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Making History This Black History Month



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For African Americans in global mission, this Black History Month has been a historic one in the life of IM as we seek to engage the Black Community of faith to be part and parcel of our missional movement. Three African American missionaries have been endorsed by IM to serve in Africa. For us, this Black History Month is of a special importance for our organization as we flourish in engaging members of this community in missions. We hope to continue to make these historical strides well beyond this month of celebration and feel we are well on our way.

At the close of last year, I had the opportunity to travel to several countries to both renew relationships and foster new ones. Firstly, I visited our newest friends and partners, the Baptists in Zimbabwe. Since 2007, International Ministries has collaborated with Baptists in Zimbabwe. These interactions have occurred not

only through the All Africa Baptist Fellowship, but through initiatives like combatting HIV-AIDS by providing goats to produce milk for the orphans of AIDS. After years of informal partnership, we have come to the conclusion that it is in the best interest of the Kingdom of God to establish a formal relationship.

Early this year, it was off to Cameroon. The Native Baptist Church (NBC) was founded in 1849 by the Baptist Mission Society of London, the first European religious congregation to settle on the banks of the Wouri River. Missionary [Joseph Merrick](#), a black Jamaican and son of freed slaves, upon arrival in 1843 spread the Gospel while promoting a spirit of independence in his preaching. In January, I attended their General Assembly and spoke on the nature of a true partnership. Afterwards, I visited villages where the rural churches are located—specifically the area of Edea where a poultry project is being implemented supported by IM. As I visited the king of that area, and saw exuberant local churches, I could not help but remember our first missionary, George Liele who sailed to Jamaica as early as 1782, and the subsequent Jamaicans like Joseph Marrick, John Clarke, Joseph Jackson and Fuller who went with British to start the very ministry I was now visiting.

Togo was my next stop where I had the opportunity to introduce new missionaries [Holale and Awenam Azondjagni](#) to our partners in Togo, where they will be serving. I was happy to watch them interact with the Executive Council of the Togo Baptist Convention. I was fascinated by how happy they were to be welcomed in their native land, this time as IM missionaries and in turn, the peoples' excitement to see them. They are eager to start working with one another. The Azondjagnis will be involved, among other things, in training pastors at Moretan Bible Institute—a school that trains pastors for rural churches. I believe this relationship will flourish.

I met up with new missionary, [Rovaughna Richardson](#) in Ghana for the third leg of my journey. Ms. Richardson will serve at the Baptist Vocational Training Center of the Ghana Baptist Convention (GBC) where they teach vocational skills to young women who are former slaves of the Trokosi system. Trokosi in the Ewe language means “wife of god” and is a practice by which witch doctors force families to give a young girl (8 to 12 years old) as a ransom in order to escape the wrath of gods. The girl is never allowed return home but instead lives in the shrines for the rest of her life. As she grows older, she is sexually abused and any child born there is part of that system of 21st century slavery. The GBC has endeavored to rescue those girls and provide education at the center giving them the skills needed to start her new life. Missionary Richardson, using her counseling skills will help the traumatized women and work with the center's staff to provide economic empowerment tools.

After a stop-over to visit the [Williams](#) family in France, where they are completing language training, I reflected upon the strides IM made in connecting African Americans to mission opportunities abroad. Black History Month may last just 29 days, but we have the chance to make it every day. To God be the glory.