



# **FORGING CONNECTIONS:**

## **#IPMResponds in Unprecedented Times**

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**Featuring Highlights from IPM's Response to COVID-19 and 2020 Annual Report**

## 2 FORGING CONNECTIONS

# #IPMResponds in Unprecedented Times

Dear Friends,

*A dear friend commented the other day that in our aging, days fly by in the blink of an eye. These days, amidst an ongoing pandemic, it feels like 2021 has passed without us ever catching our breath.*

It has been an unprecedented twenty months since our world came to a grinding halt. The Novel Coronavirus and increasingly lethal variants have brought rising cases from IPM's hometown of Cleveland to Ahmedabad, INDIA, and virtually everywhere in-between. With the end of another year before us, we are far from turning the corner. The promise of a vaccine for our younger children is heartening, but continued "breakthrough" illnesses among colleagues & friends worldwide foreshadow a deepening storm.

As I wrote in the early months of 2020, the pandemic has laid bare the gross disparities of education, wealth, and health access in our world. While IPM's Partners, Staff, & Volunteers valiantly continue to meet the needs before us, the solidarity we nurture can't make up for the many ways our global economy continues to disproportionately disadvantage the "poorest of the poor."

IPM's weekly Virtual Forums (which you can catch every Friday online) have been essential to keeping us united in our struggles. They remind us privileged North Americans that what we may take for granted would be life-saving for our sisters & brothers in the Global South. Sharing across the *zoomiverse*, we find not only online exhaustion but a transformative sense of accompaniment and hope for our world.

For almost two years now, IPM has had to scrape by without our signature Immersion Experience Program. Weekly Forums and Virtual Immersions are wonderful, but they'll never adequately makeup for lost income and immersive experiences together. Just as assuredly, our Partners continue to struggle meeting the most basic of their community needs with the pandemic's attendant dislocation and job loss. We have many steep hills to climb.

Counter to all our hopeful planning, the coming 2022 school semester won't bring the return of in-person immersion. Frankly, we continue to desperately need your help. Few organizations or families can survive the loss of over a quarter of their annual income, let alone for two years. I'm constantly reminded of all those late nights I spent in the late Bernie Marquardt, Sammy Mayer, and Paul Strege's homes wrestling with the difficult choices of how to make ends meet.

### IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE OF BERNIE MARQUARDT WILDE



*Former IPM Executive Director Bernie Marquardt-Wilde who passed away September 20, 2021 (pictured second from right), with IPM Co-Founder Paul Strege, Foundress Sammy Mayer, and CEO Joe Cistone during IPM's 2010 Annual Saint Louis Luncheon where she received special recognition for her many years of extraordinary dedication, service and support of IPM.*

From the time I first met Bernie (pictured above, with Paul, Sammy, and me) over the phone in Rome to the last Board meeting I attended in her Missouri home, I was struck by how she was able to juggle the competing interests of Project Partners with a threadbare Staff. Her recent passing brought back fond memories of meandering dinners around her table as IPM began the thoughtful but difficult transition of moving beyond our historical core to a more inclusive and indigenous organization.

Just like those late '90s conversations, the past twenty months have challenged us to re-imagine IPM's role in the world. This special edition of *Connections* highlights just some of what your generosity makes possible. As we continue to bring our collective, faith-filled, entrepreneurial spirit to bear, we remain deeply thankful for all you do alongside IPM to nurture justice, peace, and hope in our world.

Peace, Joe

Joseph F. Cistone  
Chief Executive Officer  
October 2021



**ON THE COVER:** IPM International Junior Fellow, Shahadat Ali, distributing food to children and families living in the slums of Jaipur City, INDIA.

**ABOVE:** IPM Project Partners across the globe remain united in their hope, solidarity, and love.



## Global Solidarity is Bigger than any Pandemic



*The disproportionate vulnerability of women, children, youth and communities to the COVID-19 pandemic is not surprising. Since before COVID-19, we lived in a world where injustice accentuated in specific populations, gender and places. Which produced a diversity of effects, in terms of economy, health, education, mental care, relationships, and security for the most vulnerable worldwide. The pandemic made all these life components even more unstable for the majorities.*

For international humanitarian response, answering to all these problems with a “one size fits all” approach to a pandemic such as COVID-19 may appear faster, more efficient and perhaps even cheaper. At IPM we believe, over time, that option may actually be less sustainable. Communities that direct their own solutions tailored to their particular context take a greater stake in their recovery, ultimately achieving a stronger transformation.

Our Project Partners in each of their regions demonstrated a great level of resiliency. *CEPROSI*, in Nicaragua, was one of the first Partners that created contingency plans that allowed women to respond with creativity and strength to COVID-19. Creating new projects, diversifying their products, requesting workshops to learn new abilities, regular medical appointments and taking care mentally were a few of their successful strategies.

Our Partner in El Salvador, *Patronato Lidia Coggiola*, never stopped or paused classes for children and youth. The teachers at school organized and were able to execute online classes, despite the great difficulties in the community to have access to internet and technological equipment. This allowed over 60 children to continue with their education process during COVID-19 and the lockdowns in the country.

In South Asia, IPM India Fellow Parveen Shaikh rose awareness about domestic violence through a program where 550 women participated. She also led self-defense training sessions for 145 girls and adolescents. This was crucial, since many reports show an increase of feminicides and gender violence during COVID-19 lock downs.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, our Partner *Rieiti Farm* worked to promote food sovereignty in addition to providing job opportunities for many people in the area. Their mission is to create food security by providing reliable skills in agriculture and teaching women in the community about their responsibilities, rights, and independence.

Definitely resiliency has been a key component for the adaptation of our Partners to a global pandemic; nonetheless, resilience itself sometimes seems to strive towards systemic stability and survivability. But what our Partners did wasn't only adapt passively, they did an active job, through analysis and criticisms, and decided to take action to guarantee human rights such as health, education, security and resources in general. IPM witnessed how the virus wasn't the only thing spreading in the pandemic; solidarity did too. The type of solidarity that refuses to take the established order for granted, imagining itself in a combative relation on the side of the emergent potential of vital power, essentially the power by which humans become agents of their own history.

We are deeply thankful to our friends and supporters around the globe that made possible the work of IPM, and our Project Partners consequently, during such critical times. Thank you for accompanying us in this massive mountain, we are sure together we'll get to the top.

With deepest gratitude,

Adela Zayas Hernández  
Director of International Partnerships & Programs



*In India as the rural economy struggles to catch up, so do homes & families devastated by death and long term effects of COVID. Pictured here, members of IPM Partner Pochabhai Foundation are trying to make life better by providing health camps, food distribution and school bags for children.*



*Implementing a garden model in Nindirí, Nicaragua — IPM Project Partner CEPROSI, a women's collective with archaeological practices, promotes diversity, efficiency, resilience, recycling, synergies, joint creation and exchange of knowledge that sustains livelihoods in the face of the health and environmental crisis.*



*The IPM Family was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of cherished friend Susan Nduku Mutuku on June 17, 2021. She was an inspiring and wonderful IPM Project leader, passionate teacher, and gracious host of numerous Immersion Experience Program delegations — including our last pre-COVID-19 in-person IEP travel to Kenya in January 2020 as pictured here with IPM CEO Joe Cistone. Her dedication and loving spirit will forever live in all of our hearts, and particularly for those of the Kandula Community in Kenya whom she loved so much.*



## #IPMResponds in Unprecedented Times 2020 REPORT ON ANNUAL GIVING



*As we commemorate IPM's 47th anniversary and reflect on the extraordinary events and unprecedented challenges faced by IPM and our global community this past year, it is with our deepest gratitude that we wish to acknowledge the vital impact of our donors and friends. Together with your support, IPM continues to serve as a sign of hope as we live out our mission of accompaniment, solidarity, and trust ... working across borders of caste, culture, faith, and economic circumstance to bring about lasting change. Thank you!*

### **This IPM Report on Annual Giving is dedicated in loving remembrance of Grace T. Weber**

Grace Thea Weber was one of IPM's most generous donors of time, talent, and treasure for more than four decades. Since first meeting our founders, this lifelong teacher always placed IPM at the forefront of her philanthropic life. Grace served as an active member of IPM's Metropolitan Saint Louis Advisory Council, accompanied Immersion Experience delegations to El Salvador (pictured at left) and Nicaragua, and helped plan countless IPM events in her hometown. May her memory and generosity continue to be a blessing to IPM and our Partners around the world.

#### **\$50,000 & ABOVE**

Grace T. Weber Bequest

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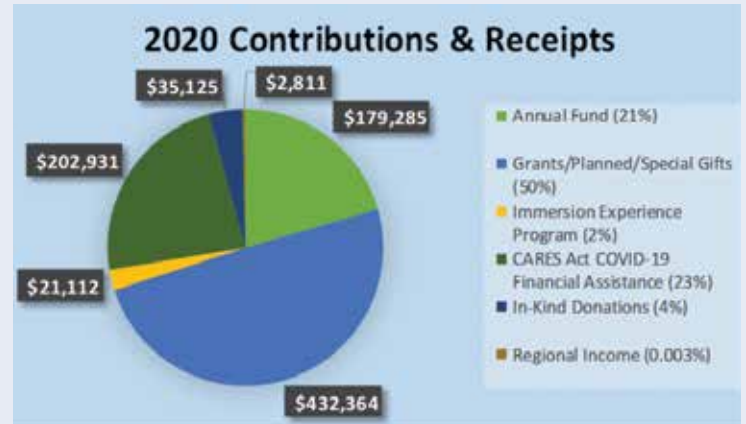
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Above: IPM Staff Alyssa Bovell and Joe Cistone with Phoebe Abebe of IPM's Sub-Saharan Africa Advisory Council (left) and her daughter Mona (right) during one of our last in-person Immersion Experiences with Andover Newton Seminary and Yale Divinity School in Kenya, January 2020.



As you can see in the chart above in yellow, the ongoing novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic forced the suspension of IPM's signature Immersion Experience Program. The resulting \$21,112 is less than 10% of our historical Immersion income.

## \$100—\$249

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*We have made every attempt to list all of our Donors accurately. We apologize if we have misspelled or omitted any names. Please contact the IPM office at +1.216.932.4082 if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you!*

## 6 COMMITTED AND INSPIRING LEADERSHIP

### Board Profile — J. Clinton McCann, D.Min., Th.M., Ph.D.



*Clint McCann, distinguished professor, author, biblical scholar, and Saint Louis community leader is a member of IPM's International Executive Board and currently serves as Co-Chair alongside Xenia Chevez of Nindirí, NICARAGUA in IPM's first-ever shared leadership role. Pictured above with fellow Board Members and Delegates during IPM's II International General Assembly in Cleveland, OH, Clint (kneeling) and Xenia (on right) make an extraordinary duo of dedicated and inspiring leadership.*

#### PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

My professional career began in 1978 when I graduated from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia and was called to serve three small-town congregations in north-central North Carolina. Those years, 1978-1987, gave me my first taste of activism when the State of North Carolina targeted a hazardous waste dump in Warren County, which just happened to be the poorest county in the state, and which included a majority of black residents. I joined the protest, which was led in a major way by members of the faith community. Growing out of this episode, civil rights leader Ben Chavis coined the phrase “environmental racism,” which still remains a pernicious reality in the USA and other parts of the world.

Also during those years, I continued my education at Duke University, completing a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies. Soon afterwards, I joined the staff of Eden Theological Seminary in Webster Groves, MO, where I have just begun my 34th year of teaching, and currently serve as Professor of Biblical Interpretation.

In addition to teaching and writing, I organized and co-led Eden Seminary's first international study/travel seminar in 2001, a trip to Guatemala and Costa Rica. These international experiences have continued to grow and expand annually (until the COVID disruption), and I am pleased that IPM has facilitated two of our Central America experiences in recent years.

#### PERSONAL LIFE STATEMENT/MISSION

My father was also an ordained Presbyterian minister; and when he retired

in the mid 1990s, he volunteered with the Presbyterian Church (USA) along the US-Mexico border in Eagle Pass, TX and Piedras Negras, Coahuila. I took my two older daughters to visit him; and when we walked across the international bridge from the US into Mexico, it was like entering a different world – a world of widespread poverty and underdeveloped resources. This experience made a big impact on my daughters and me. I came back, determined to study Spanish (I am still learning!) and determined to not ignore our neighbors to the south.

In Latin America, one doesn't have to look far to see that tens of millions of people are impoverished, not because they are unworthy nor unwilling to work, but rather because of system realities and structures that largely benefit other wealthy countries and corporations.

It is my mission, our mission, to tell the truth about how the USA and other wealthy nations have been oppressors in Central America (and elsewhere), and to act in whatever ways that we can to change systemic realities that continue to victimize people and nations. In Latin American theological terms, my mission, our mission, is to live in solidarity with the entire human family, beginning with the neediest and most vulnerable.

#### SKILLS/INTERESTS I BRING TO IPM

My interests and commitments coincide perfectly with IPM's mission to work “across borders of faith, culture, and economic circumstance with children, women, and youth to create partnerships that build justice, peace, and hope.” My

background in teaching and writing means that I bring communication skills that can help articulate and interpret the mission and core principles of IPM. In essence, this amounts fundamentally to loving our neighbors as ourselves, understanding that our neighborhood consists of nothing less than the entire planet, and our neighbors are the whole human family!

#### WHERE IPM SHOULD BE HEADING

IPM should be heading in precisely the same direction that it has been headed for the past 47 years – that is, in the direction of creating global awareness and partnerships that create justice, peace, and hope. This direction is more important today than it has ever been. We have witnessed in recent years, and we are witnessing today, a resurgence of racism, tribalism, and narrow nationalism, both within and beyond the USA. Amid ongoing global realities like poverty, hunger, displacement, racism, sexism, heterosexism, human trafficking, religious intolerance, warfare, and environmental degradation, what we need is the awareness that we are a human family and that we are all in this together. IPM has always been headed in the direction of life for all. If there is going to be a global future, it is in the direction that IPM is leading us!

#### MY HOPE FOR IPM

Unlike anything IPM has ever experienced, the pandemic produced unimaginable challenges and loss for our Project Partners, Regional Offices, and Immersion Experience Programs. Today, as the pandemic continues to overwhelm many of IPM's partners and work, it is especially important and my hope for those of us who are IPM friends and donors to sustain, and if possible, increase our financial support as we strive to live out our mission nurturing justice, peace, and hope around the world.

#### FAMILY AND HOBBIES

Clint has always been grounded in faith and family. His spouse, Sarah, is Pastor of Hope United Church of Christ in Saint Louis, MO; and he has three daughters—Jennifer, Sarah, and Annalise—and a son, Ian. In his spare time, Clint enjoys playing and watching basketball - especially Davidson and Duke basketball. While he and Sarah aren't campers, they share a love for the National Parks of the USA, and try to visit them as often as possible. Their other obsession is collecting nativity scenes, especially international ones that remind us that God loves the whole world!

## Deepening Solidarity Through IPM's New Virtual Immersion Experience Program



As the COVID-19 pandemic still keeps most people from traveling, IPM has created, offered and hosted the Virtual Immersion Experience Program (VIEP), a new and growing program to complement our in-person signature Immersion Experience Program.

In just one year, IPM has created the virtual program, developed two different models of it, and hosted six VIEPs. Out of these six virtual programs, five of them have corresponded to the "One-Country" model, in which our participants have learned and met IPM's Project Partners in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and India. In regards to the "Global/Thematic" model, IPM has hosted the Caste VIEP on May 2021. The Caste VIEP covers a spectrum of topics that revolve around racism, colorism, colonialism and miscegenation, and how each of these is experienced in Latin America, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa by our Project Partners.

The "Global/Thematic" model of the VIEP offers five important topics, related to the fight for social justice in our era: Caste, Environmental Justice, Gender Equity & Human Rights for Women and Girls, Migration & Refugees, and Multifaith Relations.

So far, we have had approximately 50 participants join our VIEPs. In addition, 11 of our Project Partners have participated alongside guest speakers from various academic and nonprofit backgrounds.

The VIEPs are an amazing opportunity for learning and connecting with people worldwide, as you only need an electronic device that supports platforms such as Zoom and Google, and Wi-Fi connection. We are looking forward to host more VIEPs and, hopefully, more in-person Immersion Experiences in the upcoming months, including: a Caste VIEP, a mini VIEP to El Salvador in November 2021, and El Salvador and Italy in-person Immersion Experiences in the Spring of 2022. IPM hopes to carry out the aforementioned programs; however, their execution will depend on the advance of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions that are applied to international travel during the following months.

### TRANSFORMATIVE TRAVEL FROM HOME!



Members of John Carroll University, OH delegation during IPM's new Virtual Immersion Experience Program (VIEP) on the Global/Thematic topic of Caste, Colorism, & Racial Equity, May 2021

I look forward to visiting the United States after the Thanksgiving holiday and meeting with different individuals & institutions interested in learning more about the Immersion Experience Program. If you would like to schedule a meeting or phone call, please contact me directly at [vjimenez@IPMconnect.org](mailto:vjimenez@IPMconnect.org).

Looking forward to seeing you in an Immersion Experience!

Victoria Jiménez  
Director of Education & Immersion Experience Programs



## IPM WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS OF OUR INTERNATIONAL STAFF



**Jacinta Wairimu Kiarie**  
Sub-Saharan Africa  
Regional Consultant (Kenya)



**Bindiya Makwana**  
South Asia Junior Associate  
& Regional Fellow (India)



**Eneyda Ramos**  
Research & Resource Mobilization  
Coordinator ( El Salvador)



**IPM** is the multi-faith successor organization to Partners in Mission, founded by Lutheran missionaries Jim Mayer, Paul Strege and others in 1974.

**IPM works across borders of caste, culture, faith, and economic circumstance with children, women, and youth to nurture partnerships that build justice, peace, and hope through transformational learning opportunities and programs.**

**Join us** as we provide opportunities and programs — grounded in equity and resiliency — that affirm and promote the inherent human dignity of all persons.

## Special Edition Connections

A Publication of IPM

**Connections** shares experiences and stories about people of faith working in partnerships to promote change. **Connections** is mailed to 3,500 donors and friends worldwide. If you are interested in receiving **Connections** or would like us to add a friend, family members, congregation, or organization to our mailing list, please contact us at +1.216.932.4082, or toll-free at 866.932.4082 (in Canada or USA), or via email at [ifender@ipmconnect.org](mailto:ifender@ipmconnect.org).

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*\*Deceased*