

Meet our Special Interest Missionaries (SIMs)

2016-2019



Colombia—Katie Isaza

Lake Superior & Trimont District

8303 W Higgins Rd

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Birthday: January 10

Anniversary: March 19

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Here is an update on how the SIM money was used and also my hopes for how the stipend would be used in 2019. I continued to support the leaders of Shalom Covenant Church and the community leaders in Manantiales neighborhood, who are working with 20-30 young moms and pregnant women. Through the funds we were able to provide nutritious snacks for the mothers and children during our meeting times together. They were also used to help with some materials as we made crafts together and spent time getting to know one another in a support group setting. I was also able to use some of the stipend to purchase materials for a children's ministry workshop I was able to teach in a neighborhood near Manantiales, with a new group of teachers who were women from the community.

In 2019, I would like to use the SIM stipend to support a ministry of Christian formation with young adult leaders in the Covenant churches in Medellin. They approached me as they are looking for a space to dialogue, God's word and grow in their relationship with God. They have asked me to facilitate those times and are looking for ways to connect with God. We will meet once a month and study Scripture, as well as practice some Spiritual disciplines together. We almost always have a meal so the funds would go to help pay for that meal, as well as materials that we use in our study times. I would also like to be able to lead them in a day-long spiritual retreat at a nearby natural reserve. The money would help pay for transportation, the entrance to the park, materials, and food for lunch together. The majority of these young leaders are women. The amount for this stipend could be between \$350-\$500.



Sweden—Barbara Swanson

Twin Cities District

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Birthday: March 3

Anniversary: November 6

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Wow, we are so thankful for how the SIM funds continue to bless us here in ministry! In 2018, I had requested to use the funds for a pastors' wives retreat here in Skåne. I was planning to invite Carin Waller, Rhonda Egging and Bethany Abramson from Sösdala and my own pastor's wife Coté and me from Malmö. 2018 slipped by all of us (lots of travel for several of those who were invited). We are in full planning mode for having a retreat day (at least an overnight!) for these pastor wives that I love so dearly. Rhonda, Bethany and I were talking about this already last week during our break out times between meetings in Göteborg. It will happen this spring, and we're looking at several different options for location. We want it to be a time away with space for worship, good study together, laughter and a bit of fun as well. We all recognize the importance of encouraging one another and supporting each other in the unique roles that we play as pastor wives.

I am so very thankful to the NWC WM SIM project that is the gift that keeps on giving. As this new year 2019 develops and I get more involved with New Swede women. I anticipate that I'll start dreaming about doing a day away for women ~ or some special activity that speaks to their needs as well. I used my SIM funds back in Belgium in 2015-2016 to host a retreat day for refugee women, and it was a huge success. People were just plain awed that we would pay for them to get away for a weekend, and have time to study and pray together and worship in their mother tongue. I have just learned of an opportunity to join a "kvinnorfika" (women's fika) that is starting here in Malmö. I plan to attend as soon as I get back from my meetings in the states.

We continue to have great opportunities to meet men (and some women but not many) on Thursday evenings at the Språkcafé (language café) that the church sponsors. We have started the Al Massira course and are enjoying the deep conversations we are having with our Mux friends who are so curious to know more about Jesus. And we've taught the Sharing Lives course 3 times in 2018 and have invitations to do it at least 2 times in 2019 already.

God is good!



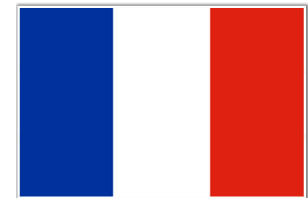
Mexico—Erika Clauson
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Anniversary: October 23
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Last year any SIM funds that were received were actually used to pay for the women’s retreat from the year before. Because of the earthquake that happened one week before our scheduled retreat in September 2017, we had to move it back one month and that meant extra costs for change in tickets for our speaker and fewer participants to cover the expenses. This meant we were left in the red after the retreat was over, and so we decided not to have a retreat in 2018, but rather work to pay back the debt from the retreat in 2017, and so the SIM funds were used for that. We do have a women’s retreat planned for May of 2019 and any SIM funds we receive would be a HUGE blessing as the women we serve struggle to pay for half of the cost of the retreat with their registration fee while we look to other help for the other half of the cost.



France—Hannah Baker
Alexandrea, Wheaton & Braham District
 The Evangelical Covenant Church
 Attn: Serve Globally- Hannah and Jared Baker
 8303 W. Higgins Rd
 Chicago, IL 60631
Anniversary: May 27



Update: Ruban Blanc, the Marseille-based anti-trafficking association with which I partner, hosted an annual outreach event in June 2018. They hosted a party among Nigerian women who work on the streets. Nigerian foods were served, and all the women on the street that night were invited to come, rest, and enjoy themselves. These events have given us the opportunity to build trust and community with these women, to pray with them, and to invite them into next steps regarding their situation, i.e. invite them to consider leaving the streets, knowing that they have people who can support them in the journey.

I’d also like to update you on my current ministry situation. Serve Globally officially launched the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) as a region of service for missions in 2017. In January of 2018, my husband and I were invited by our leadership to consider shifting from the Europe team to the MENA team and relocating to the region in mid-2019. We spent several months in prayer and discernment with a close circle of family, friends, and colleagues, who encouraged us in the transition. As a fairly new venture for Serve Globally, much of the effort of the MENA team (which counts 6 people, including us) at this stage are focused on building foundations for the long-term, such as growing our relationships with existing and potential partners in the region and raising awareness of MENA among ECC churches in North America. As a team we are guided by four focus areas of ministry, including: service to refugees; Muslim engagement; support for the persecuted church; and peacebuilding and reconciliation with a focus on Israel and Palestine.

So, with that, since the summer of 2018, my husband and I no longer serve in Marseille, France, though we continue to cultivate our friendships with many people there. We are currently on a 1-year home assignment in the US, based in Denver, CO. Our next steps will be to relocate to the MENA region in the fall of 2019 and begin intensive Arabic study. Our exact location is yet to be determined. We will also begin our role as liaisons in the region, connecting with national partners and helping to develop Serve Globally's role in the region. The rest of our team is based in the US.



Mexico—Sue Peterson

Crow River & St. Cloud District

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MEXICO

Birthday: September 27

Anniversary: December 28

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2018 PROJECT UP-DATE:

Karl & I returned to Mexico City with your youngest son, Jonathan (while our oldest son Zachary is a sophomore at North Park University in Chicago) at the beginning of September. Karl has been teaching a Covenant History and Theology course On-Line for Mexico Covenant pastors who are on the Ordination track. He had eight students from Mexico City, the State of Mexico, Leon and Morelos!!! It was a great course! He is also the director for Vitality in Mexico and forming his team. I have been co-leading a small group of Mending the Soul, a ministry of MAEM (Ministering to the Abused and Exploited in Mexico) as well as forming MAEM Centro Sur, a new chapter of this ministry. Karl and I have been visiting the different Covenant Churches in the Central District and are enjoying reconnecting with friends, neighbors and ministry partners. I continue to work on my Spiritual Direction Certificate through North Park Theological Seminary and now have two directees that I am meeting with monthly. We are living in the same condominium complex but in a different unit. Jonathan is studying at a Humanities and Sciences high school as a sophomore. Your prayers are appreciated as we continue to collaborate with our Covenant churches and reach out with the Good News of Christ to a hurting world.

I have been able to lead one Spiritual Direction mini-retreat since our return to Mexico and I am in the process of developing other opportunities for pastors and lay leaders to gather and go deeper in their relationship with God. As we have been visiting the churches and sharing my vision for spiritual direction retreats, there has been a very favorable response.

2019 SIM PROJECT PROPOSAL:

I would use this year's monies for MAEM Centro Sur (South Central) as we start this new chapter of MAEM on the southern side of Mexico City and extending into the Southeastern Central District churches in Morelos as well. We held our first meeting in December and have written our missions statement and shared our dreams for this ministry. Monies would be used for material, events and retreats. Ministries include Prevention Workshops, small support groups, workshops about Resolving Conflict, Abuse Awareness Workshops and other new ideas.



France—Stephanie Ramos

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Anniversary: October 21

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We work with La Fonderie, a ministry in Paris that exists to support and encourage Christian artists, both in their spiritual lives and in practical ways. We recognize the important role these artists have as they live out their faith through creative gifts in the postmodern culture of France.

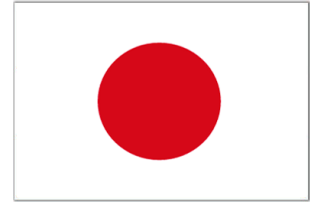
As part of this work we also run a multi-functional art space in the center of Paris, available for all artists to apply to use. This has allowed us to develop relationships with the larger art community of Paris and to be a Christian presence in this setting. We work with a team of around 8 people, most of whom are national and international artists along with several missionaries from other mission organizations.

Last year I used the SIM project money I received for needs related to spiritual direction, ie: written resources I could provide directees; transportation costs to travel outside of Paris for first time meetings, (afterwhich I could continue by Skype), and my own participation in further spiritual direction training. These funds were such a blessing to my ministry here. Yesterday I received this note from the mother of a young woman I have been doing spiritual direction with: “Stéphanie, The Lord is doing a good work with you in A’s heart. I see that she wants to have a better attitude in the family and that her relation with the Lord helps her in her daily life. I want to thank you for that.”

Thank you Womens Ministries of the NWC. Your gifts have been such an encouragement to me in this ministry.



Japan—Pauline Carlson
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Anniversary: May 31
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I am so thankful for the SIM money that has helped in so many ways over the years. Thanks to all of you for your faithful giving and prayers!

The 2018 SIM funds were used for outreach to families in our neighborhood as well as for our Summer Day Camp (VBS). It is so encouraging to see kids return again and again for our kids activities, and know they are having chances to learn about Jesus. The Summer Day Camp was for three mornings in a row at the end of July, and we had a wonderful time sharing Bible stories, doing crafts, having snacks, and playing games. For those kids who have come to our activities over the years, we are seeing a growth in their knowledge of what the Bible says. None of the kids have accepted Christ yet, but we know we are planting seeds in their hearts, and God is at work in their lives. We have seen over and over in our years in Japan, people coming to church as adults and saying, “When I was a child, I went to a church for a Christmas program or a kids program, and what I learned then has stayed with me, and I want to learn more.” We continue to pray that at some point, each of these kids will ask Christ to be their Lord and Savior.

This summer, Gary and I will begin our 36th year as Covenant missionaries in Japan. We are starting to think about future plans, and how to end our ministries well in the next few years. It doesn't feel like we have been in Japan that long, but as I look at the various ministries God has led us to do, we have been involved in a lot of different things - church planting, mission administration, theological education, MK education, evangelism, discipleship, mentoring of new missionaries to name a few. Needless to say, life has not been boring! I'm so thankful for the opportunities God has given me to serve Him in Japan.

Three Ways to Support Your SIM:

- Pray for her and her family
- Have someone from your church mail or email her birthday & Christmas cards
- Designate checks for birthday gifts and special project support with her name and mail to:

Conference WM Financial Secretary
3106 47th Ave S
Minneapolis, MN 55406

By December 1 of each year. DO NOT send funds directly to the WM office in Chicago. The active SIMs receive \$325 toward their special project and a birthday gift. This budgeted item is paid for by the gifts you send to the conference.