



Lausanne World Pulse

Providing Evangelism & Missions News, Information and Analysis

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PUBLISHER'S MEMO

Church History & World Evangelism

By Doug Birdsall

As we wrap up 2008, I am exceedingly grateful for all the developments in Lausanne over this past year. We recently had a wonderfully productive Lausanne leadership meeting in Argentina, which was generously hosted by Norberto Saracco, International Deputy Director for Latin America. The leadership team for **Cape Town 2010: The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization** has a full complement of leaders, and implementation is well underway for our program teams, participant selection teams, participant hosting teams, and communication teams. We also recently celebrated the third anniversary of Lausanne World Pulse.

These accomplishments could not have been made without the cooperative efforts of Christian leaders around the world who hold to the vision of Lausanne. This cohesiveness of vision and spirit could not be accomplished without consistent and conscientious reiteration of the original vision and purposes of Lausanne first articulated by convener Billy Graham in 1974: to bring leaders of the Church together to strategically and cooperatively evangelize the world. It is this vision that is in line with Christ's own command to the first Christians to "go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) and to be his witnesses "in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Only by looking back at our history can we be properly rooted and guided in our trajectory for the future as we: cull the wisdom and experiences of our forerunners, learn to avoid repeating mistakes, and appropriately translate their wisdom to be applied into our own times. By looking at history, we can be inspired by the saints who treaded before us, and as the writer of Hebrews said, be spurred on by "so great a cloud of witnesses...and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (12:1).

In this issue of Lausanne World Pulse, I am delighted to present several perspectives on the influence of church history on today's evangelism. Our International Director Lindsay Brown shares what evangelism lessons we can learn from the early Church. Jerry Kulah helps us understand the contextual realities of the Church in Liberia, and Steve Hawthorne sets our gaze on the history of the united, focused prayer movement and its role in evangelism. It is my prayer that as we engage further in thought, reflection, and action, that we will learn from our past and press on confidently and innovatively today and toward the future of bringing the gospel to our world.

God's best to you as you witness for Jesus this Christmas season.

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

NEWS BRIEFS

AROUND THE WORLD: Trans World Radio Selects New President

[Trans World Radio](#) (TWR) announced in October 2008 that Lauren Libby would serve as its new president and CEO. The decision was unanimous by TWR's Board of Directors following a 6-month search process. Prior to this new position Libby served as vice president and CEO for [The Navigators](#). Libby is a member of the Board of Directors for the [National Religious Broadcasters](#), the [Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability](#), and [Northwestern College](#). He is also president and CEO of New Horizons Foundation, a public charity helping donors achieve their giving objectives in education, research, humanitarian aid, religion, and health-related areas. ([Trans World Radio](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: WEA Appoints Spokesperson on Human Trafficking

The [World Evangelical Alliance](#) (WEA) announced the appointment of Christine MacMillan as a spokesperson for the WEA on human trafficking issues. MacMillan is director of the [International Social Justice Commission of The Salvation Army](#) and has spent much of her life providing social services for women and children. MacMillan hopes to work with the WEA in raising voices within the Church on human trafficking and perhaps make the Church itself a place of safety for those who are victimized. ([World Evangelical Alliance](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: Youth For Christ Holds International Conference

[Youth for Christ](#) (YFC) recently held an international conference attended by 750 people from eighty countries. According to national director of YFC in the United States, Dan Wolgemuth, about half of the attendees were under the age of thirty. The conference included sessions of worship and prayer involving Christians from a variety of backgrounds. YFC sees its people reaching out to those whom other ministries have yet to reach. Wolgemuth called for prayer for the "continual movement toward young people who are on the fringes and are being discarded around the world." ([Mission Network News](#))

CHINA: Langham Foundation Develops Program for Chinese Pastors

In fellowship with local leaders, [Langham Foundation](#) Hong Kong has been working to launch a small pilot project for pastors from mainland China. Langham Preaching will help with the development of a week-long seminar for about thirty mainland pastors from various parts of China, focusing on the development of biblical preaching in church life. It will be an opportunity to assess needs in different Chinese contexts, prepare materials that might have wider applications, and look toward further development in a mainland Chinese context. ([John Stott Ministries](#))

CONGO: MAF Ministers to Congolese Refugees

Amidst renewed attacks by the rebel group LRA in the North Kivu region of eastern Congo, many Congolese have been fleeing to neighboring Uganda. According to Fran Derocher, Africa director of [Mission Aviation Fellowship](#) (MAF), "Many of our guys are flying in support of a lot of relief agencies who are trying to get some aid and medicines and food up there." Although MAF specializes in working in remote areas, expenses, particularly rising fuel costs, have made operations more difficult. In addition, instability and violence in the region forced MAF out of its base in Nyankunde six years ago. MAF, which supports Christian workers, evangelists, teachers, medical personnel, and relief workers, subsequently moved that base to Bunia, Congo. ([Mission Network News](#))

ECUADOR: Agricultural Projects Train Farmers and Spread God's Word

[International Mission Board](#) (IMB) missionaries sometimes use gifts from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund for agricultural projects that help make long-term solutions in times of crisis. IMB missionaries Darrell and Rogene Musick have worked in Ecuador treating livestock for parasites and disease and training farmers in caring for their livestock and raising crops. Farmers who completed the training have agreed to teach others what they learned. Through their work, the Musicks have been able to share the gospel, and since beginning their work in Ecuador four years ago, they have seen forty-two house churches start. ([International Mission Board](#))

ETHIOPIA: World Serve Pushes On in Difficult Circumstances

[World Serve Ministries](#) has partnered with several Ethiopian churches to help starving Ethiopians who are victims of a large economic crisis. With global food prices rising, there is much to do, and efforts are complicated by problems such as HIV infection and lack of housing. However, World Serve estimates that there are over six hundred emerging churches in the country and over five hundred missionaries serving them. ([Mission Network News](#))

EUROPE: Thousands Pray For Millions to Know Christ

On 23 October 2008, more than ten thousand people responded to [Greater Europe Mission's](#) (GEM) call to prayer for Europe. Since then, the number continues to grow. GEM created "virtual prayer journeys" for each of the forty-seven countries of Europe (plus Turkey and the Mediterranean Region), featuring pictures, facts, related web links, and strategic prayer requests for that area. "This effort to enlist widespread, strategic prayer springs from our desire to see the 821 million indigenous and immigrant peoples of Europe experience transformation through the person of Jesus Christ," said Henry Deneen, president of GEM. ([Greater Europe Mission](#))

GERMANY: Youth Conference Challenges, Connects, and Celebrates

More than 6,500 people gathered in Leipzig, Germany, over the summer of 2008 to attend the fifteenth [Baptist Youth World Conference](#). Young people representing eighty-nine countries participated in Bible studies, workshops, family groups, and evening celebrations, giving them an opportunity to interact with different cultures. Small groups provided the youth a forum to share the experiences and challenges of living out their Christian faith. While daytime activities challenged believers to dive deeper into their faith, evening celebrations became times of exuberant worship with scripture passages read by youth in many different languages. ([Baptist World Alliance](#))

HAITI: Bringing Water and Christ's Love to Hurricane Victims

Many Haitians remained without food, water, or shelter in October 2008, following three devastating hurricanes over the summer. Because Haitians in the hard-hit city of Gonaives walk very great distances to find working water pumps, [Living Water International](#) (LWI) has been working hard to rebuild wells and repair hand pumps in the area. LWI also trained local people to do repairs themselves. Gonaives is reported to be a city where voodoo is practiced widely, so the ministry of LWI is an opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ and debunk beliefs in witchcraft. ([Mission Network News](#))

HONDURAS: Medical Teams International Sends Relief to Tropical Storm Victims

In its second medical supply shipment to Honduras, [Medical Teams International](#) (MTI) sent help to thousands of families who are victims of recent storms in the country. Relief items included antibiotics, bandages, and water purification kits. Health workers with MTI's Honduran partner, [Project Global Village](#), dispersed the supplies in the hope of treating approximately ten thousand people for three months in shelters and clinics. MTI volunteer doctors and nurses planned to arrive in November to provide critically needed back-up to workers already on the scene. MTI is a non-profit humanitarian relief and development agency that exists to demonstrate the love of Christ to people affected by disaster, conflict, and poverty around the world. ([Medical Teams International](#))

IRAQ: Iraqi Christians Send Urgent Text Messages to Christian Television Station

In October 2008, [SAT-7](#), a Christian television broadcaster that serves the Middle East and North Africa, reported receiving urgent text messages from persecuted Christians in Iraq. The messages urged prayer for Christians in the northern city of Mosul, from where many Christians are reported to have fled due to increasing pressure by extremists. There have also been reports of Christians being killed and homes being bombed, as well as death threats made to those who do not convert to Islam or pay a special tax that positions them as second-class citizens. ([SAT-7](#))

JORDAN: Arab Anglican Women Meet in Jordan

Women of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem met at the second Arab Anglican Women's Convention in Amman, Jordan, in early October 2008. The Diocese of Tokyo, which wanted to learn more about Jerusalem after one of its member attended the first convention in 2007, financed the gathering. Twenty-five Arab Anglican women from Jerusalem, the West Bank, Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan participated, as did seventeen members of the Tokyo diocese. The gathering provided an opportunity for the women to pray together and share stories and their cultures with each other. Frequent contact between women of the Jerusalem diocese is not possible since travel between the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Galilee is difficult. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

KAZAKHSTAN: Religious Freedom Faces Further Threats

A new proposal in Kazakhstan calls for tighter registration requirements for all religious groups, a smaller number of religious communities, and increased penalties for members of unregistered communities. Under the current draft, repeat "offenses" would lead to a religious community being banned. Although Kazakhstan's constitution guaranteed freedom of religion in early 2002, parliament actions have moved a different direction. The country is being closely monitored by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom for its violation of religious liberty. ([Mission Network News](#))

KENYA: Trans World Radio Awarded Seven FM Frequencies

[Trans World Radio](#) (TWR) announced the awarding of seven FM radio frequencies to broadcast to outlying areas of Kenya and remote northern and eastern portions of the country where no Christian broadcasting has existed. TWR-Kenya produces over thirty-two different programs with over sixty hours of programming each week. The new frequencies will allow TWR to reach refugees who have fled to Kenya from war-torn parts of East Africa. While temporary transmitters and antennae have been set up in Garissa, Lodwar, and Marsabit, TWR must establish seven radio stations in Kenya to broadcast programs recorded locally and in Nairobi. ([Trans World Radio-Africa](#))

LATIN AMERICA: TWR Launches City Lights Project

With ever-increasing numbers of people moving into urban areas around the world, [Trans World Radio](#) (TWR) is focusing some new projects on city dwellers. One such project is City Lights in Latin America. City Lights "links churches and individuals throughout the United States with Latin American churches and radio stations to bring God's principles into fifty Latin American cities over the next few years." TWR gives each city a package of original programming designed to connect biblical teachings with listeners' everyday lives. Partner offices in ten Latin American countries produce and distribute programming to local stations. The programs are aimed at meeting the needs of children, youth, women, and families. ([Trans World Radio](#))

SOUTH KOREA: Audio New Testament Fits Hectic Lifestyle

[Faith Comes By Hearing](#) (FCBH) recently released the South Korean Audio Drama New Testament. This dramatized format, available for free download, includes background music, sound effects, and multiple characters. It is estimated that ninety percent of South Koreans have broadband access, which allows the South Korean Audio Drama New Testament (about twenty-five hours of audio) to be downloaded in approximately twenty minutes. The ministry currently has audio New Testaments in 321 languages with a goal of two thousand languages recorded by 2016. ([Faith Comes By Hearing](#))

UNITED STATES: International Teams USA Commissions New President

In October 2008, [International Teams](#) (ITeams) USA hosted a commissioning service for its new president, Scott Olson. The event also celebrated the service of past presidents Mark Dyer, Stephen Freed, and David Schroeder, and board chairman Stephen Fraser. Guests included members of the original team of missionaries that traveled to Calcutta, India in 1961. ITeams is an interdenominational, evangelical Christian ministry that sends over 1,200 missionaries from fifty-two nations to sixty-six different countries. ([International Teams](#))

UNITED STATES: The Navigators Elects New President

In August 2008, the [U.S. Navigators](#)' Board of Directors commissioned Dr. Doug Nuenke as president and director. Following a process that vetted several qualified candidates for the position, Nuenke was the unanimous choice of a 35-member selection council. Nuenke assumed his new role in October. Pursuing an international mission assignment, he and his wife, Pam, joined Navigators in 1992. In 2004, Nuenke joined the leadership of The Navigators' U.S. Metro Mission, and last year, he completed his doctorate through Denver Seminary with a focus on executive leadership. ([The Navigators](#))

THEMED ARTICLES: Understanding the Influence of Church History in Today's Evangelism

Evangelism: Lessons from the Early Church, Part 1

By Lindsay Brown

In the first two hundred years after the death of the Lord Jesus, the nascent Church he left behind faced many obstacles in its attempts to spread the news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were small in number and scattered across a vast empire. The majority of early believers were poor and had little training or education. Most of the early Christians were amateurs, theologically speaking.

In the first two centuries following the life of Christ, pluralism was the dominant worldview in the Roman Empire, which was increasingly showing evidence of decadence, cruelty, and greed. There was also growing cynicism throughout the empire toward any gods to whom men and women were accountable. The satires of Juvenal highlight this, in which the writer speaks of a priest who was contemptuous of the Roman religion. Wherever we live in the world today, our experience resonates with this catalogue of difficulties, so we should be both encouraged to know that the early Church grew in such a situation, and eager to learn how it was that a small, disorganised band of believers grew into a significant body of people who were following Jesus by the time of the Emperor Constantine in the mid-fourth century.

In more than thirty years of student ministry, I have found two books particularly helpful in understanding how the early Church grew: *Evangelism in the Early Church* by the Anglican evangelist Michael Green¹ and *The Rise of Christianity* by Rodney Stark². Together, these books give complementary insights into the reasons for the growth of the Church in the first three centuries, with all its implications for how we engage in taking the gospel of Christ to a lost world in the twenty-first century.

So How and Why Did the Early Church Grow?

Green argues that the early evangelists had several distinct, if not unique, advantages, which made for a more ready dissemination of the gospel message. Several divine providences had prepared the world for the advent of Christianity. First and foremost was the Pax Romana. The spread of Christianity would have been inconceivable at such a rate had Jesus been born half a century earlier, as the Roman Empire during Jesus' time entered a time of peace unparalleled in history. One hundred years of civil wars had followed the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC; however, under Caesar Augustus (otherwise known as Octavius), a period of extensive peace was ushered in.

In addition, in this time of peace the development of the road system went on apace. One oft-quoted inscription found in Hierapolis in Asia Minor on the tomb of a merchant records that he travelled to Rome no less than seventy-two times. He needed no passport anywhere in the Empire.

The use of the Greek language also made a signal contribution to the spread of Christianity. It was spoken from the Black Sea to the Bay of Biscay. This obviously made communication much easier across ethnic and tribal divides.

All these have echoes in our own situation today, with the development of global technology, the widespread use of the English language, widespread travel, and the migration of peoples—all of which contribute to the expansion of the gospel in our own time.

In addition to these favourable providences, Green and Stark highlight three factors which particularly contributed to the ready expansion of the gospel, which may have implications for us today.

The Nature of the Messengers and the Message They Proclaimed

The early evangelists and gossipers of the gospel were thrilled with this new message. They lived at a time when the Greek sophists had as great a power over the common people as the Reformation preachers had in their time. Their ridicule of the gods must in no small degree have prepared the way for the Christian message. It has been well said of the Greeks that it was not that men became so depraved that they abandoned their gods, but rather that the gods became so depraved that they were abandoned by men.

In this context, the early preachers found a message that promised to deal with guilt. Greek thought had deeply impressed upon it the truth that wrongdoing must be punished. Writers like Virgil and Seneca evidence a real sense of sin.

In addition, the quest for security was even greater than the search for cleansing. The world was a dangerous place, as we can read in the Epistles of Paul to the Romans, Galatians, and Colossians, or any of the apologists, to see how gripped people were by fear of spiritual forces which influenced their lives. The new Christian message also offered immortality, a hunger of the human heart, to which the state religion had nothing to say, and which refused to be silenced.

In addition to the fertile ground for reaching pagans, the Christian faith found acceptance most readily on Jewish soil. The spread of the Jews, their monotheism, their ethical standards, their synagogues, and their scriptures were major factors in the advancement of the Christian faith.

Flexibility in the Proclamation of the Gospel

This led to evidence of flexibility in the proclamation of the gospel. In Acts 2, for example, we see how Peter quoted extensively from the Old Testament in his attempt to portray Christ as the Messiah. In Acts 17 at Mars Hill, however, Paul—knowing as he did that the pagans knew little of the Old Testament—did not quote directly from the Old Testament at all. Instead, he quoted two of their own poets—Eratus and Epimenides. This had echoes in Calvin's argument, "I take honey even if I find it in the lion's mouth."

The early preachers saw nothing wrong in quoting contemporary thinkers and using the perspectives of these thinkers to create an opportunity for the proclamation of the gospel, in order to answer the needs of their contemporary hearers.

Methodologically, they also demonstrated great flexibility. The main approaches they used included: the public proclamation of the gospel; the use of the home or small group; the role of a reasoned defence, or *apologia*, of the Christian message; working in teams; and living godly and prayerful lives. In their preaching, they aimed to satisfy the mind, prick the conscience, challenge the will, and move the emotions. They were concerned for the whole person.

I once asked the great Welsh preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones what are the hallmarks of great preaching. He said, "First, you must speak to the mind, which is the seat of the understanding. Then, you need to apply the message to the conscience (leading to repentance). Then, go on to challenge the will, calling people to repent. Finally, there are the emotions." He argued that two classic mistakes evangelists make are to: (1) start with the mind and stop there or (2) go straight to the emotions, which often leads to a spurious response if people have not fully understood what they are being asked to respond to.

More on the lessons we can learn from the early Church in [part two](#).

Endnotes

1. 1970. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
2. 1996. Princeton, New Jersey, USA: Princeton University Press.

Lindsay Brown is evangelist-at-large for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) and international director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. He has been involved in student ministry for twenty-six years, as a staff worker in Wales, IFES regional secretary for Europe, and general secretary of IFES from 1991-2007.

Evangelism: Lessons from the Early Church, Part 2

By Lindsay Brown

There is much we can learn from the early believers in Christ. Faced with a catalogue of difficulties not unlike our own, this small, disorganised band of believers grew into a much larger, significant band of Christ-followers by the mid-fourth century. What can we learn from the early Church to apply to our situation today?

In [part one](#), we learned of the impact of several external factors, including a relative time of peace in the Roman Empire, during which time roads were built that significantly increased opportunities for travel and sharing the gospel.

More importantly, though, were factors related to the message and the messengers and their compelling proclamation of the gospel which fell on fertile ground.

The Use of the Home in the Early Church

It is also important to note that the use of the home was widespread in the early Church. In fact, some writers argue that apart from synagogues, there were very few church buildings before the time of Constantine in the fourth century.

Most worship occurred in homes. We can see this in Jason's home (Acts 17:5), the home of Justin (Acts 18:7), and elsewhere (Acts 21:8). The emphasis on evangelistic Bible studies, or the use of the home-based small group, is not a peculiarity, therefore, of the twentieth century. In fact, the Puritan Richard Baxter wrote in the sixteenth century, "I find more signs of success in this work [the formation of home Bible studies] than in all my public preaching."

A Clearly Reasoned Presentation of the Gospel

Many Christians have been brought up in an environment where they have been encouraged to "stop thinking, and only believe," without asking any questions. Many people do not understand that a clearly reasoned presentation of the gospel is necessary, not as a rational substitute, but as a basis of ground for faith—not as a replacement for the Holy Spirit's working, but as a means by which the objective truth of God's word can be made clear so that people will heed it as a vehicle of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 17:2-3, 16-31; 18). Apologetics is valuable, because it can be used to demolish apparently rational arguments against Christianity so that the evangel can be heard.

In addition, the early Church evidenced some great apologists, including Justin Martyr, Origen, and Athanasius. In fact, Adolf von Harnach, the great German historian, argued that the Church grew primarily for two reasons: (1) it outlived the pagans and (2) it out-argued them. This, perhaps, is especially important today in responding to the hostility of people who think that to become a Christian is to commit intellectual suicide.

On the other side, some people tend to think that Christianity is exclusively rational. However, there are also moral considerations—and the moral always overshadows the intellectual in terms of a decision of faith. Reasoning alone will never pin people down. Faith, prayer, and love are needed. We must not pander to people's intellectual curiosity; instead, we are to give them a basis for believing.

Whichever question we start off by seeking to answer in our apologetic approach, we must ultimately present people with two things: (1) the objective person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and (2) our own personal subjective testimony of our experience of him. It is true that the Christian faith goes beyond reason, but that does not mean that it is against reason. After all, following his resurrection, Jesus challenged Thomas to believe without seeing, not to believe without thinking!

So we can see from the early evangelists that the message:

- was communicated by words, either written or oral;
- was related to the theological understanding of the people;
- was taken to the people where they were;
- was both spontaneous and planned; and
- involved, at some point, a call for a specific practical response.

Michael Green¹ argues that in all the sermons in Acts, no matter where the evangelists started from (whether Acts 2 or Acts 17), they all communicated the same three things at the end of their discourses:

1. There is only one God, who has created us and to whom we are accountable.
2. He raised Jesus from the dead.
3. We must, therefore, repent or face judgment.

This message was proclaimed to Jews and to intellectual pagans alike. Surely, it has implications for how we communicate the gospel today.

Character and Environment of the Early Church

Rodney Stark² argues (not so much as a theologian, but as a sociologist) that much of the early Church was made up not so much by the mighty, noble, or wise, but that converts were drawn in an overwhelming majority from the lower classes of society. Granted, there were some individuals of substance in the early Church, including Erastus, the city treasurer in Corinth, or some Christians among the aristocracy in Rome in the second half of the first century, but the vast majority of believers were from a poor background.

In this context, Stark argues that particular growth in the Church occurred during times of two major epidemics: (1) probably a smallpox epidemic from 165-180 AD and (2) a measles outbreak in 251 AD.

At its height, perhaps five thousand people a day were dying in Rome. In the first plague, so many people died that cities and villages in Italy and the provinces were abandoned and fell into ruin. It was in these circumstances that the believer's testimony was particularly powerful. At the height of the second great epidemic, around 260 AD, Dionysius, the bishop of Alexandria, wrote a lengthy tribute to the local Christians:

Most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves, and thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to

them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbours, and cheerfully accepting their pains. Many in nursing and curing others transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead....the best of our brothers lost their lives in this manner....The heathen behaved in the very opposite way. At the first onset of the disease, they pushed the sufferers away and fled from their dearest, throwing them into the roads before they were dead, and treated unburied corpses as dirt, hoping thereby to avert the spread and contagion of the fatal disease; but do what they might, they found it difficult to escape.³

Such a testimony angered pagans such as the Emperor Julian, who wrote in a letter to the High Priest of Galatia in 362 AD: "I think that when the poor happen to be neglected and overlooked by the priests, the impious Galileans observed this, and devoted themselves to benevolence...the impious Galileans support not only their poor, but ours as well, everyone can see that our people lack aid from us."

Surely, the testimony of the early Christians in reaching out to the sick, dying, and infected—even offering their own lives in an attempt to save the lives of unbelievers—has implications for our Christian ministry in the world today. Should we not also seek to hold together on the one hand a bold verbal proclamation of the gospel with, on the other, a compassionate concern for the needy, the sick, and the dying? It surely has significant implications for the treatment of AIDS patients, the poor, the distressed, and the needy.

The Gospel Message and Women

Stark also argues that the early Christian message was especially attractive to women. In the first centuries following Christ, infanticide and abortion were commonly practised; however, these were prohibited by the early Christians. Men greatly outnumbered women in the Greco-Roman world. In his classic work, J.C. Russell (1958) estimated that there were 131 males per 100 females in the city of Rome, and 140 males per 100 females in Italy, Asia Minor, and North Africa—likely as a result of tampering with human life.

Exposure of unwanted female infants and deformed male infants was legal, morally accepted, and widely practised across the Greco-Roman world. In a letter written by Hilarion, a Roman soldier, to his pregnant wife Alis, we see the contrast between his concern for his wife and hoped-for son, and coldness toward the birth of a possible daughter: "Know that I am still in Alexandria...I beg you to take good care of our baby son, and as soon as I receive payment, I shall send it to you. If you are delivered of a child (before I come home), if it is a boy, keep it, if a girl, discard it. You have sent me word. 'Don't forget me.' How can I forget you? I beg you not to worry."⁴

The status of Athenian women was very low. Girls received little or no education. Males could divorce by simply ordering a wife out of the household. In contrast, among the Christians, women were cared for. Widowhood was highly respected, and remarriage was, if anything, mildly discouraged.

A well-to-do Christian widow was enabled to keep her husband's estate. The Church stood ready to sustain poor widows, and allowed them a choice as to whether or not to remarry. Women were apparently given prominent positions in the church (e.g., Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2). Deacons were of considerable importance and assisted at liturgical functions and administered the benevolent and charitable activities of the Church. Women were appreciated, affirmed, given dignity, cared for when alone, and offered responsible roles.

These things contributed to the gospel message being attractive to women in the first few centuries, and thus were a cause of many women coming to faith in Christ and into the body of the Church. Although there was clearly an order in the early Church, and we could argue about the rights and wrongs of women as elders or bishops, it is clear that Christian women were afforded greater dignity and value than their contemporaries. I will leave you to work out the implications of all of that for the Church today!

Endnotes

1. 1970. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
2. 1996. *The Rise of Christianity*. Princeton, New Jersey, USA: Princeton University Press.
3. Ibid, 82.
4. Ibid, 97.

Lindsay Brown is evangelist-at-large for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) and international director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. He has been involved in student ministry for twenty-six years, as a staff worker in Wales, IFES regional secretary for Europe, and general secretary of IFES from 1991-2007.

Understanding the Contextual Realities of the Church in Liberia, Part 1

By Jerry P. Kulah

Marcus Garvey, a great son of Africa, once said, “A people without a knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without a root.”¹ A Liberian historian also observed, “A people who lack appreciation for their culture and fail to factually document their history and culture is like a palm tree with its palm cabbage removed.”²

It is therefore with great delight that I attempt to unfold some of the challenges facing the Church in post-conflict Liberia in the area of Christian missions as it endeavors to contribute toward the task of rebuilding a nation which was socio-economically, politically, and spiritually devastated by fourteen years of civil war. My hope in this article is three-fold:

1. to remind the Liberian Christian community of its evangelism and missions challenges;
2. to facilitate network, partnership, and collaborative efforts among its peoples in the mission enterprise in Africa;
3. to solicit the moral and prayer support of our friends and partners abroad in our effort to reclaim our place among the comity of nations.

The prerequisite for mobilizing the mission enterprise of the Church in Liberia is to provide relevant information to the Christian community on its current status as far as mission involvement is concerned. I am therefore delighted to share a brief history of missions in Liberia with the hope that the Church, whose divine mandate it is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, will be motivated to take seriously the challenge of missions and thereby advance the Kingdom of God in Liberia.

To do this, I shall endeavor to answer the following four questions:

1. What are some basic foundations upon which Christianity was established in this nation, and who were the pioneers?
2. What were some of the major socio-political, cultural, and religious challenges associated with the advent of Christianity in Liberia?
3. What are the current contextual realities of the Church in Liberia in regard to missions?
4. What are our challenges, and what is the way forward?

The Founding of Liberia: A Unique Beginning

The Republic of Liberia is black Africa's oldest independent nation, with independence declared 26 July 1847. Thus, unlike the rest of Africa, Liberia was never colonized.

Liberia is located south of the Sahara, on the west coast of Africa. It is bordered by Sierra Leone, Guinea, La Cote d'Ivoire, and the Atlantic Ocean.

It is a small country with an estimated population of 3.5 million: 95% are natives; 2.3% are Liberians of American descents; and the remaining 2.7% are Lebanese, Indians, and other Africans residing and working in Liberia.

Liberia has sixteen major ethnic groups divided into three language families: the Mande, which make up 47.2% of the population; the Kru, which make up 41.3%; and the West Atlantic, which make up 7.9%.³ Approximately 48.3% of the population are traditionalists; 38.33% are Christians; 13.0% are Muslims, and 0.30% are Baha'i.⁴

Since its existence, Liberia has been a land of rich cultures and traditions.⁵ Before the advent of Christianity in the nineteenth century Liberia was also a land of "strongly entrenched and institutionalized secret societies"⁶ involving almost every people group. While the culture and tradition of the Liberian people were the connecting link enabling them to maintain their common identity and life, there were (and still are) elements of the culture which impeded their socio-economic development and kept them in spiritual darkness.

Our Christian Foundation

Although its current constitution (revised in 1985) declares Liberia a secular state, it is indeed a Christian nation. There are several reasons for this assertion:

1. The birth of the nation. Unlike other countries in Africa, Liberia was birthed from the womb of the Church. Eleven churchmen signed its declaration of independence on 26 July 1847 in the Providence Baptist Church, thus making Coast of Grain (now Liberia) a sovereign state.

2. Monrovia, formerly, Christopolis. Because of her Christian heritage, before independence the capital city of Liberia was first called "Christopolis," meaning the "City of Christ." The name was later changed to "Monrovia" in honor of America's fifth president, James Monroe, who, it is said, significantly contributed to the formation of the American Colonization Society, which was responsible for the repatriation of emancipated slaves to Africa. In appreciation of his generosity, some unspiritually-minded settler leaders changed the name of the capital city.

3. National Day of Fast and Prayer. Unlike other countries in Africa, Liberia celebrates a national holiday called "Fast and Prayer Day," which is set aside to mobilize national prayer for the spiritual cleansing and healing of the nation (see 2 Chronicles 7:14). This national day was birthed out of a political crisis between Liberia and the British colonial parents of Sierra Leone in the mid 1800s out of which Liberia, along with its political leadership, was delivered only by the power of prayer. Since then, this National Day of Fast and Prayer has been annually observed.

4. Christian symbols. The contents of the national anthem, the national flag, the pledge of allegiance, and the first constitution of Liberia (1847-1985) all point to the fact that Liberia's forefathers had assumed Liberia was a Christian nation.

5. Past and present heads of state. Almost all of Liberia's twenty-three presidents, interim presidents, and transitional chairmen have been leaders from the Church. Several were even clergy.

The Realities

But what is the current state of the Church in the context of missions? Given the huge presence of church leaders

in national government since the birth of the nation, why is the population still predominantly animist or traditionalist? Why has the nation performed poorly in global missions?

With such an undisputed Christian heritage, one would have expected that Liberia would be the vanguard of spearheading an indigenous mission thrust to the rest of Africa and the world.

However, that has not been the case. One would have further expected that all of Liberia's people groups would by now be adequately evangelized and disciplined with functioning, multiplying congregations which are capable of reproducing themselves in cross-cultural missions. But, sadly, this has not been the case. Liberia still lags far behind in mission endeavors, and many of its unreached people groups stand vulnerable to the rapid, silent invading forces of Islam and other religious groups which are scrambling for a place in Liberia.

There are not yet authentic, national research statistics on the Church in Liberia to help determine the extent of the harvest field and harvest force in the land. It is not that the Church does not have the capability to carry out such research. The fact is that something is terribly wrong with the mission vision of the Church in Liberia.

However, according to Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, 38.33% of Liberians are Christian, (and have an annual growth rate of +8.6%); 13% are Muslim (and have an annual growth rate of +11.3%); and 48.37% are traditional ethnic groups (and have an annual growth rate of 7.8%).

These statistics reveal the following alarming facts:

1. Over sixty percent of Liberia's population are still unreached and waiting to be evangelized, be disciplined, and have Bible-believing churches established among them.
2. Islam is growing at a faster rate in Liberia than Christianity. If the Church continues to ignore her responsibility to do missions, most of this large, unreached population will be claimed by Islam and other religious groups and taken into a Christ-less eternity.
3. The Church in Liberia has not yet prioritized indigenous mission work. The concentration of the Church is primarily in the cities, while the larger population in the interior of Liberia remains unreached or without the teaching of sound biblical Christianity.
4. The primary medium of communication (languages/dialects) of traditional people in Liberia is still largely ignored by the Church. The gospel has not yet begun to be proclaimed with cultural relevance in a way that makes sense to the rural people and, hence, encourages their acceptance of it.

The cultural understanding of any people group is the most significant and effective means of reaching them with the gospel. As Richard W. Bowie points out, "Any proclamation which does not take seriously man in his environment is not true proclamation. The gospel may be said to have been truly preached only if it has been made challengingly relevant to the people in their situation."⁷

All these realities point to the wrong beginnings of the Church in Liberia.

In **part two**, we take a look at factors hindering missions in Liberia—and how we are seeking a way forward.

Endnotes

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Understanding the Contextual Realities of the Church in Liberia, Part 2

By Jerry P. Kulah

In part one of this article, we explored the unique beginnings of Liberia, including the fact that while Liberia is rooted in a strong Christian heritage, nearly sixty percent of the population is unreached. Why is this so, and how can we move forward?

Factors Hindering Mission Endeavors in Liberia

The advent of Christianity in Liberia is inseparable from the arrival of ex-slaves from South Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia (USA) into Liberia. Following their emancipation, the American Colonization Society (ACS) assisted in their voluntary relocation to Africa. Some of them were churchmen who looked forward to making their newfound home a Christian community. As Joseph C. Wold records, “In 1820, the Baptist Church and Methodist and Protestant Missionary Society were organized on board the ship *Elizabeth*,”¹ which brought the first settlers to Liberia.

Relationship between Settlers and Natives: A Poor Beginning

With regards to evangelization, the gospel had a very poor beginning among the natives. That is, the initial Christians who brought the gospel to Liberia did everything but proclaim Christ to the natives. These pioneer missionaries restricted themselves along the coast and remained socially, politically, religiously, and culturally isolated from the natives. They referred to themselves as Americo-Liberians,² meaning Africans with the prejudices and predilections—the biases and aspirations—of white men, and would have nothing to do with the natives.

Wold shares that, “(Christianity) became one of the marks of being an Americo-Liberian, which distinguished them from the tribal people. To them, it was incredible that an uncivilized tribesman, who could not even speak English, might be a Christian.”³

The settlers’ (including the Christians) only attempt to relate to the natives was to exercise political control over them. That attempt was often met with stiff resistance and resulted in warfare. A patriotic Liberian, E. Wilmot Blyden, lamenting the socio-economic, political, and religious disparity between the settlers and natives, describes the situation:

A group of returned exile-refugees from the house of bondage (USA) settled along a few hundred miles off the coast of their fatherland, attempting to rule millions of people, their own kith and kin, on a foreign system in which they themselves have been imperfectly trained, while knowing very little of the facts of the history (and culture) of the people they assume to rule...and taking for granted that the religious and social theories they have brought from across the sea must be adapted to all the needs of their expatriated brethren.⁴

Peter Falk also observes that the separation of the settlers from the indigenous population “caused a political and social difficulty and even...obstructed the evangelization of the indigenous population.”⁵

Wold provides reasons why the gospel initially failed to make any positive impact on the indigenous people, thereby laying a foundation of superficial Christianity in Liberia for many decades:

First, the wars between the pagan tribes and settlers kept the former geographically isolated from the Christians. Second, the tribesmen never considered Christianity a real possibility for themselves, because it was identified with a foreign culture. Third, unfortunately, the moral laxness and social injustices of the settlers in their relations with the tribes did not commend Christianity as a way of life.⁶

With such a poor beginning, the indigenous people perceived a negative impression of the gospel—it was not a message of liberation, but one that enslaved. Hence, superficial Christianity became a way of life for more than a century. Even today, Christianity in some major cities of Liberia still bears the brunt of a Christianity that has “a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:5).

Later, when Christians attempted to reach the natives with the gospel, the settlers brought along with them Freemasonry and, mixing this with traditional secret societies, this became a pervasive influence against the Church. As a result, traces of syncretism are still prevalent in some churches in Liberia today.

The Western cultural lifestyle of the settlers greatly influenced the kind of Christianity and political system they introduced in Liberia. Instead of emphasizing repentance of sin and conversion through faith in Jesus Christ as the basis for salvation, they emphasized the “sitting on a mourner’s bench” until one had an ecstatic experience. Another means of becoming a “Christian” was to replace one’s African name with a Western name. This practice was largely responsible for the kind of superficial Christianity that characterized the Church and several of its leaders in Liberia until about three and a half decades ago.

Because these settlers were at the helm of political affairs, heads of the Church, and simultaneously involved in the Masonic and other kinds of secret societies for more than a century, the Church became a toothless bull. It was voiceless against the social, economic, and political ills that oppressed and marginalized the natives. Since many top church leaders were deeply rooted in secret societies, the Church tolerated the practices so much so that they co-existed with worship services in almost all traditional churches.

While the fourteen years of senseless and devastating Liberian civil war (which claimed more than 250,000 lives) can never be justified, it is important to note that the unhealthy silence of the Church regarding the resulting immorality, corruption, oppression, and marginalization of the ordinary people contributed to the anger, hurt, bitterness, and retaliation. The ordinary people warmly embraced the 1980 military coup and the 1989 popular rebellion.

Because the Church failed to be “salt” and “light” in Liberia when darkness was covering the people—and because the Church compromised the integrity of the gospel by refusing to advocate for righteousness in the land—Liberia today is degenerated and classed among the poorest of the poor nations of the world. Yet, because God has promised that “if my people... pray...I will heal their land still” (2 Chronicles 7:14), there is hope for Liberia.

Our Challenges

These ugly developments, however, have left the nation, its people, and the Church with numerous challenges with which to deal in post-war Liberia. Among them are:

1. The need for God-fearing, honest, credible, and accountable leaders (in both the Church and society) who will uphold the rule of law and restore the lost image of the nation.

2. The challenge of rampant corruption that has invaded every sector of Liberian society—a situation that is now worsened by the high rate of unemployment, poverty, and joblessness.
3. The high illiteracy rate, coupled with an inadequate educational system. Liberia’s current illiteracy rate stands at about seventy percent.
4. The need for sound theological education that is holistic in nature and promotes the propagation of biblical Christianity with cultural relevance and sensitivity to the African culture.
5. The need for viable indigenous mission thrusts that will train and equip godly men and women for the task for evangelizing the rest of Liberia and contribute toward global mission initiatives.
6. The need for research in missions in order to have a genuine picture of the state of the Church in Liberia—and the extent of the harvest field.
7. The need to strengthen partnership and networking among churches and para-church organizations for the mission mobilization of the Church in Liberia. For missions to be prioritized and facilitated successfully, it would require the combined effort of all mission-minded churches and their willingness to cooperate, collaborate, and coordinate their resources, expertise, skills, and abilities for its realization.
8. The need for the mainline or traditional churches in Liberia to see scriptural reasons to abolish and dissolve the so-called Inter-religious Council of Liberia—or discontinue its involvement therein (Amos 3:3; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). The continued existence of this organization (which includes some leading traditional churches and some sects of Islam in Liberia) has more *damaging* effects to the integrity of the gospel and the role of Christianity than *benefits* for Christianity.

The Liberian traditional churches, now organized into the Liberia Council of Churches, certainly had a strong basis for the formation of the Inter-Faith Mediation Council. It is alleged that during the Liberian Civil War some unscrupulous Islamic warlords informed the Islamic community that the civil war was a war between Christians and Muslims. This was a scheme to solicit funds from the Arab world for personal aggrandizement and to invite the sympathy of the Islamic international community.

Hence, the Inter-Faith Mediation Council of Liberia was established to provide a forum for informing the international community that the civil war in Liberia was not a war between Christians and Muslims. However, given the time lapse since the civil war ended, and the level of political stability achieved, I am of the opinion that the purpose of that establishment was long ago achieved.

Furthermore, the Church and other social and religious groups may need to meet occasionally to address socio-economic and political issues confronting the nation whenever it becomes necessary to do so for the common good. But the effort to do so does not necessitate the continued existence of an inter-religious alliance which has the propensity to promote a pluralistic gospel which denounces the exclusive claim of Christ as “the only way, truth, and life” (John 14:6).

The Way Forward

Having critically analyzed the challenges of missions in post-conflict Liberia, I see one primary need that seems to stand out among others as the way forward to overcoming this nightmare: the development and empowerment of quality spiritual leadership to serve both the Church and society. For decades, the Church was primarily an identity of the elite social class of the Americo-Liberians, while the indigenous people languished in their traditional worship and practices. But that is now an issue of the past.

God did provide one blessing in disguise as a result of the civil war: corridors were opened for many Liberians to seek refuge in neighboring countries. While in exile in Nigeria, for example, many people (including me) had the opportunity to acquire quality theological education with specialized skills in missions, leadership, and

development. Many such skillful Liberians are returning home by the thousands with a deep passion for the holistic development of post-conflict Liberia. Hence, the nation is now well-situated to respond to this need.

Conclusion

Our nation has a great Christian heritage laid down by our forefathers, who today form a part of the great cloud of witnesses that are watching to see how well we will build upon the foundation they laid out for us. Even though some of them made some wrong decisions which adversely affected our socio-economic, political, and spiritual life, there is still hope for the spiritual cleansing and healing of the land if we will repent and take seriously our responsibility to do missions. The clarion call to all Liberians is: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1) to advance the Kingdom God in your generation.

Endnotes

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3. Wold, 53.
4. Lynch, 119.
5. 1979. *The Growth of the Church in Africa*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Zondervan, 115.
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United, Focused Prayer: Changes in the Way We Are Praying for the World, Part 1

By Steve Hawthorne

This is the first of two installments of how prayer related to evangelization has increased and changed in phenomenal ways since the 1984 International Prayer Assembly for World Evangelization.

Prayer has always been viewed as an essential part of missions. No one would question missionary Samuel Zwemer's statement that “the history of missions is the history of answered prayer.” Praying for the work of world evangelization has been indispensable to missions. As well-known Scottish pastor and teacher Oswald Chambers wrote, “Prayer is not preparation for the work. Prayer is the work.”

In recent decades, we have seen rapid escalations and dramatic innovations in prayer related to missions. What follows is not a comprehensive survey; rather, it is a sample of how prayer is playing a greater role than ever in accomplishing world evangelization.

Not Unprecedented

It is important to recognize how well-precedented most of the present-day movements of prayer really are. If we stay within the Protestant tradition, it is hard to forget how the **Moravian communities** committed themselves to hourly intercession in the summer of 1727. Members of the Moravian Church continued a prayer watch tradition for one hundred years, focusing much of their praying on world evangelization. Ever since then, prayer has been closely linked to missions in the Protestant tradition.

Prayer as a Mission Activity

Famed Protestant missionary William Carey was impressed by the Moravian prayer watch. Sixty-five years after it began, Carey published his influential *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*¹, which called for action (using the now archaic term means) in several ways. The “first, and most important,” of the action points called for was “fervent and united prayer...for the success of the gospel.” At a time when denominational fragmentation was great, Carey organized monthly prayer meetings to involve Christians of all denominations. Not long after Carey sailed for Serampore in West Bengal, India, the celebrated Haystack Prayer Meeting of 1806 in Williamstown, Massachusetts, positioned united prayer as the engine of mission mobilization in the United States.

Of course, prayer was seen as much more than a mobilization method and had long been viewed as an indispensable part of how mission work was accomplished on the field. Prayer as a mission activity became even more celebrated by the faith mission movements. Leaders such as evangelist George Mueller and Hudson Taylor were notorious for looking to prayer as a method of mission.

One of the missions which arose during this time, [Sudan Interior Mission \(SIM\)](#), adopted the motto, “By prayer.” This motto is still used today.

A Significant Turning Point

In 1984, nearly three thousand prayer and mission leaders gathered in Seoul, Korea, for the International Prayer Assembly for World Evangelization. The purpose was “to generate a vision for prayer for the completion of the Great Commission among churches throughout the Body of Christ.” There is no question that united prayer for God’s global purposes has been on the rise in phenomenal ways since the 1984 gathering. To recount just some of what has unfolded since then:

- Concerts of prayer have flourish.
- Computers have been used to inform and connect those who pray.
- National prayer networks have been formed.
- Prayer leadership of the local church has been recognized.
- Prayer walks have increased. • Prayer evangelism has been pursued.
- Spiritual warfare has been on the rise.
- The call for prayer summits for pastors has occurred. • The role of intercessors has been identified.
- Twenty-four hour/seven-days-a-week prayer rooms have multiplied.
- Children have been encouraged to pray.
- Global prayer events with local city-wide gatherings have occurred on the same day (e.g., the [March for Jesus](#) and the [Global Day of Prayer](#)).

All of these innovations or movements have either been the direct result of the 1984 International Prayer Assembly (IPA) or were strongly influenced by it. Some have historical precedent; others have never before been seen.

Not Just Praying More—Praying Differently

According to a report by David Barrett and Todd Johnson², there are an estimated 200 million Christians praying regularly for the advance of the gospel and world evangelization. While this number is significant, the ways in which prayer has morphed and movements of prayer have matured are even more noteworthy. There is an increasing sense that the most significant days of prayer are before us.

Evangelicals have not merely prayed more since 1984—we have also come to mobilize prayer for world evangelization differently. The mutations and maturations of prayer can be clustered in three broad categories, the most dramatic of which have come about since 1984.

1. Information Exchange: We Are Praying More Clearly

- *Operation World*. Patrick Johnstone released **initial versions** of *Operation World* in the 1960s and 1970s. However, the fourth edition, released in 1986, was distributed in a major way. Now in ten languages, with two million copies in print, the book has shaped the way believers pray. Editor Jason Mandryk has said that while *Operation World* does help believers to “pray responsively ‘at’ or ‘about’ specific situations,” it is designed to help believers pray “directively, ‘towards’ God’s kingdom being manifest long-term.”
- *Spiritual warfare*. The sometimes controversial idea of spiritual warfare has provided a framework for exchanging ideas about what factors have restrained the progress of world evangelization. The expression informed intercession was coined by spiritual warfare leaders who then formed the **Spiritual Warfare Network** in the early 1990s. Closely linked with a spiritual warfare emphasis was the idea of “spiritual mapping” introduced by George Otis, Jr., the CEO, founder, and president of **The Sentinel Group**. **Spiritual mapping** provided a way for prayer-worthy information to be gathered and used in prayer directed toward the evangelization of cities or regions.
- *Dated prayer guides*. Working with the **AD2000 and Beyond Movement**, the simple idea of praying for sixty-two countries, two each day through the month of October, spread rapidly across the globe in 1993. The prayer initiative was dubbed “**Praying through the Window**.” A simple one-page calendar helped focus the prayer. Tens of millions of calendars were photocopied and distributed. The effort was repeated with even greater participation two years later and continued on odd years throughout the lifespan of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement.
- *Internet information exchange*. Countless prayer requests and reported answers to prayer have been circulated on hundreds of websites and millions of email lists. Almost every mission structure or church conveys specific prayer information by email or on web pages.

2. Movements of Networked Leaders: We Are Praying Together

- *Concerts of prayer*. In 1981, **David Bryant** began to revive eighteenth-century American pastor Jonathan Edwards’s practice of focused prayer by gathering believers in concerts of prayer. The hallmark of the concerts of prayer was uniting Christians from different denominations and traditions to pray toward the fulfillment of God’s purposes. The movement depended upon local leaders who formed lasting collaborative relationships on a local and city-wide scale.
- *March for Jesus*. From its inception in 1987, millions of people took to the streets to openly worship Jesus Christ and to pray for his purposes to be fulfilled in their towns, cities, and countries. Coordination was simple, but profound. On the same day, tens of millions began with the same prayers and sang many of the same songs translated into dozens of languages. At its peak, more than ten million people from 170 countries were involved. But more significantly, pastors and leaders from many traditions formed friendships and partnerships on a local level in hundreds of communities.
- *The Global Day of Prayer*. In South Africa, believers from every tradition prayed together through the 1994 crisis of multi-party elections and the tensions that followed. Christians were convinced that God spared the land in response to sustained, united prayer. In 2004, every country on the continent of Africa had gatherings on the same day. The next year, an international coordinating team based in Cape Town invited Christians from all the nations to unite in prayer on Pentecost Sunday (the Sunday fifty days after Easter), calling it the Global Day of Prayer (GDOP). **Global Day of Prayer** gatherings have since multiplied, taking place in two hundred countries. Coordinators estimate that about 200 million people have taken part in the gatherings each year. Perhaps the most significant outcome of the GDOP has been the formation of long-lasting working relationships among pastors and prayer leaders on local and national levels.

- *The International Prayer Council.* In the late 1990s some of the leaders who helped organize the 1984 IPA began to explore the possibility of calling for yet another global prayer assembly on or near the 20-year anniversary of the 1984 event. Exploring this idea brought together more than a dozen leaders from around the world to New York in November 2001. The 11 September 2001 World Trade Center attack added urgency to the possibility of encouraging national networks to mobilize and sustain vibrant movements of prayer in every part of the world. The **International Prayer Council (IPC)** was formed with this vision:

“Compelled by God to seek Christ’s glory worldwide for the blessing, healing, and transforming of the nations, the International Prayer Council exists as a coalition of prayer networkers and mobilizers working together to motivate, develop, and equip national movements and local churches to fill all nations with prayer for the fulfillment of the Great Commandment and the completion of the Great Commission.”

The following year, nearly three hundred leaders gathered near Cape Town. In keeping with the vision statement, participation was limited to those working at the national or regional levels to network and mobilize prayer focused on world evangelization. As a result, networking and encouragement among leaders are flourishing without being centralized in or dominated by any particular region. Today, the IPC is laying plans for a second IPA perhaps as soon as 2012.

As already stated, the mutations and maturations of prayer can be clustered in three broad categories: information exchange, networking, and a more dynamic engagement with the world. In January 2009, we will look at this third category.

Endnotes

1. 1792. Leicester, England: Ann Ireland.
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PERSPECTIVES

Prayer Networks

By John Godson

“Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ‘It is written,’ he said to them, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.’”- Matthew 21:12-13

God’s purpose for his house is that it be a house of prayer. God’s longing is that his house be a place devoted to prayer and seeking his face. However, when we look at the modern-day church, it is not always so. We are consumed and concerned about nearly everything else but prayer.

We have changed the house of the Lord into a place of buying and selling, a place of business; indeed, a den of thieves. We have erred and departed from God’s ordained purpose for his house. In speaking about “the house of the Lord,” there are two dimensions: the corporate level and the personal level.

The Corporate Level of the House of the Lord

Matthew 21:12-13 shows God's expectations for his house at the corporate level: it should be a place of prayer and worship. The atmosphere should be that of seeking God. It should be a place where people can come at any time to spend time with God.

The Personal Level of the House of the Lord

At the personal level, the Bible also calls our bodies the temple of the Holy Spirit:

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body." - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

This means that God's purpose for our lives as individuals is for us to be a temple of prayer. Our prime occupation is to worship and seek him in prayer. We are his temple; we are carrying an all-surpassing treasure in these earthen vessels of ours.

Prayer Networks

Prayer networks seem to be God's answer to the lukewarm situation of our churches today. What started in the late 1970s has today become a wildfire. It is believed that millions of people are involved in prayer networks. However, no one actually knows how many networks are in existence. According to Benny Mostert, who is with the [Global Day of Prayer](#) and the [International Prayer Council](#):

"In many nations, there is more than one network that calls itself the national network. Then you have international networks, and sub-continental networks. You also have new prayer movements and networks being birthed literally daily. More, who knows what is happening, for instance, in China, India, Indonesia, and the nations of the Middle East? And I can assure you much is happening there. There is simply no person on earth who can tell you right now how many international prayer networks there are in the world."

In the last few years Graham Power of Transformation Africa has been organizing the Global Day of Prayer. In 2008, an estimated 400 million believers from 211 countries participated in these events. Isn't that encouraging?

The term "prayer network" is typically used in the West and is sometimes little understood in the Majority World. The reason is that these churches are praying churches, and thus, there is no need for separate prayer ministries to mobilize prayer.

To illustrate this, a few months ago I sent out emails (for my role as intercessory director of the Lausanne Cape Town 2010 Congress), soliciting information about prayer networks from various parts of the world. Responses from places like China, Nigeria, and South Korea showed that in these places, the church is the prayer network. In fact, two pastors didn't know what I meant by "prayer network."

Classifying Prayer Networks

Prayer networks can be classified based on at least three criteria:

1. Geographically. Under this we can identify the following:

- International prayer networks with global coverage (e.g., the Global Day of Prayer, [Intercessors Network](#) and the International Prayer Council)
- Regional prayer networks, which cover continents or parts of a continent (e.g., Central Asia Prayer Network, Asian Wave, and Intercessors for Africa. Many of the international prayer networks have regional equivalents.)

- National prayer networks, which are country specific. In most countries, there is more than one national prayer network.
- Local prayer networks, which are city-wide, and in most cases, just a group of people meeting regularly to pray.

2. Target intercessor-oriented. This category defines who can join the prayer network.

- Children’s prayer networks (e.g., Children’s Prayer Network of Australia)
- Youth prayer networks (e.g., the Boiler Rooms in the United Kingdom)
- Women’s prayer network (e.g., Deborah Arise International group, which encourages mothers to pray for the youth)
- Men’s prayer networks
- Pastors’ prayer networks or fellowships

3. Target topic-oriented. These are prayer networks that are focused on a specific area of need. Examples include:

- Governments and those in authority
- Prayer for the persecuted Church
- Prayer for the unreached
- Prayer for the 10/40 Window

Prayer Networks in Different Parts of the World

In addition to the above classifications, the term “prayer network” has different names in different parts of the world. For example,

- 24/7 prayer are centers where people pray twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (e.g., the International House of Prayer, www.ihop.org). Many such centers are springing up around the world.
- **Boiler rooms** were started in the UK.
- Prayer fellowships is the most popular term used to refer to prayer networks in places like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.
- Other common terms include: power houses, prayer warriors, prayer squads, prayer chains, prayer triplets, and prayer partners.

Many churches and organizations also have prayer/intercession departments led by intercessory leaders or ministers. For example, the prayer department of **World Vision International** facilitates strategic prayer in many parts of the world. **GOD TV** started a prayer team with a goal to raise one million intercessors. In fact, many secular organizations are beginning to take examples from Christian organizations in setting up prayer departments and employing full-time intercessors to pray for their marketplace work.

There is no doubt that one of the greatest needs of the Church in our generation is a return to humble, sincere, and down-to-earth passionate hearts in seeking God.

God is gracious and merciful and has promised that we will find him when we seek him with all our hearts: *“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart”* (Jeremiah 29:12-13). *Jesus has promised, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them”* (Matthew 18:20). Let us make the most of the time when we meet with fellow brothers and sisters to pray—no matter how few or how many we are.

Let us join our master, Jesus, in his ministry of intercession. God does things in answer to prayer.

John Godson is the intercessory director of Cape Town 2010: The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization. He is a native of Nigeria, but has been living and serving as a missionary in Poland since 1993. He is also a university lecturer and serves as an elected city councilor in the second largest city of Poland (Lodz). Together with his wife, Aneta, and four children, they make their home in central Poland.

Vulnerable Mission—A Normalisation of Christian Mission Practices in Anticipation of a Post-colonial Situation

By Jim Harries

Scholars and laypeople alike often accuse Christian missions of being a child of colonialism. The **Alliance for Vulnerable Mission** (AVM) proposes a bold strategy to counter neocolonialism in mission by advocating that some Western missionaries to the Majority World follow two simple principles to “de-power” themselves:

1. using the language of the people being reached in ministry
2. conducting ministry using only locally available resources

1. Using the Language of the People Being Reached in Ministry

Language learning (ideally done in community) is a humbling experience. It includes being laughed at and corrected, even by children. It forces the foreign missionary to reconsider his or her message in a new linguistic/cultural context. It forces a healthy delay between entry to the field and serious ministry engagement. Engaging in ministry using the language of the people being reached also places the foreign missionary on a lifelong learning curve, builds appreciation and trust with locals, and leads to contextually appropriate ways of sharing the gospel. Furthermore, it boosts the pride and self-respect of the people being reached. Through avoiding translation gaffes and fine tuning with the local context, the missionary engaging in ministry can put down deep local roots.

2. Conducting Ministry Using Only Locally Available Resources

Enormous present-day, interregional, global, economic imbalance, combined with the communications and technological revolution, greatly empower Western people. Many of these are the traditionally Christian people of the world.

Should such economic domination embarrass westerners into apologising for the gospel that contributed to who they are today? The association of white skin or a Western accent with wealth and ignorance of local conditions certainly troubles many westerners working in the Majority World. As Christians, do we presume to use all the earthly power we have in our service to God, or is there a place for choosing to de-power in order to reach people? Can God use the weak? Is there a case for becoming vulnerable to be more useful to God?

The AVM believes there is such a case and finds support in the Bible. Again and again, God chooses to use that which is weak to confound the strong:

- Moses was an outcast for forty years before being used to redeem Israel (Exodus 2:11-3:10).

- Gideon reduced his army to a fraction of its original size before overcoming the Midianites (Judges 7:1-8).
- David, a young man armed only with a slingshot, beat the giant Goliath (1 Samuel 17).
- Old Testament prophets were beaten and killed (Matthew 23:31).
- At the time of his temptations in the desert, Jesus chose to reject the way of power—either to win followers by always amazing them with miracles or by using force to dominate them (Matthew 4:1-11). He emptied himself (Philippians 2:7).
- In my weakness is strength, shared Paul (2 Corinthians 12:10).

When ministers are vulnerable, the glory goes to God. Because it is hard to be vulnerable when one is controlling the funds, vulnerable missionaries opt out of this role in their ministry. That is not to say, necessarily, that their ministry is not subsidised from the West, but that they are not controlling that subsidy. They may be dependent upon outside support for their livelihood; however, they may see this as a problem that reduces their legitimacy for working in the local community, rather than a means to get a head-start over locals. They lead by example and not by paying people to follow. Instead of expanding their ministry by winning over foreign donors (thus putting them out of the reach of most locals where they are working and creating donor dependency and an orientation that links success with pleasing the westerner), they choose to confine themselves to what is available to other local people. Thus, by default as well as design, their ministry comes to be sustainable under indigenous economic conditions.

I teach part time in a conventional theological seminary in Kenya and see my key ministry to be that which is unsubsidised, rooted in the locality in which I live, and conducted in African languages. I have ministered in this vulnerable way for fifteen years (see www.jim-mission.org.uk) and have observed the frustrations of westerners who come determined to utilise their superior linguistic and financial resources in the interests of the Kenyan people. Now, however, I seek to share the advantages of vulnerable ministry with others through the AVM. The AVM will hold a series of conferences in the U.S. and Europe in early 2009. For details, go to: www.vulnerablemission.com.

The Difficulties and Freedoms of Vulnerability

The vulnerable mission method, akin to that advocated by Jesus in Mark 6:8-11, is not simple, uncontroversial, or politically naïve. As was the case for Old Testament prophets in their day, vulnerable missionaries are likely to face opposition. Some find that vulnerable mission threatens their more comfortable strategies. It challenges armchair missiology and can intimidate ministries which are heavily rooted in financial subsidy and European languages.

Many people, including missionaries, prefer not to be vulnerable. Yet many in the Majority World would prefer that a missionary come loaded with money instead of trying to level with them. Many African countries, especially, have invested heavily in European languages at the expense of local languages. Some people consider globalisation to be such that a vulnerable missionary's task is impossible. Unprotected by a cocoon of linguistic and financial superiority, vulnerable missionaries can find themselves under attack from many quarters.

On the other hand, by avoiding the political clout that comes through foreign subsidy (wealthy missionaries by the nature of their impact can make more enemies faster than can poor missionaries), vulnerable missionaries are less likely to offend through their actions than those using foreign finance and languages in their ministry. So a vulnerable missionary can survive better in an foreign environment!

Vulnerable mission means freedom: minimising one's power means that fewer people may get upset over the actions of a vulnerable missionary. Instead, ministries can be practised and honed to local conditions. The

offence caused by a vulnerable missionary comes to be that of the gospel, not his or her blundering like an elephant in a china shop through someone else's culture.

Vulnerable mission need not be an alternative to more conventional mission strategies. Instead, it can run in parallel with them, given sufficient care to the relationship between the two.

Vulnerable mission is a normalisation: it is the way mission has been done for centuries, and continues to be done in much of the world. The current globalising scene makes vulnerable mission a necessity for the sake of the future of the worldwide Church. And in the end, it is a part of God's plan.

Dr. Jim Harries is chair of the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission, which seeks to encourage mission using the language of people being reached through non-subsidised ministries. He is also a missionary to the Luo people of Western Kenya.

Top Christian Leaders Assemble at Call2all East African Congress

By Grace Samson

Hundreds of leaders gathered at Nairobi Baptist Church in Nairobi, Kenya, from 14-17 October 2008, for the first African regional Call2all Congress in East Africa. The purpose of the event was to strategically mobilize and connect leaders from twelve East African countries who are operating in different spheres of ministry in order to network and focus resources toward fulfilling the task of reaching the least and the lost in East Africa and beyond.

A representation of leaders from Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, and other neighbouring countries were present. Other African participants in attendance included: South Africa, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe. Malaysia, New Zealand, Canada, and the USA were among some of the international countries in attendance.

Some of the main presenters were: Steven Kabachia, East African regional coordinator for **Movement for Africa National Initiatives** (MANI); Loren Cunningham, co-founder of **Youth With A Mission** (YWAM); Paul Eshleman, vice president of **Campus Crusade for Christ International**; Avery Willis, international director of the **International Orality Network**; and Laban Jjumba, with Intercessors for Africa.

Mark Anderson, president of Call2all, gave a "call to consecration" at the start of the gathering. In light of current global turmoil, he stressed the need for crucified living among Christian leaders and challenged them to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow Jesus.

The six main themes covered at the Congress included:

- Evangelism
- Church presence/planting
- Mapping the Great Commission
- Orality
- Prayer
- Missions—unengaged and unreached people groups

Cunningham spoke about "How to Disciple a Nation." He went through the seven spheres of society, emphasizing the giftedness of Africa, highlighting the offering of Africa to the world, and talking about key leaders who have risen through the ranks in each sphere of society.

Bishop Kabachia, the regional coordinator of MANI, presented a session on the "State of the Gospel" in the region of East Africa. He commented on the recent research done on the number of unreached people groups in Kenya which sparked a challenge that resulted in every tribe in Kenya engaged with the gospel.

Eshleman, director of **Finishing the Task**, shared about the unengaged and unreached people groups of the world. He cited that, statistically, the most unreached tribes in Africa are concentrated in Sudan. He challenged participants to ask God for a new heart and a new perspective in order to go. "It is our job to make the decision; it is God's job to solve the problem," he encouraged.

One of the major highlights of the event was the uncovering of a massive 20 x 25 meter map. As a symbolic act of going to the nations, participants prayed, wept, worshipped, and walked on the map, covering all four corners of the earth as they prophetically reclaimed the nations for God.

As the meeting concluded, the Call2all leadership team led the Congress through a time of commitment. Participants were encouraged to meet in their affinity groups or individually to reflect on areas of need presented, and to respond to God by making a faith commitment. Participants then took bold steps forward to present their commitment before the Lord. Several individuals and groups stayed on their knees with eyes closed and held hands as they transacted with the Lord in a very deep and sincere way.

Ken Stravens, national director of Life Ministry (Campus Crusade for Christ) Kenya, closed the session saying, "I am so overwhelmed by what God is doing in our midst! The goals we have set are amazing, and I look forward to what God wants to do with us as a result of this Congress."

In January 2008, the first Call2all Congress was held in Orlando, Florida, USA, where several leaders gathered together for the North American Congress. It was the first of forty Congresses that will be held in different regions around the world over the next three years.

Call2all is a worldwide movement calling the Church to a renewed, collaborative effort to complete the Great Commission. For more information, visit: www.call2all.org.

Grace Samson serves as director of Partner Relations for the Call2All Cape Town office, a global movement connecting the Body of Christ in all spheres of ministry. She is also a member of the national leadership team of Youth With a Mission (YWAM) in South Africa and is a member of the Communications Working Group for Lausanne. Previously, she headed the School of Video Production and Public Relations with Media Village Cape Town.

Wayne Pederson Named New President of HCJB Global

Wayne Pederson was named HCJB Global's new president, effective 1 November 2008. Pederson, now vice president of **Moody Broadcasting**, will replace David Johnson, who stepped down in June 2008, after serving for seven years. Dr. James D. Allen has been serving as acting president.

Pederson is the seventh person to serve as HCJB Global's president. He has been a member of the board of directors of HCJB Global for 2 1/2 years and has worked with the ministry to raise money for key projects, including the launch of its satellite ministry in Latin America and Russia.

"The board is delighted that Wayne has accepted the call to become HCJB Global's president," said John Baugus, chairman of the board for HCJB Global. "With his combination of godly character, seasoned leadership skills, and passion for HCJB Global and its mission, he is uniquely equipped to serve as our president."

Glen Adams, the HCJB board member who headed the search team that selected Pederson, added, "Wayne has a great heart for missions....He is an exceptional leader with many years of experience in Christian broadcasting. Further, he brings a vision that will challenge all of us as we join together in the coming months and years to be the 'voice and hands of Jesus.'"

“I have a passion to see people come to Jesus,” Pederson said. “My focus has been on using the media to accomplish that. However, as I grow older, God has sensitized my heart to the physical needs of people worldwide. By combining HCJB Global Voice with HCJB Global Hands, we can demonstrate the love of Christ in very practical ways. That kind of caring opens the door for us to share the great spiritual truth that God cares not only for people’s eternal salvation, but for their welfare in this life.”

A native of Minnesota (USA), Pederson has a bachelors degree in psychology from the University of Minnesota and a masters degree in theology from Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He and his wife, Norma, live in Chicago and have two married children.

Prior to joining Moody Broadcasting as manager of the radio station WMBI, Pederson was executive director of [Christian Music Broadcasters](#), president of the [Mission America Coalition](#), and president and chairman of the [National Religious Broadcasters](#). From 1967 to 2002, he held various positions at Northwestern College, rising to the level of executive vice president for radio.

For seventy-seven years, HCJB Global’s passion has been to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Using mass media, healthcare, and education, and working with partners around the world, HCJB Global has ministries in more than one hundred countries. The gospel is aired in more than 120 languages and dialects. Thousands of healthcare patients are meeting Jesus. Local believers are being trained as missionaries, pastors, broadcasters, and healthcare providers.

(This article was edited from a [HCJB Global](#) news release.)

WEA Theological Commission: Social Action and Evangelism Must Not Be Separated

The World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission (WEA-TC), which met in Bangkok, Thailand, 23-25 October 2008, has reaffirmed the importance of holistic mission, despite the tragic [murder of Christian worker Gayle Williams](#).

In particular, the commission renewed its commitment to both evangelism and social transformation across the globe. A communiqué issued at the close of the meeting acknowledged the importance of the calling to both “love their neighbour and witness to Jesus Christ.”

In light of the murder of Williams in Afghanistan recently, the commission acknowledged that some parts of the British media have been calling for the disconnection of evangelism from social action. However, they believe as strongly as ever that if evangelical Christians are to be true to their identity as evangelicals—and true to the good news of Jesus Christ as they understand it—then these two aspects of their ministry and service cannot and must not be separated.

Justin Thacker, chair of the WEA-TC, said, “Many young Christians feel motivated by their Christian faith to serve overseas. While it is important that they express their faith in culturally appropriate ways, it would simply be wrong if they felt they couldn’t express it at all.”

David Roldan, dean of FIET Theological Institute and a member of the WEA-TC, said, “Speaking as an Argentinean, I understand the importance of standing up for the right to speak freely about what one believes. Therefore, I think it is important that evangelical Christians continue to proclaim what they believe whatever country they find themselves in while treating people with respect.”

URBAN COMMUNITIES

What Is Community Development? What Is Community Organizing?

By Glenn Smith

In this new series on urban communities we want to look more closely at sustainable community development and the work churches are doing around the world. I invite the reader to consult www.direction.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=114&Itemid=243 for a more substantial introductory article on the subject and a parallel piece on community development in Cambodia.

Introduction to the Subject

This article and the ensuing research are the result of dialogue with people/organizations in three cities on the subject of urban holistic sustainable community development. Although I did my initial training on the subject while pursuing my doctorate in Chicago, I learned firsthand about the subject in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haïtien, Haiti.

During a sabbatical in 1999, we launched five initiatives in the Cap; three are continuing today. While writing this paper I spent three days with church leaders in the community of Balan, near Cap-Haïtien. We were participating in a consultation using an adapted form of the appreciative inquiry methodology to explore ecclesial engagement with the community around the issues of voodoo and public education.

As I sat with these leaders I was struck with how community development has become counter intuitive in our day and age. These pastors and priests engaged the process with clarity, commenting, “Why has no one ever done this with us before?” Their findings from three days of discussion were the first steps in helping them to contribute to an ongoing community development project in the zone.

But I live in a third “place”—one which is as contextually specific as the other two, namely, the city of Montréal. *Place* is space with historical meanings, different identities, and varied societal preoccupations.¹ For example, I live in the city where “philosophical postmodernism” was first coined and studied as a social and philosophical expression. Montréal is a different place than the one most people are talking about when discussing this theme. The unending story we find ourselves in always needs to be woven into the fabric of place a little differently.

Community development fundamentally aims to improve living conditions and revitalize neighbourhoods. *Community organisation* is the various networking strategies employed to accomplish the specific mission of the agencies committed to the vision for the neighbourhood as it is conceived.² A sampling of mission statements illustrates this:

- “...to find ways to develop and link community-based identities and struggles in a way that challenges capital.”
- “...on the assumption that poverty should not be viewed just as an individual affair, but as a systematic disease that affects the whole community.”
- “The individuals who build these communities believed they could not only give *barrio* residents control over their economic future, but that their communities would eventually equalize power relationships between the *barrio* and the outside world.”
- “We define [community development] as a comprehensive, multi-faced strategy for the revitalisation of marginalised or distressed communities. Through the development of resources and alliances, organisations and institutions that are democratically controlled by the community are put in place. At stake is the possibility of the democratisation of the local economy. [These] organisations mobilise local resources (people, finances, technical expertise, and real property) in partnerships with resources from beyond the community. This is undertaken for the purpose of empowering community members to

create and manage new and expanded socio-economic tools (businesses, specialised institutions and organisations, skill, and practices), or new types of local governance.”³

In the United States, Ronald Ferguson and Williams Dickens point out that issues around public housing are at the core of community development corporations in that country.⁴ But as Richard Morin and Jill Hanley point out in their comparison of community development in four North American cities, the national context really does matter in how community development is articulated.⁵

Community Development and the Local Community

Community development is part of an organisation field⁶ that has a preferential option for the local community.

Therefore, it is a multi-faceted initiative that mobilises a vast number of partners (acting out of an increasing awareness of their deepest values and assumptions) to confront the forces that destroy their individual lives, families, and communities. This is done so as to build social capital to improve the quality of life and contribute to the holistic transformation of the community.

As poverty in all its facets is challenged (and persons are freed to develop their identities and vocations in life), then social capital is released in fresh ways. The organisational field as a system encompasses the principal levels of involvement—grassroots participants who are generally volunteers; local agencies that deliver services; organisations and structures on the municipal or national level that directly support these agencies; and provincial and federal entities that intervene on a punctual basis, depending upon the province and the area of competency.

However, community development can only take root as issues of power, capacity, and trust among the partners are brought to bear on the major assets that improve the quality of life and contribute to the transformation of the community.

Social capital is a new concept in community development. It refers to features of community organisation—such as networks, norms, and social trust—that facilitate coordination and cooperation for the common good. Robert Putman shares that life is easier with communities that are blessed with “substantial stock of social capital.”⁷ By contributing to meaningful human contacts of all sorts that characterize true community, we are developing a strong and active civil society and the spiritual welfare of all.

Community development, then, is: *journeying in community to express aspirations, discover assets, confront limitations, and generate solutions for peace and well-being in homes and the neighbourhood.*

Why the Church Pursues Sustainable Community Development

But for what purpose does the urban ministry practitioner pursue community development? Why listen to both the present context *and* Christian tradition—including our study of the scriptures, church history, and theology? Increasingly, we hear the use of the word *transformation* as a term that encompasses all the Church does as followers of Jesus in God’s mission in the city.⁸ But what does this mean and what does it entail?

Inspired by John de Gruchy reflections,⁹ I would suggest that a transformed place is that kind of community that pursues fundamental changes, a stable future, and the sustaining and enhancing of all of life rooted in a vision bigger than mere urban politics.

If we accept that scripture calls the people of God to take all dimensions of life seriously, then we can take the necessary steps to a more holistic notion of transformation. A framework that points to the best of a human future for our city/regions can then be rooted in the reign of God.

In Jewish writings and tradition is the principle of *shalom*. It represents harmony, complementarity, and establishment of relationships at the interpersonal, ethnic, and even global levels. Psalm 85:11 announces a

surprising event: “Justice and peace will embrace.” However, a good number of our contemporaries see no problem with peace without justice. People looking for this type of peace muzzle the victims of injustice because they trouble the social order of the city. But the Bible shows that there cannot be peace without justice. We also have a tendency to describe peace as the absence of conflict.

But *shalom* is so much more. In its fullness, it evokes harmony, prosperity, and welfare. The term goes to the very heart of God’s picture of what he has created and desires for creation. The word occurs 236 times in the Old Testament.¹⁰ It refers to a state of fulfilment resulting from God’s presence and covenantal relationship with his people. It encompasses concepts of completeness, harmony, and well-being.

The Old Testament record indicates three other important aspects of *shalom*:

1. We see from the semantic field of the word that it implies an absence of strife, but with the rich implications of a state of rest. Implicit in this first use of the term is the notion of unimpaired relationships with others and true enjoyment in all one does.¹¹
2. The term is a synonym for all we would imply by the general state of well-being of a person, a community, and nature. The ideas of completeness, wholeness, prosperity, harmony, and fulfilment summarize this best. Leviticus 26:1-12 illustrates this.
3. *Shalom* includes an eschatological aspect (Isaiah 9:5-6). The Messiah, the Prince of Peace (*sar shalom*), will bring fulfilment and righteousness to the earth.

James Metzler summarizes this well:

Eden’s *shalom* was perfect because everything was just the way God made it— connecting the possibility of *shalom* directly to the creative powers of God. Out of primeval chaos, void, and darkness, the creator had planned and formed an orderly and purposeful world....The creator looked over the work with complete satisfaction: “Behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). *Shalom* affirms that the truly good life is the natural state of creation and that all creation is truly good with place and purpose for every part...The *shalom* of all creation depended on the man and woman using their godlike powers of choice... The *shalom* of Eden... pointed to the need for community and companionship.¹²

In the New Testament the image persists, but the term changes. The reign of God is the royal redemptive plan of the creator, initially given as a task marked out for Israel, then re-inaugurated in the life and mission of Jesus. This reign is to destroy his enemies, to liberate humanity from the sin of Adam, and ultimately to establish his authority in all spheres of the cosmos: our individual lives, the Church, society, the spirit world, and the ecological order. Yet we live in the presence of the future. The Church is “between the times,” as it were: between the inauguration and the consummation of the kingdom. It is the only message worth incarnating for the whole city!

The action-reflection-action mediation of the transformational model will take on many facets. Some will be rooted in geographical boundaries, others in the interpersonal social bonds that people create around issues and concerns. Projects will emerge through the partnerships so that people can solve problems on their own. Advocacy is inevitable in our cities by their very nature. These efforts will be to get various levels of the public and private sectors to assume their obligations (under the law) to improve the living conditions and revitalize neighbourhoods.

For example, in my city, more than fifty percent of this year’s teenagers will not complete high school five years from now. It is obvious that advocating for just educational systems to promote school success is a priority. A cycle of reflection on actions will establish itself. If you get people to think about issues that concern them, they will do more social analysis and seek a deeper understanding together as to the root causes of their problems.

Acting together, developing better projects, and pursuing advocacy thrusts people into deeper reflection and actions.

Poverty is a broad concept touching economic, social, physical, and spiritual realities. It affects peoples' identity (social exclusion, absence of harmony in life, and well-being) and their vocation (deprivation at every level of life, including one's ability to participate in the welfare of the community). However, poverty can be traced to "inadequacies in the worldview." These inadequacies are in actual fact a web of lies beyond a mere cognitive level of deception.

This intricate web leads people to believe that their poverty or social status is somehow divinely sanctioned or a factor of fate and that there is no way to change it. People sense that they have no choices. A worldview can be a powerful instrument in perpetuating chronic poverty.

Good community development will emerge as the participants take this very seriously and then pursue the improvement of life and the revitalization of the neighbourhood.

Endnotes

1. One of the few texts on urban geography that takes these two distinct categories seriously is by Anthony Orum and Xiangming Chen, *The World of Cities: Places in Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). For these authors, "place" is the specific location in space that in turn provides an anchor and meaning. Our sense of place is rooted in individual identity, community, history, and a sense of comfort (pp. 11-19). "Space," on the other hand, is a medium independent of our existence in which objects, ideas, and other human persons exist, behaving according to the basic laws of nature and thought (see pages 15, 140, and 160-170). Recently, two Canadian urbanologists, Trudi Bunting and Pierre Filion, complimented this notion by stating that the "term" *place* speaks of the subjective and sentimental feelings associated with various aspects of one's environment. *Space* speaks to the objective attributes related to proximity and access. Yi Fu Tuan coined the term "topophilia" to denote the personal identity with and love of a place.
2. Robert Linthicum goes to great length to try to distinguish the two terms, giving priority to the second in urban work. See chapter three of *Empowering the Poor* (Monrovia, California, USA: MARC, 1991). The argument seems forced in my opinion.
3. Fontan, Jean-Marc, Pierre Hamel, Richard Morin, and Eric Shragge. 1999. "Community Economic Development and Metropolitan Governance: A Comparison of Montreal and Toronto." *Canadian Journal of Regional Science/Revue canadienne des sciences régionales*, XXII:1,2 (Spring-Summer/printemps-été), 201-217.
4. 1999. *Urban Problems and Community Development*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 202 and especially chapter 10.
5. 2004. "Community Economic Development in a Context of Globalization and Metropolization: A Comparison of Four North American Cities." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28(2): 369-383.
6. According to W. Richard Scott, an organisational field includes critical exchange partners, sources of funding, regulatory groups, professional and trade associations, and other sources of normative and cognitive influence. But it is well recognized in organisational field theory that institutional rules and structures are far from the whole story. This is where our understanding of worldview takes root.
7. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6(1): 65-78.
8. Although the text is quite dense, I would highly recommend Graham Ward's 2005 book, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Ward proposes a *poiesis* (which he carefully defines on pages 6-9) which does not over-distinguish aesthetic production (in the sense of poetry) from political and ethical activities—often associated with *praxis*. His *poiesis* is transformative social behaviour and the practices of everyday life. His proposal comes to a fitting conclusion from pages 165-174, where he seeks to answer the question about Christian discursive practice or *poiesis* and the production and transformation of public accounts of what is true.

9. 2001. *Christianity, Art and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the Struggle for Social Justice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

10. In thirty-eight cases the word refers to an absence of conflict; twenty-five times it is used as a greeting; and in the other cases it describes the essence of fulfilment because of God's presence. In the Greek Septuagint, the translators opted for the word *eiréné* in 192 of these references.

11. As Nicholas Wolterstorff states in his 1983 book, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, "But the peace which is shalom is not merely the absence of hostility, not merely being in right relationship. Shalom at its highest is enjoyment in one's relationships" (Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Eerdmans, 69).

12. 1985. *From Saigon to Shalom*. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, USA: Herald Press, 60-61.

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LAUSANNE REPORTS

Cape Town 2010 Update

Leaders from around the world were in Cape Town, South Africa, in October 2008 for a Cape Town 2010 (CT2010) planning meeting. The October 2010 **Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization** will draw four thousand participants from two hundred nations to Cape Town, with many more thousands participating virtually.

At a news conference on 14 October with Cape Town media, Doug Birdsall, executive chair of the Lausanne said, "We have seen seismic change since our last congress, and we need to engage new realities, such as the digital world, a post-9/11 world, and growing religious fundamentalism. Today's realities call for a renewed, deep confidence in God and in scripture so that we can boldly share Christ in word and deed."

Lindsay Brown, international director of Lausanne, added that "the congress will be global in scope and African in feel. The Church across Africa will be our host, and we are honoured that Archbishop Henry Luke Orombi (Uganda) is chair of the host committee."

CT2010 is being held in collaboration with the **World Evangelical Alliance**. The congress programme will focus on six major themes, including the supremacy of Christ, reconciliation, and the challenges facing the Church in society.

Onsite participants will be selected through a national and regional recommendation process. The number of participants from each country will be in proportion to the size of the evangelical Church in that country.

CT2010 will be the third congress hosted by Lausanne. Previous congresses were held in Lausanne, Switzerland (1974) and Manila, Philippines (1989).

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