



JAARS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Steve Russell, Former US Congressman and Decorated US Army Officer, To Serve As Next President of Global Mission JAARS

Russell will be the first leader in the 75-year history of JAARS to come from outside of the Bible translation movement.

Waxhaw, NC – September 6, 2022 – JAARS [jaars.org], the North Carolina-based logistical solutions partner to global mission organizations, today announced that Steve Russell will assume the role of president/CEO effective October 1, 2022.

The move comes after a year-long search to replace outgoing president Woody McLendon, who last year announced plans to complete his service by the end of 2022 after a decade in the role.

Russell brings to JAARS decades of high-intensity leadership experience, a heart for the gospel, and a commitment to missions.

“Cindy and I are humbled, grateful, and incredibly excited to work with such a great and noteworthy team as JAARS. I am continually amazed at how God chooses to use ordinary vessels for extraordinary work to draw people to himself at every corner of the earth. We cannot wait to begin the work,” said Russell.

After graduating college and becoming an ordained minister, Russell served in the US Army for 21 years, including leading a high-profile 1,000-member task force. While in the military, he also engaged in various ministries including sharing the gospel, hosting home Bible studies, discipling peers and younger men, teaching, and preaching.

After years of combat, three wars, and 15 moves, Steve felt led by God to turn down a promotion to colonel and settle his family back in Oklahoma. There, he entered public life as an Oklahoma state senator and went on to serve two terms in the United States Congress as an elected representative from Oklahoma.

Most recently, Russell has served as the executive pastor of the 1,250-member First Southern Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, OK. He is a gifted teacher, pastor, administrator, author, and public speaker.



“We are pleased and humbled that Steve and his wife, Cindy, have accepted God’s call and our invitation for this important role. We believe God has answered our prayers with more than we could have asked or imagined, and our Board, staff, and key strategic partners are united in our excitement about this next stage in our journey,” said Andy Hood, JAARS Board chair.

“And,” Hood continued, “we want to thank Woody and his wife, Mary, for a decade of servant leadership as our president ... and for more than 20 years of service overall. He has stewarded and shepherded our mission, staff, and global partners through a period of significant growth in both healthy relationships and mission impact. He leaves Steve and the team with a solid, sustainable organization and the framework to pursue opportunities and innovation as mission needs continue to evolve.”

MORE ABOUT JAARS

Formed in 1948, JAARS focuses on locally appropriate and sustainable solutions for off-the-grid mission partners in the areas of transportation, technology, media, and training. JAARS partners primarily with mission organizations committed to Bible translation, Scripture engagement, and other language-related initiatives that support education, economic development, cultural preservation, health, and wellness among the thousands of language communities worldwide who seek to flourish using the language(s) they value the most. In many but not all cases, these communities exist in some of the world’s most remote and difficult places.

Key JAARS partners include SIL International, the organizations of the Wycliffe Global Alliance, Seed Company, Faith Comes By Hearing, and numerous local/national mission and transportation partners globally.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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