

SMALL CHURCH, GENEROUS HEART

FBC, Andersonville, supports both CP and a missionary couple



*Each year, First Baptist Church, Andersonville, holds a missions market to raise enough money for the International Mission Board to fund one missionary couple for a year. Church members make and sell things like baked goods, knitted items and household decorations. They also auction off services like mowing lawns or cleaning windows. – **IMB photo***

Editor's Note: Churches all across Tennessee and around the nation are in the process of collecting the annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. Read how a Tennessee church meets the needs of a missionary couple while continuing to give more than 10 percent of its undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program.

Baptist Press

ANDERSONVILLE – A Tennessee Baptist church is proving that missions giving can be both/and, not either/or.

For the past several years, First Baptist Church, Andersonville, has taken on the challenge of supporting a missionary couple at the cost of \$90,000 each year.

At the same time, the church has continued to be a strong supporter of the Cooperative Program. In 2017, the church gave 10.7 percent of its undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program.

“We have always been very supportive of the Cooperative Program,” said pastor Steve Lakin, who added that every church where he has been pastor has emphasized giving through the Cooperative Program.

How the church came to “adopt” a missionary couple happened a few years ago when the church’s budget had a line of numbers his heart couldn’t reconcile.

“I was meeting with the elder leadership here at the church, and as I was looking through our financial report, I saw we had a large surplus left over,” Lakin said.



Steve Lakin

One of the elders grinned and said he was sure God had ways in mind to spend that money. Pastor Lakin agreed. "That thought just kept reverberating in my head for the next several days," he said. And as it did, those extra dollars fueled big dreams, dreams that didn't end with that year's surplus.

The little church of 125 decided to step out and commit to something radical – to raise money equivalent to what it takes to fund one International Mission Board missionary couple's work, not just that year but in the years to come.

"We got in touch with the IMB and shared what was on our heart, and they connected us with a couple who was getting ready to go to the field who could be the 'face' of the need for us," Lakin said.

In the past, First Baptist had given generously to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, faithfully passing the \$10,000 mark every year. But in the year of the surplus, the church took an additional \$90,000 out of its budget that year to "adopt" a couple (names withheld) who were IMB workers for the East Asia region.

And in the years since, the church has set aside one Sunday a year as "sacrificial Sunday," the day the congregation raises the entire \$90,000 to give to the IMB with the couple's costs in mind.

"Every year without fail, we've either gotten the \$90,000 or gone above it," Lakin said. "We became motivated and moved to give radically to see the advancement of the gospel, and we began to see giving generously as our responsibility."

As a result, the church saw God do phenomenal things, he reported. "We're just a small church; we're not huge," the pastor pointed out. "We may be a 'First Baptist,' but Andersonville is a small town. But God can take small things and do great things with them, and through our giving to the IMB, we see how God is using us."

It's caused a cultural shift, Lakin observed.

Through that direct connection to the couple, missions has come alive. The church knew their gifts mattered, but this put faces to the money they sent to the IMB, and now the congregation prays specifically, sends care packages and actively goes on mission too, Lakin said.

"It has dramatically changed our view of the gospel and the way we see missions," he noted. "People sometimes say, 'It can't be done in our church.' But if God can do this with us, then He can do it with you." **B&R** – *Lonnie Wilkey, editor of the B&R, contributed to this article.*