

## **International Missions Agency Celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

### ***Looking to the Future, The Mission Society Releases New Book, Welcomes New Leader***

(NORCROSS, Ga. – September 14, 2009) – Leaders and friends celebrated The Mission Society’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on September 11, 2009, in Norcross at the agency’s headquarters and at the nearby Norcross First United Methodist Church. They have much for which to give thanks, including 11 new Mission Society missionaries commissioned on the morning of the celebration at 11:00 a.m. at the Hilton Atlanta Northeast Hotel in Norcross.

“The Mission Society has become a global entity, responding to spiritual and material needs throughout the world,” said Dr. Gerald H. Anderson, director emeritus of the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven, Conn., former United Methodist missionary, and a founder of The Mission Society. “While retaining its Wesleyan ethos and heritage, The Mission Society has expanded beyond its initial United Methodist orbit. Today it is working with 14 different denominations and independent churches, and its missionaries come from many different denominational traditions.”

Anderson is co-editor (along with Darrell Whiteman, PhD., Mission Society resident missiologist) of a new book that was released on September 11, *World Mission in the Wesleyan Spirit*, in which 31 scholars and Christian leaders examine how Wesleyan theological orientation has shaped the practice of world missions. Collectively, their essays examine the past, present and future directions of world missions and provide the most comprehensive account of Wesleyan influence on world missions and evangelism published in the past 50 years. Twelve of the book’s contributing authors were present during the evening, including Gerald Anderson, Robert Aboagye-Mensah, Lindy Backues, Luis Wesley deSouza, Dean Flemming, Dean Gilliland, Art McPhee, H.T. Maclin, Michael Mozley, Terry Muck, Howard Snyder, and Norival Trindade, Jr.

The Silver Anniversary celebration also marked the changing of the guard at The Mission Society. Bill Johnson, Atlanta businessman and long-time board member, was introduced as new board chairman, succeeding Bill Goff. And the Rev. Dr. Phil Granger, who has served as president since 2001, was succeeded by the Rev. Dick McClain, who has served in several key positions at The Mission Society since 1986. Granger continues on as senior counsel to the president until his retirement on December 31.

“Dick brings to the position of president three essential gifts,” Granger said in an earlier statement. “First and foremost, he brings his total commitment to Christ and the mission entrusted to the church to be the vehicle to bring God’s message of salvation and eternal



life to the world. Second, he brings his love for The Mission Society as evidenced by more than 20 years of service to this fantastic ministry. Third, he brings a wealth of experience as a missionary kid, pastor, and mission executive.”

Worship leader Aaron Keyes brought special music for the evening. H. T. Maclin, founding Mission Society president; Florencio Guzman, first Mission Society missionary; Al Vom Steeg, who served as Mission Society president from 1994 to 2000, and outgoing president Phil Granger briefly addressed the 370 gathered there that evening.

The celebration’s keynote speaker was William R. O’Brien, author, former missionary to Indonesia, past president of the American Society of Missiology, and director of BellMitra Associates, which trains leaders for transformative action. O’Brien addressed The Mission Society family by saying, “The reason for your being was clearly embedded in your DNA, and reflected in your vision – the cross of Christ within arms’ length of everyone in the world. You moved beyond adolescent reactions to the parent family, and became an attractive and winsome sibling for those in the larger family of faith.” His speech recounted The Mission Society’s journey during its first 25 years and forecasted what God had in store for the future.

H.T. Maclin offered a prayer of consecration over new president, Dick McClain, who knelt with his wife, Pam, while surrounded by family. Then, in his first address as president and CEO of The Mission Society, Dick recalled something God told him more than a year ago. “Pam’s and my plan was to move to the mountains of Colorado in about a year and a half from right now, and God said, ‘What about your own plans, and what about your own dreams? Are you ready to put them on the altar?’ And, with tears streaming down my face, I remember going forward and joining those I’d invited to the front and saying, ‘Yes, Lord,’ in a new way.”

The evening closed in a time of worship. McClain invited attendees to bring to the front of the room a stone (provided at each table) to help raise an altar of remembrance for all that Christ has done and pledging surrender to Him.

At the evening’s celebration were missionaries and former missionaries, staff and former staff members, Mission Society vendors, *World Missions in the Wesleyan Spirit* book authors, and friends of The Mission Society. Also present were four of the original 34 founders, including Dr. Gerald Anderson, the Revs. Virgil Maybray, John Grenfell, and Mike Walker.

The Rev. Virgil Maybray, now 90, was founding vice president of The Mission Society. An elder in the Western Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church, Maybray served in the church pastorate for 32 years. He headed the Evangelical Missions Council from 1976-1984, which helped pave the way for The Mission Society, and he played a role in the founding of the Evangelical Church of Paraguay. It was through the encouragement



of Maybray that the now-president Dick McClain joined the staff of The Mission Society 23 years ago.

Today, the Mission Society has 198 missionaries in 36 countries. It 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 communities and throughout the world.

*World Mission in the Wesleyan Spirit* (ISBN: 978-1-57736-424-5) is published by Providence House Publishers. To order, visit [www.providencehouse.com](http://www.providencehouse.com) or fax order requests to 615-771-2002. The price of the book is \$24.95.

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