



JAMES KEECH UMAM

James (Jim) Keech is a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church serving a Mission Advocate in the denomination's Southeastern Jurisdiction (in the United States). He is part of a team with his wife, Missionary Bernice Keech.

Mission Advocates are missionaries assigned to assist annual conferences, districts, and local churches in the United States to understand and participate in global mission. Their work has a particular focus on mission personnel, including support of missionaries through the Advance for Christ and His Church.

Jim and Bernice have been in aviation ministry since 1989, first in Nigeria (from 1989 to 2002) and then in Central Asia. Jim was in the US Air Force from 1977 to 1981, and in 1983 received a B.S. degree in aviation technology from Moody Aviation, a part of Moody Bible Institute, then in Tennessee.

The son of a pastor, Jim says that John Wesley's advice, "preach the gospel daily, use words if necessary," was instilled in him at an early age. "I saw Christ lived out daily by my parents in their commitment to serve others, both inside the church and outside, and to serve each other.

"While attending church camp at the age of 10, I had the unshakable certainty that I could not live without God. Although, as a 10-year-old, I didn't know what that looked like, I knew that Christ died for me and I had to live for him." He recalls "pushing the boundaries" when he was an older teenager, deciding if his parents' faith was what he wanted.

"When I was 19, while in the Air Force, I met my wife, Bernice, who showed me that life lived for Christ is full of joy even when it's not easy. As part of our wedding ceremony, we dedicated our life together to full time Christian service."

At first he thought in terms of pastoral ministry, but came to understand that his interest in flying could be used in God's work as a missionary. He says that his first awareness of missionaries came when he was five years old and a missionary from "Africa" spoke at his church. He remembers thinking he could live in Africa someday.

At Moody, an opportunity opened to serve with the United Methodist Church in Nigeria. Once in Africa, he says, as he and Bernice were cleaning the house where they would live, he saw the name "Roger Burtner" painted on a mattress. That was the missionary he had met when he was five years old!

Jim's church membership is in the Valley Forge United Methodist Church in Elizabethton, Tennessee, a part of the Holston Annual Conference.

Jim and Bernice have two adult children, Micah Keech (and his wife Shelley) and Sarah Keech.

- See more at: <http://www.umcmmission.org/explore-our-work/missionaries-in-service/missionary-profiles/Keech-James#sthash.4KGecHPz.dpuf>