

A Brief History of IFI

1972 - 2017

72-78

A VISION FOR INTERNATIONALS

A vision from the heart of God claimed the life of one single woman, Mabel Bahler, one couple, Phil and Ruth-Ann Saksa, and one church, Covenant Baptist Church, in Columbus, Ohio, and a ministry was born.



80-90

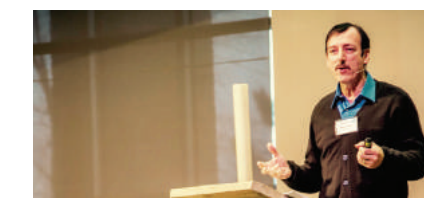
THE EARLY YEARS

The early years were characterized by perseverance yet little fruit in ministry. With prayer, patience, and love, IFI starts seeing steady number of international students become believers.

95-04

IFI DOUBLES IN SIZE AND EXPANDS SERVICES

As God doubled the number of volunteers, ministry efforts expand. New outreach activities include trips around the US, ethnic group ministry, International American Fellowship, children's ministry, international wives and mothers outreach, friendship partner program, English conversation club, and international worship.



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A GREATER VISION FOR IFI

In a pivotal year for IFI, Rich and the Columbus team revise the IFI vision and prayerfully begin to ask God for more expansion and growth. God gives Rich a vision for IFI to become a National Training Center to equip, mobilize and send anyone who wants to serve international students.

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TRAINING AND MOBILIZING

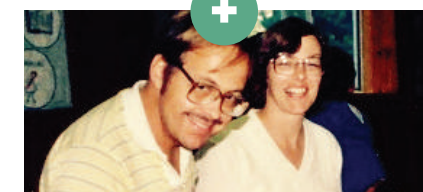
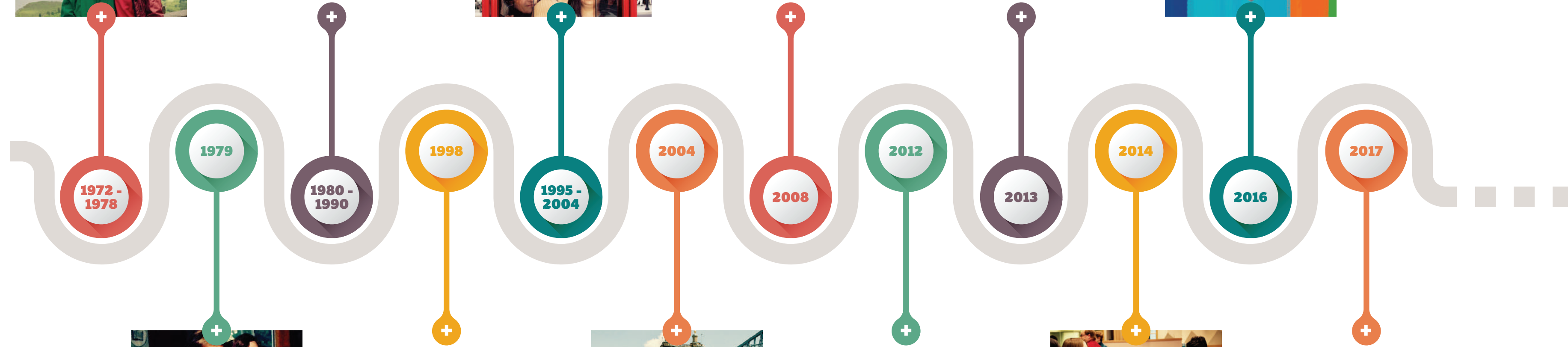
IFI takes a leadership role in ISM by making their cross-cultural training available online. Two more locations outside of Columbus start up, and the number of new volunteers mobilized with IFI doubles in 5 years.

ISEED, which started informally in 1996, is formalized as an intensive year-long discipleship training for Christian international students, preparing them for ministry back home. Graduates have returned home to start house churches, serve refugees, and reach other international students.

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A TOOL TO START NEW MINISTRIES

In an effort to pass on decades of ministry experience to others, IFI begins work on the Startup Kit, an online training course to prepare new staff to grow their own local international student ministry.



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THE VISION GROWS

From one church, the ministry approach of partnership with multiple churches was born, and IFI became an official non-profit organization, with Phil Saksa as General Director. IFI had 3 staff, 12 volunteers from 3 churches and was reaching about 50 international students. From inception, God gave IFI several Scriptural promises, as guiding vision to the future: Genesis 12:1-3, Psalm 87, Isaiah 61:1-4, and Zechariah 8:20-23.

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RICH MENDOLA BECOMES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 1991, Rich Mendola came to IFI with lots of enthusiasm, vision, and great international student ministry experience. In 1998, he is appointed to lead IFI.



04

GEOGRAPHIC EXPANSION

The IFI vision and mission begin expanding to other cities, with Cincinnati being the first ministry location outside of Columbus, with a team of 4 staff.

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IFI STAFF DOUBLES

With over 1,500 volunteers and 1,300 students being reached annually, IFI doubles its staff to aid the rapid ministry growth.



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APPRENTICESHIP AND GROWTH OUTSIDE OHIO

A year-long apprenticeship program is formed to train American believers who want to do international student ministry as full-time ministry career.

IFI grows to 9 locations, expanding beyond Ohio.

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THE VISION BEARING FRUIT

As God uses international students to fulfill His mission, IFI is able to participate and watch a decades-old vision be fulfilled. IFI has 66 staff in 7 states, with 145 churches and 3200 volunteers mobilized. Thousands of international students are being reached, 633 are engaged in Bible studies, and dozens have returned home, displaying God's splendor across the world (Isaiah 61:3).

