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A FREE monthly, online magazine that provides you with missions and evangelism news, information and analysis.

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WORLD NEWS BRIEFS

CANADA

The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) expanded its work of combating racism and its effects within the church recently by hiring Steve Kabetu to serve as Race Relations coordinator in Canada. Born in Kenya, Kabetu moved to Canada twenty years ago. He will be based in the CRC Burlington, Ontario office. Kabetu has experience in developing an anti-racism curriculum for Canadian congregations called "Widening the Circle." Kabetu hopes to strengthen churches "based on a biblical vision that challenges us to become a more intentionally diverse church, as a multi-racial and multi-ethnic yet unified family of God." (Christian Reformed Church)

FRANCE

While rhetoric from French officials toward immigrants of African descent continued, Mennonites in the northeastern part of the country welcomed delegations from Botswana, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Canada and the United States. It was the first time since the restructuring of the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM) that the organization's International Central Council met. French Mennonite Mission Committee president Jean-Paul Pelsy and the twenty-five participants used the time to fellowship, share their vision of mission and build relationships with ten area Mennonite churches. (Mennonite Mission Network)

GERMANY

The younger generation of Christians in Germany are showing an unabated interest in evangelism and missions. More than six thousand participants between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five attended a youth conference for world missions, held 8 January in Stuttgart. More than one hundred theologians, teachers, engineers and health workers are about to be sent out as missionaries to various regions of the world. (Assist News Service)

INDIA

For the first time the Awadhi people of India, numbering over twenty million, will be able to read the Bible in their own heart language. The project, undertaken by translators for the World Bible Translation Center, took thirteen years. Over ten thousand copies of the new translation were distributed at one time with the hope that these initial volumes will be used to strengthen church leaders and lay Christians in this area. (Mission Network News)

INDONESIA

Tensions between fundamentalist Muslims and Western aid workers have increased in Aceh as the area recovers from the December 2004 tsunami. According to one report, Christian groups have been accused of proselytizing Muslims in Banda Aceh amid aid efforts. Despite the aid coming in from Christian organizations, some Islamic activists claim that workers are secretly attempting to convert those in the area to Christianity. Aceh is known as Indonesia's most conservatively devout Islamic province. (Assist News Service)

INDONESIA

One year after the 2004 tsunami hit Banda Aceh, the Banda Aceh Museum re-opened with the exhibit, "Art & Tsunami Recovery," which featured ten local Acehnese artists depicting the stories of tsunami survivors. The paintings depicted scenes of terror, trauma, hope and recovery. The exhibit and its artists were supported by Catholic Relief Services in an effort to restore the livelihoods of artists and bring healing to the area. (Assist News Service)

JORDAN

A group of twenty Arab and Israeli women recently met in Petra for the Musalaha Reconciliation Ministries' Women's Leadership Conference. The women represented many communities and congregations and a host of backgrounds, including some who were born and raised in Israel and others who were immigrants to the area. Some of the women from the Palestinian side had never met Messianic Israelis. The conference encouraged the women to listen to those of differing backgrounds and to be open to hearing stories unlike their own. (Assist News Service)

KENYA

The Church of God Chaplains Commission recently brought chaplaincy training to Kenya for the first time. Thirty-two pastors met at Discipleship College in Eldoret to learn from church leaders, Dr. Jake Popejoy and Dr. R. Williams. Eldoret is a rural community that has the distinction of producing more champion runners than any other town in the world. During the week-long training, participants learned skills on how to effectively evangelize those around them. (Church of God Chaplains Commission)

MEXICO

More than forty people recently attended a church planting retreat, a major step toward choosing the first church planters in the Evangelical Covenant Church in Mexico. Pastors and lay people came from eight Mexican states and met in Oaxtepec, one hour south of Mexico City. "The leaders are catching the vision that God could do great things in and through the planting of new churches," said missionary Kari Peterson. The retreat was one of three where participants discussed possible places to plant churches in Mexico. Planning is still in the early stages. (The Evangelical Covenant Church)

PERU

Evangelical Christians are called to actively participate in society, says Dennis Smith, president of the World Association for Christian Communication-Latin American Region (WACC-LA). Smith believes that evangelicals should integrate existing spaces in civil society with humility and decision and remember that they are not the only ones desiring to use political power for the common good. "As Evangelical Christians we must defend pluralism and cultural diversity, encourage citizen participation and lobby for the consolidation of a state of law," he said. Christians do this, Smith goes on to say, not to improve the power quota compared to other religious groups or to win members of churches, but because we are mandated by God. (Latin American and Caribbean New Agency)

ROMANIA

More than 345,000 people living in Constanta, the largest seaport on the Black Sea, can now hear Christian radio broadcasts in their native tongue. The new radio station is part of the Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVG), a nationwide network of eight Christian FM stations, and is a joint effort of HCJB World Radio, the Romanian Missionary Society and local believers. Broadcasts will reach not only the entire city population, but listeners within a thirty to forty mile radius as well. (HCJB World Radio)

SOUTH AFRICA REGION

Rev. D.J. Galela has been named the new regional superintendent for the Wesleyan Church of the South African Region, which includes Swaziland, South Africa and Zimbabwe. He was educated at the Evangelical Wesleyan Bible College in Swaziland and has served as one of the Wesleyan Church's district superintendents. Galela will be replacing the Rev. Robert Nhlengethawa, who served in the regional superintendent position for twelve years. (Wesleyan Church)

UNITED STATES

Seventy-five years ago, Clarence Jones went against the belief of many Christians who thought radio was the invention of the devil and founded HCJB World Radio. Decades later, HCJB has planted over 250 radio

stations in every continent of the world except Antarctica. According to president David Johnson, HCJB has five regional offices in every region of the world and is committed to not only producing programs but to helping local believers use the programming as a tool for ministry. (Mission Network News)

WORLD EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS REPORTS

February 2006

Media and Evangelism in Asia: A Vignette

By Wing Tai Leung

A **Asian Christians creatively make use of folk media as well as modern communication technology for evangelization purposes.** Evangelism is more than transmission of information, it is also relationship building, giving voice for the voiceless and enabling people to search for their identities.

Folk Media Evangelism

In Thailand, Chiang Mai University students create Thai Dance Presentations of the Prodigal Daughter (adapted from the biblical prodigal son parable of Jesus). It is an effective means to communicate with students who were brought up in the traditional Thai culture and art. Thai dances bring out the symbolic, dramatic and thematic impacts that verbal preaching can not. There is a sense of presence in live musical, dance and drama that electronic media can not achieve.

In Indonesia, Christian artists present shadow plays using cow skin to make vivid characters to communicate the gospel. They also paint tapestries to tell biblical stories and themes in non-linear forms. Their ways of communication are similar to the Australian aboriginal arts, which unfold stories as journeys with multiple time and space on the same canvas. A shadow play can be featured independently or integrated with preaching. This type of folk media is very portable and can be featured in the market, home or other places. Folk media is very effective with rural Asians or those who have strong cultural ties.

In Hong Kong, Christian churches premier traditional Cantonese operas for gospel outreach. They modify traditional lyrics and story lines for evangelistic purposes. Many older adults respond quite positively to this kind of appeal. Cantonese opera is a branch of Chinese opera that was developed in Southern China. The music, lyrics, acting and narrative forms are unique. Adapting these operas for Christian evangelism demands talent and a major group effort.

Contemporary Communication Technologies Evangelism

In Indian cities, Christians produce films targeted for young urban professionals. These films explore life issues, work ethics, goal-setting and spiritual journeys. Most films are followed with group discussions to enable mutual communication.

In Hong Kong, a Christian group called Media Evangelism recently made use of an opportune time for outreach. During the post-SARS period, they featured an evangelistic film on SARS heroes, mostly Christian medical professionals who sacrificed their lives for their patients. They also make evangelistic films on people who are recovering from drug addiction and gambling. The response to these films has been very encouraging in Hong Kong and among ethnic Chinese groups in the diaspora. However, the formula for these films is quite predictable, following a move from human predicament to God's redemption and life changes.

Television as a mass medium is quite effective in promoting social profiles for Christian life stories. A Christian group called Shower of Blessings documents life stories of people who face crises and are converted to Christianity. It is an improvement from talk shows and features the process of conversion in docu-drama. These television series are shown in Asia and North American Chinese communities.

Breakthrough, a Christian group targeting young people, is launching radio, television, film, book, magazine and web ministries. Their television series, Legend of Survival, features Israel's resilience among

adversities and its search for identity. The gospel has a national and citywide impact beyond personal appeals. Another television series, *Generation 21*, features the passions and aspirations of youths in Asian cities. The gospel offers values to youths who are undergoing cultural transitions in post-colonial Asian cities. Film and video festivals are also organized. One recent theme was "City and Me," which included university and secondary students who shared their love for the city, for their community and for their family. It is more effective to stimulate Christian values among youths than to talk to them or talk at them. In their search for their identities, issues of belonging, love of neighbor and life goals were explored.

In Hong Kong Christian publications, most of the titles are targeted to Christian education. However, Breakthrough launched three magazines consecutively: Breakthrough Magazine and Breakthrough Junior Magazine (both suspended now) and U+ Magazine, targeted to non-Christian youth and focused on life issues and Christian values for social concern. Magazines are different from books because they capture the agenda of the day. Stories are more current and feature multiple perspectives.

Breakthrough also publishes more than thirty new book titles each year, many of which have won Christian and non-Christian publication awards. Reaching the market place of ideas and the secular playing field for Christ is the goal. In Asia, Christian books are distributed through churches and Christian bookstores. However, Breakthrough books for youths are distributed beyond the Christian channels into main distribution channels such as bookstores, supermarkets and convenience stores. Breakthrough is also one of only three Hong Kong book publishers invited to participate in Beijing book exhibits each year.

Tien Dao Communication, another Christian media group, uses the newspaper to feature successful Christians who have a high profile in society. These features stress the Christian professional's conviction, life story, sense of purpose and faith anchors. This is not direct evangelism, but it focuses on the lives of Christians who are in important positions in society. This creates credibility for the evangelism efforts.

Conclusion

Asian Christians attempt to use traditional folk media as well as contemporary communication for evangelism. Evangelism is more than a transmission of information. It is also relationship building, giving voice to the voiceless, dialoguing with seekers and dealing with social concerns. Media does not best serve as a vehicle for direct evangelism; rather, it is best used for setting agendas, offering parable stories for reflection, offering communication with seekers and giving a voice to the poor.

Dr. Wing Tai Leung is general secretary of Breakthrough (www.breakthrough.org.hk), board member of City University of Hong Kong, international advisor of ISACC (Philippines) and youth ministry coordinator of Chinese Coordination Center for World Evangelization (CCCOWE, www.cccowe.org/). He was also convener of the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization Issue Group 19 on Media and Technology. The paper produced by this group is available online at http://community.gospelcom.net/lcwe/assets/LOP48_IG19.pdf.

Evangelisation via Satellite: An Initiative Moves Forward

By Jan-Peter Graap

It is amazing to see what God has done at the turn of the millennium using modern satellite technology both in Germany and throughout Europe. Since the first evangelistic crusade with Dr. Billy Graham in 1993 in Essen, Germany, "ProChrist" (www.prochrist.de/) has gained momentum and decisively shaped evangelistic efforts in many places around Europe.

After Lausanne 1974, a process of evangelization given by God started in Germany: "All the world shall hear his word!" This was the theme of the International Congress on World Evangelisation, held in Lausanne, Switzerland, July 1974. A few years later, in 1985, the German branch of the Lausanne movement was founded. The strategy was to build a wide platform that would act as a meetingpoint for all who felt a commitment to evangelisation. The realization of national evangelistic crusades and the training of full-time workers and volunteers were part of the task. At the 1990 Congress on Evangelisation in Stuttgart, Germany, the question was brought up: "When will we finally come together to evangelise Germany?"

With Dr. Graham as evangelist, ProChrist 1993 was held in Germany. The circle was completed: "All the world—and Europe—shall hear his word!" Today there are Christians from across Europe, from over twenty

denominations, church unions and Christian agencies, working with ProChrist. Lausanne was an essential part of this process.

The History of ProChrist

ProChrist was founded in 1991 on the initiative of two Lutheran bishops, Theo Sorg (Stuttgart) and Martin Kruse (Berlin). The first steps toward using modern satellite technology for evangelisation had already been taken, with pilot projects having been held in England and France.

"Scotland '91" gave decisive impulses for Germany. The Scots encouraged us, even as we hesitated, whether this was the right way forward for Germany. They invited a small delegation (and paid their expenses!) to Scotland '91. Wilfried Reuter, well-known as Billy Graham's German translator and part of the group that supported ProChrist from the very beginning, says of this time: "The typical jokes about Scottish thriftiness lost their meaning when the Scots gave part of their financial surplus from Scotland '91 as an advance for Germany."

The German board members emphasized at the time: "We are very thankful to your sisters and brothers from the worldwide body of Christ, for their vision and faith, for their experience and the way they naturally shared what they had. Without them, the European-wide network of Christians and churches for ProChrist 1993, with a clear evangelistic mandate, would not have happened."

A Proven Profile

"Millions took part and heard Billy Graham's evangelistic sermons" was reported by countless newspapers around the world in March 1993. At the time, ProChrist 1993 was the largest evangelisation effort ever held in the twentieth century. The challenge to live a life with Jesus Christ was sent to 384 sites in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and more than one thousand sites in fifty-five other countries around the world.

And yet there was controversy even before it started. Even those with a burden for evangelisation expressed their concern: "Are we expecting people to come forward to a film screen or to start a life with Jesus Christ? Isn't the whole project much too expensive?" Many questions and objections were raised.

And yet the profile proved itself. After ProChrist 1993, there was much positive feedback from churches in Germany, as well as from other countries, expressing the desire that ProChrist continue. This pressure from the grassroots level continues for Germany—and increasingly Europe—with the sixth ProChrist event to take place in March 2006. At ProChrist 2003, events were transmitted from Essen, Germany, to over 1,300 sites in sixteen European countries. Russia also took part. Over 1.8 million people visited the evangelistic events.

One main event in a city is transmitted live via satellite to local broadcast sites in Germany and around Europe. Site organizers have the opportunity to give their ProChrist event a local touch, but can also build on the professional and attractive nature of the program coming from the main site. A large-scale and concerted publicity campaign helps to raise the public profile of local Christians. This is complemented by corresponding invitation materials which allow local Christians to personally invite their friends and contacts.

The program consists of music, interviews, a short drama piece and an evangelistic message by Rev. Ulrich Parzany, the main speaker for ProChrist. As head of the 1995, 1997, 2000 and 2003 ProChrist events, Parzany is also well known outside Christian circles. He served full-time until September 2005 as general secretary of the German YMCA. His clear and direct words are his trademark. His style is not that of a market crier who is trying to sell his product. However, he is not a psychologist either, and does not manipulate the worries and fears of his listeners or attempt to appeal to their emotions. Rather, convinced of the message of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, Parzany speaks clear and direct truth, with a good portion of humor included.

ProChrist 2006 from Munich: The Highest Pulpit in the World

From 19-26 March 2006, ProChrist will transmit direct from the Olympia Hall in Munich. The theme will be "From Doubt to Amazement." Over 1,100 sites in twenty European countries from Holland to the Ukraine will take part and simultaneous translation will be offered in up to twenty languages. Reaching foreigners in the various countries has become increasingly important.

Part of ProChrist is also the children's program, "ProChrist for Kids," that will be transmitted live from the Olympia Hall 18 March. For young people, there is a separate event called "JesusHouse." The next youth event will be JesusHouse in April 2007, and will be transmitted from Hamburg.

ProChrist is held every two to three years, and has a clear emphasis on comprehensive preparation at the local level. This is encouraged and supported through materials and training seminars, as well as through "ProChrist Impulses," a weekend satellite transmission for participating churches that runs approximately five months before the event. In November 2005, this transmission encouraged over 100,000 Christians in local churches as they embarked on the final phase of intensive preparation for March 2006.

The ProChrist 2006 theme, "Doubt and Amazement," connects with the attitude toward religious happenings in Germany and Europe. Many have turned their back on the church, and are disappointed by their encounters with God's "personnel on earth." And yet, even as churches lose ground, there is an increasing openness in our societies to discuss religious and ethical issues. People are searching for life models and are interested in the subjective expression of Christian life, even though they may reject faith as something fundamentalistic.

ProChristmobil: On the Road to Reach People

To proclaim Christ publicly and personally, ProChrist has taken a new approach with the campaign, "The smallest church in the world." Never before has there been anything like it. Seventy small "smart" cars, driven by volunteers, were sent out on a ten-month journey on 18 May 2005. They will visit over one hundred cities in Germany and neighbouring countries, working with local churches in the cities and towns they visit. Over three thousand Christians are working as volunteer drivers. The initiative will continue until 26 March and end with the ProChrist event in Munich.

The concept of this modern street evangelism is simple: On the doors of the orange and black "smart" cars, the slogan "The smallest church in the world" is visible in white lettering. In teams of seven cars each, these "mini-churches" go out to do evangelistic outreach and community service projects. People are invited to ask questions and get engaged in discussions at supermarkets, at shopping centers, in pedestrian zones and in many other places. Many prayers have been prayed, and many lives have been given to Christ in the smarts. The press response has exceeded all expectations: Over 1,500 articles and nearly one hundred television features, radio broadcasts and Internet articles have been chronicled. This press coverage is helping to make people aware of the coming ProChrist 2006 event.

We continue to be amazed at how God uses this evangelistic tool to invite people to entrust their lives to Christ. Despite much skepticism and difficult experiences, it seems fairly easy to get into conversations with Germans about issues of faith and belief. Many are just waiting for the church to finally approach them, to ask them about themselves, to listen to their questions and to allow them to voice their doubts.

Prayer for Many Decisions for Christ

In Germany, we look back with great thankfulness to the good impulses given by Lausanne 1974. Through ProChrist satellite evangelization, the words of the "Lausanne Commitment" of 1974 have become a reality: "God's working in our time deeply moves us. Our failure leads us to repentance. The unfulfilled task of evangelization challenges us. We believe that the gospel is God's good news for the world."

Please pray with us, that many people come to faith in the living God during the upcoming ProChrist evangelistic event in March 2006, and that we Christians in Germany and Europe will become more a part of the worldwide revival.

Jan-Peter Graap is responsible for public relations with ProChrist Germany, www.prochrist.de. He is also a pastor and evangelist in the German Federation of Free Evangelical churches.

In Light of Eternity: Trans World Radio and the Gospel in Latin America

By Dawn Overman

In a traditional sense, the countries of Latin America have had access to the light of the gospel for decades, yet thousands still live in the dark, remaining “unchanged” in their lifestyles. According to December 2003 reports by the World Health Organization, ninety million children in the region live in poverty, and about two million people are infected with HIV/AIDS. A high divorce rate and numbers of unmarried couples living together also demonstrate the need for Latin American Christians to daily live out their faith.

According to the United Nations Human Settlements Program (www.unhabitat.org/), more than forty percent of the urban population of Latin America and the Caribbean live in the region’s fifty cities that exceed one million people. Into this demographic climate, Trans World Radio (TWR, www.twr.org) introduced its strategic “City Lights” project, a campaign to reach fifty spiritually-needy Latin American cities in the next several years. Through this project, TWR aims to connect mission-minded churches and individuals in the United States with Latin American churches and radio stations in cities like Bogotá (Colombia), La Paz (Bolivia) and Sao Paulo (Brazil). By turning on the light of the gospel, TWR aims to bring about commitments to Christ that will result in lifestyle changes for millions of Latino men, women, youth and children.

Some of Trans World Radio’s City Lights programming:

- **Pedrito El Pulpo** (Little Peter the Octopus), weekly fifteen-minute for children
- **Sabio y Prudente** (Wise and Prudent), daily fifteen-minute for children
- **Mujeres de Esperanza** (Women of Hope), weekly thirty-minute for women
- **Cosas de Nosotras** (Our Things), weekly fifteen-minute for women
- **Tierra Firme** (Solid Ground), weekly thirty-minute; contemporary and societal issues in light of Scripture
- **Integración Familia** (Rebuilding the Family), daily fifteen-minute for families
- **Entre Jóvenes** (Just Between Us Teens), weekly thirty-minute for youth

TWR’s eight Latin American partners are already producing quality original programs that are used in the City Lights project (see sidebar). These offices also distribute broadcasts to a network of stations and link the project to appropriate ministries or missionaries already working in a particular city. Currently, TWR partners with more than five hundred stations throughout Latin America.

City Spotlight: Maracaibo, Venezuela

Maracaibo is the second most important city in Venezuela in terms of its economy and demographics. But poverty is high in this area (forty-five percent), and more than seventy percent of the working population is located in a sector that presents serious urban problems. This results in even more poverty that, in turn, directly affects the national economic crisis.

TWR-Venezuela director Annabel Torrealba believes that TWR’s programs touch lives in this populous Venezuelan city and throughout the nation. She and her team take their popular children’s broadcast Pedrito el Pulpo to thousands of young listeners who want to see the puppets impersonate their favorite radio characters.

Since 2003, Torrealba says her team has made personal contact with about twenty-seven thousand children via these Pedrito el Pulpo rallies. More than two thousand have committed their lives to Christ. “The impact on children, youth and adults has been tremendous,” emphasizes Torrealba. “More than ever, doors are opening for the gospel to reach into difficult places.”

In addition, children who attend the rallies receive kits containing school supplies, a Pedrito el Pulpo-illustrated story based on biblical principles and a CD with children's music and dramas. So far, more than one thousand of these kits have been donated to children with the purpose of motivating them to continue their studies despite their nation's economic struggles.

City Spotlight: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Santo Domingo, like other large cities, is plagued by corruption, violence, human trafficking and sexual immorality. Moreover, the syncretizing of different religious beliefs, including those of New Age and postmodernism, leave little room for God in the lives of this island nation's people.

"This panorama makes it relevant and urgent to continue our broadcasts of the transforming message of Jesus Christ," says Georgina Thompson, director of TWR-Dominican Republic. She notes that Bible correspondence courses and literature are also offered on the broadcasts. "The programs are setting in motion a new culture in family relations," Thompson adds. "The most abundant response is reflected in the calls, emails and visits to the IMAFA Institute, a center where the producers of the Integración Familia broadcast offer professional services. This has given them the opportunity to lead people to Christ and to equip them to face their family problems."

Piero, a listener to the program, said, "I listen to Radio Trans Mundial (TWR) every day. Today the subject related to conflicts of couples. I have a friend who has this type of problem, and I needed a way of guiding him. Your program helped me have the method of how to approach it. I am very thankful to you."

Thompson's team produces three of the City Lights programs: Integración Familiar, Cosas de Nosotras and Entre Jóvenes. These are also aired over TWR's high-powered AM facility on Bonaire.

City Spotlight: Montevideo, Uruguay

Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, is home to nearly two million people, many of whom struggle to provide for themselves and their families on a daily basis. According to director of TWR-Uruguay Esteban Larrosa, "In 2003, the incidence of poverty in urban homes reached twenty-one percent. Proportionally, poverty affects more children than adults. The challenge is not to allow more time for the children of poverty today to turn into the parents of poverty tomorrow."

What better way to ensure a brighter future for the next generation than by introducing their mothers to Christ? Since radio is not hindered by geography, religious barriers or cultural traditions, it is the ideal method to reach Spanish-speaking women where they are across Latin America. For more than five years, Mujeres de Esperanza, the Spanish version of TWR's popular women's program, Women of Hope, has been airing from Uruguay and Bonaire. An integral part of TWR's Project Hannah and City Lights ministries, the broadcast currently airs in more than twenty-one Spanish-speaking countries worldwide.

Many women have testified that they identify with the themes featured on Mujeres de Esperanz. Issues include health, relationships and spiritual matters.

"It was one of those winter nights with rain, cold and wind, and I was feeling abandoned," wrote a Uruguayan woman to the program's producers. "With tremendous pain in my heart, I cried out for some comfort. I was alone and without work, feeling the most miserable of all women. I turned on the radio to listen to music and forget my burden for a while, and I heard, by chance, someone talking to me personally. On your program, you were telling me all that I was feeling. Not only did I forget my burdens, but also I became acquainted with Christ. I saw that all my problems were because of my sin and my forgetting God. From then on, you have been my best company. I go to church, but I never stop listening to your programs."

City Spotlight: Bogotá, Colombia

God is also using the City Lights broadcasts to touch lives in Colombia, where terrorism, drugs, occultism, corruption, unemployment and poverty have prevailed for years.

TWR-Colombia's director reports that his team has received positive feedback about the simplicity with which the word of God is shared on TWR's programs, and how listeners appreciate being able to obtain current information about Christianity. TWR broadcasts five programs over radio station Nuevo Continente in the capital of Bogotá. But the programs reach beyond Bogotá, since Nuevo Continente has another

station in Medellín. In all, TWR distributes programming to some sixteen stations throughout Colombia, directing new listener contacts to local churches and encouraging believers to continue being faithful to the Lord in their church by supporting its ministry.

Programs from the City Lights' menu of programs are also being supplied to six local stations in the jungle region in order to reach the indigenous tribes. One of these key stations has been provided with fourteen solar panels that permit the station to be on the air all day long instead of just two hours when electricity is provided by the local village generator.

TWR colleagues in Colombia reported the testimony of a man who visited their office. The man, a Colombian pilot, was kidnapped by guerrilla forces and, while in captivity, was given a New Testament and transistor radio by one of his captors. Early one morning, the pilot found the signal of Radio Nuevo Continente. After tuning in to TWR's programs for several days, he committed his life to Christ. Within a few months, he gained his freedom, and today he and his family are faithfully attending church.

TWR-Colombia is also seeking opportunities to assist Radio Nuevo Continente in working with street children in Bogotá, hoping to minister effectively, despite governmental restrictions, to these often forgotten children and to ultimately introduce them to Christ.

Dawn Overman is magazine and Internet content editor for Trans World Radio, www.twr.org. She and her husband, Chris, a senior systems administrator for TWR, live in Willow Spring, North Carolina, USA.

My Hope India: Using Technology and Home Groups to Bring the Gospel to Hundreds of Thousands

By Laurie Fortunak

In a country where nearly ninety-two percent of the one billion plus people profess to be either Hindu or Muslim, Christians in the nation of India are working hard to get the gospel message out to those who have never heard. One of the ways this is being done is by integrating the technology of television with the biblical practice of inviting friends and neighbors into one's home (Luke 5:27-32). This simple practice, according to Preston Parrish, executive vice president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA, www.billygraham.org), if bathed in prayer and blessed by the Holy Spirit, can lead many into the Kingdom of God.

And this is exactly what is happening through "My Hope India," part of the "My Hope" World Television Project, sponsored by the BGEA. For six days this past 2005 Christmas season, up to 800,000 home groups representing nearly sixty thousand churches invited non-Christian friends, family and neighbors into their homes to watch television Crusades that had been dubbed into fourteen different heart languages. From this event, local churches and the BGEA are seeing hundreds of thousands of decisions to trust in Jesus Christ.

"My Hope" History

The "My Hope" projects began in 2002 with a vision by Franklin Graham to take Billy Graham Crusades and the gospel message to a larger population. Beginning in the Latin American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, the television Crusades and evangelistic movies were dubbed into Spanish, and adapted to local cultures. The BGEA purchased air time on television and began mobilizing and training local pastors and church leaders who would open their homes to non-Christians. After watching the Crusade or movie on television, the trained believers would then build on the gospel message. According to Parrish, there is great benefit in leading others to Christ in this type of home setting. "When someone makes a decision [to trust in Christ], they are coming to faith where they are already in a small group," he emphasized.

Since 2002, "My Hope" projects have also been held in Panama, Paraguay, Russia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Peru and Moldova. Over two million decisions of faith have been recorded so far.

“My Hope” Comes to India

More than a year ago, the BGEA and partnering churches in India began preparing for the “My Hope India” project. In the two hundred years since the great Baptist pioneer William Carey shared the gospel with the people of India, non-believers have been coming to faith. “Despite this,” Parrish said, “the massive subcontinent is vastly unreached” with the message of Christ. He and others recognize that with a nation so complex in terms of land, people groups, social norms and history, sharing the gospel in India carries unprecedented challenges.

“We have prayed as never before in this project,” Parrish said. “We give God all the glory [for what is being done].”

For months, local churches and believers prepared for the broadcast. The great importance the people of India place on relationship makes the home group interaction effective in sharing the gospel message clearly and concisely. The 150 television broadcast hours over Christmas included films and Crusades in fourteen languages. Local believers then expanded on the presentation of the gospel message with those who had come to watch the broadcasts. Thoughtful and deliberate preparation and much prayer were combined before, during and after the airings; however, according to Parrish, “evangelism is the work of the Holy Spirit.” It is indeed God who gets the glory.

For Parrish, there are at least five reasons the response so far to the “My Hope India” project has been so successful:

1. God delights in blessing the uncompromising presentation of the gospel.
2. God delights in using the proclamation of the gospel through local languages.
3. Television is an effective medium to use in sharing the message.
4. The gathering time allows for relationship-building.
5. The project flows through pastors and local churches.

Reminders of the Power of the Gospel

In a time when tragedy, violence and sadness seem overwhelming, we all, as Parrish suggests, need to “be reminded afresh of the uniqueness and power of the gospel.” For Parrish and those involved with the “My Hope” projects, it is important not to “shrink from the proclamation that Jesus is Lord” in a time when increasing secularism and rising radicalism seem to be unhindered. Romans 1:16 provides the mandate for the Christian life: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.”

The Holy Spirit is indeed doing a mighty work through “My Hope India” and other projects which incorporate both the human and the divine element. According to Parrish, there are at least three elements Christians must take to heart when seeking to share the gospel in various contexts:

1. Don’t shrink from the proclamation of message of the gospel.
2. Look for new ways to share the gospel (in this case, by combining technology and home groups).
3. Cover the project in prayer.

For more information on the “My Hope” projects, go to http://billygraham.org/IntlMin_WorldTVProject.asp. Laurie Fortunak is editorial coordinator of Lausanne World Pulse. She also serves as editorial coordinator for Evangelism and Missions Information Service (EMIS, www.billygrahamcenter.org/emis) and managing editor of Evangelical Missions Quarterly (EMQ, www.emqonline.com/)

Jesus. All about Life: Using Prime-Time Australian Media to Tell Others about Jesus

By Martin Johnson

Nicole is in her final year of high school in Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia. She and her family attend an Anglican church which had signed up to be part of the “Jesus. All about life” (JAAL) campaign. “Jesus. All about life” is an Australian national prime-time media campaign,

developed by Bible Society NSW, which has as its aim, "the mobilization of quiet Christians to share their faith." JAAL is based on the "Power to Change" campaigns run by Campus Crusade for Christ in Canada and Ireland (1998-2002).

Nicole was happy to do the training at church and to pray for five of her friends by using a prayer card produced for the campaign. Her greatest fear, however, was that the television commercials, which were the backbone of the campaign, would be "dorky."

She was relieved when she saw the commercials (which she had downloaded from the Internet) and began telling her friends to be on the lookout for them. Nicole admits she is not a "loud" personality, nor is she an obvious evangelist, but during the five weeks of the campaign she had at least one conversation a day with her friends at school which was centered on Jesus, not religion.

Nicole's experience was exactly what the organizers of the campaign were looking for. According to Bible Society NSW communications manager and JAAL co-director, Martin Johnson, "We spent over two years developing the 'Jesus. All about life' campaign and the research we did showed that people were very open to talking about the person of Jesus, they just didn't like religion."

The three commercials, which ran in prime-time on two of Adelaide's three commercial television stations, asked people to consider what Jesus said and how his teachings about life made sense. The television commercials were supported by city-wide billboards and radio spots.

A key part of the Irish and Canadian "Power to Change" campaigns was a well-produced book which was sent to people who responded to the advertising. "We asked Dr Peter Downey, a Sydney-based writer, to look at the research and then write a book for Australians that would introduce the reader to the person of Jesus," said JAAL co-director, Karl Faase. "We wanted a book that answered the questions that the people whom we had researched asked about Jesus. Peter had already co-written a book about the Bible which had a really open and friendly style and it had just been picked up by an international publisher. Together with Bill Salier, Peter wrote the 'Jesus. All about life' book which has proven to be a great tool to give to those who responded to the campaign. The book leads the reader through Jesus' life and why he died and then challenges them to make their own commitment. The book also contains Luke's Gospel."

Like the "Power to Change" campaigns, the success of 'Jesus. All about life' depended on strong local church involvement. "Bible Society has been partnering with local churches since 1817 and whilst the methods have certainly changed, without their involvement there is no way a prime-time advertising campaign would be effective," said Bible Society NSW CEO, Daniel Willis. "We went to the South Australian Heads of Churches and they established a local working group who were charged with running the campaign in South Australia. They enrolled three hundred churches that over the five weeks of the campaign ran 550 events and trained six thousand people to share their faith."

As well as generating church support, the local committee also had the task of raising AU\$300,000 to fund the media buy.

While organizers developed the key parts of the campaign in Sydney, including the commercials, the response website and the response book, the Adelaide committee had to raise funds to buy the local television time, billboard space and cover their own costs. Members believed that this would come from the Christian business community, individuals and denominations.

"Once people understood that the commercials would be seen in prime-time and that ninety percent of Adelaide's 1,200,000 population would see them up to ten times, the fundraising and support was a lot easier to generate," Johnson said.

With the campaign now over, the feedback from those involved has been very positive.

"Ten major denominations were involved in the Adelaide campaign and to see 'Jesus. All about life' banners outside the Uniting, Baptist, Salvation Army, Anglican and Catholic churches presented a real church unity that no other event has ever produced," said Adelaide committee chairman, Rev. Stuart Cameron. "One of our working group members, Bob Beaumont, said some twelve months before the campaign went to air, that 'if all the individual churches get behind this campaign, it will be the biggest

event the Christian Church in South Australia has seen since the Billy Graham Crusades of the 1950s.' Bob's post campaign observation was, 'they did ... and it was!'"

The campaign generated a range of responses. First, there were direct responses to the website, the toll-free phone number or via text messaging through mobile phones. Each of the commercials invited people to ask for a free information pack and two thousand of these were distributed. However, by far the biggest response was that of churches as their members used the interest created by the prime-time television advertising and the billboards to share Jesus with their friends, family and work colleagues.

"Churches bought eleven thousand copies of the response book to give away," said Cameron. "Many of them also produced their own postcards which advertised the campaign on one side and on the other side an invitation to a JAAL event at their church. 250,000 of these were given out during the campaign. Over 75,000 people attended a JAAL event [which was] run by a local church."

According to Cameron, one local church member from the Adelaide Hills traveled into the city each day by bus with the same seventeen people. One morning during the campaign he bought seventeen copies of the 'Jesus. All about life' response book together with seventeen bus tickets and gave them to his fellow travelers.

The campaign also generated secular media coverage. Adelaide is known as the "city of churches," which is more a reference to its founding as a free settlers state (to which all religions and ethnic groups were welcomed) than to its spiritual status. However, when the churches worked together during the campaign it attracted press interest which was overwhelmingly positive.

Adelaide was the first city to run 'Jesus. All about life.' Canberra, Australia's national capital in the Australian Capital Territory, will be the second city. The campaign will be launching there in March 2006.

In October 2005 the Adelaide working group hosted an information day to which people from other major Australian and New Zealand capital cities were invited. "This was a great way of communicating the vision of 'Jesus. All about life' and apart from Canberra, we have strong interest from Brisbane church and business leaders who are now looking at running the campaign in their city," said Johnson.

According to Willis, the vision of Bible Society NSW in funding and developing the 'Jesus. All about life' project, was "to help Australians engage with the person of Jesus Christ and to consider his message that 'I have come to give you life in all its abundance'" (John 10:10).

"I know other Bible Societies, particularly in the UK, [that] are also developing these sorts of campaigns that use media to engage with the community," Willis said. "We have a real heart for our Australian community and our vision is that the 'Jesus. All about life' campaign will run in every capital city and regional area in Australia."

For more information about the campaign, go to <http://www.jesusallaboutlife.com.au/>

To watch the television commercials go to <http://www.allaboutlife.com.au/> and click on the Watch the TV ads link.

Martin Johnson is manager of communications for Bible Society NSW, www.biblesocietynsw.com.au.

ERF Television: Opening Evangelistic Windows to Europe's One Hundred Million German-speakers

By Glenn Carlson

For the first couple of decades following its founding in 1959, TransWorld Radio's German sister ministry, Evangeliums-Rundfunk (ERF), based in Wetzlar near Frankfurt, kept fairly close to the extended family's radio-only mode. However, with the advent of VHS tape distribution in the 1970s, ERF slowly edged its way into video production and distribution, and then eventually into the television broadcast field.

But, whereas the paradigm for the radio and VHS tape ministries had been mainly one of teaching, discipleship and edification for committed Christians (many who lived in areas where Bible-believing churches were few and far between), the vision of ERF's television department pioneers was in reaching out to the "highways and byways" of the TV airwaves with culturally-attuned evangelistic programs. These programs would be compelling and would use everyday language rather than many doctrinal and biblical-historical terms.

Expanding the Ministry into Television

A pragmatic rationale was that TV programming was much more expensive to produce than radio. If producers could afford to produce some television (in addition to 24/7 radio programs), then they had better make it count as an effective "guerrilla warfare" lance into the heart of the secular TV landscape. This seemed especially desirable due to a fundamental difference in the way people consume television versus how they view FM and MW radio. Television viewers channel-hop frequently (and thus may happen across the gospel), whereas radio listeners have real or figurative memory buttons on their radios set to the same four or five channels.

The timing for this entry into television was also providential. In the latter part of 1989, ERF's TV studio complex was going into construction when suddenly and dramatically the Berlin Wall came down. Over night, regional TV airways in Germany's heavily de-Christianized former-Communist East had become accessible. And the eastern Germany TV landscape was different from that of western Germany. Local TV stations were hungry for programs that were free and that provided solid production values like the talk-show and magazine formats that ERF was starting to produce on a weekly basis. These programs featured "living epistle" (1 Corinthians 3) testimonies and perspectives on a wide range of issues from vibrant German Christians with something to say and share.

A Decade Later

By the end of the 1990s, ERF had built up an ad hoc network of about forty such local and regional TV channels, virtually all of them with a completely secular programming base, and all but one which aired ERF's Christian programs free of charge. (The exception was FAB, a popular commercial station in Berlin that charged a modest service fee per airing.) A somewhat uniquely German side benefit to having "Heimat TV" (local area TV) channels was and is the strong sense of regional identification that Germans have. This identification is often far stronger than their sense of national identity (except when it comes to international sports events like World Cup soccer). The local stations became quite popular. In one survey, roughly fifty percent of viewer respondents were non-believers for whom Christian broadcasts were an utterly new phenomenon indeed; people whose curiosity had been piqued or consciences pricked by the contents. These individuals began asking for more information about the subjects at hand from a Christian perspective as well as for Bibles and materials about the Christian faith. Some people, both nominal Christians and those from completely secular backgrounds, asked for personal spiritual guidance. Such individuals were referred to ERF's professional counselling department. Some have invited Christ into their lives.

In 2000, ERF further expanded its broadcast reach by placing its flagship program, "Hof mit Himmel" (Courtyard to Heaven), onto NBC Europe, one of the thirty or so channels that are fed into eighty-five to ninety percent of all homes with cable access. The result was a doubling of viewer reactions, up to 7,500 responses per year. This was followed in 2002 with broadcasts via Astra satellite on the Stuttgart-based channel, B-TV, further upping theoretical technical reach to an estimated eighty percent of all German households. However, the word "theoretical" needs to be stressed. Actual average weekly viewership was estimated at 100,000—this in a country of eighty-two million people. One of the reasons for this low number is that these stations with nationwide reach lacked the A-list popularity of Germany's big TV networks. Hence, the pull-in effect on secular audiences was modest.

One More Breakthrough

In 2002 another major breakthrough occurred: ERF joined dtcp, a partnership of (then-secular) independent producers. These producers banded together to avail themselves of equal access rules that were legislated after parliamentary concern that Germany's TV industry ownership had become too concentrated within an oligopoly of two main conglomerates. The dtcp producers' cooperative could thus tap into late night and early AM weekend slots reserved and set aside on VOX, one of the A-list channels. The rotational nature of the dtcp cooperative meant that ERF could run all-night marathon viewings of ten half-hour programs from midnight until 6 AM. These were interrupted "only" by breaks for telephone sex

commercials, which ERF had no control over. However, it was generally felt among ERF leaders and others that broadcasting within this culturally-deprived environment was well within the purview of Christ's command to go into the whole world and preach the gospel. And the results were encouraging. During each marathon viewing, hundreds of viewers would phone in and ask for more information about the Christian faith and for personal counselling.

ERF had two levels of interconnected phone banks, manned by twenty to thirty operators and twelve to fifteen phone counsellors. During and immediately after the marathon viewings, dozens of viewers called in (the average call length was thirty minutes). Many callers were up in the middle of the night watching TV due to insomnia induced by life problems. They were "ripe for the picking" and ready to be touched by the Holy Spirit. Lives were surrendered to Christ for the first time; recommitments of faith were made by those who had gone astray. Psalm 139:7 ("Where can I flee from your presence?") was understood in a new way. Even in late night television, God's Spirit was there.

However, there was also resistance from the enemy. Volunteers answering the phones endured bomb threats and verbal abuse. Early attempts at running live Internet chat rooms during the marathon viewing fizzled due to the aggressively anti-Christian tenor of some participants.

The digital revolution that has brought ever-cheaper production technology to the broadcast scene in recent years has also opened up a new paradigm for ERF. Expanded production into programming for Christians keeps with ERF's motto: "Bringing people to Christ, and helping them to grow in Christ." As of 1 January 2006, ERF began a two-hour (5-7 PM) daily slot on Germany's 24/7 digital satellite channel, Bibel-TV. Features include a variety of teaching, edification and informational programs for Christians. Existing evangelistic programs (to catch secular "seekers" also tuning in) will also be aired. There are eleven tracks in all.

Glenn Carlson is executive producer of ERF Television, <http://www.erf.de/>

Multi-Media Evangelism: Opening Spiritual Ears through Deaf Ministry

By Howard Baldwin

When Jesus was in the region of the Decapolis, a deaf man with a speech difficulty was brought to him. After the man's friends begged Jesus to lay his hand on him, Jesus took the man away from the crowd, put his fingers in the man's ears, spit and touched the man's tongue. Jesus looked up to heaven, sighed deeply and said, "Ephphatha!" which means, "Be opened!" Immediately his ears were opened and his speech difficulty was removed. The people were astonished and said, "He has done everything well! He even makes deaf people hear, and people unable to speak, talk!" (This event is recorded in Mark 7:31-37.)

Helen Keller was born both blind and deaf and said that of the two conditions, the latter was worse. This is perhaps true because blindness cuts you off from things, whereas deafness cuts you off from people. An individual can live without things; the ability to communicate with people is essential.

When I was a boy, my father was a printer. In those days there were schools for the deaf that would teach the deaf a trade. One trade that was very popular was to become a Linotype operator. There was a deaf operator in the print shop where my father worked and through him, my father learned some sign language.

There was also a barber shop in our neighborhood run by a man named Mr. Roberson. Whenever we would go in for a haircut, my father would always ask how Mr. Roberson's nephew was doing at the deaf school in Staunton, Virginia, USA. The nephew had become deaf through a childhood illness. I didn't think much about it at the time and I don't think I even knew his name. Only the Lord knew that one day this man's nephew and I would be doing deaf ministry side-by-side.

Simultaneous Ministry through Art

For thirty years I was a chalk artist evangelist and shared the gospel through "Sermons in Art." The evangelistic crusades were held in local churches where each evening I would present the gospel through a message in art. While I drew the illustration in chalk using ultra-violet ray lighting, the good news would be heard in stereo sound. In churches with a deaf ministry, a video monitor would be placed next to the easel. The message had been prerecorded in sign language. Both the hearing and the deaf received the message simultaneously.

It was through this visual media that a multi-media ministry began which now shares Christ through weekly Sunday School Bible studies in American Sign Language on videocassettes and DVD disks. Sign language is the second largest language group in America and churches today use the lessons on Sunday morning to reach the deaf for Christ and train them in discipleship.

Bible Studies

Bible lessons are designed to be twenty minutes and conclude with three questions to get the deaf involved in class discussion. The teacher, Ray Bearden, had two deaf parents. Though he does have hearing, Ray learned sign language before he could talk. After graduating from college and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, he pastored deaf ministries in several states. Though Ray now pastors a hearing church, he still has a vital ministry to the deaf through the weekly studies that are used by almost a hundred churches that have deaf ministries. Twice a year Ray comes to the small video studio at Multi-Media Evangelism in Richmond, Virginia, USA to record the Bible studies. Twenty-six lessons are recorded in one day.

Bearden was not the first teacher of the weekly Bible study. They began with Clifford Bruffey, the Baptist chaplain at Gallaudet University in Washington D.C, USA. Bruffey had been deaf from childhood. Because of this, he could identify with others who were deaf and could understand the many difficulties deaf people face everyday. For twenty years he taught the weekly Bible studies. In none of his studies did he speak. George Joslin and Ray were the interpreters for the hearing audience. Off camera they would read the signs and voice them into a microphone as both audio and video were recorded on tape.

One day while Clifford and I were at lunch, he signed that he was going to visit his aunt while he was in Richmond. I asked what her name was and he answered, "Mrs. Roberson." Could this be the nephew of the barber? I asked if Mr. Roberson ran the Star Barber shop on Cary Street. Clifford said that he did. After years of working together, I found that Clifford was the same nephew I had heard about years ago. The Lord had brought us together to share the good news.

The JESUS Film and Deaf Ministry

The JESUS Film has become a great tool for evangelism, especially for the deaf. An interpreter signs the audio, which is then inserted into the film in a cameo. One of the many languages the film has been translated into is Russian. We were able to go to Moscow, find a dedicated Christian deaf interpreter and videotape them signing the Russian audio into Russian sign language. While there we also worked with a deaf ministry in a church that reached out to deaf schools and clubs. When they saw the JESUS Film in their own Russian sign language, a way was opened for them to know who Christ was and to receive him into their hearts and lives.

The JESUS Film in Russian sign language was so well received that it was reported that the head of all government deaf work in Russia had the video also captioned in Russian. This ministry reaches both those who are hard of hearing and those who are completely deaf.

In Costa Rica we worked with missionaries who were reaching out to the deaf. They needed a video of "Religious Signs," a presentation which covers important religious symbols in sign language. During the taping we also taped the JESUS Film in the sign language of Costa Rica.

Expansion of Multi-Media Evangelism

During the Billy Graham Amsterdam World Conference for Evangelists we caught a vision of providing the "Messages in Art" (a ministry that uses art to share the gospel) with people in other countries. We wrote to missionaries and told them that if they would translate the message into their language and record the narratives, then we would dub the language onto the video and send them a master video free of charge to copy and distribute in their mission field. Many did this and to date the "Messages in Art" have been

used in twenty-five different languages. Each message is about eighteen to twenty minutes long and is ideal for home meetings, fellowships, worship services and youth meeting. Themes include The Praying Hands, Christ at the Door, the Good Shepherd, Who is Jesus? and The Road to Emmaus. In Spanish the messages are closed-captioned. On a recent evangelistic partnership mission to Odessa, Ukraine, we distributed one hundred DVD copies of three of the "Messages in Art" in Russian.

Video has come a long way over the past thirty years. We started with black and white and later progressed to color. In order to make a quality video, in the past one had to have expensive studio equipment, big cameras and high-powered lights. After a day of recording, the teacher was literally red from the powerful lights. Today, camcorders and digital video offer far better results than could have ever been achieved previously. If a picture is worth a thousand words for hearing people, think of what it means for the deaf!

Helping Others Experience Their Faith

In 1989 we organized a special tour to the Holy Land for the deaf. We videotaped the experience and put it together in a production entitled "Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus." The video is signed by Clifford Bruffey, Ray Bearden and Liz Bearden. This opened the door for those who could not go to experience a new understanding of the Holy Land through the eyes of other deaf Christians.

"The Life of Christ" and "The Old Testament Bible Stories" have been interpreted by Vesta Souter using flannelgraph. The Life of Christ is ideal for teaching Bible and Sunday School classes to children. It contains four hours (divided into fifty segments total) of Bible stories. One of the keys to effective teaching is the interpreter. Vesta is hearing but she is the daughter of deaf parents and was an art major in college. She and her husband now serve as missionaries to the deaf throughout Europe with the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board.

Missionaries in Moscow are also working to reach the deaf. They have been working on a project that will put the scriptures in story form on video in Russian sign language using deaf Russian Christians. With a laptop computer and simple editing programs such as iMovie or Final Cut Pro, the video can be edited simply and effectively.

Training in Deaf Ministry

Interpreters need training in sign language. This is especially true for dedicated interpreters in local churches. Multi-Media Evangelism has put together a video Dictionary (which includes both English and Spanish words listed below the signs) of over 2,800 American Sign Language words. Deaf who come from other countries bring sign language which is different from American Sign Language. Sign language is not universal. There is always much to be learned.

"Conversational Sign Language" is a one-hour course taught by Ray Bearden and is ideal for beginners. It gives the manual alphabet and ninety sentences that are used in everyday conversation.

Isaiah 29:18-19 says, "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the Book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." Without Christ we are all spiritually deaf to God. Deaf people need the gospel. God opens deaf spiritual ears through total communication for the deaf. Pray that this will be the day that they will hear the words of the Book and will come to know the author.

Howard Baldwin is president of Multi-Media Evangelism, www.multimediaevangelism.org, in Richmond, Virginia, USA. He is a graduate of the University of Richmond and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Baldwin has led over twenty overseas mission trips to England, Estonia, Ukraine and Russia.

The JESUS Film Project: Finishing the Task

By Jim Green

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

His Last Command—Our First Concern

When Jesus gave the Great Commission to his disciples before he ascended into heaven, he imparted God's eternal vision to reach the world with his love. These twelve men obeyed his call and transformed human history with the life-giving message of forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation through Jesus Christ. Today, we at The JESUS Film Project, www.jesusfilm.org, prioritize our savior's last command by making his Great Commission our first concern. Our vision is to work with the body of Christ to finish the task of sharing Jesus with everyone, everywhere, in his or her own language, so that everyone will have an opportunity to hear the gospel and receive Christ.

It Began with a Simple Dream

Since 1950, Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI), dreamed of developing an appealing, biblically-accurate film about the life of Christ. This dream became a reality more than twenty-five years ago when John Heyman in cooperation with CCCI produced the JESUS film—a two-hour movie about the life of Jesus based on the Gospel of Luke—with the hope of bringing the good news to life for the peoples of the world through the powerful medium of film. They never imagined that God would use this simple film as one of the most powerful evangelistic tools in church history. Of the 5.4 billion people who have watched JESUS since its release in 1979, more than 201 million people have indicated decisions for Christ. Now in more than nine hundred languages, it is the most widely-translated film in world history (www.jesusfilm.org/progress/translations.html).

Catching God's Vision to Reach the World

Why is the JESUS film so effective? Because it is the power of the word of God. Jesus said, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). God promised that his word would never return void, so as we continue to lift up Jesus and proclaim the word of God throughout the earth, he is faithful to draw people to himself. God's vision of reaching the world with his love lived in his heart long before Jesus proclaimed the Great Commission. Hundreds of years before Jesus walked the earth, God shared this vision with his servants, the prophets:

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14)

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14)

Jesus continued to proclaim God's vision as he prophesied about the end times, saying, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14).

Language Translations: Reaching the Unreached

The JESUS Film Project remains faithful to the calling of joining Christian workers throughout the world—both CCCI staff members and partnership ministries—to lift up Jesus in the whole world by producing language translations for the unreached people groups of the world. Our first priority is to complete all language translations of the JESUS film for people groups with more than 100,000 people. We are continuing to move forward in cooperation with the body of Christ to reach all unreached people groups in the farthest corners of the earth who have yet to hear. This task is truly beyond any one ministry or organization. We have been partnering with more than 1,500 Christian agencies to give people multiple opportunities to hear the gospel through the JESUS film. In the next ten years, we anticipate a great worldwide mobilization of churches to share Jesus through the JESUS film in the context of follow-through and church planting. We envision five million churches using the JESUS film to plant churches in every corner of the globe. Our vision is that every church will have a JESUS film team!

A partnership ministry in Mozambique recently traveled to an unreached village to preach the gospel. Felito, the leader of the outreach, asked the chief for permission to screen JESUS. However, the chief replied, "I'm the chief [and religious leader] of this village, and since this village exists, we have never allowed any other religion. We don't want you to do anything here." Undaunted, Felito responded, "We

came to show the JESUS film, preach the gospel and heal the sick." The village chief was surprised to hear that they would heal the sick. He said, "You can heal the sick? Is that possible?" Felito replied, "Yes, if you let us do what we came to do—show the JESUS film, preach the gospel and heal the sick."

The chief finally consented, and that evening five thousand people gathered to watch JESUS in the language of their hearts. At the film's conclusion, Felito began to preach a clear, gospel message, inviting people to receive forgiveness from their sins in Jesus' name. Before he had finished speaking, the crowd began to raise their hands and lift their voices, saying, "We want our sins to be forgiven!" Felito then asked the sick to come forward for healing, and an 8-year-old boy who was deaf was instantly healed and could hear. When the village chief saw this miraculous healing, he came to the platform, took the microphone and said, "What you have just seen is real, because there is no man who can do what you have seen unless God is with him. And God is with these guys." An entire village of unreached people heard the gospel in their own language, saw the power of God and had the opportunity to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ.

Follow-Through Evangelism: Discipleship and Church Planting

The JESUS Film Project also recognizes the need to work with local churches to ensure follow-through evangelism for those who respond to the gospel, to help build spiritual movements everywhere so that everyone knows someone who truly follows Jesus. By linking evangelism with training, discipleship and church planting, new believers become connected with the local body of Christ and have the opportunity to grow in their faith. For example, a film team in rural Africa may be able to reach a few villages a month by themselves. If, however, they train local Christians to use JESUS effectively, their efforts are multiplied far beyond their own abilities. When the ministry puts time, effort and energy into the training and mobilization of other believers, more people hear about Jesus than through evangelism alone.

In Tanzania, local church leaders partner with JESUS film teams to plant new churches. Since January 2005, one JESUS film team has joined several denominations to plant twenty-eight new churches! Bishop Hilkih, an Anglican leader, said, "I have started twenty-eight new churches in the Myra Region with Wilson Molonga, the JESUS film team leader. All these twenty-eight churches are healthy and growing....All the denominations are wanting to give [JESUS film] teams an office in their headquarters building!"

One of these new churches was the first church ever planted in a remote village on the shores of Lake Victoria. This village was known for its high population of alcoholics, drug addicts and prostitutes. The owner of the village bar came to a JESUS film showing and prayed to receive Christ. The Lord convicted his heart, and he transformed his bar into a church! The leader of this new church said, "This village has been changed by the hand of God. There are no more alcoholics, drug addicts and prostitutes. The young men are now going into town and finding jobs. The government heard what happened and is helping the young men find jobs."

Standing Together to Finish the Task

As we continue to strengthen our existing partnerships and establish new relationships, we look ahead to the great things God has in store for us. According to Dr. Steven Steele of Dawn Ministries, 750,000 churches were planted in the past ten years with involvement of the JESUS film! In the next ten years, Dr. Steele anticipates that ten to twelve million new churches will be planted worldwide.

The times in which we live are significant in God's kingdom. We are seeing an unprecedented unity and passion in the Church worldwide as we join together to reach the lost, and we are thankful for the calling God has given us at The JESUS Film Project. We stand with the body of Christ to follow our savior in his mission to "... preach good news to the poor ... to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1b). May we have the compassion of Jesus for the lost of this world—the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives and the prisoners, as we proclaim the good news of the kingdom to the ends of the earth.

Jim Green *is executive director of The JESUS Film Project.*

The Advent of the Talking Bible

By Harvey Hoekstra

The advent of the "Talking Bible" revolutionizes how we can make the translated scriptures available in audio for non-readers. The "Talking Bible" dramatically increases the value of every Bible translation. It creates new possibilities we could not have dreamed of just a few short years ago.

After spending nearly fifteen intense, joyful and fruitful years in the Sudan translating the New Testament into the Anuak language, followed by a similar period in Ethiopia in the 1950s on into the 1970s, I began to realize that most of the people for whom I had translated the New Testament would never read it. It wasn't that they were not interested. They simply could not read! Unless they could hear the translated Word in some way, the Bible would remain as foreign to them as if it had never been translated at all.

I was delighted and encouraged, therefore, to find that these non-reading people responded very positively when they heard the newly-translated Word on phonograph records and, later, on cassettes and compact discs. Soon hundreds and even thousands of non-readers became believers, were baptized and began to share their audio scriptures with others.

But it has been only recently that advances in technology have created previously undreamed-of possibilities for making the Bible available in audio for the two billion adults in our world who still are functionally illiterate.

Advent of the Talking Bible

Five years ago Talking Bibles International, <http://www.talkingbibles.org/>, developed and patented a new listening device which we called a Talking Bible. The Talking Bible looks just like a reader's Bible but contains an entire New Testament sealed inside. Instead of opening this Bible to read it, a person simply pushes a button to hear it. With the advent of the Talking Bible, it was no longer necessary to provide a tape player and fifteen to twenty-five separate tapes which had to be duplicated, labeled on both sides and packaged. The Talking Bible, with its set of batteries inside, provided all that was necessary for the non-reader to conveniently and clearly hear a sequential reading of the entire New Testament in a single-voice recording. For those who had access to electricity, battery power was not required. For those who lived in sunny climates, a solar panel provided the needed power to "run" the Bible and recharge the batteries.

The Talking Bible has not only been a blessing to individuals but has also proved to be very useful in group settings. At normal playing levels, the message can be easily and clearly heard by fifteen or twenty listeners—or even more—without additional amplification. People who have a Talking Bible therefore frequently invite neighbors, family members and friends to join them for daily listening sessions. The word spreads quickly. Many believe and are baptized. Many new churches are formed.

Believers who cannot read are excited to learn that their Bible contains exactly the same message that readers have in theirs. For the first time, the Word of God is as available to them as it is to people who can read. They can listen to it at any time of day or night, wherever they are, and whatever they are doing. Some of them even feel that they have a special advantage which readers do not have—they can listen to their Bible while working around the house, riding on the bus or even working in the fields. Most readers cannot read while they are working!

Future of the Talking Bible

The analog Talking Bible has already proven to be extremely useful. However, as useful as it is and inexpensive to produce, it has some of the same limitations that all analog devices have. Having extensively tested the proto-type recently, we will be using a solid state digital Talking Bible that contains an entire New Testament on one small memory chip during an upcoming project in Africa. This digital version makes it possible to move quickly from book to book and from chapter to chapter and provides a crystal clear message with high fidelity sound. Since the digital Talking Bible has no moveable parts, power usage is very low and durability is very high. Though we will continue to use the analog version in various areas, the digital Talking Bible will provide a significant new way to reach the non-reading half of the world with a Bible in their own language and in a form they can understand.

Changed Lives

The primary intent in designing the Talking Bible was to give non-reading Christians access to the translated scriptures in audio in their own language. Listening to the Bible would enable them to grow stronger in their faith and become more effective disciples of Christ. What we had not fully anticipated was the impact the Talking Bible would have on non-readers who were not yet Christians.

Greg Kelley, CEO of World Mission, one of our ministry partners, recently shared his own experience in Africa:

“One of our partners, Congo International Ministries, has reported in their October 2005 newsletter that some four hundred churches have been planted in eastern (Democratic Republic of Congo) as a result of the Swahili Talking Bible. Evangelists and pastors are covering the country-side bringing the good news!”

Another report came to us from India where many non-readers have been introduced to the Talking Bible:

“A Hindu village priest insisted that he, being spiritual leader in that village, should be the one to be responsible for their Talking Bible. He promised to call the people together to listen every day. The amazing thing that happened was that the priest himself began listening and became a believer along with almost the entire village. Three months later, when the local evangelist called to check up on them, the converted village priest pointed to the small village temple. There was a chain and a padlock on the door. The temple was closed. Instead, because of the power of God’s spoken Word, many people in that village were baptized and were worshipping together, praising God and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

From another part of India comes this testimony:

“Now fifteen people are listening to the Word of God and said that they could understand the Bible clearly and that it is a blessing to their family. One day we were listening to the fifth chapter of Mark’s Gospel. A woman came and asked us to pray for her. Her problem was similar to the woman who touched the garment of Jesus Christ. She listened to that portion of the Gospel and trusted Christ. After this incident she started to come to our church regularly. After a week’s time she told us that she was healed of her sickness. She fully accepted Jesus and took baptism. This is a great miracle that took place during our Bible-listening session.”

We who regularly read the Bible for ourselves may find it difficult to appreciate the incredible impact a Talking Bible has on non-readers. It’s hard for us to realize that some non-reading Christians are being “taught” by pastors or other believers who cannot read well themselves. For the believer who lives in that kind of environment, listening daily to a Talking Bible is a wonderfully exciting and nurturing experience.

Read, for example, the following testimony we received recently from Africa:

“I am a 45-year-old mother and am unable to read for myself. My home does not have electricity and I sell charcoal for a living. Before I received my Kikongo Talking Bible I would ‘rent’ someone to read the Bible to me twice a week. Now I gather ten people two or three times a day and listen with them for thirty minutes to my Talking Bible.”

Effectiveness of the Talking Bible

One reason why the Talking Bible is so effective is that people in oral cultures learn everything through hearing. They know how to listen and they remember what they hear. Many of these people have phenomenal memories which far exceed those of most readers. They are able to memorize large sections of Scripture simply by listening to them on their Talking Bible. And after they have memorized the verses, they often spontaneously share them with others. They listen, they learn and they tell others what they have learned—and do so without urging, embarrassment or difficulty.

As a former Bible translator, I continue to be extremely grateful for the faithful and sacrificial efforts of Bible translators around the world who make God’s Word available in new languages. It’s almost impossible to imagine what “Christian missions” would be without them. At the same time, I am deeply concerned by the realization that hundreds of millions of people still have no direct access to these translations simply because they cannot read now—and never will.

Literacy training is therefore very important and of great value. However, it has been estimated by responsible scholars that the number of non-readers in 2025 will be as great as it is today—in spite of the many literacy programs that are being developed. Besides, the distribution of the Talking Bible to non-readers is not in competition with literacy training. In some ways it may even enhance literacy efforts. For example, some who read poorly become better readers by listening to the spoken word while following the printed text in their hands. Or, as one person put it, “The Talking Bible may help good readers to become better readers, poor readers to become good readers, and motivate non-readers to become readers.” But whether they become readers or not, all who hear God’s spoken Word become better informed and better equipped to share the message of Jesus with others. Something wonderful happens that would not happen if they did not have the Talking Bible in their own language. The most significant way for non-readers to come to faith in Christ and to grow in their Christian life is by listening to the Word of God faithfully and systematically in their own languages.

It’s also important to remember that many readers, especially in oral cultures, learn much better from hearing the scriptures than by reading them. For them, the spoken word still carries with it an authority and power which the written word does not have. It’s not surprising, therefore, that some readers who have both a written Bible and a Talking Bible much prefer the latter.

However, millions of people who need a Talking Bible will not receive one unless thousands of individuals, churches, Bible societies and mission-sending agencies become more aware of the unique needs of the non-reading world—and prayerfully seek to help meet those needs. Our earnest desire and passion, therefore, is to help readers catch the vision of the tremendous spiritual harvest that could result if we put as much emphasis on reaching non-readers with audio materials as we do on providing written materials for those who can read.

For decades the Christian community has faithfully demonstrated its loving concern for the lost by investing millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of hours in translating the Bible into new languages. But most Christians probably do not realize that we can now multiply the effectiveness and fruitfulness of all our past translation efforts by adding the relatively small amount of time and money required to “translate” written Bibles into talking Bibles. By adding only a few cents more to every dollar already spent to translate a New Testament into a new language, we can make that translation available to twice as many people.

Finally, a testimony from one person who wrote:

“I cannot even put into words how special and touching it was for me to be able to actually physically put these Talking Bibles in people’s hands. I have tears in my eyes even now just remembering some of the expressions on their faces and looks of such gratitude. It was a blessing in my life like none other.”

Dr. Harvey Hoekstra is chairman of the board for Talking Bibles International, www.talkingbibles.org. He and his wife served as missionaries in the Sudan and Ethiopia for several decades. Hoekstra has authored several books and holds a doctorate in missiology from Fuller’s School of Intercultural Studies.

Tract Evangelism...More Effective than Ever

By Peter Batzing

The old stereotype of a nattily-dressed hawker standing on the street corner handing out black and white “hellfire” gospel tracts is gone. Well, nearly. Modern-day tract evangelism has become extremely relevant, effective and even technological. And the best part is...it’s all so easy.

American Tract Society (ATS) traditional “paper” tracts hold their own with any printed publication in the industry. They include cutting-edge graphics, high-quality paper and creative, accurate, biblical content. This means, among other things, that they look good, making that all-important first impression a positive one.

One-of-a-Kind Tracts Open the Door to Sharing the Gospel

Design and subject matter of the tracts always changes to keep up with the times, but the core gospel

message remains the same. The ATS has tracts playing off a number of popular television themes and films. These include American Idol, Lost, and most recently, The Chronicles of Narnia. When conversing about these popular subjects, these tracts are easy to hand out. The "modern" topics are used to introduce some aspect of God to the reader. After making the transition from the popular theme to the need for salvation, the tracts help lead the reader to finding salvation and forgiveness. Sports tracts work in the same way. Football, baseball and NASCAR-related tracts are very popular, especially when highlighting a Christian athlete's testimony. People use these tracts in great numbers, often distributing them at sporting events.

We also had tracts printed out just days after certain national disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, the war in Iraq and the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City. News releases were distributed to the media and to our tract users about the availability of the tracts, which we were able to start shipping immediately.

When blockbuster movies come to movie theaters, individuals and church groups hand out tracts before and after showings. Titanic was the first film to generate such a great interest. The Passion of the Christ and The Chronicles of Narnia have followed suit.

The Individuals Handing Out Tracts

Non-Christians generally do not buy gospel tracts. Christians buy them to hand out as evangelistic messages. This takes place in an infinite number of ways. Individuals, churches, bookstores and other Christian ministries use ATS tracts in varied and creative ways.

Individuals. Individuals are by far the most creative. During Halloween, people hand them out with candy, distribute them at local festivals, or more recently, children have been giving them to the people handing out the candy. During Christmas, people often put tracts in cards and gift boxes. Older adults are great at handing out tracts at the beach, at the mall near their home or to fellow passengers on public buses. Families who attend sports games or go to the movies often hand out tracts. Another creative way people hand out tracts is by including them in the envelope when paying bills.

Many Christians in business use tracts in their day-to-day interactions with customers. The Old Hickory Bat Company puts a copy of the ATS Mickey Mantle tract in a box with each bat they sell. A veterinarian in California, USA, keeps copies of the "Will Your Pet Go to Heaven?" tract in his waiting room. An oncologist in Michigan, USA, keeps his pocket stuffed with the "Doc, Can You Help Me?" tract. An auto shop owner in Texas, USA, keeps copies of car racing tracts in his waiting area.

Churches. Over six thousand churches use ATS tracts. Many put tracts in racks and offer them free to their members, who in turn use them for street and neighborhood witnessing. Youth groups take them on summer mission trips. Teachers use them to go along with Sunday School and Vacation Bible School curriculums. Many churches use Easter tracts to hand out in bulletins because they have realized that Easter is the day when most "unchurched" people attend services.

Christian Ministry. Dozens of Christian ministry partners use ATS tracts in their own outreach. The Assemblies of God, Focus on the Family, Gideon's International and the Salvation Army are just a few examples. They distribute tracts in any number of ways: by handing them out at crusades, giving them to individuals at local homeless shelters or putting them in special mailings.

Prison chaplains use ATS tracts extensively in their day-to-day ministries. More than half of the thousands of "decisions" we receive back from the tracts each year come from prisoners who have read ATS tracts and made a decision for Christ. ATS considers this an extremely important part of the ministry.

ATS military outreach is also significant. Possibly the most visited tract racks in the country are in the Pentagon, where hundreds of tracts are taken by visitors every day. Soldiers enjoy handing out ATS tracts and many people include large bundles of military tracts when sending packages to soldiers. For over one hundred years, ATS has presented Bibles with a special gospel presentation page to America's top military academies. Hundreds of ATS donors participate in this evangelistic outreach by supporting it financially.

ATS's international outreach (International Tract Society—ITS) is probably the fastest-growing segment of the ministry. ATS staff work with ministries in other countries to provide print film start-up help for them

to print their own tracts. Last year ITS had ninety such "print partners" in fifty-eight countries around the world. These partners printed over eight million tracts.

The Electronic Age

With the recent technological advancements of the Internet, ATS has embarked full-scale into evangelism through this medium. The online ministry is concentrated in two areas: (1) providing resources for Christians to use and (2) directly reaching out to non-believers.

To help believers share their faith in the digital age, ATS provides many ways to spread the gospel via technology. First and foremost, all print tracts in the ATS online catalog can be sent as an e-tract through email (www.atsdirect.org/).

Also, ATS provides electronic forms of print tracts that are specially formatted for use on PDAs and other handheld computers. A number of eye-catching interactive Flash gospel presentations, called Digitracts, have been created that can be sent via email or used on a website. These are quite popular and are accessed an average of 1,500 times a day. ATS recently unveiled mTracts, which allow Christians to send a text message to a mobile phone that directs the recipient to a website where they will view a compelling gospel presentation.

ATS has created specially designed outreach websites that capitalize on cultural trends. Each of these websites contains a clear gospel presentation and invites the user to make a decision to put their trust in Christ. ATS has developed sites based on American Idol (a popular television program in the U.S., www.idol-vote.com/), the poker craze (www.biggest-bet.com/) and The Chronicles of Narnia movie (www.keytonarnia.com/). Print material has also been created to allow Christians to direct their unsaved friends and family to these special websites.

The Internet provides an avenue to share the gospel in an open and free environment. Internet users are hidden behind the mask of usernames, and because of this anonymity, they are often more honest about their problems and willing to receive advice regarding those problems. Our resources can be used either as an attention-grabber, as a follow-up to a tract or as a stand-alone gospel presentation that can be sent to someone in need.

As the Internet makes its transition into Web 2.0, Christians will need to discover new ways to get believers to interact with non-believers in a community environment. It's becoming more difficult to get users to watch a three-minute presentation, but those same users will engage in a three-hour chat online about religion. The Internet is the town square for millions of people, and each day it's becoming easier for anyone to chat, blog, podcast and even build their own community. ATS is focused on offering new easy-to-use resources, as well as training on major Internet tools. ATS's goal is to get more Christians ministering to the nearly one billion people that are searching online. The following is a list of some ATS-related sites:

www.prayerhelp.org/
www.itestified.org/
www.biggest-bet.com/
www.idol-vote.com/
www.atkids.com/
www.keytonarnia.com/
www.ATStracts.org/disaster
www.atstracts.org/its/

The world is changing almost daily, but the gospel and people's need for salvation through Christ will never change. ATS's goal is to reach people where they are with the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. Nothing else matters. Everyone at ATS sees their work as serving Christ in their own way.

***Peter Batzing** has served as the editor and publishing director for the American Tract Society, www.atstracts.org, since 1996. He is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and lives in Richardson, Texas, USA, with his wife and young son. ATS is an interdenominational ministry based in Dallas, Texas, USA.*

Chinese Christian to lead OMF International

OMF International (formerly the China Inland Mission) has announced that Dr. Patrick Fung will become the tenth general director of the mission. Dr. Fung, a Chinese Christian, is the first Asian to lead the ministry, and succeeds the Rev. Dr. David Harley, who served as general director since 2001.

Dr. Fung became a Christian while a medical student in Sydney, Australia. He was admitted to the Royal College of Physicians in the United Kingdom and the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine and served as a doctor in Hong Kong specializing in internal medicine. He later received a diploma in Christian studies from the China Graduate School of Theology in Hong Kong and a masters degree in missiology from Fuller Theological Seminary.

He and his wife Jennie, a consultant gynecologist, joined OMF International in 1989 and began working within the Muslim context. In 1996 Fung was appointed director of OMF Hong Kong. This role included mobilizing students and graduates for mission and training church congregations, particularly Chinese churches, for the role they can play. In 2001 Fung was appointed OMF's international director for mobilization. He is currently based in Singapore.

Dr. James Hudson Taylor III, the seventh general director of OMF and great-grandson of its founder, said, "In the providence of our sovereign God, it is marvelous to see his hand raising up within OMF a godly leader from the Chinese church. One hundred and forty years ago God brought the China Inland Mission into being to share the gospel with the unreached peoples of China. Now, coming full circle, [God is raising up] a leader from a vibrant, mission-minded Chinese church and OMF [is taking] a step in global partnership in world evangelization."

The goal of OMF International is to glorify God through the urgent evangelization of East Asia's peoples. OMF currently has around 1,100 workers from more than twenty-five countries.

The Fungs have two children, Elaine and Samuel.

This article is edited from an OMF International, www.omf.org, press release.

WORLD PERSPECTIVES

February 2006

Contextualizing Cyberspace—Missiology Still Matters When it Comes to Cybermissions and Internet Evangelism

By John Edmiston

[**Cybermissions:** The intentional front-line cross-cultural use of computers and the Internet to facilitate the Great Commission.]

The Internet is being used worldwide to spread the gospel.

Search engines such as Google, Yahoo and MSN can help hundreds of millions of people who are interested in searching for faith to find the gospel. In fact, "God" is one of the top online search terms. For the first time in human history someone sitting at home can type in a spiritual query in their own language, (sixty percent of Google's searches are already in languages other than English) and be guided to an answer—if one is readily available online. The goal of cybermissions is to be there when these seekers ask questions and to lead them to faith and to integration in a local body of believers.

I have witnessed four phases of Internet evangelism since I first went online in 1991:

1. **Eccentric** – (early 1990s) Newsgroups, bulletin boards and online “flame wars” between Christians and atheists were common.
2. **Enthusiastic** – (mid 1990s) Online tracts with a gospel outline and a response form were available, but these were overwhelmingly in English.
3. **Evangelistic** – (late 1990s to present) Online tracts with snippets of audio and video and testimonies and links to items of interest to Western non-Christians are available. These same post-modern, Western-oriented websites are translated into various major languages in an effort to “reach the world for Jesus.”
4. **Ethnically Aware** – (2005 into the future) Indigenous missionaries and experienced Western missionaries combine to do highly contextualized and appropriate websites in their own languages and cultures without any corresponding English language website being established. These websites then link with on-the-ground efforts by those same agencies. The Western missionary may act as a technical and strategic adviser, but the design is done by national Christians who know that culture and its nuances.

The first three phases were good in their time and place but they occurred with little or no reference to modern missiological insights. Internet evangelists and cybermissionaries are beginning to understand the importance of learning language, culture and contextualization. Thus it is this last Ethnically Aware phase that is the true future of cybermissions.

This article will take a brief look at why mission agencies should be involved in Internet Evangelism (IE), how IE can be done and some of the ways that modern missiological insights can be applied to this field.

Why Missions Agencies Should Be Involved In Internet Evangelism

There are over one billion people online from nearly every country and from every unreached people group. According to a Pew Internet Survey, between twenty-five and forty percent of those people regularly search for religious topics online. The gospel has its own power and people can be converted simply by reading a Bible, browsing a tract or scanning a webpage. If missions is about spreading the message of the gospel, then cyberspace must be considered as a strategy.

If done properly, IE allows for very high levels of anonymity for both the missionary and the convert and is much safer than many conventional approaches. When people want to ask a private question, they go online. Questions that are embarrassing to ask in public (whether involving medicine, sexuality, politics or religion) will indeed be asked online. People with exploratory questions about Christianity will often first search online and missions agencies need to be there to respond.

Cybermissions allows for extensive use of volunteers and of people whose health does not permit them to be “on the field.” Some of these may indeed be highly effective cybermissionaries—such as nationals now living in the West or retired missionaries who have a deep knowledge of the language and culture but have come home for the education of their children or other factors.

With modern work-flow software, cybermissionaries can be seamlessly integrated with conventional missionary efforts—making for some very constructive synergies. Most indigenous missions movements have a substantial number of highly-qualified Christian Information Technology (IT) personnel who are not yet fully employed in that nation’s IT sector. For instance, a Filipino Christian computer scientist can do excellent work for around US\$300 a month. Outsourcing cybermissions-related IT work to indigenous Christian movements both strengthens those movements while also lowering costs for the mission agencies.

How Can We Do Cybermissions?

Many of the traditional missionary activities such as sharing the gospel, counseling, follow-up and training can be done online. Web pages can give a basic gospel outline and have a form attached allowing email feedback from the reader. This can be done anonymously if required. Follow-up lessons can be put online and forums and e-groups can be created for discussions between the missionary and any converts. With broadband becoming ever more available, audio and video feeds and Internet telephony are now possible.

This further increases the possibilities for outreach. MP3 files of sermons and radio programs can be "podcast" to anyone with a computer.

Training of leadership can be done via an online Bible school or through CDs, VCDs and DVDs of material sent to them and played on their computers. Increasingly common, digital projector technology allows larger churches to train large groups via an Internet-connected laptop linked to an LCD projector. In Japan, with large numbers of Internet-enabled cell phones, training can be personally delivered via the leader's cell phone. (For more information on this, visit <http://cybermissions.org/articles/cybermissions.htm>)

All this can occur while the missionary is safely asleep in another country, and the server is in yet another secure location. Email's asynchronous nature enables queries to be answered at a convenient time, and from anywhere in the world.

Each different people group will have different IT needs; some may have very little Internet connectivity, while others, such as those in China, have over one hundred million users online. The online outreach needs to be appropriate to the bandwidth and computer resources available to the target people group. If a people group has five thousand or more people connected to the Internet, cybermissions should be considered as a possible strategy, particularly if that people group is closed to traditional missionary approaches. (A list of the forty-three most suitable nations for a cybermissions approach can be found at: http://cybermissions.org/articles/cybermissions_target_nations.htm)

Cybermissions easily lends itself to tent-making because of the demand for IT services in most developing nations. A group of indigenous missionaries can be given recycled computers and set up to run an Internet cafe in an unreached people group. The Internet cafe provides revenue for the missions team, who then use the icafe as a community contact point for friendship evangelism. (More details on this approach can be found at: <http://cybermissions.org/icafe/>)

The response rate for online evangelism is about one decision per fifty page visits. This is about the same or higher than for traditional "crusade" evangelism. This is due to the fact that people tend to only go to websites when they have some existing curiosity about the material and have either clicked on a link or entered a query into a search engine. Alan Beeber from Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI) often says that CCCI will soon see more conversions online than by all other methods of CCCI evangelism combined. If open source software is used and a good pool of volunteers is created, IE is also extremely cost-effective, often at under US\$10 per online decision for Christ.

Missiology Still Matters

Technology does not replace missiology and cybermissionaries still have to learn the language and the culture and still need to contextualize their message to the target audience.

We need to trust the emerging Church in the developing world and the highly-capable indigenous missionaries that it is producing (and the incredible IT talent that can be found everywhere from Bangalore to Botswana). The national believers know God, know computers and know the language and culture of their target groups and we need to advise them, fund them and then get out of the way! For US\$1,500 a month, a small team of three highly-trained, professional, national cybermissionaries can be fully funded. This includes software and hosting costs.

We cannot throw away the gains of missionary communication theory and the debates on contextualization by having Western websites simply translated into Chinese or Kiswahili and put online! The goal of missionary practice is to develop a culturally-sensitive, self-replicating, indigenous church and our cybermissions strategies should reflect this.

Cybermissionaries should be connected to the local church and be able to address deep worldview cultural issues such as spiritism, polygamy, shame and face, HIV/AIDS and the extended family. They should also be able to connect as cyber pen-pals and mentors, sharing the deep heartaches of those who come online and often share amazingly personal information with complete strangers. This requires genuine cultural affinity and the resources of local believers who know the language and culture.

Western website design criteria may be entirely inappropriate in another culture. Chinese like their websites to be very cluttered and visually active; Filipinos often distrust the color blue; and some groups dislike certain graphic images like playing cards. Images of attractive casually-dressed young Christian women that are acceptable in the West can actually be offensive in many cultures. Thus a cybermissions team has to design a unique website for each target group and list it in Google (or on a local search engine in, say, Mongolia) with corresponding tightly-targeted keywords. This requires an enormous amount of careful thinking and frequent website redesign and improvement. This is best done by a team of cybermissionaries who are familiar with the culture (though they may live in another country).

The question always comes up about how online contacts can join a local body of believers. The clearest answer to this question comes from the phenomenon of online dating which clearly proves that relationships begun online can turn into serious life commitments in the real world! Online contact merges into offline reality quite easily, especially now that search engines include the ability to do "local" searches. According to Tony Whittaker, postmodern churches see as many as eighty percent of their Sunday visitors come via a "first contact" at the church website (<http://ied.gospelcom.net/>). However, there are some very important questions that need to be explored about online ecclesiology and the nature of online support groups, e-groups and bulletin boards and whether cyber-church exists and whether it can successfully nurture home churches and secret believers.

In the developing world, computers are now viewed as a natural part of youth and professional culture and represent positive values such as prosperity, education and opportunity. In these nations, human aspirations and the Internet are closely connected. If we can use this moment to reach out to people who are preparing to change and who are seeking God online then we can reap a harvest of souls. But we must do it in line with missionary best practice, trusting the local believers and creating culturally-sensitive, deeply-contextualized and thought-through cyber-outreaches that create a truly independent and strong indigenous church.

John Edmiston is chairman and CEO of the Asian Internet Bible Institute and www.Cybermissions.org.

Media and Outreach: The Search for Bridges of Relevance

By Ron Forseth

The mission of Outreach, Inc., www.outreach.com/, is to empower Christian churches to reach their communities for Jesus Christ. To do this, we seek to identify and utilize timely and appropriate bridges of relevance by which churches can engage the culture. These bridges are comparable to the redemptive analogies found in cultures around the world and described by Don Richardson in his book *Peace Child*. The idea is to identify those openings in the hearts of people by which the concepts of the gospel can be conveyed and take root.

Before Outreach decides to encourage thousands of churches to rally around an opportunity, certain criteria must be met. Substantial resources are required to promote an effective outreach and churches have much competing for their attention. In the case of movie-based bridges of relevance, such films need to meet the following three criteria:

1. The highest standard of excellence in production quality.
2. The right content which empowers a direct and powerful presentation of the message of redemption.
3. An appeal not just to the churched or the unchurched, but to both types of moviegoers.

In the cases of *The Passion of the Christ* and *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Outreach concluded both movies had met these criteria. (The broad appeal of Mel Gibson's *The Passion* developed with the controversy and hype surrounding it.)

These movies allowed churches and Christians to confidently say, "Go see the movie, then come discuss its meaning with me."

Other movies, including *Left Behind*, *A Walk to Remember*, *Polar Express* and many others have relevant

spiritual content, but for a variety of reasons did not rise to the level of *The Passion and Narnia*. There may be hundreds of movies that provide an opportunity for individual churches to do an outreach of some type, but thus far Outreach has found two films which meet the requirements of a national outreach.

(Note: While Outreach has supported the promotion of Every Tribe Entertainment's *End of the Spear* and sees it as an excellent film presenting a story worthy of national attention, it was difficult to confidently anticipate that it would indeed capture the widespread attention of society. Gratefully, at least in limited measure, it has.)

In the cases of *The Passion and Narnia*, Outreach used comprehensive resources to gain the attention of churches and direct them toward effective outreach. These resources included: cover stories in Outreach Magazine, the development of an array of communication tools, the hosting or co-sponsoring of nationwide events to explain the outreach opportunities and the extensive promotion of the outreach opportunity via widespread media channels.

Promoting The Passion and Narnia

The promotion of *The Passion and Narnia* took two different paths. With *The Passion*, a rough cut of the film was ready early enough to be used in the marketing strategy. While many things contributed to the "tipping point" which made *The Passion* the phenomenon that it was, one element made a particular difference: the screening events were held over a period of several weeks preceding the release of the movie. National, enthusiastic support was garnered when, in the span of about a month, three large standing-room-only screenings were held, one at Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois, one at Saddleback Church in California and one at the Orlando, Florida meetings of the Global Pastor's Network. Nearly twelve thousand pastors were able to view the film prior to its release. In a short while, the country went from almost no Christians having seen the movie to almost every Christian knowing at least one trusted person who was heartily endorsing it. Pastors recommended the film to other pastors in their communities who in turn recommended it to their congregations. This seemed to be the flashpoint which ignited the fire that spread not just across the country but to the whole world.

Narnia promotion was different. Since a rough cut of the movie was not available until just before the release of the film, the Mission America Coalition, Outreach and many others sought to mobilize more than ten thousand church leaders through nearly 150 local and regional "Sneak Peek" events nationwide. Because the events did not include a full screening of the movie, it was difficult to gain the unreserved and wildly enthusiastic endorsements as had occurred with *The Passion*.

Nonetheless, Outreach, Inc. was able to work as Official Church Resource Provider for both films and did so with a passion of its own. Both were opportunities to empower churches to reach out. It was our desire not simply to promote the films, but also to draw moviegoers back to churches where they could hear a fuller presentation of the gospel and could grow spiritually in the environment of Christian fellowship. The communication tools we provided—postcards, banners, personal invitations, door hangers, sample sermons and more—encouraged people not only to see the movies but also to visit a local church.

And with both movies, Outreach worked with thousands of churches to do just that. Churches engaged with *The Passion* to invite more than ten million people to church. In addition, churches distributed well over three million *Passion*-related evangelistic booklets.

However, with *Narnia*'s preferred rating ("PG" instead of *The Passion*'s "R") and broader audience (children, adults and a core audience of *Lord-of-the-Rings*-style fans rather than the typical gospel-loving Christian), *Narnia* has been able to gain similar success at the box office as did *The Passion*. *The Passion* grossed over \$610 million at the box office worldwide; *Narnia* is already over the \$550 million mark (mid-January 2006), even as it remains in theaters and will certainly do so for many more weeks.

It is rare when both the Church and society in general find a movie that captures both of their attentions. The future will show what films will be used to help the Church engage the culture. *Narnia*'s second movie, almost sure to be produced, will lack the front-and-center crucifixion imagery. And society certainly won't soon be asking for another film that lifts Christ and his cross up for reflective consideration, as *The Passion and Narnia* have. But as long as the world prefers to use movies as the place for exchanging ideas, the Church will certainly engage in the same space to present its most important messages.

And the Church does not need to wait for a national blockbuster in order to utilize movies for outreach. Many families are looking for an affordable evening of entertainment and churches can offer it to them with a "Community Movie Night." Some, like Columbus Evangelical Church in Columbus, Montana, USA offer monthly or quarterly movie nights. Consider *A Walk to Remember*, *Joshua*, *Chariots of Fire*, *Second Chance*, *Cinderella Man*, *Fly Wheel*, *Because of Win Dixie* or *Hoosiers*. See www.movieministry.com/ for more information. Or visit www.cvli.org/ and after choosing your country of origin, click on "Producers" to discover a goldmine of film producers and their movies, many appropriate for church outreach movie nights. (Screening licenses for legal public showings can also be obtained from www.cvli.org/.)

Standing Firm as New Movies Fight for Societal Beliefs

Ironically, the next movie to capture the public's attention will most likely be one that is hostile to the gospel and the basic tenants of the faith, namely, *The Da Vinci Code*. The assignment of the Church will be to assert not just the gospel, but to also present its case for the basic assumptions of the gospel. These include the deity and purity of Christ, his death and resurrection, the reliability of the Bible, the virgin birth and the very right of the Church to represent Christ and the message of salvation. This calls for wisdom as we run the risk of increasing the viewership of the movie just by engaging in the discussion. This is seemingly an unavoidable outcome, but one that needs to be risked if we are to counter what the movie teaches. If we remain passive, we run the risk of conceding substantial ground to the secular and spiritual forces bent on deconstructing the Church and opposing the gospel. The stakes are very high as the story invariably drives people from or to Christ. Thankfully, Lee Strobel, Josh McDowell, Erwin Lutzer, Darrel Bock and other leaders and writers are leading the charge in an appropriate engagement of the culture around *The Da Vinci Code*. And so, Outreach, along with the Mission America Coalition, Zondervan, Church Communication Network, Parable Stores and numerous other ministries and resource providers, will be in the fray, equipping the Church to prudently invite the unchurched to seek not the obscure and changing truth as warped by *The Da Vinci Code*, but the real truth as given clearly in scripture.

The Church is the steward of the gospel message and will continue to present and defend it throughout history. At this point in history, movies are the focal point of the public's attention—and therefore an important venue for engaging the culture.

Ron Forseth is vice president of Outreach, Inc., www.outreach.com.

Engaging a New Generation through Media

By Tom Newman

Twenty years ago, I led a group of young people on a tour through England with the stage show "Toymaker & Son." After performing on a makeshift stage in a packed room at a local YMCA, I felt inspired to take the microphone and communicate a vision that had been emerging in my life. I still remember the curious looks my wife and several close friends gave me as I proclaimed that "we were called to reach a sight and sound generation with the gospel of Jesus Christ through music, theater and film." Pretty bold words for the assistant principal of a Christian school in Oklahoma, USA. Now, after three internationally touring live shows, two documentary films, over fifty television commercials, two internationally broadcast children's series, two feature-length movies and the current theatrical release of a new film, I look back in wonder that I'm still here, pursuing that same vision.

Of course the cultural, political and spiritual landscape of the world has changed since that day in England. However, the need to reach a sight and sound generation has not. Saying that today's culture is consumed and controlled by media is overstating the obvious. From films, books, television and videogames, media and the art of storytelling have become the currency of culture and influence in our world. And though it's often an unconventional method within the body of Christ, I can't think of a greater place to communicate the stories and truths of God than through these mediums.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus chose some unconventional means of his own to communicate his message. He toured the countryside and told stories. Though it hardly seemed like an effective means of communicating such important truth, there he was talking about farmers, wedding banquets, wineskins and mustard seeds. Of course our modern Bible translations with their comprehensive footnotes can tell

us exactly what each of these stories meant. But the meanings weren't that clear for those who were actually there, not even for the twelve disciples. So with a message so important, why not just come out and tell people exactly what he meant? In the Gospel of Mark we find the disciples asking Jesus a similar question to which he responds, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom—you know how it works. But to those who can't see it yet, everything comes in stories, creating readiness, nudging them toward receptive insight...All my stories work this way" (Mark 4:10-13; *The Message*). Philosopher and literary critic Kenneth Burke says that "stories are equipment for living." From his ministry on earth, this seems to be an idea that Jesus understood quite well. And it's a remarkable thing that the God who incarnated himself as a man also chose to incarnate eternal truths through an equally unexpected means.

If I wanted to convince or educate an audience of the terrible dangers that great white sharks pose to beach-going vacationers, I could probably deliver a moving speech packed with relevant facts and startling statistics. And I might actually persuade a handful of people to spend their vacations away from salt water. But in 1975 a director by the name of Steven Spielberg devastated the beach tourism industry with his thrilling story *Jaws*. Consider also: *Bambi*, which tells of the evils of hunting; *Cider House Rules*, which persuades that abortion is a humane and necessary practice; and *Mary Poppins*, which reminds busy fathers to spend more time with their children. It seems that a well-told story is the greatest way to make an idea—be it true or false—come alive.

End of the Spear

Last year I co-produced the film *End of the Spear* with Every Tribe Entertainment, which was released in theaters 20 January. The movie is based on the true story of the five martyred missionaries made famous by Elisabeth Elliot's book, *Through Gates of Splendor*. Countless sermons, news articles and books have told the story over the last fifty years. From the beginning of the creative process, it was our desire to incarnate the eternal truths of forgiveness, sacrifice and love within a well-told story uniquely suited to film. Most people have heard the story from the viewpoint of the missionaries (Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully, Nate Saint and Roger Youderian), but through the direction of veteran film maker Bill Ewing, executive producer Mart Green, and director Jim Hanon, we approached the story from the virtually unknown perspective of the violent Waodani tribe who killed them. Not many know that in the few years after the missionaries' deaths, the Waodani changed from being the most violent tribe in documented history to a peaceful people. Even today, many in the tribe call themselves "God followers." When I look back, I don't think we could have found a better way to encapsulate the truth of God's power to change the human soul than through the story of a tribe who lived through such an incredible transformation. After screening the film with critics, church groups and prominent Christian leaders, we were overjoyed with the predominantly positive response. Of course there are some who might have preferred that the film include more references to God or more detailed information on how a sinner can become saved. But as the filmmakers and storytellers for *End of the Spear*, our focus was just that—to make a film and tell a story.

The Chronicles of Narnia

In recent months C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* entered the cultural landscape with a huge presence. Much has been said of Lewis' belief that a story can sneak truth past what he called "the watchful dragons" of a hardened heart or unreceptive audience. Judging by book sales and movie receipts from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, one could probably say that Lewis not only sneaked past these "dragons," he also slayed them. I hope this will serve as a reminder to other Christian artists, authors and filmmakers who desire to express eternal truth to this generation.

In 1988 and 1989, our company, Impact Productions (www.daretomakecontact.com), was given the remarkable opportunity to slip past the "watchful dragons" of Communist Russia with the live dance show "A Toymaker's Dream." Before we came, I made sure to clearly outline the symbolic, biblical meaning of our show to the Russian officials who would allow us entrance into their country. I even told them that our reason for coming to Russia was to tell the Soviet people that God loves them. Their response was surprising: "Do you think we are stupid? We could see all that from watching your show. But you cannot say those kinds of things in our country. Do you understand?" Of course we gladly accepted an offer that allowed us to demonstrate the love of Jesus through a story, rather than just telling the Soviet people about it. To this day, I am still amazed at the warm embrace we received from this strongly atheist nation.

As Christians, our countless rapture stories and bath-robed sermons have left a funny aftertaste in

people's mouths. We often pack so much message in our stories that they are stripped of enjoyment and effectiveness. Though such heavy handed efforts have been applauded in years past, in many ways it has only encouraged others to tell even more stories through such ineffective means. John Akers, publisher of Christianity Today, bluntly asks, "Where are the creative men and women—the writers, artists, filmmakers—who will capture the imagination of our confused world in the name of Christ?" I pray that many young people will begin to answer this call to the media and engage a new generation with well-told stories. Only when this happens will we reach a sight and sound generation.

Tom Newman is founder and president of Impact Productions, www.daretomakecontact.com. As a producer his work includes the feature film "End of the Spear," the children's series "Pahappahoey Island" and the holiday film "Christmas Child."

Seekers and Skeptics at Your Door: Internet Evangelism and You

By Rusty Wright

Could God use you to reach people for Christ via the Internet? The answer may surprise you. What if you could interact personally with seekers at their points of keenest interest, when they felt relaxed and under no pressure to respond and invited your thoughts and insight into spiritual matters? Consider the following story.

Email Query

Jaime (not his real name) emailed after reading one of my Internet articles about life after death. He was a recent college graduate and didn't believe in one God; he was, however, terribly afraid of death. From his studies of anthropology, he felt that believing in an afterlife was merely wishful thinking to assuage one's fears. Nonetheless, he emailed this query: "I'm looking for the truth and I would appreciate it if you would show me a little of what you've found."

I told Jaime that I, too, had wrestled with skepticism and fear of death. I related that my wife's undergraduate degree was in anthropology and that she has still continued to use her inquisitive mind both in work and faith since becoming a follower of Jesus. I explained that I had come to know Christ in college and sent him links to Internet articles on anxiety, evidences for Jesus' resurrection and the gospel.

Jaime appreciated the articles, and after reading them he placed his faith in Christ! He said he could see his life changing. His emotional problems were beginning to clear up, his outlook was becoming more positive and he was beginning to think more of others and less about himself. I sent him links to an online Bible and other articles to help him grow in faith. He planned to attend church.

God used the Internet to take the gospel message into Jaime's living room. Then he used the Internet to bring Jaime into my living room (via email) for some conversation. The result: Angels rejoiced in heaven as a new believer passed from death to life.

I'm No Techie!

"How could I ever use the Internet to reach people for Christ?" you might wonder. Your skills may have thus far been restricted to sending emails and reading the news online. You are not alone. My technical knowledge is also limited. For years, I was even hesitant to use an ATM (Automatic Teller Machine) at the bank, for fear I would do something wrong and it would swallow my ATM card.

Gradually, I overcame my technophobia and began to use computers for word processing. However, I still used somewhat primitive setups. Only in 1998 did I switch from the rather archaic DOS operating system to Windows because a friend said I should "get with the (1990s) before the (1990s) are over!"

Figuring Out Your Own Talents

We all have talents and abilities. A key to usefulness is making our talents available to God. Your talents may be in building friendships, engaging in conversations, answering questions, inspiring people or telling stories. God can use those.

My own interests involve communication, especially relating Christ to secular (general) audiences. Over the years I've written numerous evangelistic articles to help reach nonbelievers. Several years ago, a couple of friends involved in Internet ministry, Keith Seabourn and Allan Beeber, asked me to send them my articles so they could put them online. Although I didn't understand what this entailed exactly, they said it would make the articles available free to people all over the world. That seemed like a good thing.

Keith's website, Leadership University (www.leaderu.com/), aimed to collect thousands of articles supporting the validity of the Christian faith. Allan's website, Evangelism Toolbox (www.evangelism.com/), became an online "Yellow Pages" (directory) of evangelism resources. Both helped introduce me to Internet outreach.

The Digital Revolution

At a convention in Amsterdam a few years ago, I saw a brochure that read, "The Great Commission is Going Digital; Are You Ready?" That piqued my interest. Maybe God wanted me to focus my energies on Internet Evangelism.

The brochure spoke of the then-fledgling Internet Evangelism Coalition (www.webevangelism.org). I started to hang out with and learn from the individuals involved in this ministry. I began to write more for the Web and soon my articles began to appear online. The simplicity and pervasive nature of the Internet was allowing people to find and use these articles in ways I had never imagined. I could sit with my laptop in my office, on an airplane or in a hotel room and compose an article that would tactfully nudge people toward Christ and biblical principles.

This seemed almost too good to be true. What a potential for spreading good news!

A Simple Prayer

While jogging one morning in August 2003, I felt impressed to pray that within a year, I would be aware of one hundred websites that had used my articles. At the time, I was aware of forty-three. A year later, I learned of the 100th site that had used this material. Some sites publish the articles and others link to them. The articles appear in several languages, including English, Spanish, Albanian, Chinese, Croatian, French, German, Hungarian, Italian and Polish. People keep translating and posting them. God gets the glory for this.

A surprising number of the sites are not Christian. For instance, one site linked to a version of one article, "Elvis has Left the Building," which traces the fascination with Elvis Presley and its spiritual implications. An Argentine medical school website published a translation of another article, "One Minute after Death," which discusses near-death experiences.

Some secular newspaper sites ran material. Personal websites and "blogs" (weblogs) linked to articles. I did not contact these websites to ask them to use my articles. Many content managers simply found the articles on the Web and used them. Some secular newspapers, personal websites and weblogs have also contained various articles. Many of these articles can be found at www.probe.org/Rusty.

What Can You Do?

Some Christian Internet partners are seeing hundreds—in some cases, thousands—of their website visitors indicate decisions to trust in Christ. They connect inquirers with online volunteers who seek to answer their questions, help them grow in the faith and point them to a church. It's a team effort that is bearing much fruit.

Internet Evangelism (IE) offers a dazzling array of possibilities to communicate Christ. Writing articles is just one method. You may want to interact with unbelievers in a chat room, correspond via email, communicate on a blog, design your own website and/or pray for or support web outreach financially. Excellent IE training and volunteer or fulltime IE opportunities exist.

You can also encourage your church or Christian group to participate in Internet Evangelism Day, www.internetevangelismday.com/. This international focus day is designed to help Christians learn more about the potential of the Web for outreach. The site explains how to create a short focus program to include in church services or other activities.

The important thing is to ask God what he would have you do. In John 2:5, Mary told the servants, "Whatever he [Jesus] says to you, do it." Ask God to enlarge your borders. He did it for Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:10). Maybe he wants to do it for you, too. I hope he does.

Editors Note: The April issue of Lausanne World Pulse will focus on ways the Internet is being used for evangelism and outreach.

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Media Evangelism among the Unreached

By Justin Long

The amount of media evangelism among the unreached really is amazing. The Western world is media-rich, and missionaries worldwide have learned to use this medium very effectively.

Audiocassettes and CDs are widely used in some countries. For example, the North Africa Partnership has used tapes with recordings of the JESUS Film for evangelism. Tapes and CDs have three benefits: (1) they can be played at convenient times, (2) they can be replayed at future (convenient) times and (3) they can be copied.

Radio Broadcasting

Radio broadcasting is also widely available. A quick scan of the World Christian Database reveals that over 5.8 billion people are touched by Christian radio and television broadcasts. I remember surveying many of these resources when I worked with the World Christian Encyclopedia and was amazed at the breadth of broadcasts, including ones from Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC), FEBA, Trans World Radio (TWR) and HCJB World Radio. However, I did not know of the large variety of television, satellite and local radio broadcasts that were available. For example, Radio Tirane (in Albania) used to broadcast atheist programming, and is now used to broadcast Christian programs. SAT-7 airs all over the Middle East. Many people don't think about groups like the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) or LeSEA, but both broadcasting groups are airing in many unreached nations. Radio has an advantage over audiocassette: it is virtually an unstoppable medium for transmitting new programming. Tapes can be copied; however, it is not always easy to get new tapes. Radio broadcasts can be recorded with a receiver.

Film

Film, too, is widely used. The JESUS Film has been translated into 920 languages, representing six billion people. Translation into another 232 languages is in progress. The JESUS Film has been viewed by over 5.4 billion people (including multiple viewings) in 228 countries (it has been shown on television in 176 countries). Over two hundred million decisions for Christ have been recorded. Other films are also seeing results. Film, of course, has the benefit of being visual and is an incredibly powerful medium for engaging the mind and the emotions.

Videocassettes

Videocassettes and DVDs are visual, but they can be copied. They go like wildfire all over the Middle East and Asia, where video piracy is widespread. Sunday School programs like VeggieTales and Superbook are especially enjoyed. I have not been able to find any statistics on the number of these in circulation—I doubt anyone really knows—but my guess is that the number is quite large. DVDs and videocassettes are perhaps one of the best formats for media. Further, they can be recorded from television. Using television and videocassettes hand in hand builds the synergistic value of both.

Internet

The Internet is becoming a burgeoning field for media evangelism. It represents the future of media delivery. The JESUS Film is now being streamed over the Internet. Podcasts are being aired (although few Christians make use of this for evangelizing the unreached). Still, whenever I hear people say we are a "post-typographic nation" or "we just don't read anymore," it's funny to me because the rising generation

reads as much as they watch. They read emails, blogs, websites and more. The only difference is that we don't read as much on printed paper as we once did.

There is a downside to all this activity. Namely, that many people in the 10/40 Window are not being affected by these methods. Just because radio broadcasts are being aired doesn't mean large numbers of people are listening to them. The same goes for satellite television, which is banned in some countries in the Middle East.

Suggestions for Reaching the Unreached Via Media

Here are two areas where I think we could do better:

1. The JESUS Film works among peoples that are not very media-savvy, but not as well in media-rich environments. World B (majority evangelized, minority-Christian) countries like China and India and even some countries in the Middle East and Southeast Asia are becoming very media-savvy. Qatar, for example, is well-known as a media capital, and the latest DVDs are commonly found throughout Asia. The JESUS Film is, unfortunately, somewhat dated, having been filmed in the 1970s. In some cases it may be hard to get a young person today to connect with it. This is often the case with Christian films; I've watched some that were supposedly aimed at young people that unfortunately featured talking heads which gave long speeches of ten minutes or more. When videos focus on the same face in the same position for more than a minute or two, most viewers will lose concentration. We need new video approaches, but we should also concentrate on broadening the use of the JESUS Film among World A peoples who are not yet media-savvy and where film is something new and wonderful. There it will be most effective at communicating the gospel.

2. While there are exciting things going on with Internet Evangelism, it's still evolving. We have to find new, innovative methods and mediums that will work in conjunction with print on the Internet. We need great bloggers who can attract people with their witty, powerful, insightful examinations of current situations, trends and explanations of the Christian faith (as C. S. Lewis once did). We need people who can develop innovative, faith-filled, dramatic/humorous video shorts that will be copied as widely as pornography (check out Google Video to see what's popular, <http://video.google.com/>).

For all media, we need to more widely incorporate non-westerners. We need to be actively recruiting media-savvy young people who are familiar with the people being reached. Perhaps this could be a new "short-term" mission of the future—to put together a team that would develop good evangelistic media that could be released under an open-source license and would be free for copying. Perhaps such a "film camp" could be sponsored by organizations like Youth With A Mission (YWAM) or Campus Crusade for Christ (CCCI). The results could be useful resources that would spark prayer or be used in evangelism. The question is, Who will be willing to take up the challenge?

Justin Long manages strategicnetwork.org and is senior editor for *Momentum*, a magazine devoted to unreached peoples.

PEOPLES OF THE WORLD

Into Their World...The Afar (Danakil) of Ethiopia

By Laurie Fortunak

Claiming to be descendents of Ham, Noah's son, the Afar (Danakil) of Ethiopia have had a very turbulent history. The Afar are a proud people, valuing power and prestige, the latter which many times comes from killing one's enemies. Other groups of Afar can be found in Djibouti, Somalia and Eritrea. As the Arabic word "danakil" is an offensive term to them, members refer to themselves as the Afar.

The Afar are divided into two groups: the Asaemara, prestigious and powerful nobles who primarily live

in Assayita; and the Adaemara, commoners who live in the desert area of the Afar Plain (a.k.a. Danakil Desert). One specific area of this desert land is the Danakil Depression, a vast plain of salt pans and active volcanoes which lies two hundred feet below sea level. Here, the daily temperature can reach 52 degrees Celsius (125 degrees Fahrenheit).

Most Afar are nomadic, herding sheep, goats, cattle and camels. Those who are not herdsmen earn a living by harvesting slabs of solid salt during the dry season. A few Afar work in the country's capitol, Addis Ababa, where they hold government jobs. Of those who live in the desert, many live in oval-shaped huts called ari, which are made of palm mats and are easily moved. The Afar camps are surrounded by thorn barricades which protect them from wild animals and enemy tribesmen.

Afar marriages are typically monogamous and girls may marry as early as the age of ten. Marriages between first cousins are preferred and the presence of someone able to read the Koran is required at the marriage ceremony.

Meat and milk are staples of the Afar diet, with milk serving a dual role as a social offering. When a guest is given fresh warm milk, the host is implying that they will provide immediate protection for the guest. If the guest is killed while under that protection, it is imperative the host avenge the person's death.

Since the tenth century, when the Afar converted to Islam after making contact with Arabs, Islam has played an important role in the lives and beliefs of this people group. It is estimated that the vast majority of Afar are Muslim. However, their faith is highly syncretic and includes pre-Islamic beliefs, including the belief that certain trees and groves have sacred powers. Older customs are also practiced, including an annual offering to the sea to ensure safety for the villages during the November rainy season. Because spirits of the dead are thought to be very powerful, an annual Rabena, or "feast of the dead," is celebrated.

The Afar of Ethiopia are in desperate need of hearing the gospel. It is thought that only one percent of the Afar are Christians. Portions of the Bible have been translated into Afar. For more information on the Afar (Danakil) of Ethiopia, visit:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afar_\(ethnicity\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afar_(ethnicity))

For ministry-related information on the Afar (Danakil) of Ethiopia, visit:

www.ksafe.com/profiles/p_code5/1704.html

www.2001pray.org/PeopleGroups/Afar.htm

www.peopleteams.org/Selection.htm and click on specific region of the world (North Africa and Middle East to learn more about the Afar)

(Information compiled from www.joshuaproject.net/)

(Note: The website links above are intended to provide you with more information about this people group. Some of the links are to groups that are not religious in nature but who provide information and background that may be helpful in researching this people group. The content of each of the websites linked to is the sole responsibility of the linked-to organization. Views expressed on these websites do not necessarily reflect the opinions and beliefs of the staff or writers of Lausanne World Pulse or those of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, Institute of Strategic Evangelism, Evangelism and Missions Information Service or Intercultural Studies Department.)

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TRENDS, STATISTICS AND STRATEGIES

World Evangelization Analysis – Strategy Working Group

By Paul Eshleman

When we speak of world evangelization, we look at the macro strategies that must be employed so that all the peoples of the earth have an opportunity to:

- * Hear the gospel
- * In their "heart" language
- * Near where they live
- * With access to a healthy indigenous church

To see this accomplished, many barriers must be overcome. Each month members of the Lausanne Strategy Working Group look at different barriers and highlight the latest thinking, strategies and models that may contribute to solutions. One of these includes understanding the task of world evangelization, which is awesome in its scope, its complexity and its challenge. Yet our Lord told us that before he came again to this earth that his gospel would be preached as a witness to all the nations. He would not command us to do something that we could not accomplish. Determining how we should best go about fulfilling this command is a challenge for every pastor, missionary and organizational leader.

The first five books of the New Testament give us some of our biblical basis.

- Matthew 28:18-28 speaks of the DEPTH of the Great Commission.
- Mark 16:15 speaks of the BREADTH of the Great Commission.
- Luke 24:46-47 speaks of the SURETY of the Great Commission.
- John 20:21 speaks of the MODEL of the Great Commission.
- Acts 1:8 speaks of the EXTENT of the Great Commission.

During the Amsterdam 2000 conference, 520 strategists in world evangelization from 122 countries gathered to discuss one penetrating question: What must we do in the coming decade to complete the task of world evangelization? They discussed many of the barriers to evangelization and called on Christian leaders to make the following twelve objectives a priority:

1. To work toward the planting of churches within every remaining people group as we seek to evangelize and make disciples
2. To accelerate the multiplication of church planting movements in the 10/40 Window and other needy areas in order to give closer geographical opportunity for discipleship, worship and continuing evangelism
3. To continue to mobilize significant, strategic focused prayer for the unfinished task and to raise up workers for the harvest
4. To work together more intentionally and inclusively, through alliances, networks and partnerships—sharing contacts, information and resources (We do this to demonstrate unity with one another as evidence of the deity of Christ and his love for the world.)
5. To empower and provide training in evangelism, discipleship and church planting for younger leaders as well as laypeople
6. To encourage extensive and innovative initiatives to reach and disciple children and young people in each new generation
7. To allocate a much larger portion of our resources toward the least-reached areas of the world
8. To seek to use media, technology and other creative means more effectively to spread the gospel among the masses

9. To stay personally involved in grassroots evangelism so that our presentation of the biblical gospel is relevant, contextualized and meaningful
10. To live out the gospel as we seek to meet the physical and social needs of those to whom we minister with practical expressions of love and compassion
11. To assist in the work of scripture translation and distribution, recognizing its necessity as a foundation for all evangelism and church growth
12. To ensure that all of our strategic plans of evangelism are biblically based and guided by the fourfold scope of Acts 1:8 (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth)

So What Are We Going To Do About These Barriers?

Soon after the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization was created, a Strategy Working Group was formed to help encourage leaders within the Church to prioritize the task of evangelization while seeking solutions to some of its biggest barriers. In a recent meeting of the Strategy Working Group we affirmed again the conclusion from Amsterdam 2000 and added two more priorities:

1. To ensure a greater emphasis toward the oral learners of our world
2. To find out why there is so little change in redirecting the efforts of the church towards the least reached

The Strategy Working Group hopes to help in overcoming these barriers by:

1. Focusing the attention of the church on the most neglected peoples of the world;
2. Finding and spreading "best practices," tools and methodologies; and
3. Connecting a network of activists in evangelization who through their influence make a difference in plans for evangelization being designed by leaders of the church.

What Can You Do As A Leader?

1. Make sure that you are working on at least one of these fourteen priorities
2. Share with us what is working in your area of the world (peshleman@lausanne.org)
3. Attempt to allocate your resources to the most neglected

Paul Eshleman is chairman of the Lausanne Strategy Working Group and vice president of Campus Crusade for Christ, www.ccci.org/. He also founded and directed the JESUS Film Project (JFP). During his twenty-five years of directing the JFP, the film was translated into nearly nine hundred languages and shown in 236 countries.

LAUSANNE REPORT

February 2006

Strengthening and Uniting the American Church through Media Outreach

By Jim Overholt

The Mission America Coalition* (**MAC, www.missionamerica.org/**) was formed with the vision of "the whole Church taking the whole gospel to the whole nation," and for many years has carried out that charter as the "behind-the-scenes" organizer of a long series of successful national evangelism initiatives. While there have been many opportunities for successful, national campaigns in a variety of different areas, MAC had never been involved in promoting a movie as an evangelism opportunity until 2004 when actor Mel Gibson and Motive Entertainment approached MAC about helping to promote The Passion of the Christ movie to the faith community.

The Passion of the Christ Movie

The traditional Hollywood establishment had turned their backs on Gibson's effort to accurately and dramatically portray the suffering of Christ in a high-quality cinematic production, so Gibson elected to financially underwrite the production himself, and seek help from non-traditional sources for marketing and distribution. Motive, a faith and family marketing company, was retained to help organize the effort, and MAC was approached to help mobilize the Church as a primary audience in support of the movie.

MAC determined quickly that while it is not in the business of promoting movies, it is in the business of promoting evangelism opportunities, and that the release of this movie had great potential for teaching as well as outreach in local communities. The MAC board saw the film not only as a unique national evangelism opportunity, but also as a potential watershed event in a culture that has become increasingly dominated by a morally bankrupt media establishment. It was time, for "the whole Church" to stand up and be counted.

MAC staff consulted with Motive and with Gibson's production company about how to approach the Christian community to encourage them to use the movie as a teaching and evangelism opportunity, and how to mobilize them in support of the film itself. MAC helped develop and distribute promotional materials, engaged the support of denominational and national ministry leaders and organized movie screenings and other promotional events in over one hundred key cities throughout the United States. Using the City and Community Ministry network of local church and community leaders, MAC partners sponsored, resourced and helped orchestrate these meetings at churches and other local ministry locations, and then facilitated the purchase of large blocks of theater tickets and even entire theater seatings for local churches to share the movie with friends and neighbors.

Due in large part to these efforts, the movie turned out to be a record-breaking blockbuster, and became the watershed media and cultural event MAC had anticipated. The Church had come together publicly, on a nationwide scale, and with a unity of purpose and consistency of message not seen for a long time. The effort served not only to revive public discussions of such bedrock Christian themes as Christ's love for us, his sacrifice and resurrection, and what that means to each of us personally; but also served to re-engage the church as an important influence on the entertainment industry and, in turn, on the culture. During the campaign and in the months following, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) received an all-time record number of comments from the public about the profanity and obscenity that has become all-too-common in the public media, and as a result assessed a record number of fines and license suspensions against companies and individuals who had been some of the worst offenders. There emerged a new awareness by the Church of the media's toxic effect on the culture, and a new willingness to address the issue.

The Chronicles of Narnia Movie

While the Mission America Coalition was pleased with the results of The Passion campaign, it didn't expect to become involved with the film industry again any time soon. As a result, when The Chronicles of Narnia movie came to MAC's attention early last year, it was supportive, but not inclined to get directly involved as it had with The Passion. But as MAC began to consider the potential of a blockbuster fantasy and adventure film, which would likely have great popular appeal and reach deep into our culture—far deeper than The Passion did with its "R" rating and overtly Christian theme—it began to watch Narnia's development very carefully. If Narnia could be made with the highest artistic and production quality of Hollywood, while still retaining the wonderful Christian themes and imagery that C.S. Lewis had woven into his imaginative stories, it could present a truly remarkable opportunity for evangelism. As MAC became convinced that both of these criteria would be met by Walden Media (the producer) with oversight by the C.S. Lewis Estate, MAC became increasingly excited about the opportunity and decided to support the film.

MAC's effort to promote the evangelism opportunities afforded by the release of Narnia was a much larger and far more complex undertaking than the campaign with The Passion. It was larger in the sense that MAC needed to start by bringing church leaders to the same level of appreciation of the film's potential value as an evangelism tool, and secondly because to go deeper into the culture meant that MAC needed to go deeper into the Christian community with the message. As a result, MAC spent a great deal of time and effort designing and helping produce outreach-oriented promotional materials, including thousands of "Narnia event-in-a-box" kits which contained samples of both free and low-cost promotional materials; individual resource guides to support outreach efforts by pastors, teachers, youth leaders and parents;

and a resource DVD containing: exclusive clips from the film; messages from pastors, teachers, parents and young people about how they could use the materials; and messages from the film's producers and directors, including a fascinating discussion of how the film was made. The DVD also contained an introduction by Douglas Gresham, stepson of C.S. Lewis and heir to the C.S. Lewis Estate; a music video collage by leading Christian musicians who composed and performed songs created especially for the Narnia film; and of course, the film's popular trailer.

To promote the evangelism opportunity broadly in key media markets, MAC designed and helped produce five major events in key American cities including: New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas and Los Angeles. These events were co-hosted by Mission America Coalition staff, and included live appearances by both Walden and Disney executives, Douglas Gresham from the C.S. Lewis Estate, live performances by leading Christian artists such as Stephen Curtis Chapman and Rebecca St. James and extended exclusive film sequences from the movie itself. Three smaller "sneak peeks" were held with live appearances at prime locations such as: Boston; at the Vision New England meeting of church leaders from five northeastern U.S. states; and Colorado Springs, where Focus on the Family co-hosted a group of over one thousand local and national ministries.

To communicate even deeper into the Christian community, MAC designed and produced smaller Narnia events in 150 additional U.S. cities, a fifty percent increase in the number it had done for The Passion. These local "sneak peeks" were used to inform, inspire and equip local pastors and other ministry leaders, who in turn would hold own promotional meetings at their own facilities and drive the message of this opportunity even deeper into the grassroots of the faith community. The work consisted of identifying and recruiting both facilities and leader hosts in the target cities, providing them with the necessary resources, agendas and supporting audio/video materials, and supplying resources such as the Narnia event kits for attendees to use at their own meetings.

All of these promotional meetings—and the campaign overall—were remarkably successful. However, the underlying and behind-the-scenes processes were very complex. The logistical issues involved in arranging, coordinating and resourcing this series of meetings at locations all over the country were formidable, and made even more difficult by having to secure legal and artistic permissions and approvals for the use of film assets and other promotional content. Coordinating the work of several resource providers including Disney itself, launching and maintaining an information website and handling the volumes of phone calls and emails put significant stress on MAC's home office staff.

But the greatest complexity arose from the need to avoid creating the perception that the film is a "Christian movie," which could potentially reduce its appeal in certain culture groups MAC wants to reach, while at the same time preserving the conviction within the Church that Lewis' imbedded Christian themes—the "story within the story"—makes it a very real and very powerful opportunity for evangelism. Walking that fine line in the creation of promotional materials; obtaining permissions to use movie assets and Disney resources at Church meetings; conducting interviews with the press; and a host of other politically-sensitive situations was a daily and often frustrating challenge.

In the final analysis, MAC is very pleased with the effort and with the results. The movie opened with a record-breaking box office and Disney's biggest opening day ever. It overcame both the first and second Lord of the Rings openings, and was still beating most of the competition several weeks into its theatrical run. Even secular commentators attribute this "staying power" to the continuing teaching and outreach efforts in the faith community. Most important, however, it is achieving the spiritual objectives MAC had hoped and prayed for. In fact prayer was a very important component in supporting the Narnia outreach opportunities. Starting in August 2005, every week, a nationwide prayer conference call was held to pray specifically for the outreach of the film, and hundreds of prayer intercessors prayed regularly for the opportunities afforded by the movie. Thousands of Christians also received a series of emails with prayer suggestions and information on the release of the film.

MAC continues to get glowing reports from churches of a wonderful Christmas season harvest of new believers. The movie has made a significant difference. Newspapers across the country have featured stories about Narnia and highlighted its faith themes, usually reflecting in positive terms that "fine line" we had sought to establish. The collective voice of the Church as an important audience, and a strong influence for change in Hollywood, was heard loud and clear.

For the Mission America Coalition, the experience was very gratifying. It was another opportunity to unite the Church in communities across America, and strengthen their sense of common purpose in reaching the culture with the gospel message. It illustrated in a powerful way that if Christians want to be involved in the evangelism of our culture in the twenty-first century, we have to be engaged with the media. We have seen that demonstrated in a very positive way with The Passion and Narnia films, and we will soon see it from a different perspective this spring when the The Da Vinci Code movie is released. This film promises to deliver a direct assault—in what is likely to be a blockbuster production—on the fundamental truths of Christianity. The Church's voice will need to be heard in connection with that film as well, and individual Christians will have another opportunity to teach and share their faith. Preparations have been under way for several months to both equip individual believers and prepare the Church to respond in an effective manner.

*The Mission America Coalition is the name used by the U.S. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.

Jim Overholt is executive director of the Mission America Coalition, www.missionamerica.org.

LEADERSHIP MEMO

February 2006

Reflections on Lausanne and the Year Ahead

By Doug Birdsall

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the wonderful name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We are indeed living in exciting times, in a world of globalization and dynamic change. We see this reflected now in every aspect of our lives, from the vast array of global fashions and cuisines we can enjoy to the rapid development of technologies that will increase our productivity and entertainment. In the midst of such constant change with all the choices, technologies and methods before us, now more than ever, we need to be able to discern our times and know what to do.

We need to be like the men of Issachar, who understood their times, who knew what they should do and who boldly led God's people (1 Chronicles 12:32). We must resist the temptation to succumb to trends, and instead carefully reflect and incorporate aspects of our times that are biblical, relevant and effective. There is a need for substantive reflection in the midst of the dynamic changes and influential forces. Such substantive reflection is a hallmark of Lausanne.

It is our conviction that all theological study and reflection must lead to mission and action, otherwise it is futile abstraction. It is also our conviction that all mission activity must be based on a sound theological foundation, otherwise it is mere pragmatism. It is at the very frontiers of mission that both theological reflection and activity must be forged to create an effective tool for breaking new ground for the kingdom. Thus, Lausanne is committed to bringing together both thinkers and doers.

As we look toward the year ahead, I am encouraged to hear of future meetings of the Lausanne Theology Working Group and the Lausanne Strategy Working Group, led by Chris Wright and Paul Eshleman respectively. Additionally, Lausanne is seeking to hear reflections and to inspire a new generation of leaders with its upcoming Younger Leaders Gathering in September 2006 (for more information, please go to www.lausanne.org). In addition, plans are being made for the Third Lausanne Congress in 2010. Lausanne III will be a tremendous opportunity to bring together the most experienced evangelical leaders in the world, as well as current and future leaders, to fellowship, share experiences, evaluate, strategize and inspire a new generation for world evangelization.

Today, the great explosion of media and technology has both expanded and shrunken our world. We can see and understand more peoples and cultures. We can travel the world and instantaneously talk to people across oceans and continents. Now more than ever, Christians must discern how to creatively and strategically utilize such powerful and influential tools, without accommodating the standards and uses of this world.

As I look toward the year ahead, I thank you again for your partnership in the gospel and for the fellowship that we share through the Lausanne movement. At a time when the Church is challenged to be both relevant and prophetic, we believe it is more important than ever to work for the unity of the Church and the advance of the gospel. Thus, we have our ongoing commitment to the whole Church, taking the whole gospel, to the whole world. May God continue to wonderfully bless you.

Yours in Christ,

Doug Birdsall, co-publisher, Lausanne World Pulse

Doug Birdsall is executive chair for the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, www.lausanne.org/, and director of the J. Christy Wilson, Jr. Center for World Missions at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He has served as a missionary in Japan with Asian Access/LIFE Ministries since 1980. Birdsall has been president of Asian Access, www.asianaccess.org/, a mission focused on evangelism and church multiplication, since 1991.

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