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

APRIL 2006 issue

WORLD NEWS BRIEFS

AUSTRALIA

As North Queensland experiences its worst cyclone on record, Anglican offices have been shut down, a church hall has been destroyed and a rectory roof has been ripped off. The town of Innisfail was most affected by Cyclone Larry, where houses were ripped apart by gusts of nearly three hundred km/h. "Innisfail is devastated," said Rev. Chris Wright, area dean of the northern region in the Diocese of North Queensland. "The bulk of the church hall is gone and the rectory lost most of its roof." Wright said no one was hurt. (Anglican Communion News Service)

BRAZIL

The Rev. Walter Altmann, a Lutheran theologian from Brazil, has been elected the new moderator of the central committee of the World Council of Churches, a WCC official said on 24 February. Altmann is president of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB), a post he has held since the end of 2002. He was born in the southern Brazil city of Porto Alegre in 1944, and it was in that city on the last day of the WCC's 14-23 February assembly, the first held in Latin America, that he was elected to lead the world's biggest grouping of churches. (Ecumenical News International)

CANADA

The board of trustees of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) has appointed Ida Mutoigo to the position of director of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), Canada. If the appointment is ratified by Synod 2006, Mutoigo, who currently serves as CRWRC's team leader for East and Southern Africa, will be the first female director in the development and relief agency's 44-year history. CRWRC is an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America providing a ministry of development, relief and justice education to people in need around the world. (Christian Reformed Church)

ECUADOR

The Encounter with God churches in Quito continue to make sizable strides toward unifying their relationship and planning joint partnerships for future church multiplication in the area. Recently the churches formalized their relationship as a "RED," the Spanish term for network. As part of the network, churches agree to work together in holding outreach events and planting daughter churches. Pastor Luis Estevez, senior pastor of the El Batan Church, has been named the RED coordinator. (Church Ministries International)

ERITREA

Nearly 1,800 Eritrean Christians are believed to be under arrest because of their religious beliefs, according to Compass Direct. Many are being held in police stations, military camps and prisons in twelve known locations across the country and are routinely subjected to physical beatings and severe psychological pressure to deny their faith in Christ. According to Compass, since May 2002 all independent evangelical churches have been closed. (Assist News)

INDIA

In Uttar Pradesh, Jharkand, Punjab and other places in India 175 Operation Mobilization India film and literature teams are working to add new believers to local fellowship for God's glory. The teams are using a film on the life of Christ called Dayasagar. Each team is made up of four to six 18 to 30-year-olds. The

teams use home visitations, film shows, literacy classes and health and hygiene awareness programs to share the love of Christ with those they meet. (Operation Mobilization India)

NORTH KOREA

A new website www.prayfornorthkorea.org, dedicated to mobilizing and facilitating prayer for North Korea has been launched as part of the Global Week of Prayer for North Korea 19-25 June 2006. The website is a call for Christians to pray for the more than twenty-two million people in North Korea who are in desperate need of physical and spiritual healing. The site contains resources, including PowerPoint presentations and written materials, to equip participating prayer groups. (Christian Solidarity Worldwide)

UNITED STATES

Urbana.org has announced the launch of a new blog: Missional Hands. The blog is intended to be a conversation with missions staff from around the world who are uniquely qualified to talk about what it takes to be a missionary today. (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship)

UNITED STATES

Today's Pentecostal Evangel, the magazine of the Assemblies of God denomination, received a record number of salvation responses in 2005. Nearly 1,900 people clipped salvation coupons from the magazine and sent them to the Evangel office, indicating they had decided to make Jesus their Savior. Individuals receive follow-up material to help them, and local churches are advised so personal contact can be made. Since the coupons began appearing regularly in the magazine in 1997 more than fifteen thousand have been returned. (Assemblies of God)

UNITED STATES

The Episcopal Church and the Church Pension Group (CPG) are collaborating in a historical research project known as the Episcopal US Congregational Life Survey. Congregations were selected at random, and include communities of various sizes in rural, suburban and city locations. Each congregation's response will provide an opportunity to better understand its participants; its strengths and the factors that make it unique; the areas where change is needed; and its options for the future. In addition, organizers say the survey will help create an accurate national portrait of those who attend Episcopal churches and missions. The results of the survey should be available fall 2006. (Episcopal News Service)

UNITED STATES

The board of directors of International Teams mission recently appointed Dr. David Schroeder as president and CEO of International Teams USA. Outgoing president Stephen Freed will now serve as international ministry leader for the global organization, which serves fifty-three countries. Schroeder previously served as president of Nyack College where he has seen the student population nearly triple during his time of service. International Teams currently has over eight hundred missionaries from thirty-two countries. (International Teams)

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WORLD EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS REPORTS

Mahalife.com and the Younger Generation of India

By Joseph Vijayam

In just a few years, India and China have become the center of world trade and economics. In addition to macroeconomic changes, there are significant changes occurring in the Indian society, especially among the younger generation. Anyone traveling in India is greatly impressed by the overwhelming changes in the social habits of the youth caused by the consuming power of the media in general, and the Internet in particular. Within a couple of years, the skylines of all urban areas in India have changed drastically with hundreds of billboards displaying dotcom advertisements at every major intersection. Magazines and newspapers are filled with advertisements of online shops, resources, communities, etc. Most of these advertisements are targeted to youth between the ages of fifteen and thirty.

The Internet is fast becoming an integral part of the lives of young people in countries like India where

technology has jumped several cycles of growth and advancement has suddenly bridged the gap of access to information between Western societies and those in developing countries. Because of its advances in science and technology, India is at the forefront of nations where urban youth are embracing the Internet as a medium of communication, information, entertainment and social interaction, often times with greater enthusiasm and speed than their counterparts in Western countries.

Unlike other media, the Internet allows people of all ages, races, creeds and countries to freely share ideas, opinions, stories and experiences. According to one estimate, over 1.5 million web pages are added each day. Like motion pictures in the early 1900s, and like television in the mid 1900s, the Internet at the dawn of the new millennium has incredible power to influence the lives of the emerging generation, especially the educated and urban youth in India.

Mahalife (www.mahalife.com) is an online ministry that suits the tastes of Indian audiences in its expression of content and flavor while being world-class in terms of presentation.

Mahalife.com is a rapidly growing ministry that is attracting young people who are especially seeking online and telephone counseling. We are truly amazed and blessed to see what God is doing through this website. Many young people are reading the gospel, seeking counseling and responding to its message from the safety and convenience of their homes. The content, various sections and presentation style make it user friendly, relevant and attractive to Indian youth. By working in collaboration with several youth ministries in India we are able to quickly connect seekers with a person in their city or town who can build a one-on-one relationship with them.

What makes Mahalife.com unique, in comparison to other evangelistic ministries targeting the emerging generation, is the fact that it leverages a medium which is especially well-suited for personal counseling. The Internet provides a platform which can be both personal and at the same time anonymous. It is one-on-one and at the same time one-to-many. It is a form of communicating one-way, while it is also interactive. It is low cost but perceived as high-tech, trendy and exclusive. It is no wonder that personal relationship-building websites such as those that provide a platform for pen pals and dating are so popular.

The key to the success of Mahalife.com as a website that draws young people to Christ is the strength of its counseling team. A major portion of our time and financial resources are spent on increasing the quality and quantity of our counselors. It is impossible to do this task through paid counselors. The costs would be astronomical and such a program would not involve the whole Church in this exciting work of reaching the next generation with the gospel. We believe there are many in the body of Christ who are already called to a ministry of counseling but lack the necessary training and appropriate platform to exercise their gifts. Mahalife.com identifies those individuals and trains them in Christian counseling and Internet tools. Once equipped, these individuals are recruited as volunteer counselors through their local churches/fellowships. The goal is to involve the whole Church to reach the whole world around them with the whole gospel.

Mahalife.com reaches isolated seekers with the message of the gospel of Christ in a context that is familiar to them and relevant to their situation. Those who respond to the gospel by surrendering their lives to Christ are connected with believers and are encouraged to become a part of the local church. With eighty thousand hits per month, (resulting in over one million hits per year), Mahalife will reach many young people in India with the good news. Over one thousand people are expected to seriously seek Christian counseling and connection with believers directly through Mahalife over a period of one year.

***Joseph Vijayam** is managing director of Olive Technology, a computer software company. He has offices in Hyderabad, India and Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA.*

The Strategic Role of www.hikidz.org in Internet Child Evangelism

By Harry Bryans

At the 2004 Lausanne Forum in Thailand, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization **rated the www.hikidz.org children's website as one of the four most strategic tools to communicate the gospel to the world's two billion children over the next ten years.**

According to the Barna Group, individuals are five times more likely to come to Christ before the age of fourteen than at any other time in their life.¹ They are also more likely to discover their gifts and calling in their youth, be stronger in their walk with God and better assimilate Christian values into their daily lives. As many leaders have proved, to change a nation we must start with the children. Children are by far the most strategic and responsive to the gospel. Most, however, are far outside the walls of our churches. They are also the most seriously neglected in terms of using the church's resources and time spent discipling. All children deserve the opportunity to hear the good news wherever they are and in whatever language they speak.

Research in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom also shows that children are now spending more time on the Internet than adults.

Whether we like it or not, the Internet is rapidly becoming the key communication channel. Even if we are appalled by some of its contents, the Internet can indeed be a channel of blessing. At no other time in history could countless millions be reached every second of the day as is possible today through the Internet.

It is also important to note that twenty-first century children:

- develop skills rapidly and are increasingly the ones who guide their parents and grandparents in using modern technologies
- are becoming the influencers and deciders in our consumer society and are targeted by companies using all kinds of media to get their message across
- are increasingly left alone by over-occupied parents to be informed, distracted and amused by modern media tools such as television, video games and the Internet
- are the focus of a United Nations sponsorship campaign to supply \$100 laptops with Internet access to children in developing countries

As Christians, we need to take a leading role in our society and the media to positively influence the culture and fulfill the Great Commission. However, to reach even more of today's children in a way that will engage them at a greater level, they need new, innovative and appropriate means of communication.

Hi Kidz Purpose and Mission

The website seeks to provide children with a safe world of fun, entertainment, information and interactivity. Woven into these goals are opportunities to discover both Christianity and a holistic Christian worldview that touches every area of life. The children are encouraged to respond personally to God's love and call on their lives. A weekly Cyber Mag is sent out as a free animated email in English or French to all who register on the site. Other regular emails are also available for teens, parents, teachers and children's workers.

The Hi Kidz website presents an exciting opportunity for a children's Internet site and represents the collaborative work of Christian ministries to reach today's generation in a relevant and engaging way. The site was initially developed in French by the Swiss children's ministry, Grain de Blé. In the UK, the English version has become a collaboration of fourteen organizations, including Agape, Crusaders, Scripture Union, the International Bible Society and Viva Network. For such a site to be effective across countries and languages, many ministries and the wider global Church need to share in this project together.

Until now, the low budget Hi Kidz pilot version (with limited content in English and French) has received more than 300,000 visits from over one hundred countries across five continents, with an average of seven pages viewed per visit. All this has happened without any major publicity campaign. The current Hi Kidz site is still just a pilot version.

The Future of Hi Kidz

What started as a collaboration of different ministries investing in a united project will become the heart of a very new Hi Kidz website on an international scale. However, in order to offer children's ministries all over the world, it is imperative that we work together in a spirit of dynamic collaboration and not one of defensive competition.

In 2005, Grain de Blé commissioned Esterheart Ministries to restructure and redesign the current pilot site. The overall strategy is to develop a multilingual site that can compete with the appeal and quality of the best secular sites. Once a worldwide partnership of major children's ministries is in place, networks of collaborating children's ministries will be able to manage the site on a local/linguistic level. This will also enable these networks to provide content that is adapted to the children's needs and culture. It will also allow the networks and local churches to effectively incorporate the site into individual strategies and action plans at every level.

The restructuring will build on the strengths and experience of the pilot version. It will be upgraded according to Esterheart's six-month study which has included findings from both secular organizations dealing with children's websites and several Lausanne reports regarding children.

The new Hi Kidz site will be presented in a 3-D environment and offer entertainment and education communicating Christianity at two levels. First, we will introduce the child to the universe of God's creation and our responsibility as stewards. Second, we will introduce them to the creator himself and how to grow in relationship with him through Jesus Christ. Hopefully this will enable every child, parent and guardian to appreciate the website with a low-entry threshold and acquire trust to accept the pertinence of the website's holistic approach to knowing God.

The site is designed to not only touch children, but entire families. It can be integrated into church efforts to reach their community and nation and can be a very versatile tool for evangelism, discipleship, cross-cultural mission and church planting.

You may ask if the Internet is in danger of isolating children from their natural social environment. Hi Kidz has acknowledged this risk and is seeking to develop online content with off-line action. The website will inspire the child to do activities with friends or family. It will also publicize local Christian activities and events. We can easily imagine that Internet child evangelism will develop into an expertise that will challenge our existing ministries to approach their mission in a more professional way. Let us remind ourselves that children have changed a lot in the last decades, with media and entertainment being one of the major causes. Hopefully the Christian community can progress in offering child-friendly content on the Internet.

For the moment, Esterheart Ministries is engaged in a worldwide campaign for consolidating partnerships and funds in order to realize Grain de Blé's wish to offer every nation a multilingual tool to evangelize children without needing to carry the financial weight at a local level. Investing in this site is investing in tomorrow's leaders. Today's children will shape tomorrow's society. If we want Christian values to drive their judgment, we need to connect with them where they are connected.

Every stage of the project has brought its challenges and struggles. It is imperative to pray for the children, for this strategic project and for the people of God to join forces and support it in whatever way God inspires them.

Endnote

1. Barna, George. 2003. *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*. Ventura, California: Regal.

Harry Bryans is the pioneer developer and webmaster of www.hikidz.org. Bryans is originally from North Ireland but served as missionary in Belgium for twenty-two years. He worked for fifteen years with the Grain de Ble European children's ministry and helped launch the Hi Kidz telephone ministry in a dozen countries on three continents.

Internet Outreach to Muslims in North Africa

In Muslim countries where conversion and proselytizing is illegal, cyberspace is an anonymous haven for North Africans to explore Christianity—and a means for the gospel to penetrate a closed society. With Avant Ministries' assistance, the growing underground church is establishing public cybercafés equipped with pay-per-minute computer terminals.

Already popular venues in North Africa, these cyber cafés will be the first ones managed and operated by national Christians. Believers are so discriminated against in Muslim culture that they often cannot find employment. But a cybercafé supports the home church movement financially and spiritually; it provides a profitable community service, sustainable income for employees, a legitimate business cover for Internet users and outside visitors, a potential evangelism outlet and a discipleship training forum.

"It provides a safe place for Christians to go where the owner will not be hanging over their head and watching what they do," said Maher Haddad, director of Arabic ministries for Avant's Malaga Media Center (MMC) in southern Spain. "We're hoping to get more into Internet chat room ministry and voice chat, especially after [café] hours in private."

The cybercafés will also help direct traffic to the MMC-sponsored website Asdika.org (Friend), where Muslims can quietly learn about the Christian faith. The cybercafés were inspired by a church leader searching out a haven for North Africans conducting telephone follow-up with Muslims who call about the MMC's radio and television broadcasts. Each cybercafé would be self-sustaining within six months. The start-up cost of equipping and furnishing one cyber café with five computers, including operating expenses for six months, is almost US\$13,000.

Church leaders hope to open a network of at least five cybercafés in various cities; funding has been secured for two.

(This article was originally written for an Avant Ministries publication. This article cannot be reproduced without permission from Avant.)

The Internet Evangelism Coalition and Online Evangelism

By Sterling Huston

The Internet is the fastest growing media form in the history of the world. Ten years ago there were only a few million users worldwide, mostly in developed Western nations; today, more than one billion people access the World Wide Web. Although it is estimated that the United States leads with nearly two hundred million people currently online, the greatest online growth has been in Asia where China has one hundred million users and Japan has seventy-eight million users. The Chinese language is fast becoming a dominant language online.

When the Internet first became popular in the public arena a decade ago, Christian ministries immediately took note. Individuals, churches, denominations and ministries recognized the potential of the web and created numerous Christian websites. Many of these sites, however, served only as electronic brochures to communicate information to the ministry's constituency.

But as the Internet matured, so did its use. Christians began to develop websites solely to share Jesus Christ with non-believers. The terms "seeker sensitive site," "online evangelism" and "Internet evangelism" became more common as groups recognized the extraordinary opportunity to share the gospel of Christ on the web.

These early pioneers who had caught a vision for the use of the web for ministry were often relatively unknown, underfunded and often unappreciated by the larger Christian Church. This led many to feel as though they were the only ones doing Internet evangelism. Many faced ongoing issues of discouragement, lack of financial and technical resources and limited ways to share materials with those coming to Christ online.

History of the IEC

Recognizing the need for communication and collaboration among the early Internet users, the Billy Graham Center (Wheaton, Illinois, USA) hosted a consultation in 1997 on using the Internet for evangelism. More than one hundred participants from churches, denominations and ministries came together. At the close of the meeting attendees, sensing that their work had only begun, voted to establish the Internet Evangelism Facilitation Committee to help facilitate online collaborative evangelism. This committee, representing a broad cross-section of the Christian Church, immediately set out to establish major goals in the areas of communication, evangelism resources, seeker sites, training and Christian growth materials available through the web.

Two years after the original consultation, an international conference was convened to focus on networking, equipping and mobilizing those involved and interested in Internet evangelism. Out of that conference came a permanent organization now known as the Internet Evangelism Coalition (IEC) (www.webevangelism.com). Recognizing it would take time for the organization to become self-sustaining, the committee asked the Billy Graham Center to host its administration and provide 501(c)(3) status for contributions to the organization.

About the IEC

The stated purpose of the IEC is to stimulate and accelerate web evangelism within the worldwide body of Christ. Part of its mission is to encourage collaborative efforts and to connect partners and resources for more extensive and effective Internet evangelism.

Since its official forming in 1999, the IEC and its members have hosted additional international conferences to further collaborate and network with ministries using the Internet for evangelism.

The IEC has also enhanced communication by producing a monthly e-newsletter and establishing a website which identifies resources created through IEC efforts. The monthly newsletter, available through the IEC website, shares relevant information about the web and web evangelism.

Recognizing the need for a quality gospel presentation which is culturally relevant to the Internet audience, IEC partners developed the seeker site Now Try God (www.nowtrygod.com). The content of this presentation is available to churches and para-church ministries as an effective tool for sharing the gospel online.

IEC partners have also developed The Evangelism Toolbox (www.evangelismtoolbox.com), which includes a database of effective Christian resources to help people share their faith in Jesus Christ. These resources, the work of many leading evangelical organizations worldwide, are provided in multiple languages in both online and offline formats.

Often when people come to Christ through the web there are no immediate Christian growth resources available. This motivated the establishment of Growing In Christ (www.growinginchrist.com), which provides ways for new believers to get questions answered regarding Christianity and the life of Jesus Christ. It also helps connect new believers with more experienced Christians who will answer their questions.

The IEC also recognized that there were many offline training programs for sharing one's faith with others, but that none were specifically geared to the unique environment of sharing one's faith on the Internet. As a result, the program Online Training for Online Evangelists has been prepared and is available as a self-taught and self-graded training tool.

The IEC also recently developed a partnership with visionSynergy (www.visionsynergy.net) for the formation of the International Internet Evangelism Network (IIEN). IIEN seeks to bring together people pioneering in the area of non-English speaking web evangelism.

The Internet has some unique advantages for Christians who want to reach their world for Christ. With information available twenty-four hours a day and an instantaneous reach across time zones and national boundaries, believers can share the gospel from the privacy of their own homes with non-Christians halfway around the world. Note these examples:

- A young woman in Michigan, USA, entered into a digital dialogue with a woman in China who knew nothing about Christianity and wanted to learn English. Through the Internet she arranged for the Chinese woman to download a Bible in her own language.
- A North American church received an email from a man in Finland who had committed his life to Christ through the gospel presentation on their church's website.
- A college student at the University of Virginia, USA, who was searching for meaning stumbled across a website for students and got on her knees in her dorm room with tear-filled eyes and surrendered her life to Christ.

The anonymity of the web allows seekers to be much more vulnerable in their spiritual search. The Internet's accessibility permits these seekers to return again and again to explore biblical truths. The Internet Evangelism Coalition is committed to encouraging churches and para-church ministries to utilize the web as a strategic resource for sharing the good news of Christ and helping new believers begin their initial steps of Christian growth. To that end, the IEC continues to evaluate new technologies that use the web with one primary purpose in view: that we might enlarge and extend the presentation of the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ to a needy world.

***Sterling Huston** is chair of the Internet Evangelism Coalition. He also serves as director of special ministries and senior team at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.*

The 417 Project and Missionary Support

By Dave Koenig

Many missionaries dedicate their lives to sharing the gospel. They may even sacrifice all other dreams for this high calling. So how on earth could I not sacrifice a few months and use my abilities as a web programmer to help contribute to the global missions effort? This was the question I was recently confronted with.

My wife and I were in the planning stages of a mission trip to Thailand and were looking for creative ways to raise our funds. I immediately thought of creating a website that would tell those we knew about our trip. This would save us quite a bit of money from not having to pay postage for mailings. Not only was it more affordable, it would allow us to inform more people than traditional methods would about our ministry. By using pictures and texts we could also inform readers better than by simply using words in a missionary letter. Visitors could get updates on the progress of the fundraising and learn how to best pray for the trip based on the events that were taking place. I couldn't think of a better way, within our means, to raise support.

Soon I felt compelled to share this method with others. Why not give other people the opportunity that I had? This was the start of the 417 Project (<http://the417project.org>). I gave a presentation to a group of potential missionaries at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and was asked several times why I did not charge a fee for this service.

Besides the fact that I could not live with myself knowing that I was charging missionaries for a service that is basically free to provide, the fact is that my primary goal for the website is to help missionaries raise money. Charging them for the service seemed to be counterproductive. In fact, the 417 Project would cost less to host one thousand missionary ministries each month than it would to go to a movie and get some popcorn.

"417" comes from Philippians 4:17, which says "Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account." The project is meant to be a tool to help missionaries raise support. A missionary is able to upload pictures and change text in a five-page mini-site through an easy-to-use online form. The changes are made instantly. If the missionary is looking to post more information than the mini-site can handle, he or she is able to link to his or her own blog or online journal that is hosted elsewhere. If his or her mission organization allows it, he or she is able to accept donations online. Paypal, Amazon and others provide a means to accept online donations through credit card. Missionaries can also post a mailing address where support checks can be sent. (A demo of the site can be seen at <http://the417project.org/demo>.)

The project is just beginning and only God knows the potential for this service. First, enough missionaries must try the site and give feedback. From there I will continue to tailor it to meet the needs of the men and women who are on the front lines of ministry. Although this may be a small contribution, I feel blessed to play a part in global evangelization. My hope is that this encourages you to consider how you can use the talents God has given you to help spread the gospel.

If you have any questions/comments, would like to start your own 417 mini-site or want someone to help you find a way to use your gifts for the gospel, feel free to contact me at dave@the417project.org.

Urban Impact Ministry in New York City

By Larry Holcomb

Purpose and Overview

Urban Impact (UI - www.urbanimpactny.org) is a unique ministry that focuses on reaching the 10/40 Window by raising awareness of the need to reach unreached people groups and by evangelizing the unreached people groups who have come to the United States.

Our hope is to evangelize Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs who have come to New York City from "closed countries" around the world. Urban Impact missionaries can make inroads into these immigrants' lives, and thereby into the lives of all their friends and family in their homeland. Our long term goal is to see converts trained and sent back to their own closed countries as church or political leaders.

Daily Ministry and Focus at Urban Impact

Much of our daily ministry involves meeting the many needs of the new immigrants from our target countries. Currently, we are concentrating on Muslims from West Africa, South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East. We have various programs and outreach events targeting these groups, including children's and youth ministries and classes in ESL, computers and citizenship. We emphasize meeting needs and building relationships; yet we are meticulously focused on leading those we interact with to a clearer understanding of Christ and the gospel.

Our ministry is built around the particular needs of distinct immigrant groups. One of our strongest outreach programs is geared toward the five to ten thousand West African Fulani tribespeople who are now in New York City. The Fulani tribe is a far flung, diverse ethnic group of West Africa spanning some nineteen countries. They are the largest nomadic people group in the world and are also the largest of the unreached tribes of Africa—numbering some twenty to twenty-four million. According to the 2000 United States census, in the past few years thousands of Fulani have immigrated to New York along with at least 120,000 other West Africans.

Because of their nomadic tendencies and their history as the "bearers of the banner" of Islam in Africa, evangelization can be a very difficult, slow process amongst the Fulani in Africa. One persistent missionary recently shared that he had served in Burkina Faso for twenty years and only saw six or seven people who were genuinely interested in Christianity.

In the United States, things are very different. Many Fulanis see America as the country of their dreams and are very eager to befriend Americans and hear of our way of life. Though Muslim, many Fulani are surprisingly open to hear the stories and teachings of Jesus. They are also very curious to learn of the true teachings of the Christians who have shown them so much love and compassion.

Sharing the gospel with these Muslims can be a long and tedious process. Most must overcome a lifetime of misinformation and doctrinal inoculation against Christianity. Often it takes months for them to verbalize their many questions and objections. In Brooklyn, we are now meeting weekly with a group of twelve Fulani men to discuss Christian ideas. We watch a short video clip, and then use the video and a selected Bible verse as the theme of the discussion. We also conduct an annual men's retreat, where we take groups of Muslim men on weekend retreats to the beach to further teach them about the Bible and the gospel.

Urban Impact Missionaries

Dedicated missionaries and workers of all ages and from all areas of the US are the foundation of what we do. We have also had missionaries from Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Guyana.

Some serve a week or a day; others serve a summer, semester or one-year term. Short-term workers raise support to pay costs of room and board in New York. Missionaries who come for three months or longer are required to come as "tentmaker missionaries" and work a job in the community so as to assure both their daily involvement with their focus group and their financial stability. Missionaries work in teams, live in UI missionary apartment/houses and have weekly meetings for prayer, fellowship, planning and training. We currently have five missionary apartments in Queens and Brooklyn with two more to be added in June. Summer 2006 we will have twelve to fifteen new missionaries serving amongst the 10/40 Window peoples of New York.

Help from the Outside

Many Christians and churches from around the US have a strong burden for reaching the 10/40 Window for Christ. Hundreds of groups have worked with Urban Impact during the past three years to share the gospel with New York's unreached peoples. Teams have come to us from all over the US and Canada. They come as youth groups, senior adult groups, singles groups, families, choirs, seminary teams and through many other Christian organizations.

Mission teams help our ministry in many ways. Many groups do direct evangelism with immigrants on the streets, while others help run various weekly outreach programs or other special events.

During the summer, teams help host eight weeks of outdoor children's Vacation Bible School (VBS) programs. There are sometimes up to six simultaneous VBSs going on involving hundreds of 10/40 Window kids. Around the holidays we enlist teams to help with special outreach events like our annual Thanksgiving evangelistic dinner. Teams come from all over the country throughout December to host our "Home for Christmas" programs in the homes of Arabic, Bengali or African Muslims. The teams hosting these parties bring gifts for the kids and use nativity sets or books to tell the Christmas story and share the gospel with the children and their invited neighbors.

Many teams help out with light construction and rehab work. Our missionary apartments are in very old buildings and are always in need of repair. Teams also help us with repair work in some of the very needy tenement buildings in Brooklyn. Over a three month period, visiting teams helped us gut and restore our new "African Friendship Center."

Churches, ministries and individuals also help by providing website services, serving on our board of directors, sending financial support and mailing school supplies, backpacks or clothing for young immigrants.

We are excited about reaching the far corners of the earth in New York City. Unfortunately, there are still thousands of Muslims arriving in New York City and other American urban centers every year who do not get even one chance to hear the gospel. Because there are so few missions-minded Christians in our inner cities, many Muslim immigrants could possibly have had a better chance of hearing the gospel if they had stayed in their own remote country. By remaining in their closed countries, at least Christians might be prayerfully aware of their plight and need for the gospel and have a strategy to reach them. I have met many Muslims who have been in the US for five years or more and still only speak Arabic or Bengali. They have little chance of ever "stumbling onto" a Christian witness here in their language.

Urban Impact is working to change this. Last year we established the first of five Urban Impact Muslim Evangelism Centers in New York City. This center, called the "African Friendship Center," focuses on evangelizing West Africans, North African Arabs and Bangladeshis in Brooklyn. We are scheduled to open one new center per year. The second center is scheduled to open spring 2006 and will focus on ministry to Indians and South Asians in Queens.

We are convinced that even if someone is able to "escape" and crawl through the 10/40 Window, God still wants him or her to hear the gospel. And we are convinced that God has called Urban Impact to take a lead role in exposing the need to reach America's 10/40 Window immigrants...and inspiring others to help us in addressing these needs.

Larry Holcomb is a missions speaker and director of Urban Impact. He has served in San Francisco, California; Birmingham, Alabama; and New York City (USA). Larry, wife Linda and their four children live in an immigrant neighborhood of Queens.

Chinese Persecution—Fact Or Fiction

By Carl Moeller

A record number of Americans traveled to China in 2005. And even more are expected to visit in 2006 and beyond. The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that tourism spending in China from tourists of all countries will increase about three and a half times by 2014, from US\$87 billion to more than US\$300 billion. Fuelling the increase is the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing.

Tourism is part of China's emergence as an economic powerhouse. But when Americans and other nationalities travel to China, what will they see? Will they see a free society with religious rights for all? Will they see brutal police crackdowns on political and religious dissidents? Or will they see something in between?

China native Johnny Li, minister-at-large for Open Doors International, describes China as a country of paradoxes that is baffling to the outsider. On the one hand, it has some of the world's highest buildings and first-class road building facilities; prosperous families living in modern accommodations; and the usual American fast food outlets and chain stores.

On the other hand, there are many dirt tracks and unpaved roads. There are villages where entire populations live in caves. More than seventy percent (nine hundred million) of China's 1.3 billion people are farmers who are living below the poverty line.

Of one trip, Li said, "In 2005, I traveled to villages in the desert in northwest China. We drove on a muddy road for over twenty hours. No tourists visit here; the people have no expectations for a bright future. They are not benefiting from the economic reforms in China. But there is a hunger for [the Bible]."

While some Chinese Christian leaders and other dissidents languish in jail, others travel the world talking of religious freedom. Some smuggle in the Bible, yet the Bible is also legally printed and sold. Last November 2005 United States President George W. Bush worshipped in a state-approved church in Beijing while urging Chinese leaders to grant greater freedoms (including freedom to worship without state controls) to all people.

Great Variation of Tolerance

There is great variation of tolerance within China as well. In some areas, house church Christians are left alone by local police and are able to sing at the top of their voices and build their own churches in defiance of formal legislation. In other areas, house church meetings are stopped and the church leaders are arrested, beaten and sometimes jailed. Periodically, there are waves of crackdowns (initiated by higher-level authorities) on unregistered groups. These crackdowns usually come prior to major national or international events and are seemingly meant to send a message to house churches that the government is still in control of activities in the country.

"Whatever you hear about China regarding religious freedom or lack of freedom is probably true," Li says. "It depends where you go. So many things in Beijing or in the big cities of China look just the same on the outside as they look in the United States. But in the rural areas, there is a lot of persecution in places hidden from view."

Since 1999, the U.S. State Department has designated China a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. China is ranked number nine on Open Doors' World Watch List of countries where Christians are most severely persecuted.

Some still deny there are significant levels of persecution in China. Yet the majority of Christians currently refuse to worship within the state-approved churches, finding the monitoring by government bodies invasive and controlling. Evangelism outside the registered church walls is illegal. Although the Chinese government does not have a national law that explicitly prohibits the teaching of religion to anyone under the age of 18, internal provincial regulations exist to forbid baptism of minors and restrict church children's programs. Sunday School teachers face the likelihood of detention, fines or imprisonment of up to three years if caught teaching children. House church leaders are still jailed and beaten for what in Western society would be regarded as the free expression of their faith.

The Largest Persecuted Community Today

The Christian Church of China may not have as many martyrs as Colombia, face as many restrictions as Christians in Saudi Arabia or fight as many extremist mobs as their brothers and sisters in Indonesia, but the sixty to eighty million Christians in China remain the world's largest single persecuted community today.

Li came close to experiencing police brutality during a recent visit to China. At the end of an Open Doors training seminar, the Public Security Bureau (PSB) surrounded the seminar building, charged in and arrested the twenty students on site. Li had left moments earlier.

All twenty students were hospitalized from the abuse they received during the arrests. The PSB confiscated their Bibles, hymnals, spiritual books, clothing, blankets, gospel CDs, video CDs and mobile phones. The Christians begged for the return of their Bibles but all the Bibles were either burnt or destroyed.

The next morning Li and the Open Doors team heard about the arrests and managed to ensure that all but one of the detainees were released. Li said that following their release, the group encouraged each other and felt honored to suffer for Christ.

For those in the rural, economically-deprived parts of China, Bibles and spiritual books are necessary to help strengthen believers and lead non-believers to faith in Christ. This is what one new believer recently said to Li: "What would happen if I never had the opportunity to hear about this living God? We have nothing here. If we have no Jesus, we will become the worst of the worst in this world." Let us all seek to help millions of others in China hear the Word of God.

***Dr. Carl Moeller** is president/CEO of Open Doors USA. Open Doors is an international ministry which has supported and strengthened persecuted Christians for fifty years. Moeller formerly ministered with Campus Crusade for Christ and Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, USA.*

Institute of Campus Revival and Awakening Set for Yale University

An Institute to help college campus ministry leaders understand revival and awakening **biblically and historically**—and to help bring revival to their own campuses—has been scheduled for 21-28 June 2006 at Yale University, Connecticut, USA.

"The Institute of Campus Revival and Awakening" is sponsored by Collegiate Impact, Campus Renewal Ministries and The Center for World Revival and Awakening.

"The Institute will focus on spiritual breakthroughs of the past, as well as current issues, to prepare and equip participants for campus transformation in the present," said Dave Warn, founder and director of Collegiate Impact.

"It is not just an intellectual or academic event, but will provide a practical way to spark genuine revival in the classic sense," he said. "It is more than a classroom experience, and will include prayer and worship."

The Institute, limited to seventy participants, is designed for full-time leaders of denominational and parachurch campus ministries, such as Campus Crusade for Christ, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, The Navigators, The Christian Union, Baptist Student Union, Reformed University Fellowship and Chi Alpha. Campus ministry leaders of Christian universities and colleges also are among likely attendees.

Topics to be explored include America's four "Great Awakenings" and their implications for campus ministries today; the theological, historical and practical underpinnings of revival and awakening; campus revival in relation to intellectualism and anti-intellectual; postmodernism: help or hindrance; and more.

The Institute is being held at Yale because many Ivy League schools were founded on Christian principles, with an expressed Christian mission, Warn said.

"Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards, leader of the 'First Great Awakening,' was president of Yale when God brought a deep, broad, sweeping move of the Holy Spirit to the campus during the 'Second Great Awakening.' As we look to the past and its implications for campus ministry today, we will be meeting at the epicenter of the campus aspect of a great revival," Warn said.

Faculty will include Dale Schlafer, founder and president of the Center for World Revival; Jeremy Story, founder and president of Campus Renewal Ministries; Dr. Ray Ortlund Jr., senior pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tennessee; George Otis Jr., founder of the Sentinel Group; Dr. Ken Mikema, the world's foremost scholar on Jonathan Edwards and editor at the Jonathan Edwards Center

at Yale; Caleb Maskell, associate editor at the Jonathan Edwards Center; Del Fehsenfeld III, director of publications for Life Action Ministries; and Warn.

Applications may be made online at www.campusrevivalinstitute.com or by calling (in the US) 800.321.1538, ext. 2018.

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WORLD PERSPECTIVES

Global Internet Users Present Vast Opportunities for Online Evangelism

By Dave Hackett

The world zipped past an unnoticed milestone as 2006 arrived. Over one billion people were online. Roughly 15.7% of the world's people connected through the fastest communication service ever devised.¹

Are Evangelistic Websites Drawing Visitors?

Contrary to an easy assumption, most of the Internet does not operate in English. Just one third of the web uses English,² leaving two-thirds of the seventeen billion web pages of content³ to be in languages other than English. Only twenty percent of the top fifteen Internet-using countries are English-speaking,⁴ leaving fast-growing user countries such as China, Japan and India to supply almost a quarter of the world's people online. Compare the United State's portion with the rest of the world's web users and we are forced to ask this question: How are Christians preparing to present Christ in this massive medium?

According to Tony Whittaker, a leading proponent of web evangelism who has an article elsewhere in this publication, "The web/digital revolution is changing how we think and communicate in ways we are only starting to see."

Christian web evangelism pioneers are already making advances into this new frontier. Missionaries and national ministries are using a variety of approaches, some of which are described below, in their innovative efforts to harness the communicational power of the web to share the gospel of Christ.

Even now, years after the Internet has become mainstream media in the West, there are relatively few effective outreach sites in the English language. Most Christian websites have been written purely for Christians.

In other languages, the opportunities have hardly been plumbed. For instance, a highly web-literate country like Japan (with seventy-eight million Internet users; 37.4 million of them active users) only has a tiny handful of outreach websites. The potential to reach the 119 million web users in mainland China is vast. And the web offers a vital route to reach many of the 10/40 Window, hard-to-reach countries in the Islamic world, Africa and Asia.

John Edmiston, who coordinates a twelve-week course in cybermissions and Internet evangelism with the Asian Internet Bible Institute, has compiled a list of forty-three high-potential nations for Internet evangelism.⁵ The opportunities are clear, the technology is available and the first generation of Internet evangelism pioneers is plowing new ground. Initial reports from many quarters around the world show unexpectedly strong and willing responses by those seeking a relationship with Christ and his people.

International Internet Evangelism Network

In light of these developments, the International Internet Evangelism Network (IIEN) is a hopeful initiative being promoted by a partnership between the US-focused Internet Evangelism Coalition (IEC) and visionSynergy. The aim of the IIEN is to provide an international forum for non-English pioneers of web evangelism to come together, share what they have learned and explore collaboration.

This writer, David Hackett of visionSynergy, is leading the effort to get I IEN off the ground. Hackett has been explaining the non-English Internet evangelism opportunities—and the benefits of creating an international network to help advance such efforts—before meetings of the IEC and the Global Christian Internet Alliance (GCIA) and other international gatherings. Language-specific groups are showing interest in Internet evangelism for their languages. Included in these are the Reaching Japanese for Christ conference and a newly forming Arabic-language Internet evangelism network that held its first meeting last year in Europe.

Prime goals of the I IEN effort are to draw together an initial group of practitioners and secure the commitment of an on-going facilitator to carry forward the project to its next level. Discussions are underway with a potential facilitator. Individuals interested in the I IEN are welcome to email Hackett at dhackett@visionsynergy.net.

Directory of Non-English Evangelism Websites

As part of the effort to understand “who is doing what” in non-English Internet evangelism, Hackett is compiling an ever-growing directory of non-English evangelistic websites. This directory now has listings of over 1,250 non-English evangelistic websites.

The embryonic directory is not ready for public distribution. But already it is clear there are two main types of evangelism websites: (1) those that are multiple language versions of basically the same content and (2) what might be called “boutique” sites created precisely for one culture or language group. The directory has several collections of the former and long lists of the latter.

The largest effort of all to provide evangelistic content online appears to be Campus Crusade for Christ’s JESUS Film presented for online viewing. The JESUS Film website lists about eight hundred language versions of the film viewable anywhere on the web.

Another large evangelistic website collection is Campus Crusade’s “Four Laws” presentation. These sites are nearly identical versions of the same content offered in at least 175 different languages. Campus Crusade’s “Who is Jesus, Really?” set is produced in almost forty languages. Its “Life Agape” series comes in eleven languages, as does its “Every Student” series.

The group “Films for Christ” (Eden Communications) has prepared its “Christian answers” outreach site in thirty languages. Campus Crusade for Christ, Canada runs a collection called “Power to Change” (for example, www.powertochange.org/it) in ten languages, and it appears these sites have considerable freedom to contextualize for their target audiences.

Minute Factionalization

Many of the “boutique” evangelistic sites are examples of what Web Evangelism Guide’s Tony Whittaker and others identify as specific targeting of a tightly-defined affinity group. The ability to customize a website for a demographic group by a combination of language, interest, colors and geographical references is a kind of “minute factionalization,” or segmenting, that is an increasing trend in evangelistic websites.

According to Whittaker, “The more specific the target group, the better. Also, the more obscure the group, the greater the chance to get a high-ranking website about Jesus Christ. For instance, if yours is the only site on the web in a given language—say, Polish—then every webmaster will link to you; you’ll have an automatic audience. The novelty factor grabs the audience.”

Singular evangelistic websites are often adept at connecting with the particular culture in ways that can convey to the reader that “this site is just for us in our culture.” We’re beginning to see the large scale, bigger-team efforts tailor their sites to more specific target groups, as well.

But such tight identification can come with a price. Many boutique evangelistic sites make identification of the persons or ministry behind the sites more difficult and each site has the cost of being custom-built. Sometimes the sites are in persecuted Church situations and so want to shield their affiliations.

Many sites do not want to be identified as an evangelistic effort at all to make their sites more effective and contextualized. One site in Japan, for instance, relates deeply to those wrestling with suicide, and it

is only in the context of dealing thoroughly with suicide-related topics is faith in Christ presented. These have been described as “bridge strategies” to connect with the felt needs of web viewers.

Another trend is toward mini-presentations of content—tighter and smaller segments that pack an evangelistic punch. Dan Henrich, assistant professor of communications at Liberty University (Virginia, USA), is experimenting with one-minute video clips for viral transmission—that is, clips that people will want to forward to their friends. Walt Wilson of Global Media Outreach also predicts that online gospel video spots will become more popular, but will shrink to the one-minute length. These may foreshadow Internet integration with cell phone evangelism as transfer speeds increase.

In an effort to connect with youth and children, another approach gaining ground is creating online and electronic games for evangelism. The thought is that a website’s games can provide a fun and attractive environment to convey spiritual truths. Games offer a new opportunity to engage youth and children as well as adults seeking simple presentations in a notably relaxed and receptive atmosphere. (For an example, visit <http://guide.gospelcom.net/resources/games.php>.)

Fitting In: The X-Spectrum

Internet evangelism’s first generation pioneers are approaching this new medium in a variety of ways.

Some sites are explicitly Christian, designed for those who are well toward the seeking end of the evangelism continuum. These sites are clearly for Christians but hope that non-Christians will visit special areas on a website meant to help them understand faith and even lead them to make a decision for Christ.

Some sites are more implicitly Christian, delving into their general interest topics from a Christian worldview. Their evangelistic purpose may be so contextualized within a felt need that the casual visitor would not recognize this until captivated by the quality of the site’s content, and follow links to other sites that are more explicit.

Yet other ministries are successfully using instant messenger software such as Paltalk to attract non-Christian inquirers to chat rooms where Christians are trained to engage in evangelistic chat. These may be the real frontier, harnessing the large-scale attraction of sites and tools established and maintained by others that already draw significant traffic.

Calvin Conkey of Australia and Whittaker have created the “X-Spectrum” to define the contextual positioning of Christian websites. Their X1 to X6 scale is meant to suggest that different approaches and styles have advantages and disadvantages and can reach different target audiences. The scale is very useful for categorizing the various types of evangelistic websites.

An X1 site has a target audience that is in practice entirely Christian. It assumes knowledge about Christ and salvation and uses a high degree of insider Christian jargon and concepts. “These characteristics,” say Conkey and Whittaker, “are entirely appropriate for a site which is ‘in reach’—edification and teaching of Christians.”

An X6 site has an entirely non-Christian target audience. According to Conkey and Whittaker, “Such a site assumes visitors have no prior Christian knowledge, and may be indifferent or hostile to the Christian message. [The gospel is] presented in highly-contextualized or creative terms appropriate to target audience, in a non-formulaic non-religious non-Western style. [The] site may give little clue as to its Christian nature.”

While non-Christians who are very open to the Christian message may be receptive to websites at the lower end of the X-Scale, Whittaker sees far more potential in websites positioned at the X5 and X6 end of the scale.

Internet evangelism opportunities on the web will only increase. The number of Internet users is expected to hit the two billion milestone by 2011,⁶ and most of this growth will come in the majority world which contains untold millions of unreached cultures. The online interests and technological capacities of youth will power this first wave of web-based evangelism. However, older audiences of seekers will come close on their heels, looking to ask their secret questions about faith, forgiveness, healing and grace. Many hope the global Church will be there to meet them as they come.

Endnotes

1. World Internet Users and Population Stats
2. <http://global-reach.biz/globstats/>
3. www.metamend.com/internet-growth.html
4. <http://www.c-i-a.com/>
5. http://aibi.gospelcom.net/missions/cybermissions_target_nations.htm
6. <http://www.c-i-a.com/>

The following is a sample list of sites divided by language.

Arabic: <http://www.maarifa.org/>. Called the most popular Arabic-only Christian site on the web, this site has been online for five years. In the last two years the number of visitors to the site has more than doubled. Nearly nine thousand visitors come to the site each month. Forty-four thousand files and thirty-two thousand pages are downloaded each month.

Arabic: <http://www.everyarabstudent.com/>. Since the site became operational in November 2004, over three thousand people have made a decision for Christ.

French: <http://www.topchretien.com/>. This premier Christian site records over five million visitors per year. Since 2000 more than eight million people have visited the site. The ministry has 1,800 volunteers and counselors are always available via chat, though most follow-up is done through email. Nearly fifteen thousand people have emailed to say they want to come to Christ after visiting the site.

French: <http://www.connaitredieu.com/>. In a recent eight-month period, several hundred thousand people visited and over forty-five thousand people indicated a personal decision for Christ through this French-language website. About 2.5% of its visitors have Muslim backgrounds. The ministry has a network of seven hundred counselors to offer email mentoring to contacts.

Dutch: <http://www.thelife.nl/>. This Netherlands site had over twenty thousand unique visitors in a recent three-week period.

Polish: <http://www.podprad.pl/>. Drawn by the content in Polish, this site has some twenty-five thousand visitors per month.

Romanian: <http://www.fitzuica.ro/>. Leaders of this site say that the most-read stories are translations of Bible stories related to college life. Over twelve thousand users are registered with the site and more than forty percent use the site to access its articles.

Rev. David Hackett is associate director at visionSynergy, a ministry developing strategic international Christian networks focused on high impact opportunities for world evangelization. See www.powerofconnecting.net for more information.

The Twenty-first Century Roman Road—Signposts along the Way

By Tony Whittaker

In New Testament times, the Roman Road system was strategic in God's plan. It enabled the spread of the gospel throughout the then-known world. In the same way today, the Internet is a worldwide network that can facilitate effective gospel communication.

Mainstream Internet usage has been with us for more than ten years. Christians have been quick to use it for communication with other Christians. But relatively few have found ways to effectively reach non-Christians online. Surprisingly few cross-cultural missions are using it for their primary reason of existence. Yet the potential is enormous.

New Annual Focus Day for Churches

The Internet Evangelism Coalition (www.webevangelism.com), an umbrella group of major organizations

involved in web ministry, has helped initiate an annual worldwide web awareness focus called Internet Evangelism Day to be held this year on 7 May 2006.

The Internet Evangelism Day website (www.internetevangelismday.com) offers resources for Christians at two levels.

First, it explains the nature of the web, and the strategies we can use for evangelism. The site showcases examples of effective outreach sites, shares testimonies of people who found God online and tells the stories of Christians who use the web for outreach. There are tips on building a church website to reach out to the local community. One emphasis on the site is that web evangelism is for anyone, not just the technically gifted. The site lists spare-time and full-time web evangelism opportunities, one of which is email mentoring that can be done by nearly everyone: retirees, returned missionaries, mums at home and others. Self-training options are also listed. Because only a few training institutions offer modules in web evangelism, you can also find suggested college curriculum at <http://ied.gospelcom.net/training.php>.

Second, the website offers downloadable resources for churches, mission teams, conference organizers or Bible colleges to create their own focus day program. This might be anything from a five-minute slot within a church service to a two-hour seminar or anything in between. Ready-made resources include a PowerPoint presentation, video clips, drama sketches, witness-challenge music, posters, handouts and discussion materials. Everything can be customized to suit the individual needs of the participating group. Video clips include five-minute testimonies from two young women who found God online.

Churches who staged an IE Day last year were enthusiastic. "People were challenged and inspired!" wrote a church leader in Australia. "This is a huge help for small churches such as ours," said a church leader in the United States. Read more stories of how different churches and groups created an IE Day program last year at <http://ied.gospelcom.net/examples.php>.

The Nature of This New Medium

The web's explosive growth has been remarkable. In ten short years, as David Hackett points out in another article in this issue, it has jumped from being a minority hobby for computer enthusiasts to a communication medium used by over one billion people worldwide. If this article takes you ten minutes to read, in that time interval 460 people will have used the web for their very first time. The global impact of the Internet and the digital revolution will be as far-reaching as the invention of the printing press.

To use the web effectively, we must understand its nature as a medium. Each time a new means of communication is invented, people initially think of it in terms of a previous medium. Thus, television began as radio with pictures, but quickly developed into a different medium in its own right. Christians have sometimes been slow to make the conceptual jump. How many supposedly evangelistic radio programs still use the hymn/prayer/sermon "church medium" that few non-Christians can easily relate to?

Linear Versus Non-linear, Push Versus Pull

Many mediums are linear—they communicate a single sequential message. Radio and television are essentially linear, as are fiction books, videos and tracts. However, a newspaper is non-linear—it contains multiple messages not linked together sequentially. Readers can move around as they choose. Likewise, the web is non-linear. A website is not normally a single page of text, but offers a range of interactive choices. We must not think of it as merely "text on a screen."

We must also distinguish between "pull" and "push" mediums. Outreach literature is largely a push medium. For instance, people put tracts into others' hands. Radio is mostly a push medium. There are a limited range of stations that the user either listens to or turns off.

The Internet, however, is a pull medium. It draws people in—but only within the areas in which they wish to be drawn. It is therefore more like a reference library than a literature distribution program. There is no automatic audience for a website, no magical trickle-down effect. How many non-Christians visit the religion section of their local library even once in their life? This is why we need the "Bridge Strategy," or another advertising method, to pull non-seekers into outreach websites.

The Ninety-nine Percent Problem—A Mismatch of Resources

"Some want to live within the sound of a church or chapel bell. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell." – Pioneer evangelist C. T. Studd

It's almost like there is a rule when it comes to published Christian material: ninety-nine percent is for Christians, one percent is for non-Christians. We can see it reflected in Christian bookshops, where a quick analysis of books and videos reveals that the vast majority of material is produced entirely for Christians in terms of language, content and underlying assumptions. How many books and videos are truly evangelistic and accessible to unchurched people who do not know the language and the concepts? Try checking them using the "X-Spectrum" tool (see article by Hackett). The same situation can be seen for Christian websites. Perhaps ninety-nine percent are written mainly for Christians.¹ Sites often take no account of where someone is on their spiritual journey. The "Gray Matrix" (<http://guide.gospelcom.net/resources/gray-matrix.php>) helps us visualize this.

Opportunities for Outreach Online

Outreach Websites. How can we attract the attention of someone who is not an active seeker? One method is to integrate web evangelism within a multiple-media outreach to a town or area. This is being effectively used in Australia's 2005-2006 Jesus. All About Life campaign.

The EveryStudent.com site receives non-web publicity on campuses, being promoted by Campus Crusade staffers and Christian students using T-shirts, contact cards and word of mouth. Kristi is one of many who found Christ at this site.

The other main option is to use the "Bridge Strategy," which focuses on building websites around a starting point of secular interest or felt need. This is a major biblical key to reaching the millions who would never dream of searching for Christian content and it enables Christians to target any affinity group of people.²

It is an application of the biblical principle of 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, and illustrates the Schram concept of effective communication.

Bridging Examples. The Bridge Strategy can apply to almost any topic. For instance, WomenTodayMagazine.com addresses many life issues that women face. Because the same team produces an outwardly similar site called ChristianWomenToday.com, we have a powerful case study. At first glance some Christians might assume this to be an outreach site—with its homepage links to Bible study and prayer. In fact, the site is designed primarily for Christians. By comparing the communication methods of each site, we can learn many lessons.³

Editor Claire Colvin of the TruthMedia.com team shares,

It seems so obvious that a Christian site is not necessarily an evangelistic site. One of the biggest barriers that stops a site from being truly evangelistic is language. One thing you'll notice on the Women Today site is a lack of Christian terminology. You don't see words like church, pray, salvation, holy, sanctified, born again or repent. Instead, you find articles written from a Christian perspective but presented in regular English.

Colvin goes on, "How can you expect people to hear your message if you speak a language they don't understand? I think this is hard for many of us who were raised in the church because these words are so familiar. It's important to remember that an evangelistic website is not about us, or what is comfortable and familiar to us. An outreach site is all about helping the gospel make sense to our audience, using the words and examples, format and tone that make it easy for them to listen and understand. I think we have a great example of this in Christ (big surprise!). When he preached he could have pulled out every theology term in the book and made himself sound very learned in the process, but that's not what he did. He told stories, he used simple parables to explain the wonders of God to human beings. He didn't change the truth; he spoke it plainly. And people responded. This is why we have two separate websites. On Christian Women Today we can have a section called Prayer and Online Bible Studies and it's very effective because we are speaking to an audience for whom these terms have meaning. In Women Today Magazine we approach things differently. We give people a reason to want to listen to us, to speak to them where they are and as we are speaking to their situation we will tell them about Christ in words that they understand."

Blogs and Other Innovations. Blogs are a specialized diary-style of website, rarely used for evangelism, yet potentially very effective. Check three outreach examples at <http://ied.gospelcom.net/blogging.php>.

In the future we may see short evangelistic video clips for mobile phones passed "virally" from friend to friend. And the invention of "electronic paper" promises new options for sharing presentations.

Church Sites—Another Missed Opportunity

Church websites outnumber other Christian sites by about five to one. They therefore have huge outreach potential. Sadly the vast majority of church sites are written in churchy, insider language mainly for their members. Few have built on a foundation of user-friendliness to outsiders. However, those who do are finding success. "Week in, week out, more visitors turn up at our church on a Sunday because of the website, than anything else," said a church leader in Kingston (UK) which uses this insight.

A church website is an extension of its public face to the community. Its primary role is to demonstrate that visiting the church could be a positive and friendly experience. View a seeker sensitive church website paper. Church website resources can be found at <http://ied.gospelcom.net/church.php>.

Needs in Unreached Countries

Many web users don't speak English. Outreach sites for these non-English speakers are tragically few. In Japan for example, English is not widely spoken, yet most households are wired for the Internet. Furthermore, it is a country where few people are likely to know a believer personally, visit a church or see Christianity as having any relevance to them. The potential for outreach to Japan is enormous, yet there are almost no Japanese evangelistic sites. Pray that God will call individuals and teams to work in other languages.

Across Africa and Asia, we see similar potential. Current usage statistics can be found at www.clickz.com/stats/sectors/geographics/article.php/5911_151151. An article on forty-three hard-to-reach countries and the potential for web evangelism can be found at http://aibi.gospelcom.net/missions/cybermissions_target_nations.htm. Some European countries also have tiny percentages of believers, often lower than typical "mission field" countries. For the first time, non-Christians in these countries have an anonymous and relatively safe place to ask questions.

Mission Web Integration

There are many situations where a local outreach team could integrate an evangelistic website into their strategy using a locally-oriented "entry page" that is added to an existing larger outreach site. EveryStudent.com is working with local teams to achieve this in a campus context.⁴ PowertoChange.com has participated in multi-media localized campaigns in major Western cities. But few have used this approach in a local non-Western context. Teaching computer use also has outreach potential.⁵

It's only beginning! "You ain't heard nothin' yet!" said Al Jolson in the first talking movie. We are only at the start of understanding and using God's harvesting strategies for the digital age.

Endnotes

1. <http://guide.gospelcom.net/resources/99percent.php>
2. <http://guide.gospelcom.net/resources/bridge-strategy.php>
3. <http://guide.gospelcom.net/resources/case-study.php>
4. <http://guide.gospelcom.net/resources/locality-teams.php>
5. <http://guide.gospelcom.net/resources/teach-it.php>

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Closed Doors/Open Windows: The New Challenge in World Missions

By Arne Fjeldstad

Fatima loves chatting on the Internet. Several hours usually go by quickly in the Arabian Peninsula Internet café. The web is new, exciting and fun; you can even chat with foreign boys from other countries! And you can ask questions that the clerics in the mosque do not want to hear.

Some time ago Fatima chatted with two boys from another Arab country. She noticed something special about them and started wondering if they were Christians. She had wondered about their Holy book, the Bible. She knew there were many false things in the book, but she still wondered what the Bible taught about the Prophet Isa (Jesus). But in her country it is no easy task to get a Bible, and most Christian websites are blocked by government censorship. Maybe these boys could help her. Fatima hinted carefully about her sensitive subject and the boys understood her half-coded language. They promised to look into it and get back to her the next day.

The two Christian boys used the rest of the evening downloading each book of the Bible in Arabic. It didn't take long before Fatima had the entire Bible available on her computer.

New technologies enable us to communicate more effectively and widely. The Internet includes not only web pages but chat rooms, instant messaging capabilities, inexpensive phones and voice mail, blogs, searchable databases, email groups and news groups. When you surf, you can watch television, listen to live radio broadcasts, download broadcasts, download podcast files and more. Emails and instant messages are changing the way we express ourselves. We communicate more directly and use fewer words. New digital tools are becoming multifunctional as well. Cell phones can act as simple photo and video cameras, hold addresses, keep track of appointments and act as alarms.

New information technologies also give millions of people around the world a much better opportunity to communicate directly in cheaper and easier ways. The number of people using the Internet has virtually exploded and it will continue to grow rapidly in many parts of the world in the years ahead. The following statistics (from 2000 and 2005) indicate the number of people with Internet access in key Muslim majority countries.

Number of People with Internet Access in Key Muslim Countries

Country	2000	2005	Growth in %	% of Population
Algeria	50,000	845,000	1,590.0%	2.6%
Bahrain	40,000	152,700	281.8%	21.6%
Egypt	450,000	4,200,000	833.3%	6.0%
Iran	250,000	4,800,000	1,820.0%	7.0%
Iraq	12,500	25,000	100.0%	0.1%
Jordan	127,300	600,000	371.3%	10.4%
Kuwait	150,000	600,000	300.0%	23.7%
Lebanon	300,000	600,000	100.0%	13.4%
Libya	10,000	205,000	1,950.0%	3.4%
Morocco	100,000	3,500,000	3,400.0%	11.7%
Oman	90,000	245,000	172.2%	10.2%
Palestine (West Bank)	35,000	160,000	357.1%	4.0%
Qatar	30,000	165,000	450.0%	21.5%
Saudi Arabia	200,000	2,540,000	1,170.0%	11.0%
Sudan	30,000	1,140,000	3,700.0%	3.3%
Syria	30,000	800,000	2,566.7%	4.3%
Tunisia	100,000	835,000	735.0%	8.3%

United Arab Emerites	735,000	1,384,800	88.4%	36.9%
Yemen	15,000	180,000	1,100.0%	0.9%
	2,754,800	22,977,000		
Bangladesh	100,000	300,000	200.0%	0.2%
Indonesia	2,000,000	15,300,000	665.0%	7.0%
Malaysia	3,700,000	10,040,000	171.4%	37.9%
Pakistan	133,900	2,000,000	1,393.7%	1.2%
Uzbekistan	7,500	880,000	11,633.3%	3.4%
	8,696,300	51,497,000		

Source: InternetWorldStats.com, Updated 9 November 2005.

A Half-Open Window

In many Muslim countries there are no opportunities for traditional missionary or evangelism work. Yet there are windows open via the Internet. But these windows are only halfway open. Several countries have severe restrictions imposed on Internet use. The government in Saudi Arabia is boasting that they have censored more than 400,000 websites. The authorities claim they are blocking access to both pornographic sites and to sites with "unacceptable" political or religious content. A survey done at Harvard University documented that at least 246 websites indexed by Yahoo as religious sites were blocked.¹

Several other Muslim countries also have controls. In Egypt the website for the Muslim Brotherhood is not accessible within the country. Authorities often have a surveillance of the "backbone servers" to monitor activity. In some Muslim countries both pornographic material and Christian content are available; however, these same countries may take action against people publishing this on the Internet. In Tunisia the government has blocked websites with reports about human rights abuses and taken the authors into custody. Libyan authorities block sites critical to the regime.

The Egyptian blogger Abd al-Karim Nabil Suleiman was arrested 26 October 2005 after having written candidly about the violent riots against a Coptic Christian church in his hometown of Alexandria. Suleiman is a Muslim student at Al Azhar University, but his blog published a very strong opinion against the behaviour of the Muslim majority.

Omrid Memarian and twenty other bloggers in Iran were arrested in October 2004. He was put in solitary confinement, repeatedly tortured and forced to sign false confessions. Omrid was released in December 2004.

In Bahrain the government has demanded that all websites be registered by the Department of Information in order for the authorities to protect their intellectual copyright. The sole Internet provider in the United Arab Emirates, Etisalat, is blocking pornographic web pages, a blog (of nudity, even though there are no pictures posted on the site), links to Bahai and all websites with an address coming from Israel.

In Syria the government is imposing restrictions on email and design of websites, and has tortured people who publish unwanted material online.²

Several Christian organizations and groups, however, are evangelizing on the Internet, and many of them receive hundreds of emails and feedback every month. Some sites are hosted within the Arab world while others are based outside the area to secure freedom of speech (and protect against malicious attacks aimed at shutting down the servers). Some ministries have hundreds of people gathered online for Bible studies. Mobile phones are used to share Bible verses, animations, etc. Podcasting is becoming a good tool among many students catching up with the latest lecture online. Although text and picture messages via mobile phones can be interrupted and blocked, they are likely to be less censored because of the overwhelming number of users.

The Internet Creates and Develops Closer Relationships

The Internet opens up countless opportunities for people to share their testimonies. Communicating

via the Internet may amplify and strengthen feelings and personal attachment. Professor Bo Dahlstrom at Gothenburg University in Sweden emphasizes that emotions are expressed more strongly via the Internet.³

The Internet can spin close emotional ties between people who have never seen each other face to face. In my own research I have documented that Internet "churches" have played an important role in leading people to faith in Christ. Forty-five percent of the Internet ministries or churches surveyed in fall 1996 reported that one or more people had received Christ through their ministry.⁴

A genuine meeting with a new human being is often prompted by curiosity. People generally feel safe behind the computer screen. By communicating with another individual online, the message becomes more personal and may touch the heart of the recipient. This inclusive attitude may make it easier for the recipient to ask questions as well. And these questions may include faith issues.

The Christian message is essentially about a life relationship to the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Many people can share stories of new hope which resulted from their trusting in Christ. The Internet provides a special opportunity to communicate in an untraditional, direct, focused and "down-to-earth" manner.

The New Challenge for Mission

For hundreds of years churches and ministries have built up considerable experience and expertise in communicating the gospel in many languages and to a multitude of cultures and countries. This expertise needs to become more visible and available on the Internet. The World Wide Web is increasingly becoming a global, multicultural tool for communication and cooperation. Although English remains the dominant language, many others are gaining prominence.

The global Christian mission movement has made the gospel available to individuals and people groups the world over. The Internet is developing into a new worldwide arena where people feel at home despite different languages and cultures.

The number of people online is growing. It is entirely possible to assume that sixty to seventy million (of a total of three hundred million Muslims in North Africa, the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula) will have access to the Internet within the next five years.

However, already a number of countries have reached a "critical mass" of people using the Internet. Leaders in world missions should be challenged to think and plan strategically. We are experiencing brand new opportunities for evangelism, training and resourcing of partners in countries traditionally considered as mission fields. And we have new opportunities to communicate effectively with people in areas and countries that have largely remained beyond reach for the gospel.

The new challenge for the global missions movement is to build equal partnerships with its friends and partners locally in other parts of the world. Churches and ministries may need to be challenged and encouraged to explore new opportunities; they may also need personnel or financial support to train people and develop multilingual meeting points on the Internet.

Partners involved in missions need to mobilize and equip volunteers and salaried personnel to use the Internet as a key resource tool in:

- Sharing the gospel
- Training people to use digital media and the Internet effectively
- Developing better resources for education in a variety of topics
- Facilitating partnerships in prayer
- Facilitating a platform for holistic care among users of the Internet

A Personal Challenge

The challenge to think in a new way about sharing the gospel via the Internet or other digital media does not only include leaders in churches, ministries or mission work. Every Christian needs to take seriously the new challenge to use the Internet to communicate the good news for people who have not yet heard or received Jesus as Lord.

Entering into a dialogue or conversation with a person from another religion is no easy task. You will be challenged:

- To take time getting to know and understand another human being
- To carefully and cautiously explain how your faith impacts and governs your daily life
- To seek counsel and prayers from Christian friends when hard questions arise
- To understand and not judge the other person's thoughts, ideas and faith
- To find the right balance of respecting the other person and sharing your own faith
- To dare to encourage or challenge your new friend to start his or her own faith journey with Jesus Christ

There are real rewards for sharing your faith with another online. Perhaps you will gain more than a new friend. Perhaps you will gain a new brother or sister in the global Christian family.

Endnotes

1. <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/filtering/saudi Arabia/>
2. Human Rights Watch
3. Aftenposten, 24 May 1998
4. Fjeldstad, Arne. 1997. Doctoral dissertation.

Rev. Dr. Arne H. Fjeldstad is the CEO of the Media Project of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life. Fjeldstad served as the theologian for the Information and Technology issue group at the Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization. He has more than thirty years of experience as a journalist, editor, journalism professor and pastor.

Internet Evangelism and Your Church

By Debra Brown

Initiating Internet evangelism in the local church setting is a little like trying to ski uphill—it can be very difficult to get momentum. The best way we have found to do so is to develop an integrated system to support the online ministry. This approach has a number of benefits. First, it provides profile. Once a system is in place in any organization it becomes a part of the "machine." Information about the system soon gets included in the church bulletin, on the website and in other key communication mechanisms of the church.

Second, it provides legacy. By building a system, the church has an Internet evangelism foundational structure that others can build on. Often there is a high turnover rate in church ministries which can result in a loss of key information, expertise and at times, the ministry itself. A system will maintain the foundation when a key person moves on.

Third, it provides integration. Internet ministry should be integrated with the strategic efforts of the church. The goals and objectives of the ministry should align with the vision, mission and values of the church. It should be embedded into structures and systems of other ministries in the church.

In setting up the system at Woodvale Pentecostal Church in Ottawa, Canada, we made extensive use of the free resources available through the Internet Evangelism Coalition (IEC — www.webevangelism.com). Our system, which included a weekly class on Internet evangelism, incorporates six building blocks:

1. Training. The best way to embed Internet evangelism in the local church is to engage and educate as many people as possible. Using the Online Training for Online Evangelists course (<http://iec.gospelcom.net/otoe/index.php>) we:

- * Created an implementation/study guide that provides an eight-week training companion to the course. The guide was designed for local churches to assist them in training a team of Internet evangelists. We have made this available through the IEC to those interested in obtaining a copy.
- * Made extensive use of hands-on experience in the weekly lesson plan by ensuring classes took place where there was access to the Internet and audio visual equipment. This enabled students to see,

touch and feel lessons online in real time.

- * Encouraged students to evangelize on the Internet during the course and bring stories, learnings and questions back to share with the class the next week.
- * Obtained certificates of completion from Wheaton College (Wheaton, Illinois, USA) and the IEC for the graduates.
- * Had the church agree to hold this class two times each year.
- * Chose one student from the class to train the next group of students using the course in order to develop another leader and champion for Internet Evangelism at the church.

2. Hands-on Internet Evangelism. Taking a proactive approach to Internet evangelism, we have:

- * Arranged a set time each week where graduates of the online training program can meet online in pairs and enter into discussions with people in chat rooms and blogs.
- * Encouraged the congregation to look for opportunities to evangelize on the Internet, in emails, on their own web pages and in other online forums.

3. Internet Evangelism Day. IE Day (www.internetevangelismday.org) provides an opportunity for churchwide awareness, celebration and involvement. It is a day set aside each year to communicate the outreach potential of the web among the worldwide church. There are many tools and ideas on the IE Day website to consider for your church. At Woodvale we use this opportunity to commission the Internet evangelists who have graduated from the online training course throughout the year. We view Internet evangelists just as we view missionaries we send to a foreign field. We train, commission, send and pray for them.

4. Gospel Presentation. The majority of church websites include little or no information on how to become a Christian. On Woodvale's website we include a link to a presentation created by the IEC. This relevant presentation, Now Try God (www.nowtrygod.com), is set up so that individuals who go through the entire presentation will be referred to the originating church. In other words, if the site was found through our church website, the seeker would be referred to our church for follow up.

5. Local Church Involvement. We also want to ensure that seekers and new believers who come to our church through our Internet evangelism efforts become engaged in the local church. The cell group system is the mechanism we use to introduce new people to the church. This allows us to integrate our Internet ministry with other ministries in the church and ensure that caring people are ready to welcome new people into the fellowship. It also ensures they are followed-up with and grow in their faith.

6. Spiritual Growth. Finally, we use the Growing in Christ (www.growinginchrist.com) project of the IEC (created by Campus Crusade for Christ) as a means of ensuring follow up of new believers. People who come to Christ online are comfortable in an online environment. Growing in Christ is a site that new believers can be sent to for follow up until, or in addition to, their involvement in a local church.

Woodvale's Experiences with Internet Evangelism

Along the way, we have learned some things and made some mistakes. The following are four things to remember when launching an Internet evangelism ministry at your church:

1. Be a champion. Even though the Internet has been around for many years, in the local church setting there are a number of barriers to entering into a ministry online. Starting a program in Internet evangelism takes a leader with tenacity and a passion for both evangelism and the Internet. Church leaders often do not understand the Internet—technically, intellectually and culturally. And although evangelism is seemingly an important component of a church, it can be easily crowded out and placed on the back burner as traditional church programs compete for the attention of leadership.

2. Be an encourager. People need significant, active encouragement to voluntarily take and complete evangelism training. The more positive, fun and enthusiastic the encouragement, the better. Fear of rejection and the unknown can be major stumbling blocks to evangelism. Encouragement is needed to

work through these fears!

3. Be creative. Be creative in your approach. Impact is what is important. Find creative ways that work in your own church setting and context.

4. Be a part. A little focus or a lot in Internet evangelism will serve your church well. Place the gospel presentation on your website (considering using Now Try God). Train a class of Internet evangelists. Take part in IE Day. Or, do all of these and more. Just be a part of what God is doing through this new medium!

A Ten-Step Plan for Internet Evangelism in the Local Church

1. Meet with the senior pastor to explain the ministry. Obtain approval on the approach, deliverables, timelines, budget, etc. This should include a draft for project implementation that closely aligns with the evangelism strategy for the church. Make sure that all aspects of the ministry have been clearly articulated and documented. Provide the documentation to the pastor prior to meeting with him or her so that he or she is able to review the proposed ministry thoroughly before you meet.

2. Obtain any necessary further approvals. In the case of Woodvale, this was a lengthy process which involved obtaining approval from all seven pastors and the church board of directors. While this took several meetings (and months!), it was well worth it as all of the senior leadership in the church is now committed to the program.

3. Integrate the Internet evangelism strategy into the overall strategic plan of the church. Again, this may take time. This step is important to ensure that the approval obtained in steps one and two above makes its way into church process and possibly church bureaucracy.

4. Engage and invite the website committee into the project. If the church already has a process in place for Internet and website strategy, these individuals must be widely consulted from the beginning. In the case of Woodvale, the website is still driven at the pastoral level, so it was important to invest time in recruiting a team to carry the ball once the approvals had been given. Ensuring a team approach will ideally ensure continuity and a long-term strategy. In churches where we count on volunteerism, people come and go at a rapid rate, so the team approach to this ministry is helpful. Team skills or expertise needed on this committee include: strategic direction and project management, evangelism, graphic artist, web design, writing, editing and proofing.

5. Articulate a follow-up strategy for the church. Once people are reached over the Internet and have made contact with the local church, it is important that these individuals are followed up. The optimal place for this is through the small group/cell group ministry of the church. This has been the case with Woodvale.

6. Train small group leaders in follow-up. There is a myriad of training programs available for training the leaders of church small groups. A part of their training program should include how to enfold and engage new believers into the group and into local church life. At Woodvale, we have made sure that the small group leaders receive training in follow up. Ultimately I would like to see the churches create the option for small groups online.

7. Initiate a training program for Internet Evangelists. As mentioned previously, few people in the local church understand the Internet and how to use it for effective evangelism. A team of people need to be trained to respond to individuals who come in contact with the local church via the internet.

8. Place the Now Try God link on your website. This link provides a proven gospel presentation that will bring people to a decision point and then refer them back to your website for follow-up.

9. Begin to communicate and promote. Once your strategy is clearly outlined, a follow-up process is in place and your online evangelists are trained, begin to more broadly communicate and promote the website. This can be as simple as communicating to your membership that the gospel presentation is now available for them to refer people to. Or, it can be a comprehensive communications approach that includes paid advertising, billboards, web advertising, bumper stickers, etc.

10. Develop a measurement and feedback mechanism for the church. Once the program is up and running, a measurement system should be put into place. This will include gathering web statistics, monitoring response rates, engaging with new converts, getting the church involved, etc.

Debra Brown is president and CEO of Brown Governance Inc. and executive committee member of the Internet Evangelism Coalition. She is a member of Woodvale Pentecostal Church in Ottawa, Canada.

Six Lessons from Leadership University

By Byron Barlowe

Does your ministry have an underperforming website? Or do you have yet to enter into the twenty-first century and Internet outreach? Have you (or your donors) heard war stories and astounding stats from high-flying sites and wondered if you could ever see such results? Take heart.

For eight years it was my privilege to manage content and organizational alliances for Leadership University, a pioneering website in the Internet outreach movement. My colleagues and I saw many lives influenced for Christ. I certainly do not have all the answers, but the following are six lessons we learned along the way that can help others involved in Internet ministry.

1. Post “Ministry Meat” and Have Meaningful Feedback

A medical student regains her faith in London. A philosophy graduate student, harassed by an atheist professor in New York, finds Christian worldview content for a presentation and is encouraged via email by the Texas professor who wrote it. These are only two examples of the feedback we have received.

One commitment the creators of LeaderU.com made was to have personal, non-automated responses to feedback within a few days. As one colleague said, “Ministry is a contact sport.” We need to shift from a publishing-only paradigm to one featuring thought-provoking resources that are followed up by email and chat.

2. Invest Adequately in Resources

Some basic concepts and values launched LeaderU.com into a strategic role during the formative years of the Internet. In 1998, this unique ministry site saw 8.1 million pages viewed by over 2.8 million visitors. By 2001, thirty-five percent more audience members accessed forty percent more resources. This translated to thirty-five ministry materials being seen by fifteen people every minute.

In November 2005 alone, LeaderU.com welcomed 636,000 visitors who experienced 1.25 million free articles, essays, debates, books and reviews written from a biblical perspective.

Your vision may not include such numbers, nor should it necessarily. Maximizing God’s call for you, whatever that is, remains the mission at hand. That often means creating, borrowing or buying materials and posting them to your site. Even if your site is not necessarily “Christian,” it is still important to do this so that some may be saved, blessed, discipled or brought closer to considering faith. The Internet works like an ocean running through filters (mainly popular search engines). To reach intended audiences, you must stretch your reach through these search engines.

It is also important to get connected with others who are doing web ministry. According to Keith Seabourn, who shepherded the LeaderU.com project through technical and visionary leadership, “The Internet is not only a network of technologies, it’s also a network of people who can work together collaboratively to achieve significant results.”

You must ensure your site has enough individuals to meet the demands of success as God blesses. This includes web design and development personnel, content managers and editors.

3. Be the Body of Christ Online

The primary driver of LeaderU.com’s success has been the solid, pithy resources that are shared by a coalition of partners. LeaderU.com became a world-renowned mega-mall of apologetics, a cultural

worldview catalogue of high-quality, citable resources. These are accessible through the site itself and through thousands of outside search terms and phrases.

One example of collaborative work is the Telling the Truth Project. Nearly a dozen disparate sites focused on various aspects of the Christian worldview and strategically banded together. No one organization member could have offered such breadth and depth. Once mission agencies eschew proprietary politics, growth and momentum occurs.

The following are suggestions on how to steadily grow your web assets:

- * Ally your organization with other like-minded sites, sharing articles, opinion pieces and content, by agreement.
- * Use online content from other sites that you find pertinent ad hoc. Many gladly grant necessary permission.
- * Hyperlink from the article reposted on your site back to the source. This benefits both sites.
- * Share links with well-ranked sites. Great content will invite links.
- * Invite writers and other guests outside the organization to contribute original content.

Re-using your brochures and magazines is only a starting point. As Seabourn says, "At the advent of motion picture filming, directors would stand a camera in front of a stage. Plays were the norm. Then they invented cinematography techniques. Likewise, the Church needs to see the web as more than a repository for printed materials and invent new uses."

4. Feature Solid Content

Studies by web leaders like Jakob Nielsen prove that people read differently online. Changing eye-movement and shorter attention spans are only two factors online editors need to keep in mind when creating web content. Generally, writing for the web demands terseness. It also demands solid content. Adding a PDF version to the site can also encourage more in-depth reading.

Your content can offer enough pithiness to provide a desirable respite for reading or to meet print-to-go needs. This not only provides opportunities to influence browsers but also encourages visitors to suggest the site to others. Viral marketing results as word spreads.

Avoid "stuffing content" (i.e. starting with an attractive site design, then simply adding content to fill holes). Visitors will sense this and leave the site quickly.

The best way to be relevant and pithy is to be creatively true to your message. Doug Yeo built yeodoug.com based on this principle and has seen phenomenal growth and ministry fruitfulness. He answers a formidable amount of feedback and regularly leads people to saving faith in Christ. His site reveals not only technical papers related to his expertise as first-chair trombonist for the Boston Symphony Orchestra (USA), but heartfelt, personalized articles about his faith in Christ. For an example, see <http://yeodoug.com/articles/text/backrow.html>.

The most down-to-earth example of Yeo leveraging his own interests is a bit surprising. His interest in a local sculptor has brought even more traffic into yeodoug.com. This "new topic" often draws people in who wouldn't know a trombone from a piccolo. However, their shared interest in and appreciation for content regarding their artistic hero leads them to the site.

If you do not possess this creativity, ask for help. Again, this may mean using other people's content, a humble but effective way to do ministry on the Internet.

5. Highlight Current Events and Share Lasting Truths

On 11 September 2001 I watched as terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York City. Despite the shock and disbelief, the incident had to be addressed online at LeaderU. It was for such a time as this, when a global audience shared humankind's deepest questions, that we had put in hundreds of thousands of man-hours at LeaderU. We knew God had given us answers to some of the questions people

were asking. What emerged at LeaderU from this tragedy was an all-encompassing online response to everything from the problem of evil to the beliefs of Islam to forgiveness (see www.leaderu.com/focus/worldtradecenter.html).

It was possible to add all these responses because we already had lots of great content online and this seemed to balance out the site. We now are at 132 features and counting (see www.leaderu.com/menus/featured.html).

Seabourn, now chief technology officer for Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI), says that an entire genre of online outreach now thrives across its ministries, utilizing the strategy pioneered at LeaderU.com. Allowing popular media to arouse interest, web ministry editors seek to explain biblical Christianity in the context of current issues and cultural icons. LeaderU provides a holistic biblical explanation. Yours may only touch on a few themes.

6. Harness the Power of Deep-linking, E-letters and Search Engines

When LeaderU features a collection of articles and other resources, content-sharing partners win in three ways:

- * Existing resources are seen by more people.
- * The site's email announcement newsletter, LU-Announce, goes out to thousands of subscribers alerting them to new resources, many of whom forward them several times. More readers are exposed to the links within the text of shared articles that lead back to partner organization's website.

Much has been made of maximizing pages for major search engines like Google and Yahoo. Seventy-percent of online pages are accessed via public search engines. To get good results you must have: (1) straightforward, keyword-rich titles and content and (2) good metadata, including a keyword list and descriptions embedded into web documents. See *Web Marketing Today* for help with this.

Reject the notion of creating the be-all, end-all site. The be-all, end-all is the Internet itself. Set up your site in a way that will be found by those who, realistically, would find you no other way.

Were it not for the foresight of Christian Leadership Ministries, sponsor of LeaderU.com, and the vision of founder Stan Oakes, now president of King's College, the Christian worldview library known as LeaderU.com would not exist, nor perhaps would its successful partners' sites. Credit to the many professors, partner ministries and writers for its outstanding content cannot be overstated.

Internet evangelism and ministry is a twenty-first century reality. Enjoy it for all it's worth.

***Byron Barlowe** served as editor and webmaster of LeaderU.com for eight years, the last assignment during a twenty-year career with Campus Crusade for Christ. He now serves with Probe Ministries, a Christian worldview training and media organization.*

Scripture Resources for Internet Evangelism

By Robby Richardson

I have had the privilege for over ten years of working in various capacities with Gospelcom.net, the Internet outreach of Gospel Communications International (GCI). It has been a joy to watch individuals and ministries take hold of this technology and develop creative ways to share the good news of Jesus Christ via the Internet. GCI's participation in the Internet Evangelism Coalition (www.webevangelism.com) and my own opportunities for interaction with ministries around the world have allowed me to witness firsthand the passion of Internet evangelists and the potential of the Internet for sharing the gospel with millions.

Online Scripture Resources

The following are four excellent scripture sites available on the web:

The Bible Gateway, www.biblegateway.com
Unbound Bible, <http://unbound.biola.edu>
The Blue Letter Bible, www.blueletterbible.org
NET Bible, www.bible.org

GCI began in 1995 and was later renamed Gospel Films. As we sought to venture into the world of cyberspace, we hired as our first "webmaster" a student from Calvin College (Michigan, USA). Not only was Nick a true genius at working with the brand new world of www and html, he also had a grasp of the possibilities of this new communications technology. While still a student at Calvin, Nick had begun to make the content of scripture easily available via the web. He called this tool the "Bible Gateway."

As we began to plan for the direction of Gospelcom.net, we quickly came to the conclusion that a tool like the Bible Gateway (www.biblegateway.com) would be foundational for any type of lasting Internet ministry. If we could help make the words of scripture easily accessible and readily available, with as many different translations and languages as possible, individuals and ministries around the world that wanted to use Internet technology for outreach would be able to tap into this resource.

Today, through partnership with publishers and Bible societies around the world, Bible Gateway has become our "largest" online property and one of the most visited religious sites in the world. Not only can individuals come to the Bible Gateway site to search the scriptures in multiple languages and translations, but thousands of websites around the world can link directly to scripture passages or draw content into their own sites.

The Bible Gateway has provided the outlets for ministry that we anticipated with putting the scriptures online. There has also been countless "God moments," when people using the web have come face to face with scripture, often without knowing how they got there. I remember an extended email conversation I had in 1996 with a person who, although skeptical, had some very deep questions about the nature of scripture. When I asked him how he had come to find the Bible Gateway, he said he had "linked in" from the official site of the Paramount Studios film, Mission Impossible. One of the clues to unraveling the mystery in the film was a verse from the Bible, and someone from Paramount had linked from the Mission Impossible site to the Bible Gateway.

As you consider how God would have you use Internet technology for outreach (or how you can grow in your own spiritual journey), consider familiarizing yourself with Internet scripture resources. They can indeed become a strong foundation for your personal or organizational ministry.

Robby Richardson is director of Internet ministries for Gospel Communications International in Muskegon, Michigan, USA. He is vice-chairman of the executive committee of the Internet Evangelism Coalition and serves on boards for several Christian organizations.

Passion for Madurai Glimpses the Spirit of God at Work in India

By Dallas Anderson

In the time that it will take you to read this sentence, the world's population will grow by eleven people. According to the United States Census Bureau, 141 people are born every minute, meaning that over 200,000 people are born per day for a total of 6.2 million people per month being added to the world's population. Since 1950 India has been the largest contributor to the growth of the world's population. It is estimated that at the current rate of growth, the population of India will not stabilize until it hits 1.5 billion people. Already the second most populous nation on earth at 1.02 billion, India is expected to soon surpass China in numbers of people. With so much growth, the challenges India faces are huge.

Even though the literacy rate has grown from sixteen percent in 1947 to over sixty-five percent in 2001, India still lags behind many other developing nations. Many residents of India are caught in a caste

system that will not allow personal or professional advancement. In contrast, India is becoming a world leader in high-tech software development. Further disparity is seen daily in the marketplace, where oxen compete with sport utility vehicles (SUVs) for road space. For US\$1 you can get a ride across town in a crude rickshaw to check your email on a high-speed Internet line at the cybercafé. In rural areas you can watch an aged man beat out kernels of grain by hand. In the field across the road a John Deere Combine harvests more grain in five minutes than the aged man can in hours. The list of contrasts is seemingly endless, but perhaps the greatest contrast of all is when the light of Jesus Christ comes face to face with the powers of darkness.

An Overview of India

India is a birthplace of four distinct religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Brahmanism (Hinduism), with its accompanying social caste system, evolved from the Vedic religion of Aryan invaders. Hinduism eventually became the dominant, and later the state, religion of India. Janis and Buddhists were persecuted as a result of Hindu domination.

Islam gave rise to several new Indian sects that preached against idolatry, polytheism and caste. One of these sects was the Sikh community founded by Nanak (1469-1538), a Punjabi born in Talwandi in Lahore District (now in Pakistan). Nanak is credited with being the founder of Sikhism. Additionally, Jews came to India before the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem. It is commonly thought that there was a wide dispersion of the Jews in the years following the great disaster of AD 66-70. It has been said that Christianity in India (brought by Thomas, Jesus' disciple) is as old as Christianity itself.

Seeing India through the Eyes of Christ: Passion for Madurai

"Love and Care India" and its founding pastor John Arul invited the Luis Palau Association's "Next Generation Alliance" to bring member evangelists and teams to assist the Church of India in reaching the least-reached villages of Tamil Nadu during February 2006. I was privileged to be a part of the team as one of those evangelists. The project was called Passion for Madurai. Over a period of several weeks some twenty festivals were held across the region. Schools and orphanages were visited, the sick were ministered to by medical personal and covered with prayer, pastors encouraged and Christians engaged to reach their communities. I was invited to preach and also to help mentor some younger evangelists and their teams. Below is a brief overview of God's workings during the Passion for Madurai.

Evangelistic teams engaged the local church and its leaders, often ministering to people's physical and spiritual needs during the day while gathering in a town square for an open air festival in the evening, where local believers would share music. Personal testimonies of transformed lives were shared while the gospel was presented both contextually and clearly. While the trip presented many challenges, the gracious hand of God in bringing people into his kingdom was evident.

Tens of thousands of people were exposed to the good news, and from preliminary counts, thousands of people came to know Jesus personally and have turned from worshipping hopeless idols to worshipping the living God. The local pastors were greatly encouraged as they saw people come to receive Christ. One pastor told me that he has never seen anything like it in his life. Close to seventy percent of the crowd came forward at his festival. While not every gathering saw this high of a response rate, each gathering saw many people come forward. Lines of people struggling with hopelessness would stretch far and wide as they sought prayer for their many needs. We saw a number of people experience incredible answers to the prayers of God's people. Lame people walked, demon-possessed people experienced release and countless individuals burdened with constant pain were set free by the power of the good news.

In addition to these new converts to Christ, many believers throughout the district of Madurai were greatly encouraged and strengthened. One of the local pastors (through an interpreter) said, "This is just what we needed at this moment! Thank you with all of my being."

The Kingdom of God Visible

The following are a few examples of what God did during the Passion of Madurai.

1. Many Receive the Message of Christ. During our first night of sharing the gospel in an open-air fashion, I truly sensed the Spirit of God at work in powerful ways. The Indian choir sang and one pastor gave his personal testimony of conversion from Hinduism to Christ. There was great local opposition

to this "Christian meeting," and I could tell he was more than a little concerned as he shared his story. But God gave him the strength to finish with passion. As I preached from God's word on the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19), I wondered if those in the audience understood what was being said. When I gave the invitation, more than half of the crowd flocked to the front! I glanced over at the pastors on the platform and noticed they were having a hard time not showing emotion. It was a moment I will never forget. The counselors who had been trained were completely overwhelmed. We prayed with people for the next hour and a half.

2. God in the Hindu Temple. In the afternoons we explored the city. During one of these trips, several of us went to the Madurai Meenakshi temple (currently efforts are underway to declare it as one of the wonders of the world). As we approached the temple we were inundated by a host of beggars and people wanting to be our temple guide (for a modest monetary gift of course). We were unable to say no and soon found ourselves being guided through the temple by a young man. The temple was filled with people and vendors and reminded us of what Jesus must have seen when he entered the temple in Jerusalem.

Our guide asked us why we had come to India. One of the young evangelists was able to engage him in deep discussions concerning his beliefs. As we talked with our young guide, he shared that he was searching for answers and felt like traditional religions were not giving him the answers he sought. What a joy to tell him that truth is not found in a religion but in the person of Jesus Christ. He asked us to pray with him and we did so—right in the middle of the Hindu temple! He promised to read the Bible we handed to him. The next day I came back to look for him and found him not chasing after people to be their guide through the temple, but leaning against a tree reading God's word in his own language. Later I took a local pastor to meet him who then helped connect the young man to a local church.

3. Religious Teachers Turn to Christ. While we were teaching several men and pastors in one of the villages, a number of men dressed in orange showed up and sat down to listen. One of the local pastors told us they were religious teachers/seekers from the Hindu temple. As they sat and listened, it was obvious they were interested. When we finished our teaching, we asked them if they wanted to hear about Jesus, to which they responded enthusiastically. One of our evangelists explained the way of eternal salvation and six of them gave their lives to Christ. Hallelujah!

4. Miracles inside the Local Church. During one Sunday morning service, I was preaching in one of the local churches. My hope was to encourage the people in their walk with the Lord and to impress upon them the need to reach out to their community. It was amazing and thrilling to feel the vibrancy of their faith and passion for our Lord. As I preached I felt the Spirit of God nudge me that there might be some there who never surrendered to the Lord. I took a few minutes and explained the gospel message and asked if there was anyone who wanted to surrender their life to Jesus. Near the back of the packed room a young girl (in her late teens or early twenties) stood up. I heard a noise behind me and I turned to see tears streaming down the pastor's face. My interpreter explained that this was the pastor's daughter who had previously abandoned the faith. I was reminded of the book of Esther: Who knows but for such a time as this that God has put you in the place you are right now!

Social, cultural and political changes in India are leaving many people spiritually hungry and without hope. There is a growing sense of despair in the present systems to answer their deepest needs. While the young people are turning to education and high-tech jobs for hope, they are also feeling the emptiness that it brings.

However, God is moving powerfully across the great nation of India and I believe the nation is moving into a time of great harvest for the kingdom of God. The hopelessness of the caste system and the increased disparity between those who have and those who have not is leaving an open door for the sowing of the good news of the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ. The Church of India is alive and at work. She needs our prayers and our assistance when and where it is appropriate. As India moves to become the most populous nation on earth we must be prepared to work as if her salvation depends on us but also pray knowing that it depends of the living God. India is a land of great contrasts but none greater than the light of Christ as it stands against the darkness of all other religion.

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PEOPLES OF THE WORLD

Ethne '06: A Global Consultation on Unreached Peoples

By Justin Long

More than 350 delegates, representing every continent of the world, recently came together for Ethne '06 to celebrate progress, assess status and accelerate efforts to reach the least-reached peoples of the world. Most global conferences draw people from all over the world and organize themselves around tracks that appeal to a broad cross-section of workers. Ethne '06, on the other hand, focused only on unreached peoples.

The movement to reach unreached peoples received its most recent shot of energy in the late 1980s and 1990s, when the AD 2000 & Beyond Movement popularized the term "10/40 Window" and initiated campaigns on its behalf. These campaigns included prayer initiatives like "Praying through the Window," prayerwalks like "Joshua Project" and various research projects.

As 2000 loomed close, many mission leaders and workers grew uncertain about the future of unreached people group ministry. When it was formed, the AD 2000 & Beyond Movement had committed itself to closing in the year 2000. Still, the movement had created a lot of energy. What would happen when it shut its doors? Who would lead this movement to reach unreached people groups?

One of the first groups to step into the gap was the Great Commission Roundtable (GCR), which was formed as an attempt to cross the communication gap between the three large organizations in the group: AD 2000, the Lausanne movement and the World Evangelical Fellowship. This group focused on the "facts" of the unreached people movement: nearly two billion people still have little chance of hearing about Jesus, the Church sends only four thousand of its 300,000 missionaries to unreached people groups and Christians provide only 1.2% of mission funding for this purpose.

The Great Commission Roundtable began in March 1999 when ninety men and women from many of the world's evangelical movements and networks came together in Hurdal, Norway to create a new cooperative vehicle for world evangelization. There was a time of repentance and reconciliation, followed by a decision that a new global forum or "network of networks" should indeed be formed. This network became the GCR.

In 2001 a GCR consultation held in Malaysia included a track for those working among unreached peoples. Participants felt global conferences were good but those ministering to unreached peoples needed a consultation area where they could focus on their area of ministry. The unreached people group (UPG) track issued a formal recommendation to have continuing "UPG-focused" discussions. On the last day, a number of people gathered to discuss how to carry this idea forward.

The implementation of this idea took shape at Singapore '02. More than two hundred people attended tracks and workshops and networked with others of similar interests. Out of this came three global options or "calls": (1) a call for secure communication, (2) a reiterated call for ongoing gatherings and (3) a call for a global network of mission agencies that would focus on networking or partnering mission-focused entities at a global level. Sealink, a network of ministries focused on the unreached peoples of Southeast Asia, volunteered to convene a global committee to "foster the process of building a worldwide unreached peoples network."

Since 2004 a number of planning meetings have evolved into a global network of regional leaders who have helped to push forward work among unreached peoples. Ethne was made up of a rotating steering committee; the core for Ethne '06 was Sealink and focused on Southeast Asia. For the next Ethne meeting, the core could be from India, Africa or Latin America.

Uniqueness of Ethne Gatherings

Ethne is highly relational; most people find out about it by word of mouth. It is also a network. If someone makes a suggestion, members of the movement will often say, "That's a great idea—how about you doing it?" Ethne is a low-resource environment and consists of a global network with no single corporate entity behind it, and no staff or funds for major projects. Even receiving contributions to subsidize some

attendees is an interesting logistical hurdle; gifts must flow through various organizations related to the conference rather than through a single point.

Despite these challenges and logistics, Ethne '06 participants gathered for a successful week of strategizing and networking in an unreached area of Southeast Asia. They heard reports from Latin America, the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, West and Central Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia. While celebrating progress, delegates were sobered by the reality of the world's least-reached. Roughly a quarter of the world had no access to the gospel twenty years ago. This number has risen to twenty-eight percent. Meanwhile in 1900 one-third of the world professed to be Christian, a number which has not changed more than one hundred years later.

Delegates spent time during plenary sessions praying for the regions and then broke into four strategy tracks dealing with global issues: Harvest Linked Prayer Strategy, UPG Workers, Crisis Response and Holistic Gospel Movements. Participants spent nine hours discussing core issues, developing action plans and identifying people to carry these plans forward. During the last two days, smaller workshops and seminars were held on topics such as mobilization, resources, communication, member care and research. The Ethne resource room had many books in a variety of languages. (Note: A catalog of resources will be available on the Ethne website in the future.)

On the final evening, the delegates gathered for worship and heard reports from members of each track. Representatives from each of twelve regions served communion to the delegates. This was followed by a candle lighting ceremony. With many prayers and tears, the delegates closed the meeting, renewed in their passion to reach the least-reached.

Tentative plans are being made for another Ethne meeting. In the meantime, we pray that the momentum from Ethne '06 will help leaders worldwide accelerate new initiatives for mobilizing prayer, workers and projects among the least-reached peoples of the world. When believers come together for the next "family gathering," we hope that the number of least-reached peoples will be significantly smaller as a result.

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Into Their World...The Central Tibetans of China

By Laurie Fortunak

Nearly five million Central Tibetans live in an area of northern China often known as "the roof of the world." It is called this because its average height is fourteen thousand feet and it contains many of the world's highest mountains. Since before the time of Jesus' birth, this people group has been seemingly cut off from the rest of the world. Poor infrastructure and a harsh climate have made travel to the Tibetans nearly impossible. Only recently has there been increased access to this people group.

The Tibetans make up one race, culture, language, religion and lifestyle. Primarily farmers and herdsmen of yak, goats and sheep, Tibetans are often hard to reach because of their nomadic lifestyle. Many families live in yak-skin tents in communes. Of the few Tibetans who do live in larger cities, many practice ancient crafts such as producing paper, fiber and wool weaving, metalwork and carving wood. Tibetans, both men and women, commonly dress in long robes and are adorned with ornate jewelry. They live on a simple diet of barley products, root crops, mutton, dairy products, tea and beer.

Although Buddhism is the official Tibetan religion, elements of Bon, a 2,200-year-old religion which incorporates black magic, the occult and reincarnation, are often included in the religious practice. The belief in gods, demons and ancestral spirits is widespread and each Tibetan carries a dharma (prayer wheel) that is thought to keep evil spirits away. Tibetans live in constant fear of their gods and continually strive to appease them with sacrifices and ritual chants. The quality of healthcare, housing, utilities and education is poor. Literacy stands at only thirty percent.

Tibetans are in dire need of both physical and spiritual help. Sharing the gospel with this people group is made difficult by many factors: their nomadic lifestyle, challenging transportation to their region and the

outlawing of Christianity. Pray with us that these barriers will be overcome so that Tibetans will have the opportunity to hear about and know Christ.

For more information on the Central Tibetan of China, visit:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibetan_people
<http://easia.imb.org/peopleplaces/upg/tibetan.htm>
www.infomekong.com/tibetan_secondary.htm
www.ksafe.com/profiles/p_code1/358.html
www.paulnoll.com/China/Minorities/min-Tibetan.html

(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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STRATEGY, TRENDS AND STATISTICS

From Brokenness to Wholeness: The Vision of the Lausanne Movement

By **Linda Gotts**

The deepest desire of those of us in a broken world is to become what we were created to be: **whole people in Christ.** With its mission of “the whole Church taking the whole gospel to the whole world,” the Lausanne movement desires to first obey Christ in the Great Commission: “Making disciples of all nations... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20). Second, it desires to obey what Jesus called the greater commandments to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:28–31). In its commitment to the whole gospel, the Lausanne movement is committed to holistic mission.

“And by him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of his blood on the cross.”

Wholeness requires that first of all we be reconciled to God through Christ’s redemption completed on the cross. Having experienced that foundational reconciliation, God has chosen the Church to carry out his comprehensive plan for the reconciliation and restoration of the world until his return (see Ephesians 3:9–11 and Colossians 1:20 at right).

According to Bob Moffitt, “The staggering implication of Paul’s assertion is that the Church is more important to the healing of human brokenness—hunger, sickness, political corruption and economic injustice—than civil leaders, state governments, economic policy and development or scientific advance. God will use these and other means to advance his purpose, but the Church holds the principal ordination for this supreme assignment. However, the Church cannot fulfill her role until she understands her significance, and equips and mobilizes individual members to purposefully represent God’s holistic agenda in their respective worlds.”¹

Ministry: From Soul to Whole Person

To approach mission holistically is to be concerned with ministering to the whole person: to the person's spiritual needs and also to his or her physical, practical and emotional needs. As the church that I personally am part of seeks to practice holistic ministry, we are finding that our building is open more and more during the week. In addition to worship services on Sunday and ministries for different age groups within the church, the homeless come in out of the cold and sleep overnight once a week at the church. Those in need, including people with addiction to alcohol and drugs, people with mental illness and people with criminal records, come weekly to a drop-in centre called "Oasis" where they enjoy a warm meal and a place they feel at home. We host a ministry for those who are struggling with sexual and relational brokenness on Tuesday nights. The Alpha course, which invites those outside the church into a personal relationship with Christ, takes place on Wednesday nights. There are also groups for single parents and those living with chronic illness. There is also a group that sponsors international refugees resettling in Canada. We hope to continue to discern how God would have us use the building he has given us as a resource for the holistic needs of our community.

Perceived Brokenness: From Others' Hurt to Our Own

Those of us who seek to approach mission holistically enter the local and international communities to which God has called us looking for where God is already at work. We are called to be like Jesus; to be servants and to consider others better than ourselves; and to look not only to our own interests but also to the interests of others. Honoring God and the people we serve means setting aside our agendas, listening before we speak, taking time to build relationships, meeting people where they are, hearing from others what the needs are in their communities and responding accordingly.

Mother Teresa epitomized a ministry of love and compassion. Consequently, she won the respect and admiration of the world because peoples' hearts (believers and non-believers alike) resonated with the rightness of what she did. She represented God's kingdom values in action.

Those of us who would be mediators of God's wholeness in the world are of course still on our own journey from brokenness to wholeness in Christ. We have much to learn from people of other countries and segments of society. By spending time with these individuals, we can expect to become more aware of the values (like individualism and materialism) that we unwittingly absorb from our own culture. Instead of sharing our fifty percent divorce rate with the rest of the world, we, the North American Church, can learn from how our Christian brothers and sisters in other countries are practicing marriage and family.

Calling: From a Partial to a Multidimensional Gospel

A commitment to the whole gospel is a commitment to see God's wholeness, health and restoration come in our world. This can be achieved through: (1) the spiritual rebirth of the people that God created in his own image, (2) economic justice that ends the oppression of the poor, (3) healthcare that fights disease, (4) stewardship of the earth by caring for the environment, (5) development of sustainable sources of food and water for the starving and (6) relief aid to those in distress. Missionaries, pastors and evangelists have long been the heroes of the evangelical community. We are good in our churches at fuelling a passion for evangelism and missions. But what about those who God has created with brilliant minds and a passion for economic justice, healthcare and the environment? Do they receive the same encouragement and validation in our churches to pursue those dimensions of the whole gospel that God has given us? The church must equip and disperse its people into every sector of society as intentional advocates for the will of God. Organizations like Evangelicals for Social Action can help lead us forward.

Bono, lead singer of the rock group U2, has certainly emerged as one mentor who helps us see HIV/ AIDS as the leprosy of our day. In his recent address at the United States National Prayer Breakfast, he declared to God's people that responding to HIV/ AIDS in Africa is not about charity, but about God's higher standard of justice. Africa makes a fool of our idea of justice; it makes a farce of our idea of equality. It mocks our pieties, it doubts our concerns, it questions our commitment. Over 6,500 Africans are still dying every day of a preventable, treatable disease due to a lack of drugs most westerners can buy at any drugstore. Preventing the poorest of the poor from selling their products while we sing the virtues of the free market is a justice issue. Holding children to ransom for the debts of their grandparents is a justice issue. Withholding life-saving medicines out of deference to the Office of Patents is a justice issue.

The poor are mentioned 2,100 times in scripture. In the 2004 Lausanne Occasional Paper on Holistic

Mission we are reminded that "It is an unquestionable biblical truth that God has made an unbreakable link between faith in himself and the outworking of that faith in seeing that justice is done to the poor and oppressed." Micah Challenge is heeding that call. It is a global Christian campaign that aims to deepen engagement with the poor, to challenge leaders to achieve the UN's "Millennium Development Goals," and so halve absolute global poverty by 2015.

Becoming Whole Together

God created us to be whole people in him and to minister to others in their journey from brokenness to wholeness. According to Moffitt, "Those of us at Lausanne believe that Christ can and will empower the Church to fulfill her task as she grasps the significance of her role and obediently follows the strategy he left her. We therefore call the leaders of the Church to the overriding and ultimate job description of all who lead God's people—to equip each saint to demonstrate and proclaim God's whole concern for the restoration of all that was broken in the fall (Ephesians 4:12)."²

As we move into this calling we can expect to experience the soul satisfying joy of knowing that we are doing what we were created to do: joining God in his kingdom work. Societies will be transformed and communities of people all over the world will experience spiritual rebirth. We can look forward to Christ breathing new life into creation so that it is liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:20-21).

Endnotes

1. Written for the 2004 Lausanne Occasional Paper on Holistic Mission. It can be accessed at <http://www.lausanne.org/>.
2. Written for the 2004 Lausanne Occasional Paper on Holistic Mission.

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LAUSANNE REPORT

Lausanne Issue Group on Religious and Non-Religious Spirituality Set to Meet in Hong Kong

By John Morehead

The Lausanne Issue Group on Religious and Non-Religious Spirituality in the Western World continues to build on the foundation laid in Thailand at the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization.

This strategic group continues to address the often-neglected missional challenge of new religious movements, alternative religions and emerging spiritualities in the Western world. After the 2004 gathering the group completed a substantial document on this topic in the form of Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 45 that was published in book form in addition to the electronic file on the Lausanne website. The issue group has also created a website in preparation for a mini-consultation in Hong Kong at the Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre 30 September to 6 October 2006.

The issue group's website will facilitate discussion among issue group members and interested colleagues, addressing topics under the headings of theology, methodology and praxis. Specific issues include a look at critical missions contextualization; popular culture and emerging spiritualities; divination and syncretism; a Christian presence in neo-spiritual milieus; and the creation of neo-monastic communities. Select members of the group will prepare papers for discussion in Hong Kong, and all of the areas under discussion will then be assessed after the 2006 meeting as the group prepares for the Lausanne III gathering in 2010.

Prayer items for this issue group include:

- * Skilled theologians and reflective practitioners to attend the preparation process and the consultation
- * Good papers and case stories for the discussions
- * The right participants for the consultation
- * Financial provision for participants to come to Hong Kong

For further information or participation in the discussion group, visit the website at www.lop45.org or contact Ole Skjerbaek Madsen or Lars Mollerup-Degn.

John Morehead is associate director of Neighboring Faiths Project, a cross-cultural missions ministry to new religions and alternative spiritualities. He is a contributing author and editor to several book projects dealing with new religions.

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LEADERSHIP MEMO

The Lausanne Movement: Seminal Issues and Emerging Leaders

By Doug Birdsall

The Lausanne movement is being rejuvenated with a new generation of leaders from around the globe. This will be most clearly evident when the Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering (YLG '06) is convened in Malaysia during the last week of September 2006. At that time, 550 carefully selected younger leaders between the ages of 25 and 35 will gather together to be informed, developed, united and inspired to advance the cause of world evangelization.

They are young men and women who embrace the highest ideals of the Lausanne Covenant and who embody the spirit of Lausanne, a spirit of humility, prayer, partnership and hope. Their expressed hope is for a more authentic demonstration of the unity of the Church, for a more prophetic expression of the gospel and for a more strategic engagement with the world in which we live.

This gathering represents the heart and soul of the Lausanne movement. From its beginning, Lausanne has been distinguished by two hallmarks. First, Lausanne has a sustained commitment to identifying the seminal ideas that are before the Church with respect to world evangelization. These ideas and issues are dealt with in a substantive way, both in terms of profound theological reflection as well as strategic and creative action. There is a conviction within the movement that all theological reflection must have a missiological focus, and that all mission activity must have a theological foundation.

Second, there is a legacy of commitment on the part of Lausanne leadership to identify, develop and encourage younger leaders who God is raising up. The first generation of Lausanne leaders, including Billy Graham, John Stott, Leighton Ford and Gottfried Osei-Mensah, demonstrated this in their own lives and ministries. Leighton Ford provided vision and leadership to the first Lausanne Younger Leaders Conference in Singapore in 1987, which brought together a generation of younger leaders who are now in positions of significant leadership and influence. This includes people like Ajith Fernando, Jorge Atiencia, Clive Calver, Peter Kuzmic, Janet Morgan, Jude Hama and John Piper.

Just as people like John Stott, Leighton Ford and Gottfried Osei-Mensah and other senior leaders in the Lausanne Movement were at Singapore in 1987, so also people like Ajith Fernando, Peter Kuzmic, Paul Eshleman, Robyn Claydon and Elke Werner, along with seventy-five additional Lausanne mentors, will be at YLG '06 to pass on vision, encourage character growth and enable the development of leadership competence to a generation who will be used of God to provide leadership for the Church in its global mission in the twenty-first century.

This new generation which is bringing new vitality and energy into the Lausanne movement experiences

a world that is much different from their Lausanne predecessors. Thus, the gathering will be forward looking. It will seek to be faithful to a rich heritage of the past just as it is committed to responsible obedience with the challenges and opportunities of the future.

God used a generation of great people to develop the Lausanne movement. Billy Graham gave it birth through his vision for the Lausanne Congress. John Stott gave it an enduring framework through the Lausanne Covenant. Leighton Ford gave it strength through his leadership for the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. Gottfried Osei-Mensah gave it global presence through his leadership as the first international director.

We pray that God will raise up a new generation of men and women who will be like the men of Issachar "who understand their times, and who know what to do" (I Chronicles 12:32). We pray that they will be faithful and effective in advancing the cause and advocating the vision of "the whole Church taking the whole gospel to the whole world."

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