right of way must be cleared. And before an insurance adjustment can be made, the broken and twisted trees must be taken off the house. In many cases, the affected homeowner is not physically, emotionally, or financially capable of doing either. This is where the men and women of FBCA step in.



Working with Texas Baptist Men, FBCA has helped form a Disaster Relief team called the Central East Texas Unit made up of like-minded Baptist churches in our area.

It is their goal to share the love of Christ by fulfilling the motto of Texas Baptist Men, **“Love, more than words . . .”**

## Global Leadership Summit

ETHIOPIA

**T**he Global Leadership Summit is the largest annual gathering of leaders in the world. Hundreds of thousands of church, business and government leaders come together each year to learn from world-class leaders. ***The Summit is held in more than 123 countries and 60+ languages. The Global Leadership Summit is driven by the reality that when leaders get better, everyone wins – churches thrive, businesses work for good, and communities are transformed.***

First Baptist Church, Athens has been instrumental in promoting the Global Leadership Summit in Ethiopia every year since 2011. The leadership talks are translated

into Amharic and are professionally dubbed on to the videos. In 2019, FBCA helped host 21 sites across the country with about 4,000 people attending. Volunteers from FBC have helped in preparing the transcripts of the leadership talks and members have also traveled to Ethiopia to help open new Summit sites. For two years, during the COVID pandemic, Ethiopian partners have continued to promote the Global Leadership Summit and provide resources to train Ethiopian leaders. Training leaders is the greatest investment that can be made to help churches grow and communities flourish.





## Children's and Student's Clothing Ministry

**T**he Children's Clothing Ministry of First Baptist Church strives to honor God by offering new and gently used clothing to the children of Henderson County free of charge. Weekly since 1998, the ministry has offered clothing for children in need. Every 90 days, families can return and receive two outfits, socks, underwear, and a coat during the winter months. Additional items such as pajamas, shoes, dresses, infant blankets and infant wear are also available.

When the Athens Independent School District adopted a Uniform Dress Code, the church expanded this ministry to include school uniforms for all students' grades PreK-12.

At the end of the spring semester each campus has a uniform drive to collect uniforms that students have outgrown. FBCA volunteers sort and organize these donations, and two days in August are set aside as Uniform Distribution Days. Over 700 students are expected to receive two uniform sets, two new pairs of socks, two new pairs of underwear, and a voucher for new shoes each year.

The Clothing Ministry is in the Greenhouse, located across College Street from the church, and is open every Thursday from 3-5 PM.



*“Meals 4 Multitudes is a ministry that grew out of First Baptist Church, Athens to help malnourished children regain their nutritional health.”*



## Family Reunification Day

### PRISON ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM

**P**EP is dedicated to delivering the nation’s best outcomes in the prison re-entry field. The ministry provides unparalleled resources and real-world value-based business skills to inmates so that once they are back in society they have the tools, skills, and support structure to pursue healthy, fulfilling, and productive lives. Each year, on a day in June, recent graduates of PEP are invited to Lake Athens. There, over 100 FBCA volunteers create an event where men can be reunited with their families in an atmosphere of lavish hospitality. Volunteer boat owners spend the day giving water toy rides to young and old alike. The food is amazing and the love is genuine.





## Meals 4 Multitudes

**M**alnutrition is the leading cause of death for children under the age of five in most of the developing world. Chronic drought compounded by civil conflicts and skyrocketing food prices create conditions of poverty and food scarcity. Children suffer the most in poverty. The lack of adequate food causes serious health issues. Children cannot fight off hunger based illnesses. Their growth is stunted and their ability to learn is limited. Children drop out of school and the cycle of poverty is repeated in the next generation.

Meals 4 Multitudes was a ministry created by Jim Palmer that grew out of First Baptist Church, Athens to help malnourished children regain their nutritional health. The ministry leads churches, schools, and civic groups to pack a protein fortified and vitamin enriched food packet. Each food packet feeds a family of 6 a nutritious and tasty meal. The meal packets are shipped around the world to our partner churches and organizations, who distribute them to needy families.

A Meals 4 Multitudes food packing event is a great way for everyone in the church to participate in helping feed hungry children around the world. 60 volunteers can pack 10,000 meals in 2 hours. The cost of 10,000 meals is \$3,000 which includes the cost of ingredients, the packing event, the shipping of the meal, and the distribution to needy children and families. The meals are freely given in the name of Jesus and provide nourishment to hungry children.



# Ministry Partners



## Hope Springs Water

BRINGING HOPE, ONE BOTTLE AT A TIME

**I**n 2010 Dr. Ted Mettetal's heart was heavy and he shared the reason with his friend, Steve Akin. "God gave me a vision that I shared with Steve of the suffering that was going on in the world as a result of lack of clean water," said Dr. Mettetal.

So, the two First Baptist Church Athens members sat down together and brainstormed an answer. "The creation of a bottled water company that would give 100 percent of its profits to addressing this problem," said Mr. Akin. "And that's

how Hope Springs Water got started." In February 2010, they founded Hope Springs Water to bring hope to the developing world through clean water, improved sanitation, and public health and hygiene education.

The earliest Hope Springs Water projects originated in Nicaraguan villages along the Coco River. Then came Belize, Mexico, Uganda, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Cambodia, Sierra Leone, Kenya, and more.





In 2016, Hope Springs Water expanded its education programs to address the growing concern of menstrual hygiene management in the developing world, a major contributor to absenteeism among girls in secondary schools. Now there is the Hope for Girls program, which focuses intently on the empowerment of women and girls by advancing their access to education, equitability, and economic opportunity through access to menstrual hygiene products. When Hope Springs



Water celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2020, the organization was blessed to have drilled more than 100 wells around the world, bringing clean water and sanitation to more than 100,000 people.

“Our undying gratitude belongs to those of you who have joined with us in this quest,” said Dr. Mettetal. “We invite you to continue on this journey with us. With an expectant heart and receptive spirit, we are eager for God’s plan for Hope Springs Water.”





## Love in Action

### HENDERSON COUNTY HOMELESS MINISTRY

**S**ometimes people find themselves in need – even desperate need – and Love in Action is there to help. LIA serves people who are experiencing homelessness and may sleep on the street. Or maybe it is those who have a temporary shelter but must move from place to place. LIA also helps folks who have shelter such as an apartment, house, or shed, but have no electricity or water.

Showers are available with shampoo, soap, and clean towels at the Love in Action center at 501 N. Maple Street. Laundry service is available to all with detergent and a dryer. Churches provide lunch on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and food bags with basic toiletries are given to take away.

## Athens Soup Kitchen

**T**he Athens Soup Kitchen began operating in March 2014. The Kitchen serves meals of soup, cornbread, sandwiches, and dessert every Tuesday and Thursday. Volunteers from churches and civic organizations give their time and financial assistance in order to make this ministry successful. The ministry operates solely on donations and grant money that is used to feed people and maintain the building. First Baptist Church, Athens has been one of the faithful partners from the beginning. The motto of the Soup Kitchen is to “Love God, Love Others, and Feed Hungry People.”



## The Athens Thrift Store

MATTHEW 25:40

**I**n 2010, a businessman at First Baptist Church was inspired to begin a business that would grow into a ministry that now blesses hundreds of citizens in the Athens area. The Athens Thrift Store receives donations from the community and resales them at greatly reduced prices. People who shop at the Thrift Store are blessed by the value they receive for their money, and the profits from these sales are then shared with other ministries in Henderson County.

Approximately four times a year, the Athens Thrift Store grants money to twenty-one local non-profit ministries who help the people of our area. After 10 years of service, the Thrift Store has returned over \$1,000,000 to help the people of Athens.

## Hearts 4 Kids

RIO GRANDE VALLEY



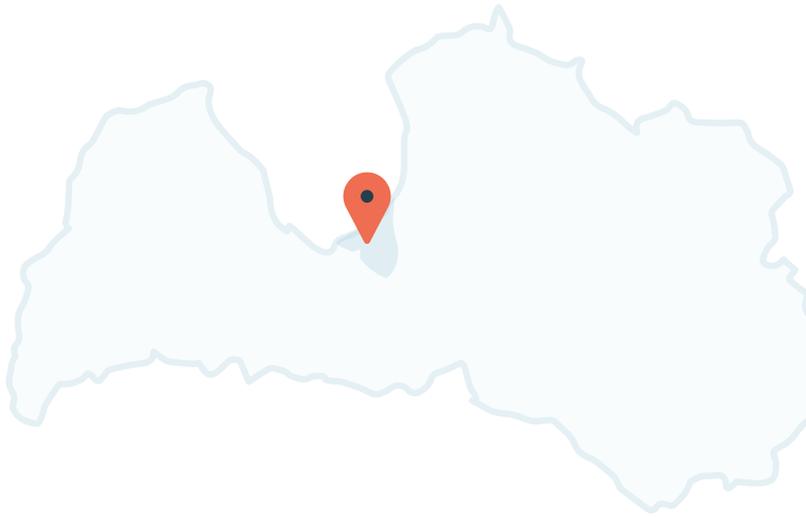
**Hearts 4Kids**

**T**he mission of Hearts 4 Kids is to provide basic needs to one family and one child at a time using short-term mission opportunities. The vision is to have a lasting impact on the families of the Rio Grande Valley. This is done by expressing the Love of the Lord Jesus Christ through works of love. The Texas/Mexico border has come to represent many things to many people, yet it remains the most misunderstood region in North America. The southern border is not simply American on one side and Mexican on the other. It is a third country with its own identity. This country is two thousand miles long and twenty miles wide. It is the mandate of the Lord Jesus Christ to serve those in need, Matthew 25.



# Missionaries of the Global Missions Offering



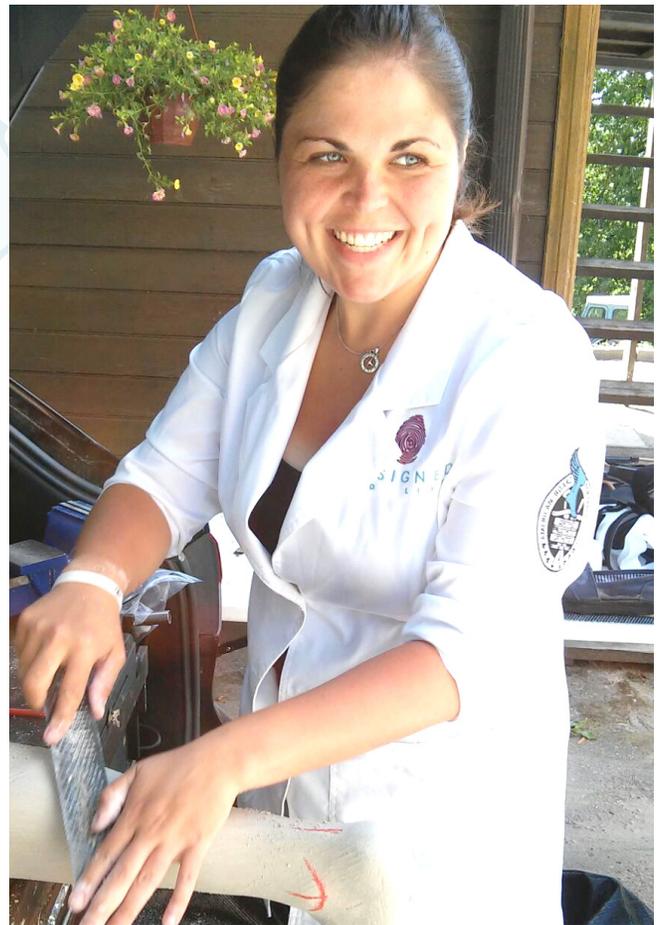


# Katie Leatherwood

LATVIA

**K**atie Leatherwood is the ministry director of Designed to Live in Cēsis, Latvia. This ministry seeks to empower those affected by disability to live a life of meaning and significance and to live beyond their disability.

15% of the world's population is affected by disability and only 5-10% of these people are reached for Christ, resulting in one of the largest unreached people groups in the world. ***Katie seeks to share Hope and the message of Jesus Christ to those who face the daily challenges of life with a disability.*** She utilizes her professional experience and expertise in prosthetics and orthotics, adaptive fitness, and disability awareness.



Katie provides prosthetic legs and orthotic braces to those that 'fall through the gaps' and are unable to access these services. Through her adaptive fitness program, ParaFit, people with disabilities train to improve their physical strength, health, and to enhance their spiritual life. Through respite events, Designed to Live serves parents of children with disabilities, providing a time for the them to rest and to be encouraged. The Designed to Live ministry is not only a physical one, but most importantly one to build authentic relationships, demonstrate God's love, and share His message of love and acceptance.





# John & Sharon Gowan

ECUADOR

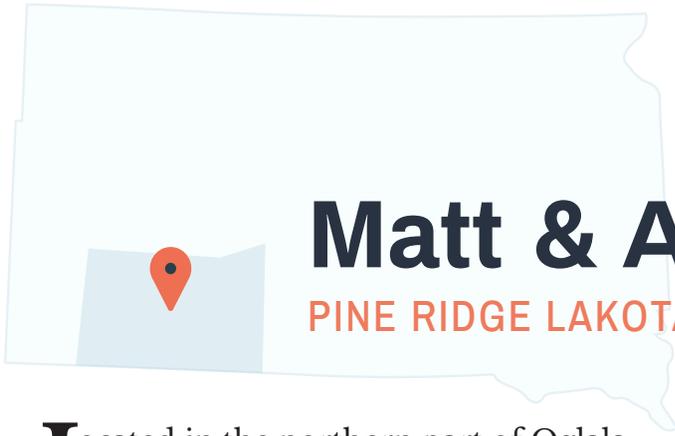
**T**he faith mission known today as Reach Beyond was begun in 1931 in Quito, Ecuador to pioneer the vision of missionary radio under the call letters HCJB -- **H**eralding **C**hrist **J**esus' **B**lessings. Over the following decades HCJB expanded to include medical ministries, emerging media and leadership training.

***The ministry now prioritizes partnering shoulder-to-shoulder with local believers around the world, still focusing on media and health care as it empowers the local church to harness these strong tools to introduce people to God's saving grace and abundant life in Jesus Christ.***

John and Sharon have served in television and education since 1985 in Ecuador and Guatemala where John helped to create the international video series DEDITOS, now being used around the world to introduce Old Testament foundational stories in major languages and oral cultures.

John and Sharon currently serve at Radio HCJB, now under Ecuadorian leadership. He is helping HCJB expand in visual media platforms and cinema. Sharon is a volunteer teacher with Living and Learning, a ministry in Quito that introduces U.S. college students to cross cultural challenges and effectiveness.





# Matt & Amanda Hadden

PINE RIDGE LAKOTA SIOUX RESERVATION

Located in the northern part of Oglala Lakota County on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation in South Dakota, Matt and Amanda lead a group of families that God called to serve the Lakota Sioux people.

Čhaŋkú Wašté Ranch was established in 2011 and has had countless opportunities to serve, demonstrate love, and work alongside the Lakota community. Located just south of the Badlands National Park, the translation of Čhaŋkú Wašté is “the Good Road in the Bad Land.”

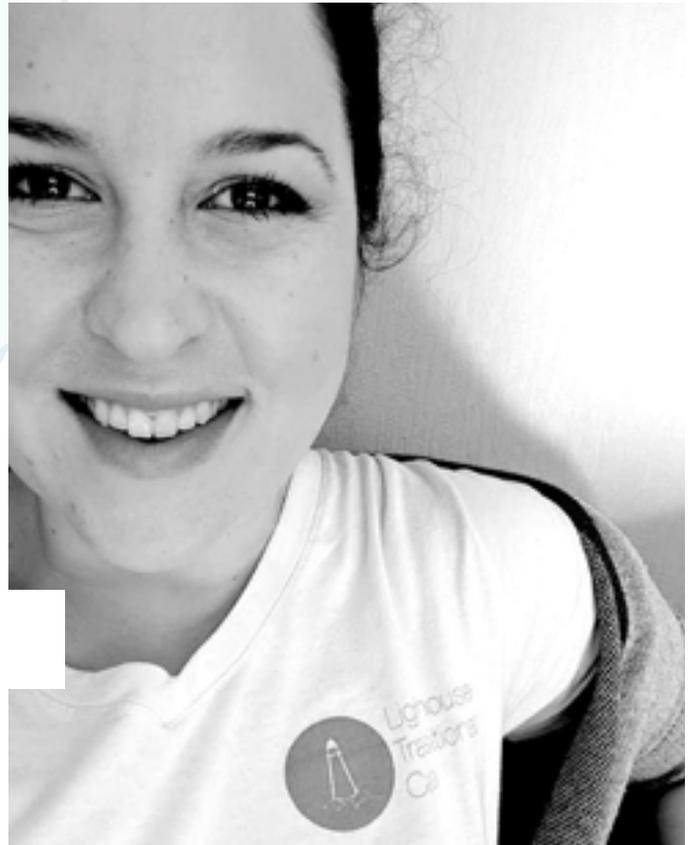
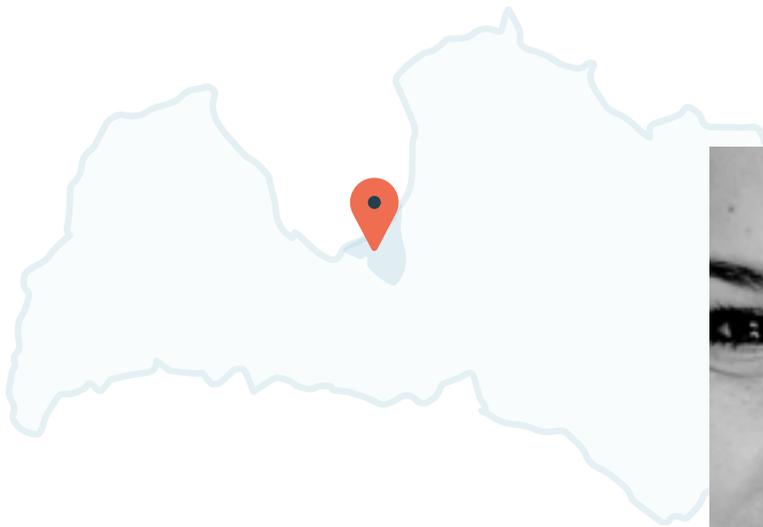
What began as a vision of a free summer camp has grown to become an extension of the local church, Creator’s Fellowship. The ministry continues to provide a

fun and exciting place for kids to enjoy the summer months while also laying a foundation of the truth of God and how He loves us all.

**“God has provided a platform to continue to grow and reach young people and adults year-round.”** The vision for the future is to continue the work that God started, but also to pursue fresh, new ways to point the community back to a faithful Creator.

Pray that God would anoint the efforts made here on His behalf and that above all else, Čhaŋkú Wašté Ranch would live out its namesake as “The Good Road” leading every foot that walks it to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.





# Amanda Owen Bannister

LATVIA

Each year about 45 young adults “age out” of the state-run orphan care system in Latvia. Until Lighthouse Transitional Care was founded by Amanda Owen Bannister of Athens in 2018, Latvia had no faith-based programs or resources in place to support these youth. This lack of care meant that many fell into addiction, homelessness, and early parenthood.

The Lighthouse, based in Riga, Latvia’s capital, supports and mentors aged-out youth toward healthy adulthood through practical empowerment and spiritual enrichment. The Lighthouse has three full-time staff and about 10 volunteers.

About 20 youth from ages 18-30 attend regularly scheduled community events.

Half of those youth are more deeply involved in the Lighthouse and are working through an individualized Adulthood Prep Program, which helps each youth meet his or her specific goals.

These youth receive regular one-on-one mentoring and discipleship, participate in weekly Bible study and learn life skills including wellness and financial management. Based on their level of need, they may also receive financial support for medical and mental health care, living expenses and groceries.

***“Our hope is that our youth will be able to live fulfilling lives and know their Father in Heaven.”***

**- Amanda Owen Banister**





# Bob & Rhonda Farley

BELIZE

**B**ob and Rhonda Farley left Athens, Texas in 1996 thinking the Lord had a short assignment for them in Alaska by serving in two Baptist Churches there. It was a great adventure, but even more exciting was when the Lord spoke to Bob during his early morning quiet time about sending them to Belize. They left Ketchikan, Alaska and traveled to the Kek'chi Indians of Central America. The Farleys went from remote communities in Alaska to remote villages in Belize.

While raising two daughters in Belize, Bob and Rhonda's ministry has included providing clean water projects by drilling new water wells and reclaiming older contaminated ones. They planted churches, started two Christian radio

stations, built one medical clinic in a remote region of Guatemala, and launched the Belize Bible College, which is Belize's only accredited four-year Bible College.

***The Farleys have hosted over 500 short term mission teams in their 25 years of service. The Lord continues to bless their ministry in Belize.***



# Sean & Neissa Gallahar

CROATIA

Pastor Sean and his wife, Neissa Gallahar, followed the Lord's leading and launched Coastline - International Church of Split in Spring 2021. Coastline exists to help people know God, grow inside of community, find their purpose, & make a difference in Split and around the world. Croatian children who moved abroad during the late 80's and early 90's Yugoslavian war are moving back with their own English speaking families and looking for a place to belong. In seeking

belonging they are discovering the love and truth of Jesus Christ. Community groups are gathering to study the Bible: young adults, college students, couples, and families. God is transforming the city of Split through the ministries of Coastline. **Coastline is raising up leaders to love the Lord and live with integrity in parts of the community like education, healthcare, hospitality, IT and more.** Coastline is cheering on another church plant in the mountains of Croatia and a sports outreach ministry in a nearby community. Sean, Neissa and the church plant of Coastline have a vision for a hope and future for Split and all of Croatia through the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ. Join us in this hope for Croatia! [Coastlinechurchsplit.com](https://Coastlinechurchsplit.com)





# Chuck & Alisha Donet

## SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT IN THE CAUCASUS REGION

**T**he work of Chuck and Alisha is to make disciples through Scripture engagement – especially by catalyzing national believers to do this – in the context of a church planting team. Before the pandemic caused them to return to the United States, the Donets lived in a strategic city in the Caucasus Region. Even in their absence, they continue doing online outreach from Lubbock, TX, and plan to return to the field as soon as possible.

Chuck and Alisha and their three children, Ben, Ryan, and Jenna, previously served 15 years with Wycliffe Bible Translators, but now they are with a small team focused on reaching 34+ related unreached Muslim people groups that are called ‘Mountain People’ – always in cooperation with local

believers, who actually take the lead in outreach and discipleship.

***They have found through experience that, God’s Word changes hearts when it is in a form that is understandable and accessible.*** So they continue to concentrate on producing and distributing many contextualized Scripture products in oral forms using local cultural arts, music, traditions, and literature, and distributing them on mobile media.

Recently, while here in the States, Chuck and Alisha built an online social media platform, and have done outreach to thousands with the help of our local partners. Please pray for those they are meeting online, as well as for their return to the mission field!





# Mayra Rivera

MEXICO/NORTH AFRICA

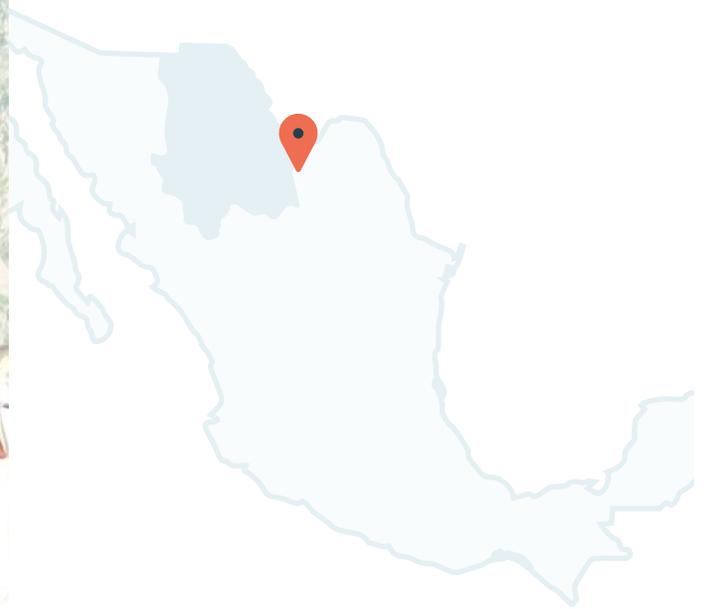
**P**amachi, a small village located in the Copper Canyon of the Sierra Tarahumara mountains, is a place mired in hopelessness, disease, hunger and more than all that, darkness and spiritual chains. ***The men and women of the village were closed to the Gospel, but after seven years of witness, many of these Tarahumara people could not resist His light.*** Some were drawn by their restless spirit to learn new things. But some were reminded of stories they had heard long ago about a God who spoke their language, a God who acted in favor of man and was not still hanging on a mute and impassive cross. Some had heard of a book that talked about the end of the world. And these stories reminded

them that they still had the same longing to fill a void that was not satisfied by alcohol or dances to mute gods.

Today, a small church is in Pamachi. Its numbers are small but its spirit is strong. The believers there struggle against religious opposition, contempt, and mockery. Nevertheless, it is a church standing firm. In the middle of that dry and arid canyon and despite the distances, the roughness of the road, the harsh weather and shoes made of cowhide and car tires, they walk every Sunday to sing Christ tamí galé (Christ loves me) Nijé niwé Biré apanero (I have a friend who loves me).

Mayra works as a missionary nurse among the remote Tarahumara people but also was called to serve the people of North Africa. The mission is the same in both countries: to share the story of salvation and a God who loves all people.





# Ernesto & Olga Santiago

MEXICO

For over 30 years, Ernesto and his wife Olga Santiago have ministered to the people in a remote area of Mexico known as the Copper Canyon. It is said that the Copper Canyon is larger and deeper than the Grand Canyon in Arizona. In this almost inaccessible region live an indigenous people group known as the Tarahumara. Historically, the Tarahumara have retreated to this harsh and mountainous place because of oppression from more warlike tribes of Indians and later by European invaders.

Their customs are strange to the western world and are based on superstition and mystic beliefs. But the Gospel has penetrated this darkness. Ernesto and Olga minister weekly in Tarahumara

villages throughout the state of Chihuahua, and especially near the town of Creel.

***The work is demanding and the people are slow to reject their traditional gods. But God's word is faithful and more and more of these unique people are embracing the one true God and his Son, Jesus Christ.***



# Peter & Melissa Murrell

## NICARAGUA

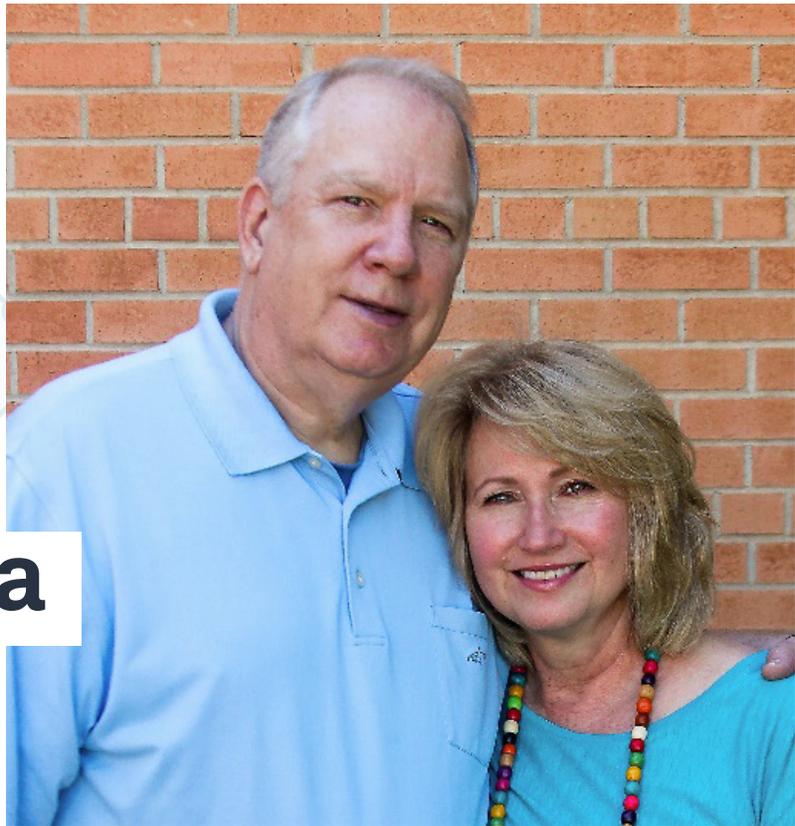
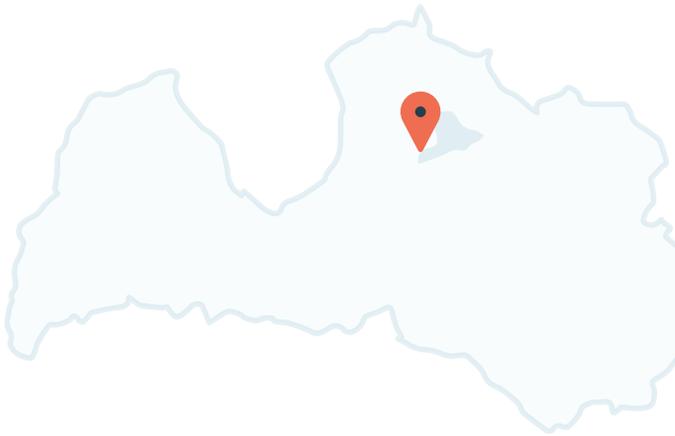
**P**eter & Melissa Murrell, along with their kids Joshua (15), Gabe (13), Nathan (8), and Betsy (6), serve with Nica Team and live in Rosita, Nicaragua. ***They minister to the Miskito and Mayangna indigenous people groups in the Mining Triangle by training pastors, serving others, and sharing Christ.***

Nicaragua is the second poorest country in our hemisphere, and the people of the Mining Triangle deal with poverty on a daily basis.

In November of 2020, hurricanes Eta and Iota hit the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua and devastated Puerto Cabezas, the Prinzapolka River region, and many areas in the Mining Triangle. Nica Team's response of providing feeding centers, emergency food packs, hygiene kits, cleaning contaminated water wells, and rebuilding a destroyed pastor's house was made possible by generous donations from partner churches like FBC Athens and several relief organizations.

Short-term mission teams can partner with the Murrells through water well drilling, constructing churches and homes for pastors, sports outreach, ministry to women and girls through Hope 4 Girls hygiene education, VBS community outreach, and seed exchange through the Seeds of Hope program.





# Mark & Laura Wimberley

LATVIA

**F**ourteen years ago, Mark and Laura began their journey to Latvia as lay missionaries to Cesis Baptist Church, a sister church of FBC - Athens. The years since have seen the Cesis Church purchase property and renew buildings to once again have their own campus. The building program is a result of the strong cooperative effort between the Cesis Church and their Texas friends. Over 35 Cesis members have traveled to Athens to participate in handbell concerts, leadership activities and other important training. From the Texas side, at least 90 individuals have served in Cesis on construction teams, VBS activities, music groups, basketball camps, youth events and various other activities.

Mark continues to speak and participate in a wide range of activities across Latvia including opportunities to teach at numerous basketball camps and clinics. Through this sharing of spiritual values, a strong network has been developed with both players and coaches in Cesis and throughout Latvia.

***The Wimberleys assist the Cesis Church as it stretches to become a more open congregation while serving a centuries-old city that has few committed Christians.*** Sharing the love of Christ with others in Cesis includes the ongoing activities of visitation in the local boys' prison, 'Table Talk' coffee-house events, handbell choir concerts, youth nights, marriage seminars and summer youth camp activities.





# Loyd & Alma Miguel

NICARAGUA, MISSIONARIES IN PREPARATION

The Miguel family directed the Nica Team ministries in Nicaragua for 8 years. Loyd—having grown up on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua and fluent in Spanish, English, and Miskito—was instrumental in moving the Nica Team ministries from Puerto Cabezas to Rosita in the center of the Mining region of Nicaragua. This region is home to three different ethnic groups, the Miskito people, the Mayangna people, and the Spanish settlers who are homesteading in this remote region. The three municipalities are the poorest in all of Nicaragua and are also the most unchurched.

**After having planted numerous churches in the region and establishing a mission compound for ministries, Loyd and Alma have felt led to prepare themselves for future mission ministries wherever God may lead them.** Loyd is currently pursuing a master's degree in Global Leadership at Dallas Baptist University. This degree is design to prepare folks to serve in regions of the world that are closed to traditional missionaries. Loyd and Alma and their two girls, Lya and Lyla live in Corsicana where Loyd is pastoring the Hispanic congregation of FBC Corsicana while he is completing his studies at DBU.





## Jim & Viola Palmer

NICARAGUA/ETHIOPIA

**A**fter 30 years serving in Honduras and Nicaragua with the Baptist International Mission Board, the Palmers settled in Athens, Texas where he is now missionary in residence at First Baptist Church and directs two mission networks.

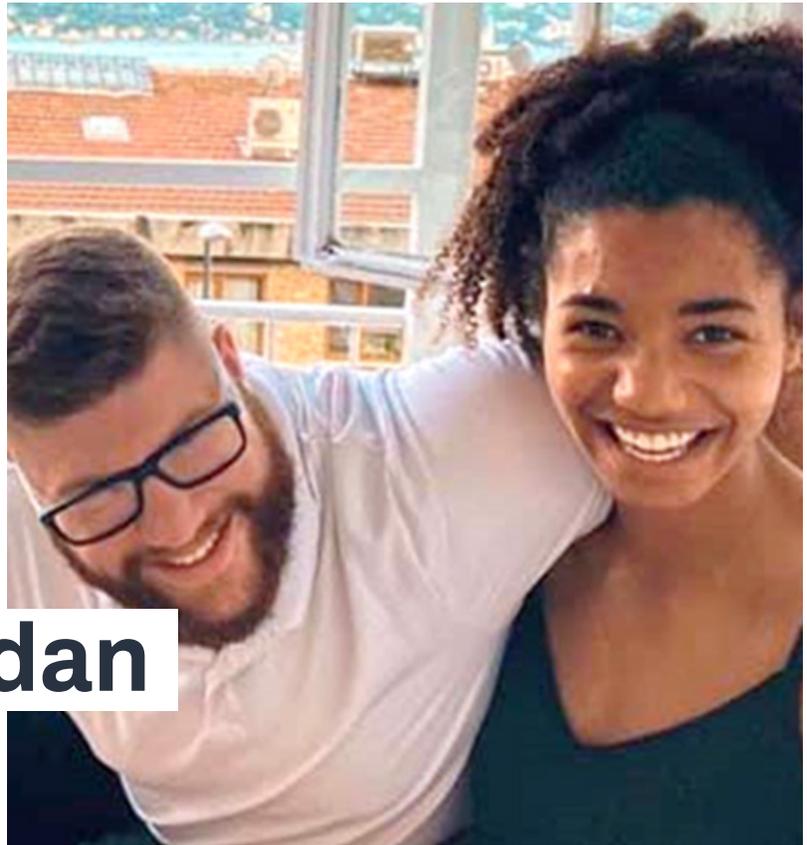
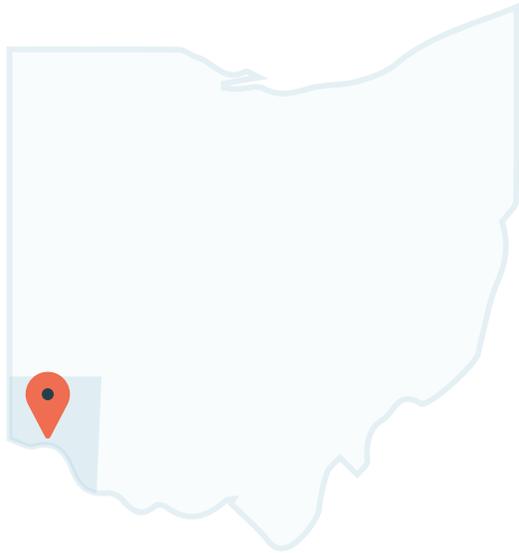
The Nica Team is a group of churches who continue to partner with indigenous churches in Nicaragua. The Miskito and Mayangna people are the largest indigenous people groups in Honduras and Nicaragua. They are also some of the poorest people in Central America. Living in the remote rain forest of the Atlantic Coast, they have been isolated from the Gospel. For the last 25 years, the Palmers directed ministries that have resulted in hundreds of new churches being planted. The Bible has been translated into the Miskito language and the book of Luke and Acts have been translated into the language of the Mayangna people. The Nica Team continues to train pastors and lead ministry to help increase agricultural

production and improve water. They also work in conjunction with Hope Springs Water to facilitate water and sanitation services in the indigenous communities.

The Ethio Team is a network of United States churches that partner with Ethiopian churches in the Southwest Shewa region of the State of Oromia. The Bacho Oromo people are poor subsistence farmers living in small rural communities. Twelve years ago, there were only a few believers among this people group. ***Through the work begun by First Baptist Church, Athens in 2007, the Ethio Team has helped facilitate the planting of more than a dozen churches.*** The Ethio Team leads in training pastors and facilitating ministries that include medical services, school-based deworming, and help create water and sanitation projects in rural villages in coordination with Hope Springs Water.

Ethio Team continues to train rural leaders and helps coordinate the Global Leadership Summit held each year in Ethiopia for several thousand church leaders.





# Blake & Jordan Thompson Yager

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

**B**lake Yager and his wife Jordan Thompson Yager serve students and student athletes at the University of Cincinnati. Both Blake and Jordan are exceptional athletes and this fact was made even more impressive when Jordan played on the USA Olympic Women's Volleyball team that won the Gold Medal in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo!

***Together Blake and Jordan have been privileged to go into some of the darkest parts of the world proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*** Now they are penetrating the darkness that is the

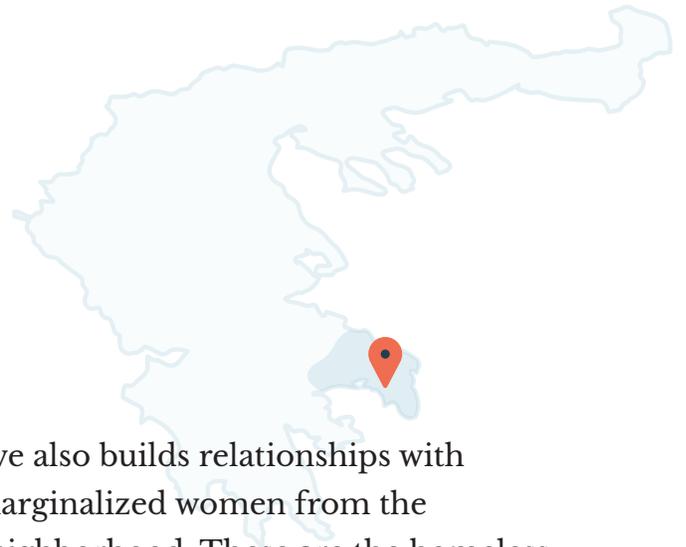
modern college campus. Every day they meet new students that are searching for answers in their lives. They share with hardcore atheists who are full of hate and anger towards Jesus and other Christians. Their goal is to help students take steps of faith toward a real and authentic relationship with Jesus Christ. They are seeing students transformed by the power of the Good News of Jesus.

Blake and Jordan are blessed to know that the people of FBCA are praying for them as they reach out to a world of students who need a Savior.



# Eve Kantakas

ATHENS, GREECE

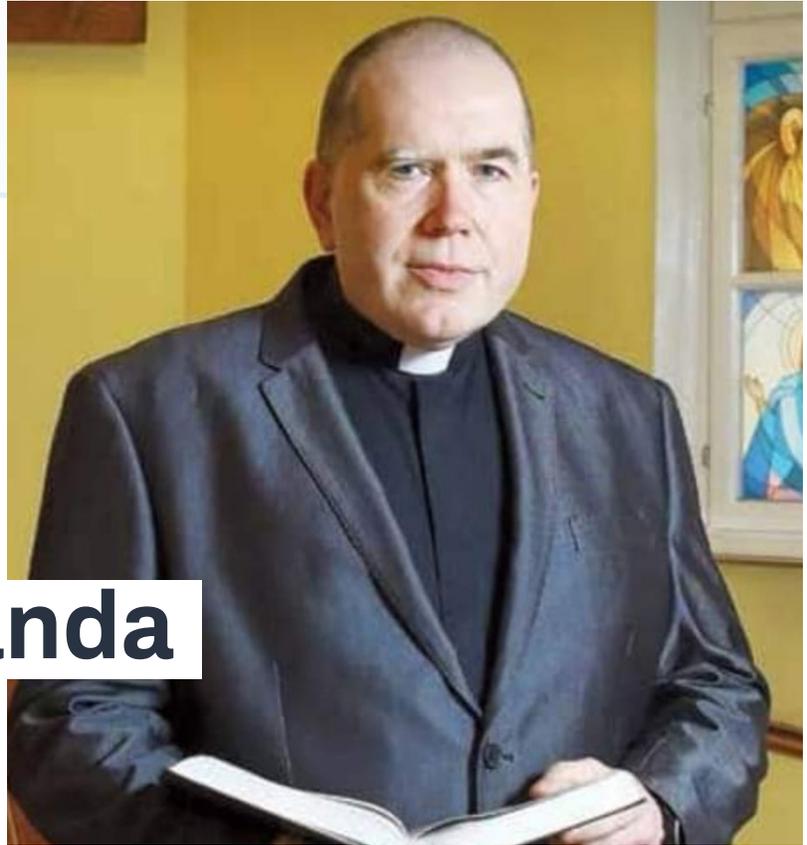
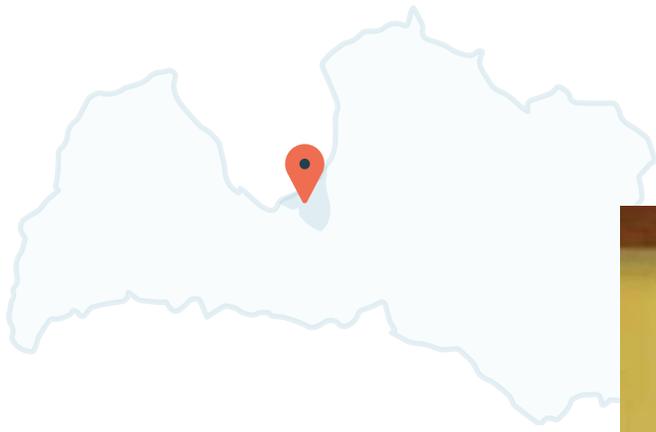


Through the local church in the center of Athens, Eve seeks to mentor and make disciples of young women and girls in the church, so that they may be a loving community of Christ for the least of these. ***Her aim is to show God's love and share the Word of God with both those who know Him and also those who are still growing to know Him.***

Together with the church's youth, Eve ministers at the church's community center and visits the local playgrounds. She reaches out to unchurched teenagers, children and their families from the neighborhood in order to share the Gospel.

Eve also builds relationships with marginalized women from the neighborhood. These are the homeless, poor, and refugee populations so present in Athens. Every week, her team helps to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of those at the church's Coffeehouse and Shower Ministry. Through the opportunity to take a warm shower, eat a meal, do laundry, receive clothing donations and listen to a Bible study, many women are introduced to Jesus Christ. This ministry helps her restore some of the dignity these women have lost.





# Mihails & Vanda Voronovs

LATVIA

**M**ihails and Vanda first became friends of FBC-Athens while Mihails was the chaplain at the Cesis Boys' Prison. Mark and Laura Wimberley visited this prison weekly for several years, partnering with Mihails to provide the boys with spiritual encouragement and practical guidance. Mihails has since transferred to the Men's Prison in Riga, continuing in the very demanding role of chaplain. He is responsible for private and group pastoral work with the inmates as well as coordinating and teaching church representatives how to perform ministry work in prison. Mihails also reaches out to assist those that are released from prison and desire to continue their spiritual studies.

Mihails is the pastor of Gulbene Baptist Church and assists regularly at Olaine Baptist Church. ***Mihails has felt called to pastor in small, often neglected churches in Latvia. For almost twenty-five years, he has been a capable and empathetic pastor bringing the Gospel to both church members and others he comes into contact with during his daily life.***

Mihails and Vanda have one adult daughter and the entire family is often involved with the music and other programs in the churches they serve. We are grateful for the friendship of the Voronovs and their continued Christian impact in Latvia.



# Stephanie DeWitt

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Stephanie DeWitt has been working as a Field Project Manager with the Seed Company since 2014. For the past 6 years, she has been working with partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Her main role is to act as the liaison between investors and local Congolese Bible Translation projects. **She works with local Congolese organizations to plan and manage the translation of Scripture into their language. She also trains local partners to develop their capacity in order to have a more sustainable impact in their communities.** Part of her job is to travel

to the DRC multiple times each year for face-to-face training, relationship building, and new project development.



# Where Are They Now?



## Nikolai & Tija Deviatkin

PASTOR & CHURCH PLANTER IN RUSSIA

FBCA began its relationship with Nikolai through IMB missionary, Dr. Robert Tucker. For over 25 years, he has been our ministry partner in northern Russia. For all these years, Nikolai served as the pastor of the Baptist Church in Archangel, Russia. It was his responsibility to oversee and encourage rural pastors in this northern part of Russia that is as large as Texas. Nikolai spent his life planting churches and developing pastors.

During these years, Nikolai also encouraged our sister church in Cesis, Latvia as we ministered together in both Russia and Latvia.

After many years of faithful service, Nikolai and Tija have retired and moved to a warmer home on the coast of the Caspian Sea. There, they serve in the local Baptist Church.

## Jeff Boozer

CHINA

Jeff Boozer grew up in the children's and youth ministries at FBC Athens and was called to serve in China in 2004. There he began by teaching English at Xi'an University for two years while he studied the Chinese language. After this, Jeff moved to Hong Kong and served with a ministry that transported Christian literature and Bibles into mainland China for five years. He then returned to the University in Xi'an and taught English. In 2019, Jeff returned to Athens to care for his mom and serve at Trinity Valley Community College.

## Sandra Clay

GERMANY

Sandra Clay served as the guidance counselor at Black Forest Academy in Germany from August 2018 through June 2021. Her mission was to guide over 200 students to live Godly and Christ-honoring lives. About 90% of her young people were the children of European, Near Eastern and African missionaries. Upon returning to the United States, Sandra settled temporarily in Jacksonville as she sought God's guidance for the future.

On March 2, Sandra will travel to St. Petersburg, Russia to work at the International Academy of St. Petersburg for the next year. She will serve as guidance counselor and writer of curriculum for both middle and high school students to help the Academy maintain its accreditation.





***“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”***

*Romans 10:13-15*



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BAPTIST CHURCH  
**ATHENS**