

A Heart for College Students

REV. KIM CELEBRATES MILESTONE WITH A MISSIONS TRIP

By Catherine Elvy, Staff Writer

A Harvard University chaplain recently celebrated the 30th anniversary of her first international missions trip by organizing a commemorative journey with her expansive church family.

“God has used me to reach out wherever I go,” said Rebekah Kim, who launched a ministry to Asian students at Harvard and a nearby Baptist church.

Three decades after leading a flock of California college students on a missionary venture to Japan and the Republic of Korea, Kim observed the anniversary with a group mission to East Asia. During the summer, Paul and Rebekah Kim, pastors emeritus of Cambridge’s Antioch Baptist Church, joined with church members and other believers to help spread the Gospel in South Korea and Armenia.

While travelling across the Korean peninsula’s rugged landscape, the team of 200-plus, including nearly 20 Harvard alumni, shared God’s plan of salvation with hundreds of students during a dozen meetings on seven university campuses.

Such efforts reflect Rebekah Kim’s deep passion for evangelism. “Every Christian should be a soldier and ambassador for Christ,” said Kim. “This world is not our country.”

Today, the fruit of such commitments from the Kim family have re-

sulted in 13 church plants in five nations, summer missions programs to 10-plus countries, and a grid of about 60 missionary families. As well,



Rebekah Kim, a Harvard University chaplain, recently marked the 30th anniversary of her first international mission and celebrated her church’s widespread evangelism efforts, especially among college students.

Rebekah Kim oversees Harvard’s Asian Baptist Student Koinonia (www.absk.org/harvard), and Paul Kim serves as a consultant to Southern Baptist Convention’s executive committee.

By focusing much of their ministry upon college students, the found-

ers of Antioch Baptist Church have mentored pastors in their diverse congregational plants. As well, countless disciples from Harvard have served at other U.S. and foreign campuses.

The family’s heart for proclaiming the Good News across the globe was born in the 1980s while the couple was ministering to the University of California at Berkeley community.

Despite not fully recuperating from giving birth to her son two months earlier, Rebekah Kim felt an urgency to evangelize in Japan. Kim sensed the distinct impression that unless she seized an opportunity to oversee the mission involving UC Berkeley students, she would miss a greater evangelistic calling upon her life.

The 1987 trip was especially significant for Kim as she grew up regarding Japan as an enemy, a view steeped in Imperial Japan’s former rule over the Korean peninsula.

More recently, the Kims and Antioch Senior Pastor

David Um, also a chaplain at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, were among the contingent who jetted to South Korea.

This time, Philip Kim, Harvard ’09, M.Ed. ’17, joined his parents for the legacy journey, which took place from May 27 to June 6. Also joining

the team was Pauline Kim Han, Harvard GSE '04, who reaches out to college students in Philadelphia, including ones attending the University of Pennsylvania.

A fervent heart for missionary endeavors arose from Rebekah Kim's love for college students. As a student at Seoul National University, Kim embraced Christ after curiosity compelled her to attend a Bible study on Genesis. "It was so clear. God answered my questions," said Kim, who was raised in Confucian tradition.

Since that commitment as a junior in February 1971, God has "blessed and used me," Kim said.

Later, after adjusting some life and career paths, Kim earned a second bachelor's degree in art history from UC Santa Cruz, plus a master of divinity from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

While preparing to relocate to

France, Kim met her future husband while visiting family in Los Angeles. "I surrendered my life to God completely to be a pastor's wife," she said.

In March 1981, the couple started Berkland Baptist Church in a neighborhood on the border of Berkeley and Oakland. "Ever since then, I have had a special heart for college students," said Kim.

A decade later, a former Berkeley student sent a desperate plea for spiritual support after transferring to Harvard University, where she lacked vibrant Christian community, including a collegiate church.

By January 1991, the Berkeley congregation had exploded to 500 worshippers. Thus, with two children in tow, the Kims planted Berkland Baptist Church-Boston, a house of worship they later renamed Antioch.

In 1998, Rebekah Kim became a chaplain at Harvard, seven years after

establishing an Asian Baptist Student Koinonia chapter. In a nod to Harvard's heritage, Kim likes to say she is following benefactor John Harvard's vision to train ministers.

In 2011, the Kims handed off direct leadership of Antioch to David and Angela Suh Um, Harvard '92, MPP '94, founder of the Boston Academic Consulting Group.

Antioch's team also includes Dan Cho, the church's longtime college Director and a fellow Southern Baptist chaplain at Harvard. As well, Cho, Harvard '96, Yale STM '05, is Asia Director for The Veritas Forum.

Ever mindful of her lifelong calling to serve as Christ's ambassador, Kim also is pursuing a doctorate from nearby Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

"God gave me clear direction, a heart for college students for the rest of my life," she said. | [cu](#)

HARVARD NEWS-IN-BRIEF

Medical Researchers Note Value of Spiritual Factor

A team of Harvard University researchers recently highlighted studies pointing to the value of spiritual approaches to medical care and the broad beneficial relationship between religious participation and health.

In the *JAMA* Viewpoint article, a team affiliated with Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Medical School recapped evidence suggesting patient health and life quality could improve with greater attention to spiritual health from

physicians. As part of social histories, doctors could ask about spiritual support systems and use such details in future care. Patients often take strength and solace from spirituality, the authors wrote in the July article.

"Godless Harvard"

Harvard University's student newspaper recently highlighted the history of mandatory church attendance on campus.

In October, *The Harvard Crimson* explained how Rev. Francis Peabody pushed to end compulsory participation in morning prayers. The Harvard

alumnus of 1869 and 1872 noted the practice reminded him of preaching stints inside the now-defunct Charlestown State Prison.

Protests to the attendance polices started as early as 1866. Students complained such practices dated back to state-enforced regulations when church absences were considered as solid proof of ungodliness, akin to "dancing or card-playing."

On the day the requirement lifted in 1886, some students said Harvard re-earned its nickname of "Godless Harvard," a moniker that surfaced a century prior.