



HOPE, PEACE, LOVE & JOY

WEEK TWO



Pause to Pray

PEACE

Lord, You are the world's PEACE!
You came and proclaimed the good news of peace to those far away and peace to those who were near (Ephesians 2:17). As the gospel is shared around the world this Advent season, please use the words of eternal life to bring eternal peace to families and households. Amen.

CHILD OF PEACE

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”

ISAIAH 9:6

Charlotte “Lottie” Diggs Moon was born December 12, 1840, in Albemarle County, Virginia. She stepped into eternity on December 24, 1912, in the harbor of Kobe, Japan. It’s a long way from Virginia to Japan, but no distance is too great for those who carry the good news of peace found in God.

Every year Southern Baptists sacrificially and generously give to our annual offering for international missions – an offering named in honor of the lady from Albemarle County. Who was this lady? How did our annual international missions offering get named in her honor? What was she doing in Japan on Christmas Eve in 1912?

You can read her complete story [here](#), but here's a summary.

Lottie Moon was not a perfect person. She resisted becoming a follower of Jesus until after her 18th birthday in 1858. She was also born in the pre-Civil War South to a wealthy farming family. The culture of her day was immersed in the tragedy of human slavery.

Lottie did not rush from her conversion to the international mission field. Fifteen years after her profession of faith, she established and taught in an academy for girls in Cartersville, Georgia.

It was there, in Cartersville Baptist Church, that Lottie Moon heard and surrendered to God's call to the mission field. Lottie was appointed to serve in northern China. She left for the mission field in September 1872. She would spend the rest of her life there, serving the poor and sharing the good news of peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Our annual offering for international missions is named in her honor because she was the first to suggest, among her many appeals for workers

and funding, that Southern Baptists receive an annual Christmas offering for international missions. It was also named in her honor because she devoted the last 40 years of her life to missions.

Having celebrated her 72nd birthday in China, her co-laborers convinced Lottie to return to the U.S. because of her failing health. She had given her life to the people of China, sharing her faith, food and money until her health broke. Reluctantly, she boarded a ship for the U.S., only to die onboard in the harbor of Kobe. Hers was a life well-lived and sacrificed for the glory and fame of Isaiah's "Prince of Peace."



NO PEACE

“There is no peace for the wicked,” says the Lord.”

ISAIAH 48:22

The numbers tell the story. Every second of every day, three people out of our world's population of 7.7 billion people step into a Christless eternity. They might be your neighbor, or they might live in a distant land. They have not trusted Christ. They don't know true peace.

The IMB provides an Annual Statistical Report (ASR) that reveals what God has accomplished through the work and ministry of your missionaries scattered across the globe. The most recent ASR can be found [here](#). While we celebrate the goodness and faith-

fulness of God, we also grieve the millions who have yet to hear the good news. The numbers in the 2021 ASR highlight more than 176,000 professions of faith, and more than 107,000 of those people have already followed the Lord in believer's baptism. Isn't God good?

Yet the church's work, our work — not just IMB's work but the collective work of the body of Christ — is not complete! Today, there are more than 3,000 unreached people groups around the world who are completely unengaged with the gospel. A total of 4.5 billion people live among a people, a tribe, a language group or a nation whose Christian population is 2% or less. For these lost, unreached people, there is "no peace," says the Lord of hosts.

What can those of us who know peace do?

- a.** We can pray for the outpouring of God's Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel among every unreached and unengaged people group. IMB has free resources available for you. "**Loving the Lost**" helps you begin a more specific prayer journey for the unreached.
- b.** We can help lead our churches to adopt an unreached or unengaged people group, begin praying for them and see what doors God opens. You can start this process by working through an online study called "**A Voice for the Nations: A Course on Prayer**".
- c.** We can encourage our pastors to include a call to missionary service in their regular appeals to

their respective congregations to hear and heed God's calling to the international harvest fields.

d. We can surrender our plans for our future and get involved today in carrying the gospel to the nations by contacting the IMB and beginning the process of international service. Start the process [here](#).



PERFECT PEACE

*“The steadfast of mind you
will keep in perfect peace
because he trusts in you.”*

ISAIAH 26:3

Our ability to maintain focus is often challenged by multiple distractions surrounding us. The “Orlando Sentinel” published an article in July 2021 stating that researchers had determined that the average human attention span had fallen from 12 seconds in 2000 to just eight seconds in 2021. The human attention span is now shorter than that of a goldfish, which reportedly has an attention span of nine seconds.

So, let’s get to the point since I have your attention for the next eight sec-

onds. The peace that “surpasses all comprehension” (Philippians 4:7) is a peace that enables followers of Jesus to exceed the tragically short average human attention span. Take, for example, the work of Andrew Bryan, a former slave who organized “a small group for preaching and worship in Savannah, Georgia, in the early 1780’s.”^[1] Andrew’s attention to the spread of the gospel far exceeded today’s mere seconds.

“By 1790 Bryan’s congregation had grown to a membership of 225 communicants and about 350 converts not yet admitted to full membership. The congregation became the First African Baptist Church of Savannah. In 1803, a Second African Church was orga-

nized from members of the First, and a few years later a Third African Church was formed, both led by black pastors."^[2]

As Southern Baptists, we celebrate this "steadfastness of mind" among all our pastors, missionaries and gospel ministry workers, past and present. On February 22, 2022, Southern Baptists celebrated George Liele Day. Liele was a slave in Georgia who was set free and became the first ordained black Baptist preacher in the U.S. He went on to carry the gospel internationally to Jamaica — 10 years before William Carey, often called the father of modern missions. You can read Liele's story [here](#).

There are now thousands of missionaries who have gone out from

Southern Baptist churches over the past 177 years to preach the gospel to the nations. All have proven with their obedience to God's call that our attentiveness to Christ can and must last more than eight seconds. Please pause right now and download the IMB Pray App (available for free in the [Google Play Store](#) or [Apple App Store](#)) and pray for the ongoing work of your missionaries.

[1] *Thabiti Anyabwile. Reviving the Black Church. (Broadman & Holman: Nashville, TN), 2015. p. 230.*

[2] *Ibid.*



ANNOUNCING PEACE

*“How lovely on the mountains
are the feet of him who brings
good news, who announces
peace and brings good news
of happiness, who announces
salvation, and says to
Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’”*

ISAIAH 52:7

On March 11, 2020, the director of the World Health Organization (WHO) made an announcement that shocked the world. “In the past two weeks, the number of cases of COVID-19 outside China has increased 13-fold, and the number of affected countries has tripled. There are now more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries, and 4,291

people have lost their lives. WHO has been assessing this outbreak around the clock and we are deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction. We have therefore made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic."

This startling announcement of a pandemic gripped the entire globe and led to lockdowns. But not every person in every country heeded or even believed the WHO's characterization of COVID-19. This parallels Paul's description of believers who are "the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an

aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life..." (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

Some who hear about the pandemic of sin embrace the gospel, and some who hear this news reject it. Our assignment as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ does not depend on either of those responses. Success, or lack thereof, does not determine whether we continue to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19). We are assigned the task of announcing, and we have an announcement. We announce to the world the "good news" of peace with God. It is possible. It is available. It is salvation.

Paul wrote, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us, we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:19–20). To whom does God want to make His appeal through you? Write the name of a neighbor and a nation / people group for whom you can pray and to whom you can announce the good news.



ESTABLISHED PEACE

“Lord, You will establish peace for us, since You have also performed for us all our works.”

ISAIAH 26:12

A few months ago, the Yadkin Baptist Association of Yadkinville, North Carolina, published a monthly newsletter that included some sobering mental health statistics relating to pastors. Here are a few of those listed:

- 33% feel burned out within their first five years of ministry.
- 40% of pastors and 47% of spouses are suffering from burnout.
- 45% of pastors have experienced emotional distress that necessitated a leave of

absence from ministry.

- 50% feel unable to meet the needs of the job.
- 57% would leave the ministry if they had somewhere else to go or some other vocational option.
- 70% do not have any close friends.
- 75% report severe stress causing anguish, worry, bewilderment, anger, depression, fear and alienation.

For those of us in vocational ministry, whether full-time, part-time, bi or tri-vocational, we understand these statistics even though we might not currently fit into any of the categories listed above. Interestingly, the people Isaiah ministered to were keenly aware of similar life challenges. God

spoke prophetically to the people of Isaiah's day as well as to us today that "the Lord will establish peace for us" (Isaiah 26:12a). He is our peacemaker with God and our peacemaker in relationships and circumstances. After all, "You have also performed for us all our works" (Isaiah 26:12b).

Peace amid turmoil, trouble, heartache, tragedy and all the seemingly unassailable difficulties of life is available to us ONLY in Christ Jesus. He is our peace. He is "God with us!" (Matthew 1:23). Perhaps at the core of at least some of our burnout, emotional distress, ineffectiveness, loneliness, worry, anguish, depression, bewilderment, anger and fear is too much self-dependence and not enough abiding in Christ's provision of strength, comfort, wisdom and peace.

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27). As He gave further comfort and instructions to His disciples, He said, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Let's start abiding in Him today by turning to His Word with renewed confidence and by surrendering our plagues of despair to His providential grace. Pause and read John 14 and 15 and then give every desperate circumstance to Him in prayer.



A RIVER OF PEACE

“For thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream.’”

ISAIAH 66:12A

Many of your IMB missionaries live and serve in places where clean water is scarce and highly treasured. Water is consumed carefully and used as sparingly as possible. When we realize just how valuable clean water is we understand more deeply the significance of Isaiah’s words that describe a river of peace and “the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream” (Isaiah 66:12a).

The barren deserts of the Middle East demonstrate the fact that rivers and

overflowing streams are an abundance that is not readily available to large portions of the population. The same is true for large regions on other continents. One local U.S. utility provider said in a recent monthly newsletter that "nearly 97% of the world's water is salty or otherwise undrinkable. Another 2% is located in ice caps and glaciers. That leaves just 1% for all of humanity's needs." This helps us understand the unimaginable value, and blessed abundance, of God's peace when He describes it in Scripture as a river.

Would you join your IMB leaders, missionaries and stateside staff in confident prayer that God's indescribable and abundant peace will "guard our hearts and minds in Christ

Jesus" (Philippians 4:7)? Petition Him to empower and bless us to reach our five strategic objectives by 2025 – a river of peace to the nations.

Let's pray over these five objectives right now:

- 1.** Send an additional 500 missionaries.
- 2.** Mobilize 500 global missionary partners on IMB teams.
- 3.** Engage 75 global cities with comprehensive strategies.

For the millions who have not yet heard, for the glory of God, and for the fulfillment of the vision Jesus pro-

vided in Revelation 7:9–10, together we pray, give, go, send and welcome people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation into the everlasting family of faith in Christ Jesus, our Eternal King! A River of peace to the nations!

