

WEEK OF PRAYER • DAY 5

Thursday, December 3



A LIFE GIVEN IS A SACRIFICE

Throughout its 175-year history, Southern Baptists have maintained an uninterrupted witness among the nations, in spite of famine, war and civil unrest. This commitment has not come without sacrifice.

Approximately 60 missionaries and children have died due to violent circumstances while serving with the International Mission Board (formerly the Foreign Mission Board) since the organization's founding in 1845. The causes include accidents such as drowning, automobile and aircraft crashes, and ships lost at sea. They also include deaths as a result of war and criminal or terrorist acts. In some cases, the missionaries were targeted specifically because of their faith or missionary service.

Of those 60, more than 20 FMB/IMB missionaries lost their lives "as a result of human hostility in a cross-cultural setting," said Scott Peterson of IMB's global research team.

The first was J. Landrum Holmes who served in China. Holmes and his wife, Sallie, were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board in 1858 and arrived in China in 1859. Less than three years later, Taiping rebels murdered Holmes and Episcopal missionary Henry M. Parker. Although family members encouraged Sallie Holmes to return to the U.S., the young mother chose to stay in China with her newborn son, Peterson wrote in a 2017 article.

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SCOTT PETERSON, IMB GLOBAL RESEARCH

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REMEMBERING LIVES GIVEN

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Writing home, Sallie said at the time, “I think I might probably be instrumental in the conversion of more persons at home than here, but if I went home for that and other missionaries acted upon the same principle I doubt if there would be a missionary left in China.”

Sallie Holmes went on to mentor one of IMB’s most famous missionaries, Charlotte Digges “Lottie” Moon, for whom IMB’s annual missions offering is named. Lottie Moon also died while in active service aboard a ship docked in Kobe Harbor, Japan, on December 24, 1912.

Although both Landrum Holmes and Lottie Moon died while in active service, neither is necessarily considered a “martyr.”

“The IMB does not typically refer to or describe our personnel who have died in active service as martyrs,”

Peterson said. “In many cases, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine if our personnel (who died due to violence) were targeted because they were missionaries or Christians.”

Terminology notwithstanding, the sacrifice of those who died while serving cross-culturally — regardless of the means or cause of death — is no less significant than those who were targeted specifically for their faith.

“The fact that we do not use the term [martyr] does not minimize the significance of the lives and sacrifice of those who died while serving cross-culturally,” Peterson said. “We memorialize all of our personnel who die in active service regardless of the cause of death. Each of those is a sacrifice because of a life lived in obedience to Christ.”

THANK GOD for the men and women who, with their children, have traveled to the ends of the earth to share the gospel with those who have never heard.

THANK GOD for the uninterrupted witness of Southern Baptists among the nations for 175 years.

ASK GOD to continue to protect missionaries and their families serving in cross-cultural and often difficult areas around the globe.

REMEMBERING LIVES GIVEN