

Rev. Dr. Lee Riggs and Mrs. Lynn Riggs testify to the importance of a gift in their will so missionaries can do what God has called them to do.



Rev. Dr. Lee Riggs and Mrs. Lynn Riggs are long-time supporters of International Ministries (IM) and members of the Mission Partnership Team (MPT) for IM global servants serving in South America.

“We have always had a deep heart for mission,” said Rev. Riggs. “It has been a real privilege to be a part of their MPTs.”

Rev. Riggs was ordained in the American Baptist Churches (ABC) and has pastored churches in Connecticut, Ohio, and Indiana; he retired in 2009 after 23 years of service as the Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Greensburg, Indiana. At the outset of his ministry career, Rev. Riggs and his wife considered mission work as a couple and as a family. Although they ultimately sensed God’s leading to serve the ABC denomination and churches in the United States, mission remained a significant part of their worldview. Rev. Riggs and Mrs. Riggs financially supported mission, and Rev. Riggs previously served on IM’s board of directors.

Between 2001 and 2015, Rev. Riggs led eleven trips to visit IM missionaries—in Chile, Thailand, and Mexico—with teams from his own church as well as from other American Baptist churches in Indiana. Mrs. Riggs and their daughters also took part in some of these trips. It was during the first of these trips that Rev. Riggs felt led to establish a long-term relationship with a sister church in Coronel, Chile. In time, these visits led to a nine-year covenant of partnership between the American Baptist Churches of Indiana & Kentucky and the Convention of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission, through which the Riggs family developed their relationship with IM global servants Barbara and Dwight Bolick, and Carlos Bonilla and Mayra Giovanetti, who served in that country.

“These ‘mission encounter’ trips allowed our team members to encounter the culture, the missionaries, and the people they served while doing small service projects,” said Rev. Riggs. “We saw the work the missionaries were doing and felt excited to be a part of it. When we came home, we would share their stories with the churches that sent us and encourage continued support. Because of these trips, our two regions in Indiana became among the strongest regions of support for these two missionary families.”

In working closely with individual missionaries over the years, Rev. Riggs witnessed the challenge for missionaries to transition to the current funding model in which they are responsible for fundraising their budgets. The importance of giving became even more clear and pressing. “Gifts are essential to maintaining the missionary force,” said Rev. Riggs. “They make it possible for missionaries to continue to do what God has laid on their hearts.”

An upside to the new funding model has been the increase in IM missionaries’ engagement with the churches as part of their fundraising efforts, through in-person visits and video presentations that tell stories from the mission field. “Nothing does more to generate missionary support than to have missionaries visit and become known in our local churches,” said Rev. Riggs.

Raised in American Baptist churches, Rev. Riggs has always tithed first as child then as an adult. When writing their wills, Rev. Riggs and Mrs. Riggs decided to make a planned gift in order to “leave a legacy by tithing the resources in our estate,” said Rev. Riggs, “and to make a commitment to share something beyond our own lifetime toward what has been important in our lives all along.”

For those who want to consider or make a similar gift, Rev. Riggs suggests working with a lawyer and with IM Donor Services, in order to carefully set up the gift with the correct designation and nomenclature.

“We feel blessed to be able to do it,” said Rev. Riggs of the planned gift from him and his wife. “We have a deep sense of the blessing of God in our lives. You can never give too much to mission. You can never out-give God.”

