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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 27, 2009

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Churches Receive Increased Financial Support for Local and International Missions, Despite Recession

The Mission Society, Based In Atlanta Metro, Successfully Mobilizes Churches for Outreach, Church Planting, Medical Aid, Orphanage Support, Job Training and Other Ministries

NORCROSS, Ga. - Despite the economic downturn, many churches still continue to thrive with the help of their members. According to a survey conducted by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), most evangelical churches and religious organizations met or exceeded their fundraising goals in the final quarter of 2008.

Among cases of steady or increased giving to Christian ministries, donations to missions has increased at churches that have worked with The Mission Society (www.themissionsociety.org), a locally based international organization that mobilizes churches and their members for missions. The organization helps churches develop and implement a local and global impact plan, which typically leads to increased contributions. The trend has continued, despite the recession, enabling churches to continue providing monetary and resource support for missions in their local communities and abroad.

"Times of increased suffering require an increase in support from the church community at large," said Stan Self, senior director of church ministry at The Mission Society. "Now more than ever, churches and their members need to come together and support individuals and organizations that need their assistance. We're finding many churches are meeting and exceeding that challenge."

Norcross First United Methodist Church and McKendree United Methodist Church in Lawrenceville are two local churches that have worked with The Mission Society and seen an increase in contributions to missions since the onset of the economic downturn. The contributions have enabled the churches to launch and sustain multiple local, national and international missions.

"Last summer we celebrated our Global Outreach Weekend, and since then contributions to missions have increased fourfold," said Chuck Shackelton, missions coordinator at McKendree United Methodist. "We have several missions in place, and one of our medical nurses will be taking a group to Kenya this month to support Kenya Medical Outreach."

Internationally, McKendree UMC supports two missionaries that train pastors in India through their organization, Hope for Today. The church also supports a sister church in Monrovia and an orphanage in Eritrea.

Locally, the church works with missionaries in Clarkston, who facilitate a resettlement program for refugees, primarily from Africa. The program provides English as a second language (ESL) classes, job training and other services and resources.



Norcross First UMC supports the Norcross Cooperative Ministry and the Family Promise Network. Additionally, the church sends mission teams regularly to Louisiana to assist with the construction and repair of homes, and to Leon, Nicaragua, where they support a church that they built, and El Ayudante Nicaragua, an organization that provides medical support and protection services for children. The church's mission teams also help build homes and irrigation systems in the area several times a year.

"Each year when we have our Global Impact Celebration, our members make a "faith promise pledge" to support our church's missions," said Pastor Brenda Westmoreland. "People are giving more now than ever before. Last month we took our first mission trip to Kenya, and the money just flowed in."

In addition to equipping churches with tools and resources they need to launch successful missions, The Mission Society also assists other local nonprofit organizations. The organization recently donated a mobile medical unit to Safehouse Outreach, a local nonprofit that provides rehabilitation, food programs, job placement and other resources to members in the community often deemed "unreachable." Safehouse Outreach uses the unit to provide medical aid to individuals no longer able to receive assistance from Grady Health System because of the facility's recent financial woes.

Founded in 1984 in the Wesleyan tradition, The Mission Society recruits, trains and sends Christian missionaries to minister around the world. At present, the ministry has more than 225 missionaries in 32 countries. The Mission Society develops diverse programs and ministries in accordance with its missionaries' unique callings and gifts, ranging from well drilling and the arts to more traditional ministries, such as teaching English and church planting. Its church ministry department provides seminars, workshops and mentoring for congregations in the United States and overseas, helping equip churches for strategic outreach in their own communities and throughout the world.

For more information on The Mission Society and churches working with the organization, or to schedule an interview, contact Ty Mays at (770) 256-8710 or tmays@inchristcommunications.com.

The Mission Society's staff includes experts on a variety of global issues and missions outreach. Expert sources are available for features and other developing news stories on international ministries and missions, mobilizations of churches, cross-cultural relations, missionary recruitment and the Muslim "Insider Movement."