



Speaker Biographies



Reina Brekke

Christos Center for Spiritual Formation

Reina's childhood was spent in a loving but atheist/agnostic home. When she came to faith in Christ in her college years, she discovered a loving God who provided a moral compass for her life. In her early 50s, she noticed a sense of missing something in her spiritual walk, accompanied by a longing to experience a deeper connection with God. Part of this path led her toward the practice of spiritual direction. It has been a journey of discovering how to be with God, and not just what to do for Him. Part of that journey was completing a master's degree in spiritual formation and spiritual direction through Richmond Graduate University. She currently serves on staff at Christos Center for Spiritual

Formation, coordinating a training program for spiritual directors. She is married, has two grown sons, two lovely daughters-in-law, and four busy grandchildren.



Dr. Janeen Davis

Peace Pursuit International

Janeen Davis, PsyD, MFT, served overseas with a large missions organization since 2007, where she lived in three different countries in Asia and supervised a member care team that supported over 1,000 frontline personnel. In 2021, she founded Purpose & Peace Solutions and moved to Tennessee, where she maintains virtual counseling services for global missionaries and stateside individuals, while also serving as the director of counseling for a local church. Janeen is the

master trainer and practitioner for *Peace Pursuit International*, and provides advanced training and consulting for local and international ministries who desire to improve in biblical conflict resolution, healthy teaming practices, and effective member care support.



Derek and Kristin Dearth

Action International Ministries

Derek and Kristin grew up in the Midwest. God increased their passion for cross-cultural missions after going on short-term mission trips during their high school and early college years through their local churches. God led them to Zambia in 2002 and 2004, where they met as singles, and worked with and ministered to street kids alongside local churches. They returned to the States in 2005, and, after getting married and finishing college, they went back to Zambia in 2011. In 2017, they returned to the States, where Derek started working with the ACTION USA team as an associate director with an emphasis on strategic

planning. Kristin serves in various aspects of mobilization and coaching, and also works part-time as a nurse. Derek and Kristin are blessed to have two sons and a daughter.



Marcus Dip Silas
KODA Aid International

Marcus grew up in Malaysia as a pastor's kid. He attended Crown College, where he met his wife, Lauren. He earned his double bachelor's in intercultural studies and theology in 2015 and a graduate degree from LSE (UK) in 2017. Marcus has worked with refugees in the Middle East, Asia and Europe since 2016. As a post-colonial follower of Christ, Marcus believes that God has not called the Church to be colorblind, but to embrace the differences within the body of Christ through the work of reconciliation and justice. He sees the future of

missions and theologizing as diverse and multicultural, reflecting the myriad of cultural perspectives in the Kingdom. Marcus and his wife now live in Minneapolis. Marcus loves learning and is currently pursuing his master's at Bethel Seminary. He is also the worship director at Faith Christian Reformed Church in New Brighton, MN.



Dr. Jolene Erlacher
Leading Tomorrow

Dr. Jolene Erlacher founded Leading Tomorrow in 2014 with the aim of equipping churches, businesses, schools, missions agencies and other organizations for effective intergenerational leadership in an evolving culture. Her passion for equipping a new generation of leaders emerged from her own leadership experiences in education and ministry. Jolene's books include *Millennials in Ministry* (2014), *Daniel Generation: Godly Leadership in an Ungodly Culture* (2018), and *Mobilizing Gen Z for Missions* (2022.) She specializes in providing training to community organizations, government agencies, churches,

missions agencies and small businesses. Jolene lives in North Carolina with her husband and twin daughters.



Laura Lee Finstrom
TeachBeyond

Laura Lee received a certificate of Biblical studies from the Association Free Lutheran Bible School in Plymouth, MN and a bachelor's in secondary mathematics education from Minnesota State University Moorhead. After teaching six years at Aurora Christian School in Aurora, IL, the Lord led her to teaching missionary kids high school mathematics. While teaching at the International Christian School of Budapest for 10 years, she also was able to serve as the TeachBeyond member care coordinator for Hungary the last two years. Her heart is to continue serving the Lord, but now while supporting missionaries

through counseling. Laura Lee is finishing a master's through Liberty University in clinical and mental health counseling.



Mike Gaston

Converge International Ministries

Mike with his wife, Murf, served with Converge International Ministries (the Baptist General Conference Board of World Missions) for 15 years. They returned stateside in 2001 for Mike to serve as the missions pastor at a church in California. In 2015, they moved to serve a church in Arizona, where they live today. He has been a diligent pursuer of Sabbath rest for over 10 years. He began volunteering on the member care team for Converge in 2017, and has been Converge's director of member care since 2021. Mike and Murf also have a ministry that includes a respite apartment in their home (the Selah Suite), where missionaries and other workers can stay free of charge for a period of rest and refreshment. Mike [blogs](#) about sabbath and other topics.



Dan Germs

Bethany Gateways

After 15 years serving as a missionary in Kenya, Dan returned to the U.S. to lead Bethany Gateways for eight years, overseeing more than 100 Bethany missionaries fielded around the world and focusing on field effectiveness, leadership development and recruitment. Dan has recently taken a new role overseeing leadership development and discipleship training across Bethany's fields. Dan and his wife, Nancy, were classmates at BGU and have three children.



Ali Jackson

ReachGlobal

Ali Jackson grew up in Brazil as an MK (missionary kid) and moved to the U.S. at age 16. She studied psychology at the University of Northwestern, and went on to get her master's in missionary care at Columbia International University. She has been ministering to MKs for nine years, serving as an MK caregiver with ReachGlobal. Ali now lives in a little fixer upper home in Richfield, MN with her husband Noah and their two very fluffy cats.



Jesse Johannesen

River Valley Church

Jesse has served at River Valley Church since 2014. In his role as global project associate pastor, he looks after the day-to-day missions efforts of River Valley Church, including mobilization, partnership and short-term teams. He originally hails from Iowa, He and his wife, Renee, have three children at home. Their family calling is to equip the local church to engage in and support missions with their whole heart.



Debbie Klaver
Minnesota Renewal Center

Debbie Klaver, MA, LMFT has been a licensed marriage and family therapist since 1994. She has a bachelor's in education and previously served as a teacher in the U.S. and Ecuador. She received her master's in clinical psychology from Wheaton College. Subsequently, she has provided individual, marriage and family therapy in several locations, including Minnesota Renewal Center where she has worked since 2001 with clients who serve in ministry and missions, as well as those in the church and community. Her work with World Mission Prayer League began in Ecuador as a single missionary. Later, she and her husband joined the mission's home office where she has served in various roles, including personnel director, and member care coordinator and consultant.



Gary and Valerie Maloney
Youth for Christ International

Gary and Valerie have been missionaries with Youth for Christ (YFC) International since 2012. They spent six years with YFC in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, before returning to Minnesota in 2018. They currently serve as mission mobilizers. Valerie is the prayer coordinator with YFC Ireland. They both have served in various roles with Prairie River Camp, part of South Central Minnesota YFC. They have been married 33 years, have two sons and two grandchildren, and reside in Apple Valley, MN.



Mark and Julie Morgenstern
Grow2Serve

Mark and Julie received their roots in missions passion and practice from the church they grew up in - an Evangelical Free church in California. In 1992, God sent them to Russia and later to Ukraine, where they spent 13 years as church planters. In 2006, ReachGlobal asked them to come to Minnesota and provide leadership to the training department. After 17 years spent in missionary training, Mark and Julie absolutely love their current role of providing, empowering and encouraging distance learning for missionaries from dozens of organizations all over the world.



Barry Nelson
Barnabas International

Barry and his wife, Ruth, serve with Barnabas International from their home in Tracy, MN. Their ministry priority is to serve, encourage and refresh global workers in ministry – “helping them find strength in God” (1 Sam 23:16). Barry joined the staff of Barnabas in 2005, and lived and served in China (2006-2022). Before joining Barnabas, he served with Training Evangelistic Leadership (TEL) in Hong Kong and China (1991-2005). Barry also served as the China Ministry Director during those years, caring for about 30 global workers. Barry and Ruth met at

Moody Bible Institute, and married not long after their graduation. They have nine children and six grandchildren.



Hannah Rasmussen
Oasis International

Hannah grew up in Tanzania and Kenya as a missionary kid, and worked in Kenya for six years as an adult. She is an acquisitions editor at Oasis International, where she worked on the *Africa Study Bible* and now coaches African authors to write Christian books. She holds a master's of divinity from Africa International University. She has published in *Missiology*, the *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, *Relevant*, *YouthWorker Journal*, the *Urbana Blog*, *Priscilla Papers* and *Mutuality*. She is also the author of *Good News About Gender: A Bible Study for Young Adults* and editor of *Faithful Servants*.



Jodi Revell
ReachGlobal

Jodi Revell has served as a missionary with ReachGlobal for 14 years, 12 of those in Hungary, as a part of the ReachGlobal Budapest City Team and teacher at the International Christian School of Budapest. In 2021, she and her husband, Mark, relocated to Minnesota. Both are still on staff with ReachGlobal where she now serves on the member care team as family ministries specialist and child safety officer. Jodi and her husband have two sons who attend the University of Northwestern-St. Paul.



Sara Simons
The Way Between

Sara Simons is a cross-cultural transition coach and director of The Way Between. She and her family recently relocated to Denver, CO after eight years of living and working in Spain. Sara has been working in a member care capacity for almost 15 years. She created The Art of Transition Workshop and published the workbook as a tool for global workers needing vocational discernment. Together with her husband, Jeff, they founded The Way Between. She holds a bachelor's in psychology, a master's in intercultural studies, and an ACC with the International Coaching Federation. She loves hiking and biking with her family, traveling to new cultures, and being a creative catalyst.



Heidi Tunberg
ReachGlobal

Heidi Tunberg spent her childhood in Malaysia and Singapore where her parents were missionaries with the Evangelical Free Church. She is a licensed psychologist who spent seven years in private practice, but her love of missionary kids (MKs) prompted her to move into caring for them full time. Since 1999, Heidi has been with ReachGlobal as MK care coordinator focused on MKs in their teens and twenties. In this role, she offers pre-field and re-entry training, and encouragement and practical support to MKs on the field and during their college and post-college years. In addition, she seeks to be a resource to parents as they raise their kids internationally. She currently lives in Minneapolis, MN with her two matching schnauzers.



Geoff Whiteman
Valeo Research Institute

Geoff is passionate about helping people and communities connect their life's purpose with God's work in the world. Geoff serves as the [research institute director](#). He volunteers as the People Care and Development Track co-leader for MissioNexus and is a licensed marriage and family therapist in Kentucky. Geoff spent some of his formative years as a TCK in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Hong Kong and Singapore. He and his wife, Kriss, have been engaged in vocational service since 2000, and supporting the care and training of those in cross-cultural work since 2007. Geoff strives to serve others in ways that call forth the inherent goodness that may have become tarnished under the stressors and strains of life - to equip and empower global workers and the people and systems who care for them, to be resilient in their life and work according to the will and for the glory of God.



Amy Young
Global Trellis

Amy Young, MA, LPC served in China for nearly 20 years, holding various leadership roles, including member care director for 10 years. She co-founded Velvet Ashes and founded Global Trellis - providing online training and resources that enlarge the capacity of cross-cultural workers. She believes every cross-cultural worker can have a tended soul and expanded skill set as they fulfill their part in the Great Commission. In addition, Amy has written six books for Great Commission workers. She lives in Colorado and is delighted not to have to get up in the middle of the night to cheer for the Denver Broncos and Kansas Jayhawks.