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PUBLISHER'S MEMO

Church Planting and Evangelism in the Twenty-first Century

By Doug Birdsall

From the ministry of Jesus Christ and the early Church, it was clear that the gospel message was intended not only for the transformation of individuals, but entire communities. It was in the context of community that lives were transformed and also for transformed lives to transform entire communities.

It was in communities of faith as experienced in the early Church that believers exercised their spiritual gifts, new believers were taught and mentored into maturity, and “the Lord added to their number daily” (Act 2:47). And as the Lord added to their number daily, more communities were formed to accommodate their growing numbers, as well as the commissioning of a few from their own ranks to bring the gospel to other peoples to form yet even more communities of faith.

This interconnected relationship between evangelism and church planting was not only a distinctive mark of the early Church, but it continues to be the hallmark of a healthy Christian community today. The great message of hope and salvation is communicated through the life of the person of Jesus Christ to others and continues to be communicated through life upon life—whether it is from a brief encounter or through many years together. But from the very beginning, the Lord intended for the message to be communicated through individuals who are part of a community of faith and for new believers to be brought into the community of faith. And as believers multiply, new church bodies are to be formed. The *missio dei* was never intended to be insular, but rather to spread exponentially to all peoples in exciting new ways.

In our day, the need to highlight the importance of evangelism and church planting cannot be reiterated enough. This past February 2008, as the **Lausanne Theology Working Group** convened in Chiang Mai, numerous dimensions of the gospel message were studied. Emphasis was on how we understand the gospel message to truly be good news to help deliver this message to a world thirsting for such good news.

Expressions of the Christian faith and how we come together in community have also become increasingly more complex and varied; however, the message and the need for the message has not changed—only how we deliver it. This is why the need for church planting to speak to such various peoples and people groups is so great. From house churches to megachurches to internet churches, from churches in the great urban cities of the world to churches in Islamic contexts, Buddhist contexts, socialist contexts, and poverty-stricken contexts, the challenges are formidable. However, the potential expression is so great to be a glorious expression of the amazing power and universality of the gospel and the Church to be the divine Body of Christ.

In this issue of LWP, I am delighted to present to you perspectives on evangelism and church planting. It is my prayer that as we engage further in thought and action, we will be inspired and spurred on toward the hope of the gospel for every people, nation, tribe, and tongue.

Doug Birdsall is executive chair of the [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#). He served as president of [Asian Access](#) from 1991 to 2007 and continues to serve on their board of directors. Birdsall is a graduate of Wheaton College, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Harvard University. He is co-publisher of Lausanne World Pulse.

NEWS BRIEFS

AFRICA: God's Word Reaches Remote Peoples in Their Languages

Although the Bible is not illegal or banned in some African countries, language and literacy issues nevertheless can impede the sharing of God's word. [Faith Comes By Hearing](#) (FCBH) is responding to this challenge through tools such as its Proclaimer, a self-powered audio player with the New Testament pre-loaded on an embedded microchip. FCBH also recently completed audio translations into six African languages, including Chitonga, Chiyao, Dogon Toroso, Lukakamega, Oluluyia, and Sehwi, languages spoken by more than 7.6 million people in five countries. To date, FCBH has produced Audio Drama New Testaments in 144 African languages and hopes to record audio Bibles in two thousand languages by the year 2016. ([Faith Comes By Hearing](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: Wycliffe International and World Evangelical Alliance Join Forces

As a new global partner, [Wycliffe International](#) has joined forces with [World Evangelical Alliance](#) (WEA) to enhance the alliance's efforts to promote transformation rooted in the Bible. Wycliffe includes forty-nine autonomous organizations involved in Bible translation and literacy work. One quarter of the organizations lead Bible programs in their home countries. It is estimated that more than two thousand languages still do not have Scripture translations. Wycliffe's Vision 2025 campaign hopes to have a Bible translation in progress for every language by 2025. Global Partner membership is given to international groups specializing in a ministry that contributes to WEA's mission. ([World Evangelical Alliance](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: World Vision Documents Desperate Measures of the Hungry

In June 2008, [World Vision](#) reported on some of the desperate measures families are taking around the world in order to feed themselves. In countries such as Afghanistan, preteen girls are sometimes sold to buy food. And in the nation of Georgia, children are being left at orphanages by parents unable to feed them. Rising food and fuel costs continue to worsen the worldwide hunger problem. World Vision wants the U.S. government to increase its response to the crisis, emphasizing that, although American families are struggling with tighter budgets, the world's poorest families are completely devastated. ([World Vision](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: New Director to Lead Micah Challenge International

Rev. Joel Edwards, currently general secretary of the [Evangelical Alliance UK](#), will lead [Micah Challenge International](#) (MCI) as its new international director beginning January 2009. MCI is a joint venture between the [Micah Network](#) and the [World Evangelical Alliance](#). MCI aims to deepen Christian involvement with marginalized communities and to urge leaders of rich and poor countries to halve extreme poverty by 2015 as part of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals. Edwards has been involved with MCI since its inception. ([Micah Challenge International](#))

ASIA: Asian Access Names New President

Joseph Handley Jr. has been named the fourth president of [Asian Access](#), an evangelical mission group, succeeding S. Douglas Birdsall, who stepped down in September 2007 after sixteen years of service. Handley, 43, has been an associate pastor at Rolling Hills Covenant Church in southern California for nearly a decade. Previous to that, he established the Office of World Mission at Azusa Pacific University, also in California. Birdsall said Handley "has a great knowledge of world missions." Asian Access, which heads into its fifth decade, began in Japan as the "Language Institute for Evangelism." It now reaches into countries such as Cambodia, India, and Sri Lanka as well as closed countries whose identities are guarded. ([Asian Access](#))

BELGIUM: Systematic Religious Discrimination Reported

The Institute of Religion and Public Policy has submitted a report to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights documenting religious freedom abuses in Belgium over the last decade. The Belgian government has been criticized by the UN and other organizations for its classification of hundreds of religious groups as “harmful sects.” Currently, about six hundred religious groups in Belgium are labeled as such, including Protestant groups, Zen Buddhists, Hasidic Jews, and the YWCA. Such groups are accused of being dangerous and are targets of measures to halt their growth and existence, according to the report. ([Institute of Religion and Policy](#))

BENIN: Catholic Relief Services Program Targets Millions with Malaria

In an attempt to treat more than two million children with malaria, [Catholic Relief Services](#) (CRS) has launched the largest home-based malaria care campaign in Benin’s history. According to a media release, the program is possible through a \$24.5 million USD grant from Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. Children will receive Artemisinin-Based Combination Therapy (ACT), a proven safe and effective treatment. Most will be able to get treatment at home in less than twenty-four hours after symptoms appear. CRS, leading a 4-member consortium, will work with more than 1,400 community-based groups to educate families and provide basic care to children infected. Ken Hackett, president of CRS, said about three thousand children die each day of malaria in sub-Saharan Africa. ([Catholic Relief Services](#))

CHINA: Crackdown on Christians as Olympics Approach

[Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#) and [China Aid Association](#) released a report in June 2008 describing increasing government persecution of unregistered Christians in the months leading up to the Olympics. As the games approached, the Chinese Central Government increased funding toward efforts to eradicate “house churches” throughout the country. People engaged in illegal religious practices will be prevented from attending or participating in the games, and landlords have been told to refrain from renting to those participating in religious activities. ([Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#))

CHINA: Gospels Specially Printed for Olympic Games

In a decision announced by the chairman of the national committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China, Bibles and gospel booklets printed in China will be available during the Beijing Olympics. With the help of UK-based Bible Society, fifty thousand gospel booklets are being printed especially for the Games and will carry the Olympic logo free of charge, as approved by the Beijing Olympic organizing committee. An additional ten thousand Bibles and thirty thousand New Testaments will also be available. The announcement was made at the 18 May 2008 opening of the new Amity Printing Press in Nanjing, a facility capable of producing twelve million Bibles a year. Bibles and booklets will be available in several other Olympic event cities in addition to the capitol. ([Bible Society UK](#))

COLOMBIA: Rescued Hostage Says It’s a Miracle

Rescued political hostage Ingrid Betancourt said that her July 2008 rescue from the hands of Colombian FARC rebels was “a miracle.” “God, this is a miracle... There is no historical precedent for such a perfect operation,” Betancourt said in a statement from Bogota. Betancourt, who was rescued along with fourteen other hostages, had been held for more than six years since being kidnapped in February 2002 while campaigning for the Colombian presidency in areas controlled by the FARC. Among the other hostages were eleven Colombian security forces members and three American defense department contract workers. ([ASSIST News](#))

ETHIOPIA: Life Sentences Given to Church Attackers

An Ethiopian court has sentenced three Muslim men to life imprisonment for the 2 March 2008 machete assault on two churches, which killed one person and injured seventeen. The sentences were handed down on 26 March; however, victims’ families only learned of the sentences after their right to appeal had expired. Of an additional seventeen people initially arrested for the attack, six remain in prison while the others have been freed. Christian sources believe three local Muslim officials instigated the attack. A Christian district politician attempting to expose the three has been removed from his position. ([Crosswalk.com](#))

GERMANY: WSCF Applauds German Company for Halting Zimbabwean Money Deliveries

The [World Student Christian Federation](#) (WSCF) happily received news that German company Giesecke & Devrient (G&D) has halted production of banknotes used to pay Zimbabwean president Mugabe's government officials and militia. While the company cited the action as a response to an official request by the German government as well as international sanctions by the European Union and United Nations, WSCF had joined German human rights groups and civil organizations in an advocacy campaign making Germans aware of the connection between G&D and the violence in Zimbabwe. In a 25 June 2008 letter, WSCF's Southern African Human Rights Office pleaded with the German government to put pressure on G&D. WSCF is a global federation of student Christian groups, founded in 1895 by the North American evangelist and global ecumenist John R. Mott. Local and national groups that make up the federation are largely known as Student Christian Movements (SCMs). ([World Student Christian Federation](#))

GERMANY: Feelings about Evangelism Changing

While many Protestant clergy still have reservations about evangelism, a recent study shows that attitudes are changing in Germany. The Research Institute for Evangelism and Church Development at the University of Greifswald conducted the study on behalf of the evangelistic project [ProChrist](#). Although much of the clergy cited spiritual care of the flock as their main concern, younger mainline theologians are becoming more open to evangelistic activity. However, German clergy felt largely helpless in spreading Christian faith. ([ASSIST News](#))

IRAQ: Partners International Ministries Opens Third Christian School

With support from Iraqi authorities, [Partners International Ministries](#) (PIM) opened its third Christian school in Northern Iraq. The school is located on three acres of land donated by the Iraqi government, and an official of the Iraqi ministry of education attended the opening. The official was quoted as saying, "...whatever you hear, this is a place where we value democracy, and everyone is welcome." A PIM official said the school is perceived as a place of reconciliation. PIM has been working in Northern Iraq for fifteen years. ([Partners International Ministries](#))

UZBEKISTAN: Government Television Program Incites Religious Hatred

Uzbek state-run television has repeated the showing of a film promoting intolerance of religious minorities. This second showing of the film entitled "In the Clutches of Ignorance" was in Russian, whereas the first showing in May 2008 was in Uzbek. Timing of the broadcast, which was before live coverage of two Euro 2008 football matches, was designed to attract as many viewers as possible. Some saw the airing as a government effort to stir up Muslims against Christians. Many religious communities have been targeted by the secret police and at least one church was raided the day after the broadcast. ([Forum 18 News](#))

UNITED STATES: HCJB Global Appoints Acting President

[HCJB Global](#), a mission organization working through media and healthcare, has appointed James "Jim" Allen as its interim president, replacing Dave Johnson, HCJB president since 2001. Allen, 65, has been senior vice president since 1997. A graduate of Biola University in California, Allen hopes to help the organization transition smoothly during its search for a permanent president. Allen has ministered in more than sixty countries. He and his wife joined HCJB Global in 1984 primarily to pastor missionaries. ([HCJB Global](#))

UNITED STATES: Expositor Named for IntersVarsity Conference Urbana 09

Ramez Atallah, general secretary of the [Bible Society of Egypt](#) and program chair of the [Lausanne III World Congress](#), will be Bible expositor at Urbana 09, [InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's](#) twenty-second student missions conference. The conference will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, 27-31 December 2009. Born in Egypt, Atallah spent his adolescence in Canada and became involved with InterVarsity while attending McGill University. InterVarsity's student mission conference, first held in 1946, is one of the longest running institutions of North American evangelism. Many distinguished Bible teachers have presented at Urbana, including John R.W. Stott and Ajith Fernando. ([InterVarsity Christian Fellowship](#))

YEMEN: Christians Arrested for Promoting Christianity

Authorities in Yemen have arrested seven Christians in the province of Hodiada for allegedly promoting Christianity and distributing Bibles. According to Washington, D.C.–based [International Christian Concern](#) (ICC), the seven were taken into custody on 18 June 2008 and then transferred to the capital city of Sana'a. ICC sources believe the prisoners may face torture by Yemeni security personnel. ([International Christian Concern](#))

ZIMBABWE: Mugabe Declares “Only God Will Remove Me”

Since the Zimbabwe elections on 29 March 2008, sources have reported numerous people murdered, thousands of homes burned, and hundreds of thousands of people displaced from their homes. President Robert Mugabe has stated, “Only God, who appointed me, will remove me.” Mugabe’s violent campaign has led to the opposition MDC party to pull out of the election, and several African countries are voicing harsh criticism of Mugabe’s tactics. However, despite a United Nations appeal, South African president Thabo Mbeki has not condemned Mugabe, a stance that has him at odds with his own cabinet according to insiders. ([ASSIST News](#))

THEMED ARTICLES: Church Planting and Evangelism

Evangelism and Church Planting: Implementing the Ministry Multiplication Cycle

By Peter Law

While catalytic points of reference have shifted to include a now stronger, more dominating representation from the Global South, faithful efforts at establishing Christ’s Church in obedience to the commission of Matthew 28:18-20 continue from points all across the globe.

Christian mission has become the responsibility of the Global Church and within that charter we have witnessed the rapid growth of church-planting movements among unreached people groups of the world. Such movements typically involve initial large-scale evangelism followed by the establishment of churches that ideally spawn multiple new church starts. Movements of this kind have been identified in India, Africa, Latin America, China, and areas within Southeast Asia.

Other less spontaneous movements sharing some but not all characteristics of the former manifest a similar vision and mission to promote and facilitate the starting of churches in areas of the world yet unreached or minimally reached with the gospel. Church-planting movements are driven by principles modeled by Jesus. Within the establishment of church-planting movements worldwide, these principles have proven to be universally applicable and effective.

Using the strategy Jesus employed—of moving people from outside the kingdom to becoming believers, disciples, workers, and eventually world Christians—church-planting ministries have consistently employed their own versions of what Crossover Communications International calls the Ministry Multiplication Cycle¹, and have found this method to be adaptable within the different cultural contexts. Drawing from Jesus’ pattern of making and mentoring disciples, church-planting ministries usually follow some or all of a 4-step approach in accomplishing the assignment: *evangelize* unbelievers, *establish* new Christians through programs of discipleship, *equip* future church planters by training them with the necessary skills, and *extend* leaders cross-culturally, having provided them with tools vital to such ministry.

Maintaining the Essential Elements

Fundamental to effective evangelization and establishment of any Christian witness in the world is the content of the Christian’s message: *God’s grace extended to the spiritually lost through the coming of his Son at the perfect time in history to live, die, and rise as victor over sin and death on behalf of sinners, opening access into God’s presence for eternity.* At the cross, Christ suffered unrelenting hellish bombardment from forces

determined to rob the world of his saving grace. Sin viciously hurled every insidious weapon of wickedness at its disposal upon Jesus, until it—sin—was utterly and profoundly exhausted. Humanity’s final enemy was humiliated in defeat and its threatening, intimidating sting removed once and for all, swallowed-up in the victory of our risen Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15: 54-57). He arose triumphant, His cosmic supremacy jubilantly displayed before the vast throngs of heaven and proclaimed to the ends of the earth through the appointed voices of his commissioned envoys.

Our task in missions is to serve as courageous emissaries of heaven—to boldly present the supremacy of Christ to all religions of the world as the only means by which men, women, and children from every tribe, tongue, and nation may escape God’s judgment through humble repentance and faith.² The reality that countless lives are transformed, churches planted, and missionary zeal evidenced around the world whenever this message is preached lends testimony to the saving, changing power of Christ’s redemptive grace in the experience of men and women from every culture, tribe, and tongue.

Multiplication not Addition

Basic to Jesus’ approach is the concept of multiplication, as distinct from addition. From the beginning, Jesus had commissioned his disciples to go out two by two. When he sent them out with his final charge to *“be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8b) he sent them in his own authority to make disciples of all nations. He had already promised that *“...this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come”* (Matthew 24:14) and in entrusting the task to the twelve, Christ anticipated vital, exponential growth.

David Garrison explains that church-planting movements typically multiply rapidly, become self-reproducing, and are indigenous, generating from within.³ The latter is most significant in that although an initial church plant may be started by churches or mission groups coming in from outside the culture, momentum will usually shift to where the movement “looks, acts, and feels homegrown.”⁴

Developing churches in keeping with the Three-Self Formula introduced by Henry Venn, the general secretary of the Church Missionary Society in London in the mid-nineteenth century, these newly planted churches are usually encouraged to be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. This strategy of planting *church-planting* churches, and encouraging that philosophy among developing church leaders, ensures that the idea of multiplication is embedded within the DNA of those new churches and their offspring.

Removing the Scaffolding

Healthy churches stem from healthy attitudes toward outside assistance. Where unhealthy dependence has not been created, churches flourish in the context of trusting God to provide for their need of leadership, finance, and vision. Hudson Taylor identified the importance of keeping the church indigenous. His original strategy shifted when he began to realize that the Chinese Church would never reach its potential maturity while foreign missionaries occupied critical leadership and decision-making positions within the Church.

He wrote, “I look upon foreign missionaries as the scaffolding around a rising building. The sooner it can be dispensed with, the better; or rather, the sooner it can be transferred to other places, to serve the same temporary use, the better.”⁵ In Moldova, Eastern Europe’s poorest nation, church planting is being conducted with Taylor’s thought in mind, encouraging indigenous independence as soon as is practically possible.

One Case in Point

The Ministry Multiplication Cycle was introduced and implemented in Moldova by [Crossover Communications International](#) at the invitation of local Christians. Now, after the establishment of over eighty such churches in Moldova, ministry strategy and initiative is designed and taken by the Moldovan Christians.

Evangelism takes the form of outreaches into townships and villages in an effort to support new church planters in their work of establishing a church in their community. Short-term mission support teams serve alongside church planters drawn not only from Western countries, but increasingly from Moldova.

New believers are given an opportunity to participate in a Christian Leadership Training Institute consisting of eight weeks of intensive Bible courses spread over two years, now taught mainly by Moldovan teachers. Graduating students become actively involved in their local churches and are equipped to offer ministry leadership, and in some cases, to eventually serve as teachers in the institute. Some of those graduating are selected through a series of interviews conducted by the Moldovan Church leadership to be trained further as church planters. Once appointed, these church planters are trained for an additional period of time in the Church Planter's Training Institute, then placed and mentored on a regular basis by Moldovan mentors, and helped in the establishment of a new church entrusted to their pastoral care.

More recently, Moldovan church planters have begun training to go cross-culturally into Russia and Central Asia. Some of these cross-cultural missionaries will join Russian church planters in Siberia who have been trained by the Moldovan leadership. Moldovan Church leaders are investigating new territory, identifying and screening potential church planters and providing both training and mentoring. This is done through the Missionary Training Institute courses taught by an international team of teachers, including some from Moldova. The cycle is complete. From evangelism to extension, the Church of Moldova is implementing the Ministry Multiplication Cycle and God's Church is being built.

An Encouragement and a Challenge

A resurgence of robust enthusiasm for missions is surfacing across the vast continents in a generation of young people ready to take this message of hope to their dying post-modern, post-Christian world. Hudson Taylor's single-minded passion to see the Kingdom of God ushered in is being witnessed again in the hearts and mission aspirations of young men and women from China and throughout Asia, Australia, Africa, and Latin America.

The zeal of early pioneers like C.T. Studd and William Carey continues to manifest in a new generation of enthusiasts for the kingdom, evident across the United States, the United Kingdom, and parts of Europe. Young people who have experienced the impact of this message in their own lives stand ready to step beyond all zones of safety out into their beckoning world for the sake of the kingdom.

However, one obstacle remains in the way of accomplishing the task set before us. Over seventy percent of all missionaries sent out into the world today are going to Christian cultures where the gospel has been faithfully preached for generations. We need to go where no one else is going—to where the people have not heard and have no means of hearing. A confused world longs for the truth.

Our calling is to take it to them. "*Go therefore into all the world*" Jesus commanded us, placing his commission solidly in our court of stewardship and responsibility. Knowing his promise to never desert us in this task, we go in obedience to the unreached—here at home and abroad—to the millions who agonize through daily rituals bent on appeasing those gods that keep them in constant fear: in the *West*, where "sophisticated" deities hold sway over the hearts and minds of men and women controlled by fluctuations in the stock market, an insatiable desire for success, or the pursuit of an elusive happiness; and in the *East*, where flamboyant deities demand servile obedience from intimidated worshippers, threatening reprisals against acts of non-compliance with the will of the gods.⁶

Nomadic herders surviving on the edge of snow-smothered Siberian hillsides and postmodern traffic-plagued city dwellers en route to the office share in a common plight: each lives in desperate need of God's transforming gospel of grace.⁷ Animistic peoples in remote regions of the world live in ignorance of the truth that can set them free. All they need is for someone to go who is willing, able, and equipped with the message.

You have that truth. Are you willing to be that someone?

Endnotes

1. The Ministry Multiplication Cycle has been developed by **Crossover Communications International** as a way to describe their 4-step approach to planting churches in Eastern Europe, involving “intentional intervention through evangelism, establishing, equipping, and extending to see the kingdom expanded” (*Crossover Communications Communiqué*, Spring 2007 edition MMVII Vol.1, p. 6).
2. See John Piper. 2007. *The Future of Justification*. Wheaton, Illinois, USA: Crossway, p 25 for further discussion on this topic.
3. 2004. *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*. Midlothian, Virginia, USA: Wigtake Resources, 22-23.
4. Ibid, 22.
5. Sweeting, George. 1985. *More than 2000 Great Quotes and Illustrations*. Texas, USA: Word Publishing, 184, quoted by Paul Hattaway’s 2003 book, *Back to Jerusalem*. Carlisle, U.K.: Authentic Media, 6.
6. Law, Peter. 2008. “Doing Missions in a Post-modern, Post-Christian World.” *Communique*. Crossover Communications International, Summer.
7. Law, Peter. 2008. “The Central Message of Missions.” *Communique*. Crossover Communications International, Winter.

Dr. Peter Law is president of Crossover-Australia and vice-president of **Crossover-USA**, overseeing international ministries. When not leading short-term mission teams, he speaks at churches, colleges, schools, and mission conferences, sharing his vision for building God’s kingdom worldwide.

Time to Shine: The Chinese Church, Church Planting, and World Missions

By Peter Sung

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” – Isaiah 60:1-3

It’s Sunday afternoon in Beijing. Outside, people are enjoying a warm spring day, a welcome respite before the harried work week begins. But inside an office building in a newly-developed section of Beijing, nearly two hundred Chinese are crying out to God. A young man in his early twenties plays the guitar as he leads an enthusiastic worship team.

“Lord, have mercy on China!” they sing in Chinese. The congregation follows along, reading the PowerPoint slides on the projection screen. After singing, the believers bow in prayer. They intercede for the church’s two missionaries sent to other parts of China. They thank God for his blessings and faithfulness in the past. And they pray for their pastor and his upcoming sermon, that God would use it to touch the lives of those in attendance, including nearly thirty newcomers.

The text for the pastor’s sermon comes from 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:9. He speaks of the reality of evil and people’s need to be aware of the battle that is raging. The service concludes with communion, announcements, and more singing. In many ways, it resembles Christian worship services in other parts of the world—except that some of those in attendance are among the brightest minds in China.

A Void to Fill

The spread of Christianity in China over the past few decades has been called the “greatest church growth since Pentecost.”¹ When Communists took control in 1949 and commenced expelling foreign missionaries, there were an estimated 700,000 Protestant believers in the Middle Kingdom. In the years that followed, Christians in

China endured intense persecution. Many thought the Chinese Church was crippled beyond repair. An American visitor in the early 1970s claimed there was “scarcely a visible trace” of Christianity in China.² That’s certainly no longer the case. Although accurate estimates are hard to come by, there are perhaps as many as 130 million Christians today, according to one Beijing government official. A remarkable work of God has taken place.

But until recently, that work took place mostly in China’s countryside, among farmers and peasants. That is partly due to the fact that, until recently, the vast majority of China’s population lived in rural settings. But it’s also because, for many years, China’s urban intellectuals were resistant to the gospel. Christianity was viewed as a foreign ideology and often associated (sometimes, rightly so) with Western imperialism. Following World War I, Western powers ceded German colonies in China to Japan, prompting a great outcry—known as the May 4th Movement—among China’s intellectuals. Shortly thereafter, the Chinese Communist Party was founded in Shanghai.

After civil war resulted in Communist victory, many of China’s intellectuals thought the future was full of promise. China was finally rid of foreign influence and could rise to her fullest potential. But things soon began to change. The Anti-Rightist Movement of 1957-1958 resulted in the imprisonment of many intellectuals. Then, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) took most of China’s scholars out of university classrooms and into labor camps or factories, only to return to their academic posts in the late 1970s. Subsequent events, plus the emptiness and corruption caused by the rise of materialism in China, have left many intellectuals with a sense of disillusionment.

Time to Shine?

Thankfully, many urban intellectuals have filled their ideological voids with faith in Christ. As one example, in the mid-1990s, Beijing was home to only a handful of urban house churches. Today, there are perhaps between six and ten thousand such fellowships. Shanghai, China’s most populated city, has seen growth as well, with possibly as many as 400,000 believers.³

To be sure, some of the churches in Beijing target the migrant workers behind the capital city’s building boom. Others host rural believers who have moved to the city. But a sizeable number of the urban churches are filled with white-collar, well-educated business and academic professionals. Many will be, or already are, China’s leaders in their respective fields.

They are part of the nation’s emerging middle and upper class. They feel comfortable in international settings. They’re sophisticated and tech savvy. And they’re spiritually hungry. While different from their rural brothers and sisters in many ways, the growth rate of their churches is reminiscent of the gospel’s advance in China’s countryside in previous decades.

“However big the place you meet, the place will be filled with Christians,” said John*, a leader in one of these churches. “It’s just a matter of time.” This new demographic hopes to, perhaps, bring a new structure to China’s Protestants. Most Chinese believers are either members of the government-approved Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) or the unregistered, not legally recognized, house church. The majority of China’s Christians attend the latter.

But some urban house churches are attempting to obtain another kind of status. In March 2005, the Chinese government issued new religious regulations that seemed to make it possible to legally register as a house church apart from the government-controlled TSPM.

With the conviction that the church should operate in a legal manner, some Chinese urban believers have quietly looked into this new legal standing. They like the thought of being within the confines of civil law, but apart from the government-controlled TSPM; similar to the churches in Hong Kong and most developed countries. However, few churches have been able to test the new law as the government thus far has been cautious to implement it.

Still, the Chinese government could be warming to the idea that Christianity can play a positive role in their goal of building a “harmonious society.” Similarly, urban intellectual believers are saying it’s time for China’s house churches to come “above ground” and “shine” the light of the Lord on China and the world. If this idea of a legal, yet free from government control, church moves forward, it could be a breakthrough and, hopefully, a win-win situation for both sides.

“We should shine on the whole society, the whole country, so that we can reform society, not in a political way, but in a spiritual way,” John encourages. Urban Chinese believers hope Christianity can make a positive contribution to China’s emergence on the world scene. By doing so, they hope to bring Christianity into the greater Chinese public’s consciousness. Controlled by neither foreigners nor the government, China’s urban house churches dream of starting their own seminaries, forming missions-training structures, and providing holistic, social ministries to benefit China’s people and the world.

One encouraging development in recent months has been a greater collaboration among China’s urban house churches. Last fall, urban church leaders from all over China met in Shanghai to discuss the future of the Chinese Church. On New Year’s Eve, several of Beijing’s urban house church networks participated in an all-night prayer gathering. Those same networks have organized a 24-hour, seven days a week prayer chain among their members. Their topic: Revival in Beijing and China.

“The Lord is doing his unifying work,” John exclaims. While the shows of unity are encouraging, they haven’t gone without notice from China’s government. John says some urban house church leaders have been questioned by police. Having seen the role of Christianity in the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, China’s government is sensitive to unified, organized, and committed groups of individuals such as churches.

However, most church leaders have no political motives and have openly dialogued with the authorities in an attempt to alleviate their concerns. The good news is that, at least for now, the authorities seem to be listening. Currently, the urban house churches, in general, are experiencing little outright persecution.

This year, with the Olympics in August, authorities in Beijing are taking a “watch and wait” approach. What the authorities will do after the Games is still unclear. So while this year could be a good year for church growth and expansion, next year—when the Olympics are over and some of the international attention on China has subsided—could be a “willing to be persecuted” year, according to some house church leaders.

To the Ends of the Earth

Persecution and hardship have been marks of the Chinese Church for decades. Western believers may find it odd that some Chinese church leaders, while not asking for pressure from the government, also do not run from it. Throughout Christian history, God has used persecution for the purifying and preparation of his Church. Many observers think the past decades of sacrifice in China may have laid a foundation for a future work involving the Chinese Church: the evangelization of the more than six thousand unreached people groups in the world.

In recent years, missions and the Chinese Church has often been associated with a movement known as Back to Jerusalem (BTJ). The original “Back to Jerusalem” band was formed in the 1940s on the idea that the Chinese Church is called to take the gospel through the largely unreached areas of Western China, Central Asia, and back to the Middle East and Jerusalem, where the gospel was first heard. While a trickle of Chinese believers headed westward at the time, this movement eventually fell silent for nearly fifty years. More recently, a renewed vision of the BTJ movement has been promoted among some rural house church network leaders with a vision to send 100,000 Chinese missionaries toward Jerusalem and the Middle East.

The vision received much publicity through the popular book *The Heavenly Man*, the miraculous story of a believer from rural China.⁴ Some Chinese churches have rallied behind the idea, but the movement is still largely in its infancy and is primarily active among rural networks made up of members with only an elementary or middle school education level.

“In fact, the new BTJ movement is probably more popular outside of China than within” says Joe*, a foreign Christian working with house church leaders in Beijing. He says urban Chinese Christians do not see themselves as alone in the completion of the Great Commission, nor do they see the advance of the gospel heading in only one direction.

“They don’t want to be seen as carrying the final torch,” says Joe, “but as participating with global brothers and sisters to accomplish the Great Commission together, taking the gospel to the ends of the earth—yes, toward the Middle East, but not exclusively.” Joe sees the emergence of the urban intellectuals as a positive sign for future mission work. Whereas China’s rural Christians might struggle with a lack of financial resources, learning new languages and adapting to foreign cultures, urban Chinese Christian professionals and academics already familiar with working in international environments seem better-equipped to deal with such issues.

“Culturally, they’re more prepared and sensitive,” explains Joe. “Their financial resources, long-term viability...who they are as people will have a longer, larger impact.” China expert Tony Lambert, in his latest edition of *China’s Christian Millions*, concurs:

While acknowledging the zeal and effectiveness of the rural believers in their own cultural milieu, it seems more realistic to accept the fact that educated Christians in the cities and those with business contacts overseas are much better placed to pioneer the first steps in cross-cultural mission—first within China, and then, as they gain experience, to the wider world.⁵

However, it won’t be an easy road. Like all prospective missionaries, China’s future cross-cultural workers will probably struggle with issues of leaving their home culture, learning a foreign tongue, and living as Christians in sometimes harsh spiritual environments. For China’s urban house church missionaries, that loss may be felt more acutely. Not only will they be giving up potentially lucrative careers, but they also risk crushing the hopes of family members from rural areas who look to them for the entire family’s financial security.

“It’s hard for them to turn their back on that,” says Joe. For now, it’s premature to say a wide-ranging mission movement is taking off among Chinese intellectuals. But a church-planting movement certainly is—and it has missions at the forefront.

One Beijing house church leader thinks it will be his children’s generation that may see a burgeoning mission movement from China to the rest of the world. He foresees the next ten years as a time of church planting among the Chinese within China, followed by a period of ten years time to reach out to China’s numerous minority people groups and, *then*, ten years after that to be the time for the Chinese Church to send out workers into the spiritual harvest fields around the world.

In the meantime, the Chinese Church continues to grow. As it matures, missions will hopefully be a natural outflow, says Joe. He points to the development of the South Korean Church (see box below) as evidence. If China follows a similar pattern, watch out.

“It could be tens of thousands of Chinese missionaries,” Joe says. “Maybe we could forecast twenty to thirty years from now, when the Chinese urban house churches are fully mature, what you will see is a mission movement in our lifetime that will impact the world.”

*Some names have been changed. Any resemblance to the names of actual persons in similar positions is not intended.

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China: The Next South Korea?

Thirty years ago, Christianity fever was rampant in South Korea. The Church nearly tripled in size during the 1970s, the “great decade” of Korean church growth.¹

However, although the Church was exploding, South Korean mission involvement was minimal. In 1979, there were just ninety-two missionaries sent from South Korea.² Today, South Korea is the second-largest sending Church in the world, with around seventeen thousand missionaries serving in 189 agencies.³ And Korean churches and missions are not planning to stop anytime soon. They have ambitiously resolved to send out one million tent-making missionaries by 2020 and 100,000 missionaries by 2030.⁴

Could China be the next South Korea? When looking at the future of the Chinese Church, some observers point to the development of the South Korean Church as a possible model to follow. There are several similarities. Both are Asian. Both countries—and churches—endured a tumultuous first half of the twentieth century. Both churches experienced periods of persecution leading to unprecedented church growth. Christians in both countries are known to be passionate about prayer and evangelism. (Many of China’s urban house churches have been strongly influenced by Korean Christians.) And both countries hosted the Olympic Games at a pivotal time in the country’s history.

In his article, "A Survey of the Korean Missionary Movement," Timothy Kiho Park, director of Korean Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, writes “explosive church growth, marvelous economic growth, continued immigration to many countries of the world, seeking higher education and accumulated missionary experience have enhanced the missionary movement of the Korean Church in recent years.”⁵ But while China has many parallels to Korea, the differences are numerous as well, and big enough to assume that a Chinese missionary movement will probably look somewhat different.

Perhaps the biggest difference to consider is the two countries’ political systems. China’s Communist government is not likely to allow mission structures and possible parachurch sending organizations to operate unhindered. Sending missionaries from China will be a bit more complex than from Korea, although it should be noted that for many years South Korea’s government placed restrictions on citizens’ foreign travel. With the 1988 Olympic Games, South Korea was forced to open politically, allowing Korean Christians to travel to previously off-limits areas.⁶ How the Olympics will affect the Chinese government is still anybody’s guess.

A second major dissimilarity is the size—both geographically and population-wise—of the two countries. South Korea is about the size of Hungary and has forty-five million citizens. China is roughly the size of the United States, but with 1.4 billion people! Thus, China is a much more diverse setting, which is reflected in the Church and would also affect missions from China. In fact, there is still much mission work to be done among China’s numerous minority groups. Third, the South Korean Church is generally better-educated than the Chinese Church and has had more exposure to the outside world, especially when compared to house church Christians in rural China. Of course, the demographics of the Chinese Church are changing, as seen in the recent church-planting movement among Chinese intellectuals.

Given the above factors, the South Korean Church has produced a wealth of seminary-trained, theologically-

educated missionaries. A Chinese mission movement, however, is likely to send more lay members, tentmaking professionals, and bi-vocational missionaries. Still, China's emerging group of educated and more affluent Christians may be the catalyst that allows the country's future as a mission-sending Church to follow a similar pattern as the South Korean Church. Perhaps the missing ingredient is time. It took the Korean Church nearly thirty years from the incredible church growth of the 1960s and 1970s to mature into becoming a major player in global missions. At least one Chinese urban house church already has a "30-year mission strategy" that eventually leads to worldwide outreach.

Considering the vast numbers of Chinese Christians, the prospects of what kind of effect Chinese missionaries may one day have on the 10/40 Window and other unreached areas is alluring. Numerous media outlets have discussed China's recent emergence on the world scene politically and economically. Why not spiritually as well? Imagine a world where the majority of missionaries are either Chinese or Korean. Could the twenty-first century be the era of Asian missions?

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2. Kiho Park, Timothy. 2002. "A Survey of the Korean Missionary Movement." *Journal of Asian Mission* 4(1): 111-199.
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Peter Sung (pseudonym) works in and around China with Chinese intellectuals and business leaders.

The Luke Partnership: A First Step in Evangelism, Church Planting, and Discipleship

By Bob Creson, Jim Green, and Roy Peterson

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, André took his translation of Luke 1-3 to a small village chapel to read it to the congregation and get their response. When he finished, the people applauded. One 82-year-old woman commented, "Very good, my son. Today I have understood what I had never understood before."

Hearing and understanding is the first step in evangelism and discipleship leading to church planting. God has sent his message of love, but it must reach people in the language and in a form they relate to best.

Making God's message clear is Andre's goal as he works to translate God's Word into his mother tongue as part of The Luke Partnership—a joint project of **The Seed Company** (a **Wycliffe Bible Translators** affiliate), **The Jesus Film Project** (a ministry of **Campus Crusade for Christ**), and **SIL International**.

The Challenge

Many large language communities, some with several million speakers, still have no scripture at all, meaning they lack a foundation for individual and community transformation. Many of these communities are hard to

access or have sociolinguistic problems reflected in attitudes toward the use of the language. In some cases, there is little or no Christian presence.

The Luke Partnership was born as a pilot program to produce some initial scripture and scripture-based materials in each of thirty languages. Our initial dream was to give these language communities access to portions of God's Word in thirty-six months.

We surveyed the languages under consideration and made decisions about what language projects to include. Here are some criteria we used:

- They had no Book of Luke or, in most cases, any other scripture.
- They were without the JESUS Film.
- No one else was planning or currently working on translation.
- They were a group of over 100,000 largely unreached people.
- They had active churches or had been adopted by church-planting agencies.
- Local speakers could be trained for key responsibility in the translation process.
- Where feasible, multiple area languages could be worked on as a group.

The Goals

The Luke Partnership permits our organizations to leverage our strengths and create effective tools for evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. An "initial goals package" for a community includes the translation of Luke's Gospel (usually published in both print and audio form), the JESUS film (based on the Gospel of Luke), and further Old and New Testament selections. This set of scripture portions, compiled by LifeWords (formerly Scripture Gift Mission) and called the Pioneer series, includes three Old Testament and four New Testament booklets which can also be produced in audio form. The Old Testament portions prepare the way for the understanding of the gospel, and the additional New Testament selections help to disciple new believers.

"We always consider the option of modifying these initial goals," says Dr. Katy Barnwell, senior consultant for The Seed Company, "but so far the Luke Partnership package—Luke, the JESUS film, and other Old and New Testament scriptures—has been approved without much variation."

We strongly emphasize audio materials from the beginning so the community can use the scriptures right away, even before they have a literacy program in their language. Even where some can read, audio often provides the most effective media to reach people. Tom Meiner, director of partnerships for the JESUS Film Project, explains,

In many cases, the Luke Partnership brings the first scriptures in their mother tongue to a group of people. The JESUS film is certainly the first film in their language, which obviously creates a lot of interest. For many of these people, the literacy rate is low, so the film helps bring them the message of Christ in a way they can understand.... The film generates excitement for the believers because now they have a tool that will draw attention, whether in a large crowd or in a private showing, so there is new interest in evangelism. Often this carries over to a nearby language group. The church leaders in that group then want these tools for their people as well. Church planting impact is similar. The scripture and film help to open doors and reveal the "ripe fruit." If there was no church, in many cases one has started.

Partnering with Future Users of the Materials

The Luke Partnership is a strategy that enables a community to attempt translation work without setting up intimidating, long-term projections for a full-scale New Testament project. The aim is to produce materials that local churches and mission agencies can use immediately—often within ninety days of the start of translation. Local churches welcome this approach and availability of tools for evangelism and church planting in a form that can be used immediately.

“Making available small portions early,” says Barnwell, “and involving the church and community in testing and using these early, helps to increase local interest and support.” Barnwell also notes that this process allows quick feedback on the translation that helps the team to find the right style of translation for the local situation.

Where churches exist in the language area they are primary partners and owners of the projects. In areas where no church exists, the Luke Partnership looks for other agencies working in the area with whom we can partner for immediate and ongoing impact. This material is never developed in a vacuum or translated without a plan for distribution and follow up.

The Cluster Strategy

In many cases, languages identified as priority needs for translation are not isolated. We developed a “cluster strategy,” grouping languages in the same geographical area together.

In the cluster strategy, representatives from several languages participate in a series of two or three workshops each year. The churches or other partners help select three mother-tongue speakers of each language, often with complementary skill sets, to be trained for initial linguistic work, orthography development, and then translation. These mother tongue teams work closely with facilitators who are experienced in translation. These facilitators sometimes come from other countries; they come on a regular basis to mentor, offer individual help, and supplement the group training sessions.

Training continues throughout the workshop series, each workshop focusing on a particular topic. From the beginning, translators apply their training as they produce portions of the Gospel of Luke in booklet form and on cassette. With the goal of ensuring a high-quality, communicative translation, translators and consultants apply rigorous procedures for studying the source text, drafting translation, checking their work with other team members, testing and reviewing with other speakers of the language, and consultant-checking the translation.

History

The Luke Partnership was born in 2001, and the first languages we identified were four in Ethiopia and five in Madagascar. **Word for the World**, a South-Africa based Bible translation organization, joined the work as a partner in Ethiopia. The Seed Company enlisted prayer partners, connected funders/investors to the projects, developed the project design, and provided administrative support as well as project management. The JESUS Film project recorded the translated script and produced the film.

In 2002, having proven the model, we began projects in several East Asian communities and later in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea Bissau, and Nigeria. This year, we anticipate opening Luke Partnership projects in Sudan and Central Africa Republic.

By 2006, the Gospel of Luke and the JESUS film had been completed in thirty languages. We had also started a second phase of the project, enlarging the scope and focusing on the cluster strategy. Since the first thirty languages began, work has started in a total of eighty-three languages and there are currently fifty-two language communities involved in active Luke Partnership projects.

From the Initial Phase to Full-scale Translation Programs

Many projects, begun with the limited goals described above, continue on to address further translation goals. The first Luke Partnership projects in Ethiopia, begun in 2001, will complete New Testaments this year (2008).

Three of the five original Luke Partnership projects in Madagascar also continued with further translation goals. Of the thirty original Luke Partnership languages, twenty-two are now full-scale Bible translation projects.

The initial phase of the Luke Partnership accomplishes several important things. First, churches in the language community experience the effectiveness of scripture and scripture-based materials in their mother tongue; a team of trained and experienced Bible translators is prepared for more translation work; and churches and other partners in the area experience what is involved in Bible translation and managing a translation program. When a Luke Partnership project is coming to a close, and further translation work is being considered, administrators look for some key criteria before approving a full-scale translation program. For example, if there is a local church, they look for believers within the church who are motivated and committed to a full-scale project. This is important because the church will have a responsible role in organizing the project and helping support the translation team financially. Church members will also be involved in reviewing and testing the translations as they are produced and in finding creative avenues to get the scriptures into use as they are translated. Also, the current translation team must have the desire and ability to continue with the translation project, or there must be a group of potential translators with the desire and aptitude for further training.

Facilitators and consultants who can give the necessary training and technical support are essential to sustain both initial and ongoing projects. As a key component of Luke Partnership projects, facilitators identify potential consultants within the local language community and guide them in an intentional training program.

Reflections

The Luke Partnership is a strategy that allows a community to begin translation work without necessarily committing to a long-term New Testament or full Bible translation project. This approach gives the translation team and the local church the opportunity to see how materials in their language can help spread the good news of the gospel and build the Church. They build confidence and gain valuable translation experience in an empowering environment.

People hear and understand, often for the first time, the message—and it is powerful! After viewing the JESUS film for the first time, one woman in an isolated area of Indonesia exclaimed, “Who taught Jesus to speak our language? How long did he study it?” In Madagascar, people in one community stayed up all night to listen and discuss the translation. One person said, “If we had known that this is what the Bible says, we would have become Christians long ago.”

Once the JESUS film is produced, it often opens opportunities for wider involvement of people in the community, creating greater ownership of the product and the potential for wider impact. When the Luke Partnership started in one very sensitive language community in Africa, there were very few Christians. The team found local people, most of whom were not believers, to read the parts for recording the JESUS film. As they read the scripture, some of them believed Jesus’ message and trusted him. People from this group are now listening to God’s truth and a small indigenous church has grown up around the translated scriptures.

Often on the first showing of the JESUS film, many respond to Christ’s call, opening the door for local agencies to implement follow-up programs that lead to new churches. Jesus now speaks languages all over the world, and people are hearing him speak clearly to them in the language—and medium—they understand best, most often their mother tongue. For many of them, this is the first time they have understood God’s message of love, and very often the result is changed lives and growing churches.

Bob Creson is president/CEO of [Wycliffe Bible Translators USA](#). He worked in West Africa and in international administration with SIL. **Jim Green** is executive director of [The Jesus Film Project](#). He joined the staff of [Campus Crusade for Christ](#) in 1962, serving in Africa for fourteen of his forty-six years in ministry. **Roy Peterson** is president/CEO of [The Seed Company](#), an affiliate of Wycliffe USA, which focuses on national-led Bible translation.

Missional House Churches in the United States

By J. D. Payne

The wonderful missionary work of house churches throughout the Majority World is no surprise to anyone reading this article. We continually hear reports of rapid church growth occurring through the ministries of such churches. However, when one thinks of house churches that are making an impact for the kingdom, he or she generally does not think such churches exist in North America.

In my recently published book, *Missional House Churches: Reaching Our Communities with the Gospel*¹, however, I reported my research of thirty-three house churches in the United States which are both experiencing conversion growth and are planting other churches. The book is the first published work studying house churches and their missionary activities in the United States. Although these churches are not a representative sample of all American house churches, they do offer an encouraging model of what the Lord is presently doing in a Western context through non-traditional expressions of the Body of Christ.

Meet the Churches

The thirty-three churches represented in the study are located in every geographical region of the United States. They were found in rural areas, suburban communities, small towns, and large urban environments. Although the Anglo community was the most represented group among the churches, there was a great amount of ethnic diversity. The churches also consisted of people from every living generation. Such churches were not solely comprised of young adults, but age ranges extended from infants to adults in their seventies. Such churches had a high view of the Bible and espoused many conservative evangelical theological perspectives, especially related to salvation matters.

Many of the churches were only a few years old. Forty-six percent of the churches had been meeting for one to three years. However, twenty-one percent were at least ten years old. The average size of each of these churches ranged from fourteen to seventeen people, with one church consisting of more than thirty-four members.

Baptisms and Church Planting

The churches had to meet two screening criteria prior to being admitted into the study. First, they had to have baptized at least one person in the year prior to the study. Second, they had to have planted at least one church within the three previous years. Due to the low numbers of baptisms in the United States and numbers of churches involved in church planting, I set these two parameters very low.

The missional house churches in the study baptized an average of four to six people in the previous year, which gave them an average membership to baptismal ratio of approximately 4.3:1 to 2.3:1. It should be noted that the membership to baptismal ratio is one statistic used by missiologists to assist in evaluating evangelistic health. The statistic is the number of church members it takes in a given year to reach one person with the gospel and see that person baptized into the membership of the church. Therefore, it is expected that the lower ratios reveal a greater evangelistic effectiveness among the members. These churches had some of the lowest baptism to membership ratios in all of North America. Also, these churches consisted of many new believers, with each church consisting of twenty-four to forty-three percent recent converts.

The churches in this study planted on average four and six churches over the past three years. Three churches in the study planted ten or more. Clearly, such church planting numbers are dwarfed in comparison to many non-North American churches. However, in light of church growth in the Western world, these are outstanding numbers! Over the three years prior to the study, these churches planted between 132-198 churches.

What Can We Learn from this Study?

There are at least five important matters that can be learned from the study results.

1. *Even in post-Christianized, Western societies, simple expressions of the church can be effective in penetrating certain sectors of those societies with the gospel.*
2. *If the sovereign Lord decides to bring about a church multiplication movement to the United States, it is most likely to happen among those churches embracing a biblical ecclesiology, without the numerous Western cultural expectations of what is required for a church to be a church.* Although the house church model is not the key to multiplication movements, the churches in this study were probably poised in such a way that if such a movement occurred in North America, they would easily be able to adjust and grow accordingly.
3. *These churches can teach us much about the importance of relationships in the evangelism, assimilation, and leadership development process.* These churches placed a great amount of importance on significant relationships for witness and accountability. The church leaders surveyed believed their simple approaches to leadership development were working well.
4. *Many of the churches in the study gave away between eighty and ninety percent of their offerings to missions and benevolence.* Few of their pastors received a salary, and few of the churches met in a location other than someone's house. Although this fact is not a call for churches to sell their buildings and stop providing their pastors with an income, the percentages reflected in these churches should give many of us cause to pause and reflect on our present church budgets and the kingdom.
5. *If the attitudes of the church leaders are correct, then the United States will see a substantial increase in the number of house churches in the future.* It was common to hear these leaders say, "Their numbers will explode" or "Such churches will become more and more prevalent." Assuming the responses of these survey participants, do reflect the Lord's will in the future, the question remains: "Will such churches be *missional* house churches?"

Endnote

1. 2008. Carlisle, UK: Paternoster.

Dr. J. D. Payne is a national missionary with the [North American Mission Board](#) and assistant professor of church planting and evangelism at [The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in Louisville, Kentucky, USA. He is the founder of www.northamericanmissions.org, a web-based resource for the multiplication of disciples, leaders, and churches. He is author of the newly-published book *Missional House Churches: Reaching Our Communities with the Gospel* (Paternoster).

PERSPECTIVES

Mission in the Global Village

By Silas A. Pinto

A Global God for a Global Village

The primary purpose and meaning of the universe is to bring into existence, out of all God's offspring, an eternal Bride for the Lamb. God so loves this rebel planet that he conspires with the world affairs to graft into his body a multitude from every nation, tribe, peoples, and languages.

The high tech, real-time communication and the global economy have brought the global village into existence. The great metroplex areas of the world serve as magnets to people in the four corners of the planet, creating the largest migration in history. According to the United Nations, about forty million people are constantly migrating around the world.

What does this mean in God's economy? How does this shape the Christian mission? What should be the face of the Church in this intercultural context?

A Multiethnic International Savior

In paintings from the Renaissance period, Jesus appears with Eurocentric features; however, the historical Jesus was a man born in the Far East, Asia. In order to save Jesus' life, his parents took him to Egypt, and he became a political refugee in Africa.

Jesus' roots included several ethnic groups and people with moral issues (i.e., the Canaanite harlot Rahab, and Ruth the Moabite). The Nazarene's genealogy also included Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. These women were either foreigners or had an unattractive past. Their presence in Jesus' genealogy emphasizes his unrestrainable, ongoing love for sinners.

The Gospels narrate Jesus' extensive ministry in Decapolis. With the exception of Damascus, the Decapolis cities were founded during Judea's Hellenistic period. They were centers for the diffusion of Greek culture, and Gentiles comprised the majority of the population. In Mark 5 we see emphasized Decapolis' Gentile character when Jesus encounters a herd of pigs. Tyre was another city populated almost exclusively by Gentiles, and dominated by Greek influence.

The Galilean Jesus spoke Aramaic, was raised in a Hebraic culture, and lived under Roman domination of the Latin language in an area where the current language was popular Greek. Jesus was probably conversant in three or more languages. Likewise, to effectively fulfill the great commission in the global village, the Church must be open to diversity in language and culture.

It was in the "Galilee of the Gentiles" that Jesus performed most of his ministry, and it was from there that he chose eleven of his disciples, the exception being Judas (Matthew 10:2). Jews used the term "Galilean" to signify heathen or sinner. Therefore, they believed "no prophet could come from Galilee" (John 7:52).

As Dr. Ray Bakke wrote in *The Urban Christian*¹, "The biblical profile of Jesus is of an Asian born political refugee in Africa, with a multi-ethnic ancestry, and a multi-lingual and multi-cultural background." The genealogy of Jesus reveals that he is bound by ties of kinship not only to the tribe of Israel, but to all humanity, and that his mission embraces all of humankind (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-28). Therefore, the homogenous church growth movement of the past is an antithesis of being Christ-like.

A Multiethnic Church

The church born at Pentecost had three thousand men from every nation under heaven. Out of God's desire that all humankind could hear of his love, each man heard the gospel in his own language. The first church was multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural. God has been thinking globally from the beginning.

However, the early Church's ethnocentrism was soon to be evident. They sold their possessions and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need, until the number of Greek converts started to grow. Based on Act 6, some denominations believed deacons were elected to give special attention to the widows. However, it is not that the church was not giving assistance to the widows; rather, the underlying issue was that the ethnic widows were being overlooked. To make sure they would be fairly treated, all the elected deacons had Greek names. Greeks caring for the Greeks would avoid preferential treatment of the dominant group, as well as patronizing the foreigners, and make sure the ethnic community had access to the common wealth of the kingdom.

It breaks the heart of God every time there is separation and inequality among his children, for this is cooperation with the kingdom of darkness and plays straight into the hands of the devil (John 17). The sign on the wall of the Temple indicated to the Gentiles where only the Jews were allowed. The cross of Christ broke down that wall proclaiming, "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3).

Consequently, Gentile Christians were no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household. God then gave the Church the ministry of reconciliation to enable her to be

the society of new creation, a rehearsal of what is to come (Revelations 7). We practice eugenics or ecclesiastical Darwinism when we only reach “our people” or the more desirable constituency. This is a church for world success, not for faithfulness.

Genesis starts with a covenant with Abraham to bless *all nations*. Revelation finishes with John seeing *all nations*, tribes, languages, and peoples praising the Lamb in heaven. God called the temple "a house of prayer for *all peoples*." The Church was charged to go to "*all nations*." In Pentecost, God caused *all nations* to go to Jerusalem.

Preparing for the second Pentecost immediately before the second coming of the Lord, God is bringing *all nations* to us. Since the Church was not able to go to the outermost parts of the world, God is bringing the world to us, to make it easier for the Church to reach the nations in her own backyard. The challenge of the Church in the global village is to reach the nations across the street. This is more of a sociological than a geographical challenge. Foreign mission has come to us, and in this endeavor it is important to note that tolerance or acceptance of the other is not the same as assimilation.

There is an abundance of racial and ethnic themes in the Bible, for this has been the most prevalent issue in the history of God’s people. We are all prejudiced and ethnocentric people, because we fear what we might lose if we welcome those who do not belong to our tribe. Only Jesus and his gospel have an all-inclusive message for all peoples and cultures. We must involve ourselves in a culture of peace, against all forces of anti-life, respecting the fundamental dignity of every person, and eliminating all forms of racism and social castes in the Church. The tide of history is moving irreversibly away from racial diversity, for it is God’s plan to someday create a global Pentecost with every creature worshipping the Lamb together.

Ethnocentrism, racism, and bigotry are not the monopoly of a specific group. But it is unfortunately very present in the Church worldwide, mostly manifested in subtle ways. But this subtlety will not go unnoticed in the eyes of the creator of humanity. Racism is one of the most diabolical manifestations of evil, for it denies God’s image in the face of the other. God has called the Church to be a place of refuge, and an outpost of God’s kingdom. In *Human Rights & Human Wrongs*², John Stott says that when Israel overemphasized the covenant, they reduced God to the status of a tribal deity.

He became Yahweh, the god of the Israelites, more or less on a par with Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and Milcom, the god of the Ammonites. They also forgot the other nations, or simply despised and rejected them. The Bible begins with the nations, not Israel; with Adam, not Abraham; with the creation, not the Covenant. And when God chose Israel, he did not lose interest in the nations.

God’s plan was to make Israel a blessing to the nations as much as he has called the Church to be a “house of prayer for all people.”

A Multiethnic Mission

The Jews wanted a local liberator, a true King, and were stunned by Jesus’ plan to propagate his gospel to all nations (Matthew 28). The challenge for the disciples was when the Holy Spirit brought Hellenist disciples, Samaritan disciples, and eventually Gentile disciples of all kinds (Acts 10). The challenge was so widespread that the first church council was convened to deal with the issue of the Gentiles. From the beginning, the greatest theological issue of the Church has been the assimilation of “the others”! The council was called to liberate the gospel from the chains of ethnocentrism (Acts 15).

The church of Jerusalem was denied the blessing to start the missionary movement, for it had wrapped the gospel with the mantle of nationality and exclusivity. This privilege was given to the church at Antioch, for it was a diverse congregation. Ray Bakke points out the multiethnic leadership in Antioch: “Simon (Niger), an African; Lucius of Cyrene, also of African descent; Manaen, a childhood companion of Herod Antipas; Barnabas, a Hellenist from Cyprus raised in a priestly family.” As Pastor Rick Warren stated,

God is a global God; he's always cared about the entire world. From the beginning he's wanted to call forth, from every nation, the people he created. Much of the world already thinks globally. The largest media and business conglomerates are all multi-national. Our lives are increasingly intertwined with those in other nations as we share fashions, entertainment, music, sports, and even fast food. Probably most of the clothes you're wearing and much of what you ate today were produced in another country. We are more connected than we realize.

A Multiethnic Heaven

The Church is the movement that not only proclaims the coming of the kingdom, but makes itself a prototype of that new creation. John saw in his vision (Revelations 7) a great multitude of all peoples, nations, tribes, and tongues—the culmination of Mathew 28.

In an effort to define who God is, the apostle simply says, “God is love.” His Church can be no other but a community of love, so that the world can believe. It is to be an affirming community, where all feel safe, wanted, and cared for. Only love equips the Church to welcome, embrace, and celebrate God's diversity in humanity, and enable her to become a sneak preview of heaven, the crown of his glory, and the most spectacular expression of his loving-kindness.

Endnotes

1. 1987. Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press.
2. 2003. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pastor Silas A. Pinto is director of the Brazilian ministry of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Florida, USA. An author and church planter, he is also a member of the Lausanne Committee in Brazil.

ProChrist in Poland Sees Thousands Make First-time Commitments for Christ **By Michael Klitzke**

The response to the gospel outreach ProChrist, organised by an alliance of different local churches, exceeded all expectations. In eight evenings, from 6-13 April 2008, about twenty thousand of the eighty thousand visitors to **ProChrist in Poland** accepted the invitation to come to faith. That's one-quarter of the people! The main speaker, Rev. Ulrich Parzany, had never experienced a reaction of this magnitude before: “The invitation to Poland was a big gift to me. I sensed it as a deep sign of conciliation and connection.” Parzany spoke in German; however, his message was translated by the Polish Rev. Mirek Czyz.

For the first time, ProChrist was broadcast via satellite beyond Germany to 103 local transmissions.

The main event in Kattowice alone drew about 26,700 people. More than one-third of them responded to the call to start a new life as a Christian. On the last evening, Parzany spoke in the “Spodek” (the biggest sports arena in the country) and asked only those people to respond who wanted to make a faith decision for the first time. Nearly 1,500 of the five thousand present responded. “It seemed to be the end of the event, but the people didn't swarm to the exit, but to the cross,” said Raimund Utsch, ProChrist president. About two thousand visitors spoke with a counsellor as well.

Cooperation among Churches

Parzany especially emphasised the cooperation of churches in Kattowice. “ProChrist in Poland proved that people in big cities can only be reached when perhaps all churches work together. That is what I also want for all cities in Germany,” he shared. ProChrist in Poland was organised by an alliance of Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, and Baptist churches, together with the regional ecumenical board, as well as the Catholic Fokolar

movement and the Catholic initiative “Light and Life.” These groups are also responsible for a relationship-orientated rework of the evangelisation week. In Kattowice alone, fifty-two churches offer 8-week-long Alpha Courses.

Going to Poland

The idea of ProChrist in Poland was born after the last ProChrist event in 2006 in Munich. At that time, ProChrist was transmitted to twenty European countries. The regional ProChrist week-long events have special meaning for Parzany: “I can respond to local events, problems, and moods. I see people more directly than at big ProChrist events.” According to Michael Klitzke, director of ProChrist, “It is also about motivating and inspiring the local churches to appear in the public eye alongside their normal church activities.”

ProChrist 2009 in Chemnitz

The next ProChrist event in Germany will take place 29 March-5 April 2009 in Chemnitz; it will be transmitted to more than one thousand European locations in twenty different countries. Interested churches in Europe can inform and register online at: www.prochrist.org.

Michael Klitzke is managing director of ProChrist. He lives in Kassel, Germany.

Evangelization Efforts in Northeast Asia

By Justin Long

Northeast Asia is home to fifty-five people group clusters. Of these, just eighteen are larger than one million people in size. These clusters include:

People Clusters	Population (in millions)
Bouyei	3.0
Chinese	1,218.7
Hui	17.2
Hani	1.8
Japanese	127.6
Kazakh	1.8
Korean	72.3
Li	1.8
Miao	9.1
Mongolian	10.9
Mon-Khmer	1.1
Nosu	2.9
Tai	6.0
Tibetan	5.7
Uighur	10.7
Lolo	20.1
Yao-Mien	5.8
Zhuang	20.0

Largest Cluster Groups

The biggest cluster, by far, is the **Chinese cluster**. According to [Joshua Project](#) data, this cluster is made up of fifty-one distinct groups totaling some 1.2 billion people. Half of these groups are the Han Chinese peoples, broken out by specific languages (e.g., Cantonese, Chaozhou, Dan, Gan, Hainanese, and so on). These groups are considered mostly reached due to the massive numbers of Chinese believers. Their job is by no means complete; however, if you want to work with Chinese you probably won't be working in an exclusively pioneer setting. Most of the other Chinese groups, however, are very unreached. An illustrative example would be the Subei (Jiangbei), a socially outcast group who have migrated throughout the region. There are tens of thousands of Subei believers in Shanghai; however, this huge number amounts to less than two percent of the total population of the group. Many cross-cultural pioneer teams are needed both to aid in the completion of the evangelization of the Chinese groups, and to penetrate smaller, lesser-known, socially-isolated groups like the Subei.

With 130 million people, the **Japanese cluster** is the second largest in northeast Asia. It is a mostly homogenous cluster: 126 million people are found within the Japanese group itself. The other two large peoples are the 2.5 million Hisabetsu Burakumin and the one million Central Ryukyuan. There are fourteen other small groups, like the ten thousand Northern Amami-Oshima. These groups are small pockets within specific islands of Japan itself. The vast majority (122 million) of Japanese are found within Japan itself; however, some 4.2 million are found in other countries. The largest minorities are in the United States (1.2 million), South Korea (0.9 million) and Brazil (over 1.5 million). "To be Japanese is to be Buddhist," and Japan is anecdotally known to be a hard field. Nevertheless, there are large numbers of Japanese groups that are reached. Brazil's Japanese, for example, are sixty-three percent Christian (fifteen percent evangelical). Likewise, some 1.5% of the Japanese in the United States are Christian: a small percentage, but a large number of believers. While over one thousand cross-cultural teams are still needed to reach the Japanese, it is possible that many of these teams could find fruitful ministry by raising up Japanese believers outside Japan to go into Japan as home-culture evangelists.

The **Korean cluster** is the third largest cluster, with over seventy-six million people. The cluster is the most homogeneous in the world, having just one people group—the Koreans. This group is broadly reached. Koreans are found in forty-five countries. In virtually every country believers overall make up over twenty percent of the cluster (although evangelicals are often far smaller in number). The two largest groups are found in South Korea (46.7 million) and North Korea (23.5 million). The Koreans in South Korea are reached: twenty-two percent Christian, sixteen percent evangelical. The Koreans in North Korea are not reached: 1.4% Christian and 1.1% evangelical. Possibly one hundred teams are still needed for the Koreans; servants and facilitators of the Korean Church is preparing for the day when North Korea will open up. Some work can be done in North Korea; however, workers need to have great sensitivity in relationship with the Korean Church.

The twenty million people in the **Zhuang cluster** in northeast Asia can be found in thirteen people groups, the largest of which is the thirteen million Northern Zhuang. Other large groups include the 1.1 million Highland Nung, 1.8 million Tai Tho Tay, 1.7 million Yongnan Zhuang, and 1.4 million Zuojiang Zhuang. All are unreached ethnoreligionists. They typically live rural lives and lag behind China both economically and educationally. They are found primarily in Guangxi province, and very few are found outside China. While there is some outreach here, perhaps two hundred teams are needed to work among the Zhuang.

Smaller Clusters and Megagroups

The remaining groups are fairly small by comparison. We will look at the two medium-sized groups, the Lolo and the Uighurs, and then deal quickly with the smaller megagroups.

The **Lolo or Western China cluster** is made up of 20.9 million people in 152 groups, found primarily in the southern and mid-western provinces. The two largest are the 8.8 million Tujia and the 2.2 million Bai. There are twenty-two groups that have populations in excess of 100,000, but the remaining 128 groups are all under 100,000 in size. Virtually all of these groups are a mix of Buddhists and ethnoreligionists. The Bai have a large number of believers and are considered reached, as are a handful of the smaller groups (such as the Eastern

Lipo, which are majority Christian). However, for the most part these groups are distinct and unreached. Perhaps another two hundred cross-cultural teams are required to fully penetrate the huge diversity found in this cluster.

The fifteen million **Uighurs** (Uyghur) are found primarily in the far western Chinese province of Xinjiang, with minorities in Central Asia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India. Work in this region is very sensitive since the Uighurs are discontented under Chinese rule. The Uighurs are a majority Muslim group with very few believers among them. Another 150 cross-cultural teams are needed to dedicate themselves to blessing the Uighurs with the good news.

Now, briefly, the smaller groups:

The three million people in the **Bouyei cluster** are made up primarily of the 2.5 million Bouyei group, the 373,000 Giay group, and three smaller groups. They are found primarily on the Yunnan-Guizhou plateau of China, near the border with Vietnam, although a small number of minority groups are also found in Southeast Asia (primarily Laos and Vietnam), as well as in some European countries like France. The Bouyei are an unreached people group who are mainly ethnoreligionists. Perhaps thirty long-term cross-cultural teams are needed to reach them.

The seventeen million **Hui** are a Chinese cluster that is primarily Muslim. The cluster is made up of five groups: the Dungan, the Huizhou Han Chinese, the Hui, the Keji, and the Utsat. The Huizhou group is 4.5 million in population, the majority non-religious, and considered mostly reached (seven percent Christian). The 12.6 million Hui group is found mostly in China, although isolated migrant minorities can be found in Malaysia, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand. They are the third largest minority group in China and can be found in virtually every northwestern province. About 170 cross-cultural pioneer teams are needed to reach this cluster.

The 1.8 million **Hani cluster** is made up of thirty mostly small people groups. These are mostly Buddhist or ethnoreligionist groups. Only a few of these groups are larger than 100,000 in size: the Akha, the Baihong, the Biyo, the Haoni, the Kadu, the Kucong, the Lami, and the Woni. About half of the groups (mostly the larger ones) are reached, while many smaller groups (mostly Akha subgroups like the Botche, as well as a few larger groups like the Lami) are unreached. These groups are small, little known minorities in Yunnan province and across the border in Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam. About thirty cross-cultural teams could reach into these groups, working along this border.

The nearly two million **Kazakhs** in northeast Asia are part of the wider 12.6 million Kazakh cluster. This cluster is made up of four people groups: the Karakalpak, the Qinghai, the Kazakh, and the Teleut. The cluster is largely Muslim and nearly completely unreached. The Kazakhs form the largest group within the cluster, and are found in virtually every country from Ukraine east to China. Most Kazakhs are found in Kazakhstan (eight million) and just across the border in western China (1.6 million). Some 120 cross-cultural pioneer teams are needed to work among them, often in admittedly difficult and sensitive situations. Kazakhstan particularly has had a deteriorating attitude toward missionaries in recent months.

The 1.8 million in the **Li cluster** are found in six people groups that average several hundred thousand people each. All are ethnoreligionists and none are reached. These are peoples found on the southeastern island of Hainan. Some 180 cross-cultural teams are needed to reach out to them; however, it will need to be a highly coordinated effort due to the relatively small geographic space in which they live.

The nine million **Miao** in northeast Asia are part of the broader eleven million Miao cluster, found in fifty-three people groups. Most of the groups have populations ranging from 10,000 to 100,000. Virtually all of these groups are found in China although some of the very large groups (such as the 1.5 million Hmong Daw) are scattered across China, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. Minorities from the cluster can also be found in European

countries like France, as well as the United States. About one hundred cross-cultural teams will be required: more than the typical one team per 100,000 people because of the huge diversity of groups.

The **Mongolian cluster** has eleven million people, mostly found in the two large Mongol groups: the 1.8 million Khalka and the seven million Peripheral Mongolians. The Mongolians once ruled the geographically largest empire in the history of humanity (a third of which was Christian) and had one of the most important Christian queens in history. Their fascinating history has just begun to be told in greater detail due to a curtain of secrecy that descended particularly during the rule of Soviet Russia over Mongolia. Some one hundred cross-cultural teams are still needed to reach out to Mongolians.

The 1.1 million **Mon-Khmer** of northeast Asia are part of the broader Mon-Khmer cluster, with twenty-three million people. These 1.1 million are mostly minorities across the border in China. Perhaps one hundred teams are needed to focus on them.

The three million in the **Nosu cluster** are found in six groups and dozens of small sub-groups, the largest of which is the 1.2 million Shengzha. These groups are unreached ethnoreligionists found primarily in China. There are small numbers of believers among them, mainly the results of recent smaller movements to Christ. Some thirty cross-cultural teams are needed to reach out to them.

The eight million in the **Tai cluster** are divided into fifty-five people groups, many of which are very small in population. The largest of these groups include the 2.2 million Southern Dong, the 1.4 million Northern Dong, and the 1.2 million Lu. The groups are all a mix of ethnoreligionists and Buddhists. Only a few of the smaller groups are reached. The cluster is found primarily at the borders of Guizhou, Hunan, and Guangxi provinces in China. Some eighty teams are needed here; fortunately, several teams are active.

The seven million people in the **Tibetan cluster** are found in ninety-nine groups, most of which have very small populations. This cluster is frequently in the news (particularly recently). The two largest groups within this cluster are the 1.4 million Eastern Khampa and the one million Tibetans. There are a dozen groups that have more than 100,000 people—and the remaining eighty-plus groups have fewer than 100,000 members. Virtually all are Buddhists and highly unreached. The vast majority of the Tibetan cluster is found on the border of China, Bhutan, Nepal, and India. Over seventy teams are needed to reach out to this cluster, working in concert with local believers (particularly the large number of believers in Nepal), often in very politically sensitive situations.

Finally, the six million in the **Yao cluster** are likewise found in large numbers of small groups. This cluster features two fairly large groups (the 1.6 million Iu Mien and the 1.3 million Pingdi), half a dozen moderately-sized groups (particularly the 974,000 She), and the balance being groups under 100,000. All of these are unreached ethnoreligionists found primarily in southern China's Yunnan, Guangxi, and Guangdong provinces; interestingly enough, they are highly mobile. Minorities from the Yao cluster can be found in Canada, France, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, the United States, and Vietnam. Some sixty teams are needed to reach out to this cluster; much work is already being done.

Justin Long manages strategicnetwork.org and is senior editor for **Momentum**, a magazine devoted to unreached peoples. He can be reached at justinlong@gmail.com.

Mission Next: Relating to the Majority World Harvest Force **By Steve Moore**

*North American Mission Leaders Conference 2008
24-27 September 2008
Denver, Colorado USA*

Historically, CrossGlobal Link (formerly IFMA) and The Mission Exchange (formerly EFMA) have jointly sponsored a tri-annual conference for North American mission executives.

The primary administration of the conference alternates between CrossGlobal Link and The Mission Exchange. The 2008 event is being managed by The Mission Exchange. This year, the event has been renamed the North American Mission Leaders Conference.



The purpose of the 2008 North American Mission Leaders Conference is to challenge assumptions, broaden perspectives, and stimulate actionable dialogue among Great Commission leaders regarding how we relate to the Majority World harvest force.

There is a growing desire among our members for something other than traditional conferences populated by subject matter experts whose contribution is limited to formal presentations in the context of a plenary session. Strong interest has been expressed in more interactive learning opportunities that involve both peer-to-peer dialogue as well as participant-to-presenter Q&A. We are structuring our plenary sessions in such a way as to incorporate all of these elements. Three of the remaining plenary sessions will include moderated panel discussions combining short presentations by panel members with participant-driven Q & A dialogue.

Instead of traditional breakout sessions or workshops, we will hold a series of issue - based conversation groups that facilitate peer-to-peer learning opportunities. The conversation groups will be limited to a maximum of eight to twelve people to increase the opportunity for participation. Each group will have a facilitator whose role is to keep the dialogue moving and on topic but not to make a formal presentation. There will be multiple groups meeting on the same topic at the same time to compensate for the small number of people (twelve maximum) per group. The Evangelical Missiological Society will conduct a series of workshops that run in parallel with the conversation groups.

Majority World leaders of mission networks contributing input are:

- K. Rajendran, **India Mission Association**
- Timothy Olonade, **Nigerian Evangelical Mission Association**
- Bob Lopez, **Philippine Mission Association**
- David Ruiz, **WEA Mission Commission** and formerly with **COMIBAM**.

In addition, we plan to bring the ideas and input of thirty to fifty Majority World leaders from both grassroots and national movements representing both church and mission structures by way of video interviews.

Both CrossGlobal Link and The Mission Exchange have opened the doors of membership to local churches. We recognize that while local churches have always been primary stakeholders in the Great Commission, globalization has allowed church leaders to pursue a wider range of decentralized initiatives that at times circumvent traditional mission structures. It is essential we include local church leaders in this wider conversation.

To attend the conference, register online by clicking on the conference link at either www.TheMissionExchange.org or www.CrossGlobalLink.org. The secure online registration will accept major credit cards as well as provide a link to the hotel where you can book your room. If you don't want to register online, look for the PDF file registration form download on the conference site where you can print the

form and fax it to: 1-770-457-0037 or mail it to: The Mission Exchange, 4201 N Peachtree Rd, Suite 300, Atlanta, Georgia 30341 USA.

For questions about registration or the event in general call 1-770-457-6677.

Steve Moore is president/CEO of **The Mission Exchange**. His personal life mission is to inspire and equip others to live a focused life, finish well, and join with God in blessing the nations.

Book Review: Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement **By Grant McClung**

Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori. University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94704-1012, 2007, 261 pages with accompanying DVD, 24.95 USD(paperback).

Are you ready for a “mental image test” using word association? Here is the word: “Pentecostals.” If your first image was that of a lively worship encounter including throngs (or a solo seeker) with hands upraised in ecstatic, other-worldly abandonment, you have joined most media depictions (both secular and religious). This scholarly but easy-to-read global study of Pentecostal churches and their social engagement may reverse—or at least balance out—that predisposed opinion and mental image.

When one first glances at the cover photo (a picture of Pentecostals with hands upraised) of Donald Miller’s and Tetsunao Yamamori’s important book, one may think, “Okay, another book on global Pentecostalism. What else is new?” “Global” and “Pentecostalism” have become basically synonymous and there is no shortage of fine treatments of this worldwide spiritual phenomenon.

What is new and groundbreaking about Miller and Yamamori’s new study is the balance provided by their subtitle: *The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. It captures with accuracy the growing influence of transformational Pentecostalism on the international social and political scene. The journey that follows indicates, much to the surprise of many, that Pentecostals are just as easily depicted with the mental images of hands *outstretched, extended outward in positive social activism and change*.

It was a journey full of surprises for Miller (professor of religion and executive director of the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California) and Yamamori (president emeritus of **Food for the Hungry International** and senior fellow at Miller’s USC center), who entered the research with the stated intention: “... a phenomenological approach to the study of religious movements.”

The idea for their research was born during their participation in a Southern World consultation when they asked one another, “Why not study growing churches in the Developing World that are involved in significant social ministry?” To their own surprise, after sending inquiry letters (which asked for nominations of churches with stated criteria) to over four hundred mission experts, denominational leaders and other informed consultants, “nearly eighty-five percent of the churches that were nominated were Pentecostal or charismatic.”

After several hundred interviews from leaders in twenty countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, Miller and Yamamori present a significant gift for the classroom, the researcher and those wishing to understand and connect with the social dynamism of the Pentecostal/charismatic movement. Their extensive notes, index, and instructional DVD are additional benefits.

These social researchers, with affinity to the Great Commission community, have gone beyond the usual “Pentecostalism is growing,” to document the greater contribution for our common global future in worldwide Christianity: How will the dramatic and pervasive international growth of “Progressive Pentecostals” (a term introduced by the authors) draw a new face of Christian social engagement and positive transformation?

Dr. Grant McClung is an advisor to the Missions Commission of the **Pentecostal World Fellowship** and is a member of the International Executive Council for the **Church of God** (Cleveland, Tennessee, USA).

URBAN COMMUNITIES

Scavengers No More: Looking at Homelessness in Metro Manila

By Corrie De Boer

“Ma’am, there is a 2-month-old infant born in a pushcart to a scavenger family,” Lisa, a gaunt-looking young woman, reported to me after dinner one night in January. She, her husband Freddy, and daughter Claire have lived in the streets of Metro Manila for eleven years. A few nights earlier, after listening to tale after tale of police harassment and constant illness, I invited Lisa and Freddy to live temporarily at my home.

“Where is this family with the infant living?” I asked Lisa. She explained, “Under a street shed a block away if it rains, and under the trees three blocks away during the day. At night, they sleep in the pavement in front of a bank.”

“Let’s go find them,” I insisted. As we approached the shed, a block away from my home, I noticed the tiny baby nestled in a cotton blanket lying silently at the edge of a pushcart, piled high with empty plastic bottles, scrap-tin cans, and old lumber. I saw the mother seated next to her three little children and tending a fire built from a square gallon can and fed by sticks of wood from a broken chair. The father was banging on tin cans, flattening them out, and preparing them for sale to a junk shop. Their 3-year-old boy was tied by the ankle to the pushcart to keep him from running out into traffic.

The baby was so frail and fragile I could literally hold her in the palm of my hand. This family now had my full attention, and I was drawn in to learn more. I found myself becoming personally involved in the lives of these two families, one of which lived adjacent to my own home. I felt the tug of something more than curiosity pressing me to find out more about a couple who, with their eight children, has lived on the streets for over twenty years.

Anna’s Story

The story starts with Anna, the 34-year-old mother, when she was eleven years old and living in Bacolod, an island city far south of Manila. She relates her experience as follows:

One day my mother explained to me that we were very poor. There was a man she knew who was going by ship to Manila. He would take me to the city to a family who would take care of me, provide schooling and a job for me—basically give me a new life. I was excited, took my few belongings, and boarded the ship, expecting a great adventure. For the first time I would have a chance to study and work at the same time.

When we arrived in Manila the man walked off the ship and told me to stay on the dock until he returned. I saw the man take my plastic bag with all of my possessions and walk away. Never suspecting evil, and with a heart full of hope, I watched people come and go until it started to get dark and a guard ordered me to leave the dock. My high expectations turned to lonely fear as hunger took over and the night closed in. I never saw the man again.

With nothing in my hand and no destination in mind, begging became my only means of survival. Hours of terror turned into days of panic, then apathy. I did not know anyone in the city. I did not know where to go. I was totally abandoned. I was afraid. At night, the pavement was my bed.

Amazed by Anna’s resiliency, I asked her how she managed to survive. She replied,

I begged. There was an old lady who took pity on me and fed me for a few months. Later on I met Tony, an orphaned 15-year-old boy who had ran away from home because of an altercation with his brother. He saw my plight, befriended me, and showed me how to live on the streets. Together, we faced an unknown future.

I didn't learn everything about Anna and Tony's life on that first day, or the second. I picked up little pieces here and there as I visited with them on the streets during my daily walks. As details of their story emerged, I learned that for twenty years "home" was a six foot by four foot pushcart occupying different street locations in Metro Manila. The pushcart doubled as the store where they did business and the sleeping quarters.

A New Revelation

As I understood more of their story, many thoughts ran through my mind. My ministry is with the poor, but I have never become that involved directly with a destitute street family. My husband and I helped establish more than five hundred preschools in the Manila slums, created jobs through an organic farm, and set up an employment agency hiring hundreds of people. But how were we to really help this one needy family who has survived on the street for two decades? And why had no church, mission agency, or social service agency ever helped them? I continued to grapple for an answer as I walked the streets.

All of a sudden, while walking home one day, Isaiah 58:6-7 kept ringing in my ears. Verses I had memorized years ago flashed back:

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

I remember studying this passage that revealed God indicting his people for their false religiosity. They prayed, read scriptures, sang hymns, and attended sacred rituals; however, they neglected to do justice, to help the needy. They equated worship with religious activities instead of the doing of justice. At that moment, I knew I had to act justly in relation to this family.

I rang up some mission agencies. None had any facilities for street families, only children. Deep inside, I knew I had to assist this family. But how? I counseled myself, "You have to set some boundaries." My schedule was already extremely full: teaching in a seminary, networking globally, administrating a city network, and overseeing an employment agency, an organic farm, and a grassroots ministry.

One evening, when the rain was coming down especially heavy, I thought again of Michelle, the tiny 2-month-old infant. The children were caught in the rain, getting wet and possibly ill. Could they not be sheltered in our living room? I stepped out into the rain, looking for them at their usual location, and found them. They accepted my invitation to shelter with us for the night.

For my husband and I, this was the beginning of a life-changing relationship, not only with Lisa and Freddy who were already with us, but with Anna and Tony. For three weeks, these two families shared our home and table as we considered more permanent living situations for them. Our living room became their bedroom. Our garage became a safe place to park their pushcarts filled with recyclable items. Around our dining table we shared common meals day by day.

The Challenge of Finding a Job

During this 3-week period, Stewart and I tried employing Tony and Freddy on our mission farm. But friction arose when Tony and Freddy's children clashed with the farmers' children. It soon became obvious that the farm families were not prepared to live together with the street families.

Since both families have experience in construction and painting, we found them work fixing up a rental home nearby our home. Once again there were personality clashes between the two families.

Freddy and Lisa decided to return to their recycling business. We assisted them in the purchase of a pedi-bike with a sidecar, making it easier for them to haul and sell their junk. The additional income gave them the capital to find a small room in which to live. After completing the house renovation project, Tony went back to working on our farm, taking care of a newly-constructed fishpond.

The Challenge of Total Healing

Tony, with his large family, faces many predicaments not of his own choosing. Among them are serious and long-standing issues—emotional, psychological, and physical—that require healing. His children have been malnourished for years and carry the signs of chronic hygienic neglect. As their story unfolds still further, their lives take on tragic proportions. He recounts with great sadness the loss of several children under unimaginable living conditions:

Our 6-year old son, Kalbo, was placed in the care and keeping of our older 11-year-old boy. Walking through the marketplace, they were separated and we have never seen Kalbo again. We have been searching for him in government shelters, but he is nowhere to be found. Our 2-year-old daughter took on a fever and was admitted to the hospital. When it was time for her release, we lacked the funds. My wife and I went out to find the money, but when we returned a few days later, our daughter was gone. We never saw our daughter again.

One day, we were desperate. We had no food and our little children were starving. A couple approached us and offered us 1,000 pesos (20 USD) in exchange for our other daughter. We turned her over to this couple, hoping that she would have a better future with them. So now we only have five kids. I feel very sad for losing my three children.

The Challenge of Locating Housing

We prayed and searched for affordable housing for Tony's family. One day we met a civil engineer who was building transitional housing for the poor. Unfortunately, the units had already been allocated. So Melchor, our farm manager, offered to rent out his family's unused house. This worked out well for the family. They are now comfortably settled in a 2-room house across from a small local church in Binangonan, a suburb of Metro Manila.

The Challenge of Educating the Family

Romel, the 16-year-old, is illiterate and has expressed a desire to learn. After some research, I found an agency willing to help him. After one week in the 10-month program, he complained of feeling bored to death, "like a prison." Unable to remain, Romel took off for the streets. When we caught up with him again, he asked that we place him in a "regular" (public) school like his younger siblings. We were able to place him in a special education program but, again, after only a few days in school, he returned to the streets.

The smaller children are a different story. Each has been successfully enrolled in school, but only after solving the problem of birth certificates. You see, children born in pushcarts don't possess formal birth certificates. Only after a local pastor agreed to baptize each of the children, and issue a baptismal certificate, were they accepted into school.

Onel, age 11, should be in the fifth grade; however, due to malnourishment and lack of any formal education, he has been enrolled in first grade. He is exuberant to carry books and notebooks and to sport a brand-new uniform. Kikay is four years old and enrolled in preschool. You should see her strutting around in her uniform and announcing how she is going to school. Contrast this with so many children from middle-class families who only groan and complain when school doors open. For Tony's children, it is a privilege they could not have imagined.

Of course, Tony and Anna can't read or write either. Kikay's teacher has agreed to tutor Anna, and another farmer is mentoring Tony in various parenting and home management skills.

The Challenge of Discipling the Family

How do you disciple a family who has led an itinerant life on the streets for twenty years? They need to learn how to set up a safe and secure home, to provide guidance to children who have been accustomed to running unsupervised in the streets, to manage a week's worth of money (instead of spending it all in one day), to live in a settled residence, and to integrate their lives into a local group of believers.

While the two families were staying at my home, I would tell them stories about Jesus and his love for them. One day, Tony and Anna prayed to receive Jesus into their lives. We arranged for Romel to attend an evangelistic youth camp and he became a believer. However, being illiterate, they could not read the scriptures for themselves. And they were too embarrassed to visit a local church without me accompanying them. So I introduced them to another farmer, Melchor, who is teaching Tony how to read and to follow the way of Jesus.

Reflections

My encounter with Anna and her family has served to slow down my frenetic lifestyle. Now, whenever I visit them, the children rush up to me to be picked up and hugged. I was not gifted with my own biological children; however, I am now enjoying the soft presence of a tiny infant, the warm hugs of a 4-year old girl, and the loving kisses of a 3-year-old boy. The kids are teaching me to play and laugh again. They provide a blessed reprieve from my academic and social action responsibilities.

As I have entered the world of this family who, for twenty years, struggled to survive on the pavement of Metro Manila, I wonder how God must be feeling toward the collective failure of the Church, the state, and the business sector to care for Tony, his family, and the hundreds of thousands like them who continue to eek out a miserable daily existence.

An important theme in scripture is the value God places on families. The *Word in Life Study Bible* explains that, "The family is the primary institution established by God (Genesis 2:23). Before there were any nations, cities, or other human communities, there was a family. Logically and chronologically, family comes first." God's intention is that each child be nurtured within the love and care of a family. However, in the case of Anna, the acceptance, provision, self-confidence, and health that God intended the family to provide came to an abrupt end when she was abandoned at the age of eleven. Now, when God looks at Anna and Tony's family, he sees disintegration, deprivation, disempowerment, and disease.

Ironically, a few blocks away from this street family's former hideaway is a major evangelical seminary, four huge churches, several upscale restaurants, hundreds of business establishments, and hundreds of largely upper-middle class families. A challenge I face is how to mobilize their support on behalf of the five hundred street families and individuals whose lives are rooted in our neighborhood.

A few weeks ago I asked Anna what had changed in her life since we had become friends. After a moment's reflection, she replied,

My family and I are closer to Jesus and to each other. We love attending the church across from our new home. The pastor and his wife care for us. She is teaching me and my children how to read and write. I am so happy here. We have a roof over our head. At last my children are going to school. This has been my long-time prayer. Melchor and Enalyn (our farm managers with thirteen children) are kind and helpful to us. They take time to listen to our stories, and bring us to the market and hospital. We feel we belong to a big family. They are like our parents to us and you and Sir Stewart are our grandparents. Above all, we are scavengers no more!

Please continue to pray for Tony and his family. Pray for God's provision for a more permanent housing for them and a more stable source of income. Pray for our plan in Mission Ministries Philippines to establish an

integrated, organic, and sustainable farm institute enabling homeless families like Tony's to learn skills in urban agriculture and alternative farm systems like hydroponics. Pray for wisdom for me and our staff as we seek God's direction in setting up an ecologically-sound and sustainable Christian community where the rich and the poor can dwell together in unity manifesting the presence of the Kingdom of God.

Corrie De Boer is chair of the Board of Mission Ministries Philippines, a Filipino agency ministering among the poorest of the poor in Metro Manila. She teaches at Bakke Graduate University and Asian Theological Seminary.

RESEARCH

[The Ethnicity of English Churchgoers](#)

By Peter Brierley

It is common knowledge that the black churches in the United Kingdom are exploding; this article looks at how the ethnic churches collectively have grown over the last few years.

An appropriate description has proved difficult to find; strictly speaking, “ethnic churches” should be “ethnic minority churches”; however, this has a negative connotation, so the word “minority” is usually omitted. In fact, white people are also part of the ethnic mix in the UK. Notwithstanding though, the phrase “ethnic churches” has come to describe the non-white churches, whether these are from Asia, India, Africa, the Caribbean, South America, or elsewhere. Some, like the Poles and Croatians, for example, are ethnically white, so that “ethnic churches” is more correctly a descriptive of the non-natural British or Irish churches, the large majority of which is concentrated in England as far as the UK is concerned, and in London as far as England is concerned.

Not all those who attend the ethnic churches are immigrants, although part of the explosive attendance figures has come from the huge surge in immigrants into the UK over the past decade, which partly explains why so many ethnic churches are in London, the hub of arrivals from overseas. The black people (which includes those from Africa, the Caribbean, and mixed) have been present in substantial numbers for the last fifty years, and started their own churches when they failed to receive a warm or enthusiastic welcome from some of the white churches. In addition, there was the pull of being able to worship in ways appropriate to their culture, with other members of their own culture and in the language of their own culture. Now, black church attendance is swelling not only through further immigration, but naturally through the inclusion of British-born children and grandchildren.

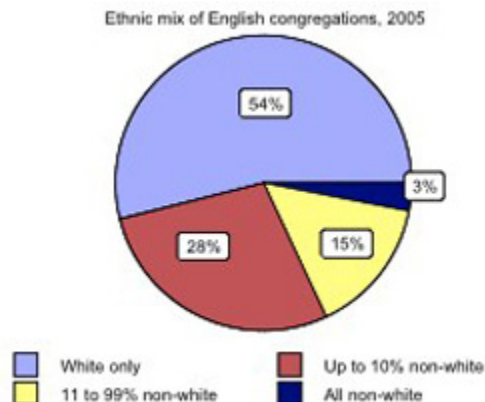
Today, one person in six (seventeen percent) who goes to church in England is non-white. This is up from twelve percent in 1998. Black church people make up ten percent of this and other ethnic groups the remaining seven percent. This also compares with twelve percent of the general population who are in these ethnic groups, which means that *pro rata* more ethnic churchgoers go to church than white people—nine percent compared with six percent, half as much again, giving an average overall percentage of 6.3%.

Congregational Ethnic Mix

The initial lack of enthusiasm of white people toward blacks in their churches has largely disappeared, so that while the talk may be about ethnic churches, the actual ethnic churches account for less than half of all ethnic churchgoers. The actual numbers in 2005 were:

Total attendance at ethnic churches	220,000
Non-white churchgoers at other churches	310,000
White churchgoers	2,640,000
TOTAL churchgoers	3,170,000

This means that there are many churches where the ethnicity of the congregation is mixed. The pie-chart illustrates the proportions.



The large majority of “white only” congregations are in the rural areas of typical English villages, where few non-white people live. The three percent which are totally non-white include Chinese and Korean churches, for example, which are wholly attended by those from these countries. However, increasingly in recent years, growth has come from other ethnic groups also, such as the increasing number of Indian Tamil churches, or the white European churches such as the Portuguese, Spanish, Polish, Hungarian, Ukrainian, German, Estonian, Lithuanian, Swedish, Swiss, and other nationalities, many of which have started because of the increasing number of immigrants from such countries.

If you were a Croatian having to struggle with speaking English from Monday to Saturday, you would welcome going to a Croatian-speaking church on Sunday, not only to speak your own language, but to meet with your own countrymen and women. In fact, seven Croatian churches have started in the last five years. Part of the ethnic church growth therefore has come from a natural expression of cultural identity among our immigrants, an opportunity for outreach among their own countrymen and women in perhaps more favourable circumstances than in their own countries.

Where Are These Churches Located?

Of the half million ethnic churchgoers, sixty-eight percent are located in London, which, while a high percentage, is much lower than it was. In 1998, eighty-six percent of the 440,000 ethnic churchgoers were in London. This illustrates the fact that ethnic churchgoers, and indeed the ethnic mix of our population generally, has spread outside of London over the last few years. Most nationalities are still concentrated in urban areas although the Chinese are much more widely spread than others.

Below are the counties where the proportion of ethnic churchgoers is high:

Greater London	31%
Bedfordshire, where the Italians are especially strong	31%
the West Midlands around Birmingham	24%
Buckinghamshire	18%
Nottinghamshire	18%
Leicestershire	17%
East Sussex	15%
Greater Manchester	15%

The Actual Ethnic Mix

The 2005 English Church Census used the same groups as the government used in the 1991 Population Census to allow for comparisons with the figures obtained in 1998. This meant a breakdown of the ethnic churchgoing figures as shown in the table below.

Church attendance by ethnicity, 1998 and 2005

Ethnic group	1998	Change	2005	Percentage of total		National percentage	
				1998 %	2005 %	1998 %	2005 %
White	3,274,600	-19%	2,640,600	88.1	83.4	93.8	88.3
Black	268,000	+23%	331,400	7.2	10.4	1.9	3.8
Indian	54,300	+9%	59,400	1.5	1.9	3.0	6.0
Chinese	54,700	+3%	56,400	1.5	1.8	0.3	0.8
Other Asian	36,300	+24%	45,000	1.0	1.4	0.4	1.3
Other Non-white	26,200	+27%	33,400	0.7	1.1	0.6	1.0
Total	3,714,700	-15%	3,166,200	100.0	100.0	47 mil.	50 mil.
Total Non-white	440,100	+19%	525,600	11.9	16.6	6.2	11.7

In this table, “Black” includes African and Caribbean and mixed, “Indian” includes those from Pakistan and Bangladesh, “Chinese” includes Japanese and Korean, “Other Asian” includes Filipinos and Singaporeans, and “Other Non-white” includes those from South American countries.

The comparison with the national percentages shows that the proportion of Indian churchgoers is much less than the numbers in the country, reflecting the fact that many who come from Pakistan and Bangladesh will be Muslims, not Christians.

Black Churchgoers

One very striking statistic in the table is the percentage of black churchgoers (10.4% of all churchgoers); however, black people are only 3.8% of the population. That means that seventeen percent of black people attend church, three times the percentage of white people.

The largest church in the UK is the Nigerian-based Kingsway International Christian Centre at Hackney, led by Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo, with some twelve thousand people attending every Sunday. Three other especially large black congregations in London in 2005 were Ruach Ministries in Brixton (four thousand attendees), House of Praise in Woolwich (2,500 attendees), and Jesus House for All Nations in Brent (2,200 attendees). The wife of the Pastor Agu Irukwu of Jesus House died in May 2007. She was only in her early forties. Twelve thousand people came to her memorial service—such is the strength of the black Christian community.

It may also be seen in the table that while all the ethnic churches have seen growth, the black churches has been particularly strong, even if in percentage terms it has been surpassed by the Other Asians and Other Non-whites. That growth has been seen especially in Inner London where sixty-five percent of all Pentecostal churches (which include the black charismatic churches) are located. Such is their strength that over half (fifty-three percent) of all Pentecostal churchgoers attend a London church! It is therefore especially appropriate that Easter People’s move to become “Pentecost” should be launched in London on Pentecost Sunday 2008.

Why Do the Black Churches Grow?

Many have asked the reasons for this growth. Jonathan Oloyede, one of the senior pastors of Glory House, a

multi-cultural church in East London, gave these reasons why Black Majority Churches (BMCs) grow in an article in the October 2005 issue of *Christianity*:

- The church is the hub for community life.
- Many black churches have a cosmopolitan outlook, not a parish mentality.
- Black communities are very communal with a culture of visiting, socialising, and regular personal interaction.
- Black churches are very evangelistic and outreach driven.
- The principle of tithe-giving helps financial buoyancy and independence.
- Bible-based sermons are relevant to the congregation.
- Services are vibrant, musical, and worshipful.
- Many black believers testify to experiencing healings and miracles.
- Many BMCs have a home cell network, which facilitates strong pastoral care.
- Sunday schools are usually a norm and part of weekly worship.
- The dynamics of many BMCs facilitate lay leaders' training.
- Various departments and programmes allow large volunteer participation.
- Prayer is the key focus in many BMCs.
- BMCs lay good emphasis on business and career prospects.
- BMCs have a culture of great respect and reverence for the clergy.
- Many BMCs have youth clubs/activities that retain young people within the church community.

Perhaps if these factors were part of the essence of white churches, similar growth would be experienced.

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LAUSANNE REPORTS

Lausanne Regional Gathering in Abuja, Nigeria: The African Church Prepares for 2010

“From the commencement of this consultation, it seems to me that God has a message for the churches and the indigenous missions groups in Africa.” – Rev. Dr. Panya Baba

Twenty-five people from Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia met in Abuja, Nigeria, for three days of intensive discussion and planning 21-25 April 2008. Included was Dr. Panya Baba, who has been part of the

Lausanne Movement since its inception in 1974. The aim of the gathering was to identify the most critical issues facing the African Church over the next five years, and to explore ways of making **Cape Town 2010: The Third Lausanne Congress** as effective across the continent of Africa as possible. The meeting was chaired by Gideon Para-Mallam, Lausanne International Deputy Director for English, Spanish, and Portuguese Africa, who is also on staff with the **International Fellowship of Evangelical Students**.

Para-Mallam opened the meetings by delivering greetings from Doug Birdsall (Lausanne Executive Chair), Lindsay Brown (Lausanne International Director), and the Anglican Primate of the Church of Nigeria, the Rt. Rev. Peter Akinola, who was represented at the meeting by Ven Tunde Papoola.

The gathering expressed enthusiastic appreciation for the choice of Africa as host continent for the 2010 Congress and made an appeal: "Please do not come to the African continent and leave us as you met us, without taking a look at the issues which are pertinent to the Church on the continent."

While the African Church has both weaknesses and strengths, the leaders acknowledged that the Lord has infused the Church with passion and vibrant worship. The leaders felt this passion and vibrancy could be a gift to the global Church at the Congress. "We need to continue working toward a healthy Church on the continent, as it is bound to have an impact on the culture, in politics, and in every sphere of national life," said Para-Mallam.

In looking toward the Congress, participants saw benefits to creating greater awareness of the Lausanne Movement. They sensed that as word spread, there would be a sense of delight in Africa being the host continent and a genuine desire to pray for the Lord to use the Congress as a means of blessing both Africa and the world.

The goals for the Abuja meeting were:

- to identify the key theological and missiological issues confronting the African Church today;
- to identify critical issues confronting Africa as a continent, and to consider their impact on the Church: its growth, its training in discipleship, its contribution in social concerns, etc; and
- to consider how these relate to our commitment in fulfilling the Great Commission on the African continent and beyond.

Participants included missiologists, theologians, church workers, evangelists, and Christians in the marketplace. These groups met separately then came together to pool their wisdom, and to hear what other contributors who were not able to come had written. The seven top needs the group identified included:

- **good governance**, including leadership, a spirit of servanthood, and role-modeling (mentoring);
- **poverty and wealth**, including good management of resources to stop resource exploitation in Africa's resource-rich land;
- **more education to replace illiteracy**, including the issue of educational instability;
- **addressing ethnicity and tribalism**, including violence and disregard of sanctity of life;
- **the rapid spread of diseases**, including HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and tuberculosis;
- **more intentional disciple-making**; and
- **the spread of Islam**, including the need for creative ways to engage Muslims.

Other important issues included:

- issues surrounding the sanctity of life,
- gender questions, and
- a concern for youth.

Participants were aware of the fact that the university is the most influential institution on the continent (in human terms) and that its influence lay behind all public policy. More Christian influence in the university at senior administrative and faculty level could have profound implications in the long term for governance and public life in each nation. Participants concluded that if they are serious about world evangelisation, they dare not ignore the university. Para-Mallam added: “At the moment, it is working largely against us. Let's engage. Lausanne really needs to take the university and ministry to young people seriously.”

Contribution of the Church in Africa to the 2010 Congress

Participants also listed the contributions the African Church can make to the Lausanne Congress. These consist of:

- **Praise.** Songs should be biblical and express good theology and missiology. It was hoped to see a characteristically joyful African nuance in the praise, perhaps with African choirs.
- **Prayer sessions.** The African Church is a praying Church, and wants to help other churches be such.
- **Church growth.** The African Church can bring stories of phenomenal growth, like those found in Anglican and Pentecostal denominations. These could present a model to the global Church.
- **Mission mobilisation.** The emerging indigenous mission movement could bring deep inspiration.
- **Islam.** The Church in Africa could help other churches engage with Islam.

Several additional points were made:

- Poverty would be no barrier to the African Church's role in fulfilling the Great Commission.
- The African Church would cover the costs of many Congress participants. Stronger churches would be approached to provide in scholarships for participants from poorer countries.
- Migration would not be seen as negative, but as a creative mission opportunity. Several of the largest churches in Europe are African churches.

Participants held one prayer goal in common: through hosting the Congress, the Church in Africa will become more serious in her commitment to the Great Commission.

Similar regional consultations are being held in each of the Lausanne Movement's twelve regions.

(This article was written and compiled by: Francis Osteen, Rebecca Samuel Dali, and Julia Cameron.)

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