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A free, monthly online publication that provides you with evangelism and missions news and information.

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WORLD NEWS BRIEFS

AROUND THE WORLD

Lowell Nelson Reed was recently named the new international director for [Action International Ministries](#) (ACTION), a position he officially takes up 9 March 2007. Reed, currently the associate international director and Southeast Asia regional coordinator for ACTION, will be succeeding current international director and founder of ACTION, Doug Nichols. Reed helped form ACTION Canada in 1980 and served for nine years as director of ACTION Philippines. As part of his new post he plans to assemble an international team of missionary assistants to provide resources, help and facilitation for the expansion of the mission's ministries. ([ACTION](#))

AROUND THE WORLD

Dr. Jim Montgomery, founder of [Dawn Ministries](#) and a missionary for [OC International](#), passed away 29 October 2006 after a prolonged bout with cancer. Montgomery and his wife joined OC in April 1958; they spent four years in Taiwan and thirteen years in the Philippines. He founded Dawn Ministries in 1985, and after retiring in 2005 he started writing The Great Commission Update. ([OC International](#))

AUSTRALIA

Church leaders in Tasmania, Australia, announced that they would run the first statewide "Jesus. All about life" (JAAL) campaign in September/October 2007. JAAL, developed by [Bible Society NSW](#), was held in Adelaide in August 2005 and in Canberra in March/April 2006. JAAL uses primetime television, radio, print and outdoor advertisements over a four-week period to get the good news of the gospel out to the masses. Bible Society director in Tasmania, Alan Harris, has been instrumental in setting up the meetings in Devonport, Launceston and Hobart. "It's wonderful having churches in Tasmania working together," he said. "I am excited at the response from church leaders and pastors." ([Bible Society NSW](#))

CHINA

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams says he believes that in some regions in China the percentage of the population attending church on Sundays is as large as or even larger than that in most western European countries. "The astonishing and quite unpredictable explosion in Christian numbers in recent years is clearly connected to a widespread sense that the equally extraordinary explosion in the economic life has left many huge questions about personal and social values unanswered," Williams said at the end of his two-week visit to the county. Williams, the spiritual leader of the worldwide Anglican communion, which numbers around seventy million people, said that if China was to develop the kind of civil society that will guarantee both stability and harmony, the Church is a vital partner. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

ECUADOR

Despite that fact that officials of the stadium in Quito scheduled a soccer game for the same night as the 21-23 September 2006 Franklin Graham Festival was to start, more than fourteen thousand people gave their lives to Christ at the crusade. Although the stadium officially seats forty-six thousand people, more than fifty-one thousand people attended the event on the last night. It was the largest evangelistic gathering in the history of Quito. Total attendance of the event was 140,000 people. ([Billy Graham Evangelistic Association](#))

INDIA

Bless Bihar Conference 2006 was held in Siwan 26-29 October 2006. More than four hundred delegates attended. Every day, after the morning worship the participants were separated into three different groups as workers, believers and Sunday school children. Classes for the first two groups were on the theme "Behold, I am coming..."; thirty-seven people committed their lives to the Lord. Sixty-four people were baptized. One person, who was not able to move his hands and legs and not able to speak for more than one year, was healed miraculously. (Emmanuel Christian Fellowship Center and India Mail)

POLAND

The general assembly of the [European Evangelical Alliance](#) (EEA) and the European Evangelical Missionary Alliance recently launched the [Polish Evangelical Alliance's](#) (PEA) "Year of Evangelical Christians in Poland," with a firm belief that there is still great hope for Christianity in Europe. "We all have a sense that our spiritually-dark continent is experiencing more signs of light than many of us had realized," said Gordon Showell-Rogers, general secretary of the EEA. "In our largely secularized continent, I have been encouraged to hear more fresh stories of God at work through one another." According to Wladislaw Dwulat, general secretary of PEA, there are about forty thousand evangelicals and 180 evangelical missionaries in a country of more than forty million. ([European Evangelical Alliance](#))

SCOTLAND

The first ordained woman to be named to the top position of the Church of Scotland says she hopes to promote Christian unity during her year in office. "I will definitely be focusing on Christian denominations. That will be the number one priority for me," said the Rev. Sheilagh Kesting after the announcement that she is to serve as moderator of the Church's general assembly from 2007 to 2008. "From a very early age I became aware of the tensions between the churches. That didn't seem to me to be right," Kesting was quoted as saying by The Scotsman newspaper. "Christians should be able to work together and live together." ([Ecumenical News International](#))

THAILAND

A team of fifty volunteers and Asia Challenge Teams workers in northeast Thailand recently traveled to three rural areas unreached with the gospel. Over one thousand people attended three days of makeshift clinics and no one was turned away. Besides seeing a doctor, everyone heard the gospel one-on-one. While the medical team was at work, the rest visited local schools where they were allowed to share their faith, play sports and do crafts with over one thousand students. Each student received a copy of "The Book of Hope" and hundreds made decisions for Christ; 137 others chose to follow the Lord. Plans are already being made to return to these villages and schools. A church is organizing a Christmas program in early December for all three schools and a follow-up program is being developed for new believers. This newly-established team is mostly targeting Isaans, an unreached people group of over twenty-one million. ([Operation Mobilisation](#))

ROMANIA

The Apostolic Church of God in Romania recently celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Pentecostal Theological Institute in Bucharest, the church's primary training school for ministers. The school opened in 1976 when Romania was still under the control of a Communist regime. Founded by Trandafir Sandhru, a prominent pastor and church leader of that era, the seminary has trained hundreds of young ministers,

including most of the prominent pastors and denominational officers in the country. ([Church of God World Missions](#))

WORLD EVANGELISM & MISSIONS REPORTS

Portuguese Evangelicals United in a Vision to Transform the Nation (Evangélicos portugueses unidos numa visão para a transformação da Nação)

By Paulo Pascoal

Portugal and its Social and Religious Characteristics

Portugal is a nation with more than eight hundred years of history and with ten million inhabitants distributed throughout an area of 92.065 km². The country is divided administratively into eighteen districts and the two autonomous regions known as the archipelago of the Azores (which has nine islands) and the archipelago of Madeira (which has two islands). Of its 308 concelhos (administrative sub-divisions of districts), forty-five have no evangelical witness of any denomination. Of the 4,261 parishes, only eight hundred have an evangelical church. Today there are approximately 1,650 churches which can be considered evangelical and which have an extended community that represents 1.6% of the Portuguese population.

For quite some time the evangelical community was characterized by a history of denominational sectarianism; unfortunately, this still exists in some areas. The lack of interdenominational cooperation has led to the lack of a visible and convincing public image in Portuguese society. Patrick Johnstone wrote that Portugal needs a united vision to reach the nation for Christ.¹

From the social point of view, we can define the Portuguese spirit as nostalgic and excessively fatalistic. Portugal may be considered the fifth most pessimistic country in the world. Within the European Union it is also the country with the highest level of domestic violence: sixty Portuguese women die each year as victims of domestic violence. One in five Portuguese women is the victim of domestic violence. We also take the lead in the ever-growing number of HIV-AIDS carriers and in the number of accidents on the roads. Additionally, 96.6% of Portuguese families are in a situation of debt.

The Evangelical Christian Response in Portugal

Within this context, the Portuguese evangelical community has tried to respond to the deepest needs of the Portuguese spirit. The Christian community has lived in special moments of unity and service for God's glory and the growth of his kingdom in Portugal and in the world; in this way the Church is attempting to change the face of this beloved nation.

The 2000 "March for Jesus" held in Lisbon drew thousands of believers from different parts of the country to testify to the Lord's name in the streets of the Portuguese capital. This was evidence of the growing evangelical presence in Portugal and the Church's new determination to change the face of the country. The 2001 March for Jesus was repeated in Oporto, the European capital of culture; thousands of believers took to the streets in a clear testimony to their unity and desire to announce the name of the Lord Jesus to the world.

There are also signs of a growing desire to join forces in favour of the evangelization of Portugal and the world. The [Portuguese Evangelical Alliance](#) (PEA) is one example of the involvement of all denominational families, from the charismatic sectors to the most conservative, within old Europe. The leaders of these denominations are asking each other about the possibility of praying together and working for the evangelism of Portugal and the world. The numbers are encouraging. According to the information contained in the *World Churches Handbook*,

edited by Dr. Peter Brierley, with information by Patrick Johnstone, the growth of evangelical churches in Portugal continues to stimulate and challenge.

The number of churches has multiplied fivefold. Portugal needs to plant 1,125 new churches in its territory to reach a target which is exceptional for all of Catholic Europe of one church for every 3,500 people.

Strategically, the individuals in the Department of Missions of the PEA have traveled across the country, challenging churches, denominations and leaders to reach the forty-five sub-districts which still have no evangelical presence. These individuals have taught about unreached peoples and suggested that these peoples be adopted by each of the evangelical churches. According to Johnstone, there are four thousand unreached ethnic groups; of these, 2,134 can be divided into many more different ethnic sub-groups with their own dialects. The cross-cultural challenge is with us and the Portuguese are not indifferent to it. Portugal has a total of sixty-five cross-cultural missionaries which, considering the number of evangelicals in the country, is significant. However, many of these missionaries belong to one organization that is especially involved in social work.

In the past there were periods of great enthusiasm, dedication and prayer for world mission within the Portuguese Church. This can also be seen today. Several missionary agencies in Portugal, prayer movements and some denominations are seriously motivated for missionary work. Indeed, Portugal is an open door for cross-cultural missions in Asia, in the East European countries, in the Americas and in Africa. This is true for three reasons:

- **Geographic.** The closeness of Northern Africa and Southern Europe.
- **Historical.** Relations which exist with Brazil, East Timor and Portuguese-speaking Africa.
- **Sociological.** Portugal is one of the most important countries in receiving immigrants from Eastern European countries.

The Global Mission Project 2015

For all the above-stated reasons, the PEA is committed to stimulating the evangelical community to a deeper spiritual vision of national and cross-cultural missions in order to bring about a healthy missionary movement in and moving out from Portugal. The aim is to transform this historic nation. In this sense, we have received direction and training from two great missionary movements: (1) **Dawn Ministries** and (2) the international **COMIBAM**, a movement of Latin American cooperation to support the Latin American countries in fulfilling the Great Commission. Supported by these two structures, we have tried to mobilize the body of Christ in Portugal in seeking to fulfill the Great Commission through the evangelization of thousands of people and the establishment of churches. We do this while also respecting the individual characteristics of each church and denomination which partners with us.

The objective of the PEA Global Mission 2015 project is the expansion of the Kingdom of God, not only in Portugal but also from Portugal to all the nations. The project is designed to bring together the church planting effort, Portugal 2015, and the sending cross-cultural mission, World 2015. On the national level, the vision is for a church to be within everyone's reach in this generation.

To this end we challenge the denominations, associations of churches and independent churches to define their goals and to adopt the unreached localities to plant new, healthy and mature churches there by the year 2015. On the cross-cultural level, we aim to serve the evangelical community by making Portugal a cross-cultural missionary force among unreached peoples and by stimulating the establishment of partnerships between churches and missionary agencies and organizations. We are developing efforts to support churches and

associations of churches to equip them in the area of motivation, vision, information, call, selection, training, sending, support and care for missionaries on the field. We do this through congresses and other events.

As key elements in the strategy of the Global Mission 2015, we share with churches and pastors the vision to evangelize and transform cities and the missionary command to proclaim the gospel. We have also stimulated a movement of strategic prayer, intentionally focusing on the Kingdom of God in Portugal. We have begun a process of research which describes the different religious, historical, social, cultural and spiritual realities of each district and the present cross-cultural missionary commitment of the churches and denominations.

We also hold consultations with church leaders and conferences at the district level to define aims and to mobilize churches to reach unreached localities in Portugal and in the world. We also help to define and proclaim the prophetic message to reach each district, city, town and village in the country, to adopt ethnic groups and to send cross-cultural missionaries.

Two examples of how Portugal is being transformed are: (1) Graciosa, an island in the Azores, and (2) the sub-district of Vizela. In both cases the team of leaders of the Global Mission 2015 challenged pastors and leaders to unite to reach these areas in organised outreach. After several months, the Pentecostal Novas de Alegria (“Joyful News”) church and the Baptist Church of Praia da Vitória, both in the Terceira Island in the Azores, are about to baptize the first new believers in the Graciosa Island, an island previously without a church. In Vizela, veteran missionary Bill Wooten, after many years of trying to plant a church in that city, had the joy of beginning a new church and of seeing a beautiful new building opened, paid for and adapted for worship by different churches in the region.

It is God's mission (*missio dei*) that we are concerned with. From him all things proceed and to him all return. God's glory is the purpose of this whole undertaking which, we believe, it is God himself who is bringing about. All the same, it is his plan to use the Church to fulfill his holy purposes. Certainly God will add the necessary means.

Endnote

1. Johnstone, Patrick. *Operation World*. 21st Century Edition. Waynesboro, Georgia, USA: Paternoster Publishing, 529.

Paulo Pascoal is director of the **Portuguese Evangelical Alliance** Missions Commission. Through this commission he heads up a transformational saturation church planting movement called **Global Mission 2015**. He is also director and a faculty member of the Portuguese Baptist Theological Seminary. Pascoal is the initiator and coordinator of Mevic-Intercultural Evangelical Mission, a interdenominational mission agency to help the Portuguese churches to fulfill the Great Commission.

Just10–Transform Your World **By Chris Moffat**

The realization that contemporary society shows many alarming signs of having turned its back on God gave J. John the vision to connect with people in a new and engaging way. In January 2000 J. John commenced a new series of areawide, interchurch missions and evangelism in towns and cities across the United Kingdom that was based on the Ten Commandments. However, unlike the do's and don'ts most people think about when they consider the Ten Commandments, J. John presents them in a positive light and as the best parameters for life. For example, “You shall not steal” is entitled “How to prosper with a clear conscience” and “You shall not commit adultery” is unpacked as “How to affair-proof your relationships.” J. John is often asked why he began this series. Following is his response:

“I can honestly say it was a ‘God idea.’ In 1999 there was much discussion on how to mark the new millennium. I sensed God saying that we should go back to the basics—back to his ten principles of how to live life well. There have been signs of a spiritual awakening wherever we have taken ‘**Just10.**’ During the twenty-five full-time years I have spent in evangelism I can honestly say that this is the most fruitful, transforming programme I have ever been involved in.”

J. John has now run twenty-four series across the UK; the venues have included ten-thousand seater marquees, cathedrals and county showgrounds. Countless others have seen the series on DVD around the world.

Just10—The Ten Commandments

The live talks are held over a ten-week period, one Commandment per week. The Commandments are presented in reverse order, starting at number ten and finishing with number one. Each evening includes a warm welcome, sung worship, a video clip and a personal testimony and teaching from J. John. Each session concludes with an opportunity to respond to the gospel presentation. Each of these components is tailored to be jargon-free and to engage with the unchurched.

The evenings run with the following titles:

1. *How to find true contentment*
2. *How to hold to the truth*
3. *How to prosper with a clear conscience*
4. *How to affair-proof your relationships*
5. *How to manage your anger*
6. *How to keep the peace with your parents*
7. *How to stop driving yourself crazy*
8. *How to take God seriously*
9. *How to know the real God*
10. *How to live by priorities*

While all of the talks are evangelistic, the topics get progressively more God-focused as the weeks go on. Experience has shown that having the series spread across ten weeks allows momentum to build; the number of people attending has risen in nearly every series and the effect that God has in a community can be cumulative. Christians have multiple opportunities to invite their friends, and people can fit the weekly programme into their busy schedules. It allows people to be taken on a journey from week to week. There is not just one crisis point where individuals are called to make a decision; instead, there are ten opportunities for attendees to warm to the gospel and respond to its message.

The Unchurched and Christians

Often when individuals become Christians they also become very enthusiastic witnesses. They often impact friends, family and colleagues as they tell of how their lives have been transformed. It can be an advantage to them if they are able to invite their friends to the same ongoing event that has deeply affected them. We have seen this happen on each series of extended mission. For example, in the latest series in Devon, one woman came to faith in the first week. This made such a difference in her life that her non-Christian husband came along the next week; he made a decision to follow Jesus that evening.

The series also acts as a spiritual check-up for Christians. By calling believers to “get right with God,” the series makes Christians more effective witnesses. As their own lifestyles are challenged week by week, they enter the workplace, the home and the community as different people. Through changed attitudes and actions, others are drawn to question the cause for such changes.

By relating simultaneously to Christians and the unchurched, the series offers an opportunity for every person to respond. People do not feel threatened, and it does not foster a “them and us” mentality that can be present at so many outreach events. Every individual attending comes to learn, to be challenged and to reassess his or her life, no matter what his or her starting point.

Lasting Impact

Over 500,000 people from around the UK have attended one of the twenty-four events; countless more in the over one hundred prisons where the DVD has been shown have made commitments to Christ. It is impossible to measure the impact this has had both in individuals and in communities. Thousands have made first-time commitments to Jesus, and even more have recommitted their lives or come forward for prayer.

The impact of these series is practical as well as spiritual. Those who respond are invited to link up with organizations that can help them further; this may be in the form of debt relief, professional counseling or spiritual pastoring. Parenting and marriage seminars are run alongside the missions, so that people can tackle at a deeper level some of the issues that may arise during the series events.

Amnesty dustbins (trash cans) which enable people to repent and make restitution are provided. Amnesty bins allow people to dispose of inappropriate materials throughout the series: stolen items when talking on the subject of stealing, pornography when discussing adultery, weapons when dealing with murder, idols/occult objects when talking about idolatry and so forth. It has been incredible how many people respond in this way. At one mission, during the week after the talk on stealing, £102,000 of stolen money was given in by one man alone. At another series after J. John spoke on murder, such a large amount of ammunition and guns were handed in that the police brought in armored vehicles to take it all away

Partnership and Unity

Partnership is key to the success of these missions. Each series is managed by the local church. Each partner church commits to praying for the event, preparing for the event, pastoring those in attendance, promoting the activities and providing help where needed. Churches of all types partner together with a common vision for mission with **Just10**. The unity is a powerful witness and has brought about connections that have lasted long after the missions have finished. Having hundreds of churches working together also means that whole communities, cities and counties can be impacted.

Prior to a mission much preparation goes to ensuring that the churches are ready. All of the churches involved conduct a friendship evangelism course based on J. John’s latest release “Breaking News.” This course is designed for small groups and is tailor-made for discussions, study and reflection; it is an ideal tool for equipping Christians for practical and effective evangelism and mission. As well as preparing churches to make the most of this opportunity, the events are publicized widely in the press, on the radio, on billboards and on flyers.

The evangelist John Wesley once said, “God does nothing except in answer to prayer.” We believe this and each mission is undergirded by prayer and prayer strategies have been developed in preparation for each of the Just10 missions. Prayer is encouraged by every means--private prayer (daily), prayer triplets and weekly/monthly corporate prayer meetings. A prayer team continues to intercede during the meetings and even after the event is over.

Much of today's society thinks with a postmodern mind. Relevance and personal impact are key as individuals search for reality. It is because the **Just10** series meets people where they are at—in real life dilemmas, in real life situations—that it is of such importance. The Ten Commandments engage people in the issues of life and points them to the solution: Jesus Christ who lived in accordance with them and sets us free from the consequences when we fail.

A report from the Committee on Strategic Evangelism, sponsored by the [Evangelical Alliance](#), stated that the trends and issues relating to evangelism in these days can be summarized as follows:

- *Evangelism is most effective as a process*
- *Evangelism is most effective when contextual (i.e. associated with lifestyle)*
- *Evangelism is most effective when relational*
- *Evangelism is most effective when Christians are seen to have integrity in lifestyle*
- *Evangelism is most effective when it bridges the culture gap (i.e. the relationship between what happens in Church and in society)*

The Just10 series uses all of the above principles and provides a tool for effective evangelism, delivering it in an appropriate package for the people of this age.

J. John believes that “the Ten Commandments—God’s top ten—are not obsolete, they are absolute.” After one recent series J. John commented, “I have been enormously humbled at the way our series have helped people to reassess, refocus their priorities and in many cases, restart their lives.” For more information on Just10, the Just10 DVDs/CDs and J. John please visit www.philotrust.com.

Chris Moffat has been involved in organizing five **Just10** missions and numerous other engagements around the world.

An African Seminary Goes Online

By Rich Starcher

Online learning is all the rage in many Western countries. Most instructors in African Bible colleges and seminaries are aware of its existence, but few have had firsthand experience as online learners, teachers or course designers. Many wonder whether true learning is possible using online delivery systems. Others, who may not doubt online learning’s legitimacy, are skeptical of a small African institution’s capacity to deliver education via the Internet.

Is it possible for an African seminary to use online delivery systems to achieve the same learning outcomes as in a face-to-face classroom setting? Do students in Africa have adequate knowledge of and access to information technology to complete an online course? Do small African schools have the technological capacity to deliver online courses?

What follows is an assessment of the first efforts by the [Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology](#) (NEGST) to offer online education. NEGST can serve as an example of a small school in a Majority World context offering online education.

The Course’s Origin

The online course was first taught January to March 2006. Seminary leadership approved this “experiment” with a view to better serve not only working students in Kenya but also students around the continent whose financial or family situations did not permit them to enter a fulltime, residential study program.

Hermeneutics was chosen as the first online course for three reasons. First, it was required for all NEGST masters degree programs. Hence, there was an ongoing need for the course. Second, several existing extension students had an immediate need for the course to advance their program of study. Third, as the instructor, I had previously taught hermeneutics for NEGST both on-campus and at an off-campus site.

The Students

Seven students completed the course: three Kenyans and four expatriate missionaries serving in Kenya (one American, one Brit and two Canadians of Romanian extraction). For three of the seven students, “Online Hermeneutics” was the first course they had taken from NEGST.

Course Development

The course was developed in close collaboration with the [Learning Technologies Division of Mission Aviation Fellowship](#) (MAF-LT). As is common for online courses, all the lessons had to be prepared well in advance of their delivery date. After receiving my work in August 2005, MAF-LT personnel “branded” it with NEGST’s logo and color scheme, organized it for easy online access and burned it onto a CD for reproduction. To accommodate learners in a low to mid-tech environment, we provided students with a CD containing all information that could be prepared in advance. Hence, they only had to go online to participate in class discussions and to submit assignments.

Course Delivery

We scheduled Online Hermeneutics to be delivered during NEGST’s regular 12-week January 2006 trimester, which I divided into six, two-week modules. NEGST’s trimesters normally included ten weeks of classroom instruction plus one “reading week” followed by an exam week. However, because the final assessment instrument in Online Hermeneutics was an exegetical project rather than an exam, I devoted the last two weeks (module six) to the final assessment project.

I used reading assignments to deliver the bulk of the course content. I supplemented the textbook (Daniel Doriani’s *Getting the Message*) with various articles and book chapters. Each module also contained a brief explanatory “lesson” and several discussion questions. Apart from the textbook (which the students were expected to purchase), students could access all needed course materials on the CD.

The course was not designed to be an independent study experience for participating students. On the contrary, the “heart and soul” of the course resided in the threaded discussions stemming from the questions posted for each module. For example, after reading articles by Gordon Fee and James Brownson, as well as a chapter in the Doriani text, students answered the following open-ended questions:

1. Do you agree with Brownson that there are “wrong readings” of text? If not, why not? If so, can you give an example of a “wrong reading” from your own experience?
2. Do you think the “sermon” on polygamy invented by Dorani resulted from a “wrong reading” of the Bible? Why or why not?
3. What do you think Brownson means by “spirituality” when it comes to reading a text? Is there a “spiritual meaning” that is different from the “plain meaning?” How does his view compare to the apparent dichotomy between the “exegetical method” and “spirituality” as described by Fee?
4. How do the views of Brownson and Fee relate to Doriani’s exhortation, “Only when we join skillful methods to a receptive heart can we expect Bible study to bear fruit in the lives of individuals and the church?”

Finally, the students were instructed to interact with the postings of three other course participants.

The term “threaded discussion” refers to the online presentation of students’ written contributions to a conversation. Many excellent course management software programs exist today to facilitate threaded online discussions. However, we judged all of them to be too “bandwidth intensive” for use with students in the Kenya

context. Instead, we used a free, web-based email system called SquirrelMail, which displayed students' discussion participation in a "tree" format that clearly showed who said what to whom. The downside to this interface was that it required participants to stay online while reading and responding to other students' postings (unless they copied the postings onto a disk to read and respond to at their leisure). At least one participant could only access the Internet at a local cybercafé.

Course Evaluation

I sought to assess the "success" of NEGST's first online course using student's input (their course evaluations) as well as their "output" (the assignments they submitted). Students were given two opportunities to evaluate the course: (1) NEGST's standard anonymous teaching evaluation form and (2) comments solicited via email.

The standard evaluation form contained many questions not pertinent to an online course (e.g., instructor's "voice is clear and audible"). Further, only three of the seven students submitted evaluation forms. Hence, this input was of limited value. Nevertheless, the overall composite score of evaluation forms received was 8/10. The "teaching process" received the highest marks, a composite score of 9/10. The "teacher" received the lowest, a composite score of 6.8/10. Students rated "course content" at 7.4/10 and "grading" at 7.3/10. All three students rated the priority of the course as very high or high. To help put these numbers in perspective, the range of my overall composite score on course evaluations for the past five years was 8.49 to 9.96, with an average of over 9. However, with less than half of the online class participating in the standard course evaluation exercise, the more helpful data were gathered from emails sent by students.

Six of seven students emailed comments on the course. All but one of them, including the student limited to a cybercafé connection, mentioned interacting with other students as the most enjoyable aspect of the course. Two of six desired more regular input from the instructor. Another judged fellow students' writing as unclear and wished [the instructor] had encouraged "richer commenting on colleagues' work." Several participants criticized the software interface used to manage the course. Two major criticisms emerged as noteworthy. First, the time online required to interact handicapped some. Second, the course management software was clumsy. I should mention here we switched software interfaces after week one of the course because the first interface could not display students' contributions in tree form. However, SquirrelMail still proved less than ideal. Unfortunately, less clumsy course management software generally increases students' time online in a low-tech environment.

The final assessment assignment for the course was identical to that submitted by students in face-to-face sections of hermeneutics I had taught previously. There was no significant difference between the quality of the final work submitted by online and face-to-face students. All appeared capable of applying the hermeneutical principles studied to the exegesis of a biblical text.

Recommendations

Despite some expected "first-time" glitches, I definitely would call NEGST's first online course a success. Clearly, the institution is capable of delivering quality online education, and students in Africa can succeed as online learners. Nevertheless, I would make at least four suggestions for improving students' online experience:

1. **The students needed a better orientation to online learning.** Perhaps one or two students might have opted not to study online if they had known better what it entailed. One in particular complained of the time required to interact with other learners. Another struggled more generally with the technical aspects of online learning.
2. **The students desired more comments from the instructor.** There is a delicate balance between the instructor stifling a conversation by intervening too often and the students feeling neglected because the instructor intervenes too seldom.

3. **The students found the software interface awkward.** We chose SquirrelMail because it displayed participants' contributions to the threaded discussion in a "tree" format that made it clear who said what to whom. However, it was clumsy and did not allow students working from their own computers easily to download the threaded discussion to their hard drives. Hence, they had to "camp" online to read and respond. Mozilla's (free) Thunderbird email system might better satisfy the needs of those with their own computers. Nevertheless, those confined to web-based email (as in a cybercafé) would need to continue using an interface like SquirrelMail.
4. **Some students might be helped by a "learning center" approach to online education.** The learning center approach uses a computer lab maintained by the institution to which students come (together or at their leisure) to participate in online courses. Naturally, this approach deprives students of a measure of freedom; however, it offers the advantage of onsite technical and pedagogical assistance and permits the school to utilize a more sophisticated software interface. Learning center participation need not be obligatory for all students taking the same section of a given course but could be a viable alternative for those with inadequate Internet access.

Conclusion

NEGST's pilot online course demonstrated the feasibility of virtual education in a Majority World context. All enrolled students demonstrated a firm grasp of course content. All managed to cope with technical difficulties. Despite reservations on the part of two students, all seven participants indicated they would seek out another experience in online learning. Further, NEGST's first online course attracted three new students who otherwise might not have matriculated.

It is unlikely online learning will completely replace its face-to-face counterpart any time in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, it is proving to be a valuable arrow in the quiver of educational institutions all around the globe. Small, Majority World institutions should not fear experimenting with this alternative delivery system because they can successfully deliver online education, and their students can learn effectively online.

Rich Starcher has served for over twenty years in three African countries under the auspices of the Evangelical Free Church of America. Most recently he was dean of extension studies at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology.

A New Gateway to World Missions at Urbana 06

By Gordon Govier

St. Louis, the gateway to the American Frontier, will become the gateway to world missions for nearly twenty-five thousand of Christians who attend InterVarsity's twenty-first student missions convention this month. The theme of **Urbana 06** is "You Have a Calling" and it will be held 27-31 December 2006 at the Edward Jones Dome in St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

InterVarsity leaders announced in 2004 that the triennial convention was moving from the University of Illinois campus to St. Louis in order to attract more students and offer more comprehensive programming. Jim Tebbe, InterVarsity's vice president for missions and the director of Urbana, says, "I believe a new location gives Urbana a different lens through which to see God's heart for the world. A new venue helps us explore new possibilities and redesign the event with fresh vision and energy."

Those who come to Urbana 06 will be immersed for five days in the world of cross-cultural missions; the event will include testimonies from missionaries, Bible exposition on Ephesians and seminars led by missions

practitioners from around the world. Urbana 06 will also host the largest gathering of representatives from missions organizations and seminaries in North America.

Speakers at Urbana 06 include Ajith Fernando, national director of **Youth for Christ** in Sri Lanka; Brenda Salter McNeil, director of **Salter McNeil & Associates** in Chicago, Illinois, USA; Lisa Espineli Chinn, director of **InterVarsity's international student ministry**; Oscar Muriu, pastor of **Nairobi Chapel**, Nairobi, Kenya; Ray Bakke, founder of International Urban Associates in Seattle, Washington, USA; Saul Cruz, founder and director of **Armonia Ministries** in Mexico City, Mexico; and Rick Warren, pastor of **Saddleback Church** in Lake Forest, California, USA.

2006: An Important Year for Missions

Paul Borthwick, a missions professor at **Gordon College**, notes that 2006 is an important anniversary in the history of missions and student involvement in missions. Several key events are being commemorated:

- **Fifty years ago five missionaries were martyred in Ecuador**, an event depicted in the movie *End of the Spear*, released in January 2005. All five missionaries cultivated their passion for lost souls while they were college students. One of the men, Jim Elliott, had attended InterVarsity's first student missions convention in Toronto.
- **Sixty years ago InterVarsity held its first student missions convention** in Toronto. Two years later it was moved to the University of Illinois and became the Urbana convention.
- **One hundred years ago the Azusa Street revival began**, which launched the modern Pentecostal movement.
- **Two hundred years ago the Haystack prayer meeting was held** at Williams College in Massachusetts, launching the modern missions movement in the United States.

InterVarsity's Urbana student missions conventions are a part of the legacy of the Haystack prayer meeting. But Urbana itself has created a legacy. Borthwick said that he will be attending Urbana-like student conventions in Taiwan, Indonesia and Nigeria in coming months. "All of these are testimonies of the fact that through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit students are mobilizing for a great advance into secular culture, into Muslim culture, into Buddhist culture, into the world that we live in and the world beyond ourselves," he said.

Ephesus: Paul's Gateway City to Asia

"You Have a Calling" is based on Ephesians 4:1, where the Apostle Paul wrote, "As a prisoner of the Lord then, I urge you to live a life according to the calling you have received."

The book of Ephesians describes God's purposes and the place of the Church in his eternal plans. Paul wrote this letter from prison to ordinary people who were a small religious minority in the midst of a powerful empire. Paul masterfully addresses the tension between the victory of Jesus over all things in heaven and earth and our lived experience of waiting for the consummation of God's reign over all things.

Fernando will speak on portions of Ephesians during Urbana 06 plenary sessions. Participants will study the remaining four sections together in manuscript Bible study format. Manuscript study is an inductive Bible study technique, in which a group focuses on the text of the passage itself, devoid of editorial comment, textual notes and cross-references. Starting with a fresh "manuscript" allows the reader to approach the Bible with a clear perspective. Participants learn to observe the text, ask questions, interpret what it means and find ways to apply it in their lives.

Each morning at **Urbana 06**, trained InterVarsity staff will guide attendees, divided into small groups, in manuscript study. Participants will have a transformative communal experience in the scripture while at the same time learning this powerful inductive method of study, which InterVarsity teaches students in its campus ministry.

Urbana: For Everyone Interested in Missions

Although the focus of Urbana is college-age students, men and women of all ages who are interested in learning more about God's call to the nations through missions are welcome to register and attend.

George Stulac, pastor of Memorial Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, is working to get as many people from his church as possible to attend Urbana 06. "It is the best event that I know of to draw people into missions and to give them training and vision for it," he said.

"There isn't any parallel to Urbana on that scale, bringing together all these different mission boards and agencies under one roof. The Christian who is asking God, 'What is your calling for me?' can go and be instructed faithfully from scripture about God's calling to evangelize the world."

Missions Through the Lens of AIDS

The United Nations reports that nearly forty million people in the world are infected with HIV/AIDS. In some countries in southern Africa, one-third of the population is infected. In light of this suffering, InterVarsity will offer an AIDS track at Urbana 06.

Urbana's AIDS track will be led by Dr. James Thomas, director of the **Program in Public Health Ethics at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill**, North Carolina, USA. The leadership team includes Emmanuel Katongole, associate professor at **Duke Divinity School** and Grace Tazelaar, missions director for **Nurses Christian Fellowship**.

Participants will look at the AIDS epidemic as a means to foster mercy, compassion, justice, reconciliation, humility and unity, which are all characteristics that God desires for his Church. AIDS offers American churches an opportunity to relearn biblical views about sexuality, the role of women in societies and racial reconciliation. Track participants will be encouraged to approach the suffering of their brothers and sisters with humility, sensitivity and God's love.

Open for Business Conference at Urbana 06

The forces of globalization that are breaking down cultural, economic and language barriers around the world are also opening new doors for the gospel. Christians are identifying incredible opportunities for business to be a force for economic, social and spiritual vitality, changing both individual lives and entire communities. Many consider business to be the missions strategy for the twenty-first century.

The Open for Business Conference at Urbana 06 is a specialized track for those who have a passion or growing interest in business and global missions. It will build, mobilize and equip a multi-generational network of business practitioners who seek to harness the potential of business to contribute to the global advance of God's kingdom around the world.

Open for Business participants will attend special plenary sessions with business as mission leaders who will illustrate how business can help alleviate poverty, transform lives and bring healing and spiritual renewal.

Business as mission means releasing business people to use their gifting in business, integrated with biblical principles, to transform their own communities and nations and to carry the good news to the ends of the earth through commerce.

Business as mission works both within a business setting and through its purposes and capacities. It seeks to harness the power and resources of business for intentional missions impact in the community, nation and world at large (adapted from the [Lausanne Occasional Paper 59](#)). Business as mission includes, but is not limited to:

- **Starting a business as mission enterprise in the Developing World** which impacts a community economically, socially and spiritually
- **Enabling such enterprises through training and availability of capital** (e.g., microfinance)
- **Infusing Christian values and perspective** into the global conduct of business (e.g., ethics, Christian leadership principles)
- **Ministering to counterparts in the marketplace** with the gospel of Jesus Christ

Slum Communities of the Developing World

The world has moved to the city; the mega-cities of the globe are bursting at the seams as people flock to them to find work. More than one billion people live in make-shift housing and another billion are on the way. (Read [October 2006](#) issue of LWP for more on this.)

The slum communities track has been designed for those interested in urban transformation in the Two-thirds World. Urban church planting, economic development, waste management, child labor, prostitution, housing and other critical areas will be addressed within this track.

International Students Track

God desires to see Christian international students impact the world in extraordinary ways. This track is designed to provide international students with a unique opportunity to hear God's call to join his global mission in the context of a smaller international community. It seeks to enhance the attendees' understanding of what it means to be kingdom citizens in a multicultural world. International students, North American students who are friends of international students and those working with international students are invited to join this track.

Pastors and Church Leaders

Urbana 06 also includes a program designed for pastors and other church leaders who are seeking ways to help their churches have a more dynamic missions ministry. Seminars will discuss how to effectively engage with the emerging postmodern culture, inform about current world missions issues and discuss ways for Christians across the world to partner in the spread of the gospel. The track is open to all current pastors or other church leaders.

Worship and Drama

The Urbana 06 worship team is lead by Daryl Black, a St. Louis (Missouri, USA)-based worship leader, singer, songwriter and producer. Sharing worship with twenty-five thousand others who gather to seek their place in global missions will be an unforgettable experience.

The theater team is led by artistic director Patrick Sims. The diverse team of artists will help attendees understand and apply the message of Ephesians—and view God's world and his people through fresh eyes.

Goal is Mobilization

With total attendance of over 220,000 since InterVarsity's first student missions convention in Toronto in 1946, Urbana has mobilized thousands of men and women onto the mission field and into Christian vocations. Urbana 06 will continue the tradition. InterVarsity believes the new location in St. Louis will allow Urbana 06 to serve the global Church by motivating more people than ever before into global missions.

Gordon Govier is a journalist in Madison, Wisconsin, USA. He is employed by [InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA](#).

Urbana 06 Open for Business Conference

By Johnny Chun

This year's **Urbana 06** conference in St. Louis, Missouri, USA 27-31 December 2006 will also feature a special "Open for Business" track for delegates who have a passion or growing interest in business and global missions. Open for Business will build, mobilize and equip a multi-generational network of business practitioners who seek to harness the potential of business to contribute to the global advance of God's kingdom around the world.

There are important economic, political and demographic forces at work in the world that create a unique context for business as an agent of holistic transformation. This is why this event is so important and timely.

The Open for Business program will function as a conference within the larger 25,000 person Urbana convention. It will consist of plenary sessions and seminars that deepen a biblical view of business, examine instructive successes and failures and highlight business-as-mission lessons from around the world. There will also be a business plan competition to solicit innovative "business as missions" proposals for entrepreneurial ventures around the world.

This conference is for:

- **Business professionals** who want to integrate their business skills and passions with their faith and God's mission in the world.
- **Business-as-mission practitioners** who want to network with other practitioners, hearing what God is doing around the world and connecting with the next generation of missions-minded business leaders.
- **Students** who want to pursue business as their Christian calling and seek vision and guidance in that pursuit.
- **Pastors, educators or other leaders** in the Christian community who want to see business-as-mission values and strategies integrated into the broader body of Christ.

The Open for Business conference will fit into the overall **Urbana 06** experience through the following ways:

- **Dedicated plenaries.** Open for Business delegates will participate in special plenaries with business-as-mission leaders who will illustrate how business can help alleviate poverty, transform lives and bring healing and spiritual renewal.
- **Dedicated seminars.** Open for Business delegates will have exclusive access to seminars that will inspire, equip and deepen one's sense of the life God is calling him or her to.
- **Networking opportunities.** Open for Business delegates will be housed with each other in two downtown St. Louis hotels, providing for ample networking opportunities. Participants will be able to network with hundreds of people who draw experience from a diverse range of countries, specialties and career stages.

- **Dedicated Bible studies.** Ephesians is the scripture for the entire Urbana 06 convention. Open for Business delegates will study Ephesians with each other, drawing specific insights on how God's calling is worked out for business people.
- **Innovation Opportunities.** Open for Business is hosting a business-plan competition—complete with a \$40,000USD prize pool—to spur innovation and incubate the next generation of business-as-mission ideas.

More information can be obtained from <http://www.urbana.org/u2006.ofb.cfm>.

Johnny Chun is executive secretary of **Tentmakers International**. He is also executive director of Mission International and former director of the Korea Association of Tentmakers (KAT).

Freedom to Worship: World Christian Gathering on Indigenous People By Pio Gabad Arce

The World Christian Gathering on Indigenous People (WCGIP) in Davao City, Philippines 11-17 September 2006 was a cross-pollination of cultures and more. Indigenous people regained their freedom to worship the creator. Drawing more than five hundred representatives of indigenous tribes from twenty-three countries, the gathering became a venue for indigenous peoples worldwide to express themselves freely, using dance and music to show their faith in Jesus Christ. Many lives were touched as a result.

“We are no longer ashamed of who we are,” said Rudy Mande, a Matigsalug church leader. His tribe is considered to be the lowliest in southern Philippines. The young man is also a teacher and runs a children’s school in his village. He led his students in a performance at the gathering. The experience gave Mande more resolve to teach his people to be proud of their God-given culture. Norlita Colili, a Pala’wan woman also from the Philippines, felt the same way. She said the gathering gave her a desire to revive her dying culture for God’s glory. “God impressed to me that by his help, I will organize the few believers in my tribe. We will start using our music, art and other traditions as an offering to God and use it in reaching out to other tribes for Christ.”

Reporter Harry Balais observed, “The gathering was a new learning process for me. History books have not reflected the indigenous people’s side of the story.” He said it gave him an opportunity to know about the Blackfoot, Cree, Navajo, Lakota, Sioux and Mi’kmaq people of North America. “They deserve much, much more. They are the first nation people, after all.”

The impact of the gathering in Davao City reached as far as the Arctic region. Diana Brønlund, a Greenlandic woman, was excited about the doors that opened for her at the event. She and another woman danced, chanted and played their native drums. These drums are not allowed in many churches in their region. “I am so thankful [for the] new connections and friendships. It was an unforgettable and rich experience and I really enjoyed it; the weather was a little warm, but we survived.”

Monte Ohia, chair and co-founder of **WCGIP**, is convinced that the impact of the gathering will be felt strongly not only in the Philippines, but also in other parts of the world. “The fires are already burning and things are getting hot, and it will undoubtedly become hotter as time goes on,” he remarked.

Ohia also believes that protocol played an important role in the success of the gathering in Davao City. “I feel that in God’s heart we did everything right,” he said. “We opened with protocol—a traditional indigenous welcome, a march through the city and a civil reception. God is a God of protocol because it is all about honoring the authorities and people of the land—the host nation—and bringing people closer together. It also

gave the different nations opportunities to bring their gifts, to speak their languages of greeting and to display the array of regalia the Lord has blessed the nations with.”

Pio Gabad Arce chairs the Sixth World Christian Gathering on Indigenous People in the Philippines. He is part of the leadership team of Tribal Mission Foundation International, a Filipino Christian mission agency bringing transformational development to indigenous tribes. He and his wife helped pioneer Simbahang Kristianong Lumad, an indigenous people church among the Matigsalug tribes in Southern Philippines.

Making the Most of a Mission Experience Through Journaling

By Donna Thomas

Taking teams on short-term mission trips was unheard of some thirty years ago. Today nearly every church, Christian college and mission agency in the United States is involved. Of the estimated forty thousand short-term sending organizations in America today, there are more than one million short-termers of all ages involved. These experiences must be more than simply “the thing to do.” They must be carefully planned and orchestrated so they do not become glorified vacations with little lasting benefit. As responsible Christian sending groups, we must be sure these trips provide the maximum benefit for both the field where the team is going and the team members.

In 1964 my husband and I took a group on our first short-term mission trip. We did not know what we were starting but were delighted that our trip met a need both on the field and with those who went. After a few trips the Lord gave us greater vision; we started a mission agency and purchased a forty-passenger airplane. Within a few years we were taking people from various cities in the US all across Central America, South America and the Caribbean. During the next forty years we took over six thousand short-termers to countries all over the world.

The Development of *Through the Eyes of Christ*

Although I thought as leaders we were doing everything right, one day I realized something was missing. During and after each trip participants said they would never forget their experiences on the mission field. The sum total of their response, however, was simply to save money for the next trip. This did not seem right; surely a greater response was possible. I soon had the idea for a journal, *Through the Eyes of Christ: A Short-term Missions Journal*, which would help team members discover how the Lord was leading them. The journal was designed to make participants think more deeply about their experiences.

Essential Elements of a Journal

The primary purpose of the journal is to help Christians who are giving both their time and resources in a short-term mission trip to have a significant personal growth experience with the Lord. They are seeing things they have never seen before; they are relating to people of another culture, both Christian and non-Christian. Questions of values, responses and direction in life arise. Participants are mentored by these experiences and it is important to grasp what the Lord is trying to teach them. The following are six essential elements in a journal.

- *A record of daily experiences.* Writing down daily experiences is a way to record each day’s events and their perceived value. The missionaries may think what they are doing today is so special that they will never forget it; this may not be true. The next day has great experiences too. If not written down, events and experiences can become confused, exaggerated and changed in the minds of the missionaries. If the experiences are written down, the chances are greater that what is related later will be more accurate.
- *Daily responses.* Each day’s challenges and encounters are significant. As the missionaries write about these events, they can also evaluate their responses. The missionaries can consider if this is the way the Lord would have them respond to certain situations. Luxuries such as a soft bed, a telephone, a

television, a cold drink and fast foods are suddenly not available. This is an excellent opportunity to reevaluate what is important in life.

- *Writing thoughts to God.* This is the time for each team member to be in contact with God in a special way. A place in a journal for thoughts and meditations is a must. The journal allows missionaries to write their desires and longings so that they can be used by God. The missionaries can use the journal to express their innermost feelings and responses to God as they process trip events.
- *Daily Prayers.* Prompts for personal prayer time help team members cover each day in prayer. Praying for and about their day's activities, their responses, their growing vision of the realities of the mission field and their relationship with teammates and new Christian friends is essential.
- *Questions.* Questions arise as missionaries discover conditions that may be common in this new country but uncommon to them. These questions are not to be ignored; they are to be remembered. The journal is the place to write these questions so that the missionary can later find the answer.
- *Prayer Partners.* No one should travel on a mission trip without prayer partners and a journal should include a place to record contact information. Scripture is clear on the importance of having people agree together in prayer. The missionary is not to come home the same person; he or she is to be different. He or she is also to do things differently. And the prayers of his or her prayer partners can help this happen.

Using *Through the Eyes of Christ*

It is important to begin praying, thinking and talking to God about an upcoming missions trip several days before departure. *Through the Eyes of Christ* starts ten days before departure and enables participants to be clear as to why they are going, what they want to experience and how they see the Lord might use them. These pages help travelers lay any fears or concerns before the Lord and prepare their heart, soul, mind and strength for the trip ahead. Getting into the habit of using the journal in advance of the trip is important.

The next section of the journal is for use during the trip. This has plenty of space for each day and questions to help analyze each experience. Each morning and/or night travelers are to take a minimum of ten minutes to write their thoughts and experiences. The third section is a place to reflect on the trip after returning home. In this section team members continue evaluating and discovering what the Lord was teaching them. The last section is debriefing.

Debriefing

This is the most significant section in the journal. Debriefing helps team members discover what the Lord is trying to teach them and the direction he wants them to go. The missionaries are not supposed to simply come home and say, "It was a great trip." Their hearts are full with what they have seen and experienced and this is a time to work through these experiences. *Through the Eyes of Christ* contains key questions that will help them discover what the Lord is telling them; they can also work on practical next steps in obedience to the Lord. This section also guides them in how to tell their story to their circles of influence. Included are tips to help the missionary get others interested in learning more about the trip.

Journaling and Short-term Mission Trips

There is much untapped potential of short-term mission trips and journaling helps missionaries to discover this potential. One woman recently commented, "Every experience the Lord gives is an experience intended to further the kingdom." Journaling will help the traveler to more clearly understand this. As mission trips increase in the coming years, the need to make the most of them increases as well. A time-tested journal is a valuable resource.

For more information on *Through the Eyes of Christ: A Short-term Missions Journal*, visit www.cvministries.org or call (US)317-876-9884.

Donna Thomas is founder of Christian Vision Ministries. She has led mission trips around the world and is author of two books on missions.

WORLD PERSPECTIVES

Biblical Reasons for the Divine Uniqueness and Finality of Jesus Christ: Basic Requirements for Evangelistic Outreach

By Rolf Hille

The central content of the preaching of the gospel is the person of Jesus Christ. The Christian faith differs fundamentally in this respect from all other historical religions. While these also have important founding figures, such as Buddha or Muhammed, whom they base their authority upon, none of these founders is comparable in importance to the place given to Jesus Christ in Christianity. The most basic requirement of evangelistic preaching is therefore to clearly understand and explain the person and work of Jesus Christ. The New Testament gives clear answers why Jesus is God's Son and the savior of the world. The result of this is the complete and ultimate claim to truth with regard to his person. In an age of globalization, ideological relativism and religious pluralism, evangelism must struggle to boldly and clearly proclaim these biblical/theological basics.

Let me give the most important reasons from scripture to prove that Jesus Christ is the only Son of God. These arguments should be shared and proclaimed in the process of dialogue with people of other religious beliefs to give them the chance to understand the biblical message concerning Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus Teaches with Divine Authority

Just as Moses received the law on Mount Sinai, so Jesus ascended the mountain where he spoke the beatitudes in order to proclaim the new law of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 5). The authority of Jesus to proclaim the will of God is also evident in his position on the Sabbath, which was provocative to Judaism: "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8).

2. Jesus Has the Right to Bind People to His Person

Because Jesus, the Son of God, is so unique, the eternal destiny of every human being depends on his or her relationship to Jesus Christ (Luke 12:8). Each person to whom the death of the Lord is proclaimed in a way that he or she can understand in his or her context and can accept a personal relationship with Jesus, is responsible before Christ in a final eschatological sense. For all who have had no personal confrontation with Christ through the preaching of the gospel, the criteria in the final judgment is demonstrated in Matthew 25:40: "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

By reason of the uniqueness and finality of Christ, it is therefore valid and binding on us here and now that Jesus had the divine authority to bind people to himself and to call them to follow him. This power to bind other people to his own person exclusively belongs to the Son of God. Whenever a person tries to usurp this divine right and take it away for him or herself, it will always result in a catastrophe. In Germany, we experienced this in the 1930s when Hitler required every soldier to swear an oath of allegiance to his person instead of any constitution or other objective authority; he thereby bound them absolutely to himself. Binding a person entirely to oneself and making a covenant of an absolute loyalty of faith and obedience are rights reserved only for God the Father and for the one he sent, Jesus Christ.

3. Jesus as Creator Shares God's Creative Power over Nature

The confession that Jesus is the Son of God means that he belongs to the side of the creator, not to that of created beings. As creator, he has unlimited authority over all powers and forces of nature. The unique, creative power of Jesus is also shown in that he can make something from nothing. This is evident in a most exemplary way in the feeding of the five thousand.

4. Jesus Has the Unique Right to Forgive Sins

In Mark 2:1-12, the story is told of how the people pushed their way into the house where Jesus was preaching. Wanting to help their lame friend, four men got up onto the flat roof of the house. They opened the roof and lowered the lame man directly to Jesus' feet. Jesus looked at the man and simply said, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (2:5). The scribes and teachers of the law are more than irritated by this remark. The authority to forgive sins is a right belonging exclusively to God's sovereignty, because the forgiveness of sins is, in a way, a creative act in the reverse direction.

At the creation, God called into existence what did not previously exist. Human beings can only change the form of material which already exists; they cannot produce and bring into being anything fundamentally new. Corresponding to this is the matter of forgiveness of sins. Sin is produced by fallen humanity. The blood of Abel cries out from the earth to God, and Cain cannot change this. Forgiveness is a sovereign act of God in which he speaks out of existence that which exists. This is precisely what Jesus did when he said: "Son, your sins are forgiven." Moreover, in order to confirm this unique authority, he added: "Which is easier to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?'" But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . ." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home" (2:9-11). Through the power of Jesus as creator, he proves publicly the yet greater power to forgive sins. Jesus has this power because he is both priest and sacrifice at the same time. Being sinless, he was made to be sin by God. He carried the consequence of sin and death in order to grasp people from the power of sin and death.

5. Jesus' Power over Death

Last we come to the most profound and all-encompassing confirmation of the divine omnipotence and completeness of Jesus, namely, the resurrection.

One of the strangest statements in all of the New Testament is found in 1 Corinthians 11:26: "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." This challenge to proclaim the Lord's death is quite odd. At best, one can commend the outstanding deeds of a dead person performed during his or her lifetime (i.e., he or she was a great inventor, a brilliant musician, an outstanding politician or a pioneering discoverer). In certain cases, one could even praise the courageous, yet composed, death of a person such as Socrates. But death as death itself one cannot make as the substance of one's proclamation. Yet, the mystery of the divine Sonship of Jesus which is revealed in the cross and in the resurrection as victory over sin and death is different. Holy God and sin are absolute opposites. The living God and death are radical opposites. In the Old Testament, one can recognize this because every priest who touched a dead body became ritually unclean. Then, on Golgatha, the unimaginable occurred: The one who himself is God was made to be sin by God. Holy God identified himself with sin on the cross of Christ. Judgment against the world took place. Moreover, in this judgment the power of sin was not only conquered, it was also destroyed. The living God identified himself with death and annihilated the power of death. One death devoured another and won the victory. Satan was destroyed.

Therefore, we should proclaim the death of the Lord because his death does not mean destruction, but redemption from the power of sin and a beginning of a new creation through the resurrection of the dead. People who have accomplished much in their earthly lives have, at best, improved somewhat the conditions of earthly life under the conditions of sin and death. The Son of God is, therefore, the only and unique savior of the world

and the completion of God's plan of salvation and his revelation of himself. We must focus our eyes on Colossians 1:15-20:

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the Church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

Dr. Rolf Hille is executive chair of the World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission and was the convener of the Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization Issue Group on the Uniqueness of Christ.

What Makes Christianity Fundamentally Different from Other Great World Religions?

By Jerry Root

The unique claims of Christianity have often caused consternation for those outside the faith—and at times produced an unnecessary condescending attitude within those of the Christian faith. Perhaps it would be wise to sort some of this out to the benefit of both Christians and those of other faiths. I will attempt to do this by clarifying what can be shared by all faiths and then taking note of the one thing that sets Christianity apart.

Common Beliefs Shared by All Great World Religions

C. S. Lewis noted that just because a person is a Christian he or she does not have to believe that everything in all the other religions is necessarily wrong.¹ The sociological fact of religion is noteworthy; that is, all cultures have religion. All societies seem to embrace the idea that human beings are fundamentally religious or spiritual beings. Perhaps the materialistic Western nations might be seen as an exception to this generalization; and yet, individuals in the West seem to pursue their materialistic interests with religious devotion. As was once observed, human beings were made by their creator to worship; they cannot help but worship. If they will not worship God, they will worship something in God's place. All religions have their mystics; people who devote themselves to seeking God with their whole heart—this is not a phenomenon peculiar to any one particular religion.

Furthermore, taking a lead from German philosopher of religion Rudolph Otto, Lewis marks the things all of the great world religions have in common²:

1. **Belief in a divine essence of some sort.** Lewis calls this the numinous. Religions have variations in their understanding of the divine and describe it differently if they are animistic, pantheistic, polytheistic, dualistic, monotheistic or Trinitarian monotheistic. Nevertheless, they all believe in some sort of divine.
2. **Belief in a moral law.** However, everyone tends to break this moral law.
3. **Belief that the divine is the keeper of the moral law.** Violations of the law are an offence against the divine. All of the religions believe that human beings stand in a precarious place before the divine and this has shattering consequences. At this point Christians would stand in relative agreement with a host of other religions.

The religious dilemma for all is, can the offense stated in this last point be corrected; and if so, how? Here it is that Christians distinguish themselves from the other religions. All of the other religions say that human beings must fix the problem by performing an additional set of rituals and abiding by a secondary code. Sadly, some Christians can fall into such a pattern when their interpretation of the Christian faith drifts toward a form of works righteousness—that is, they believe they can earn their way back into God’s good graces by means of human merit. Seldom is such a program for repairing the alienation between the person and the divine able to give assurances to the follower of the religion. If the first code was so easily violated, what confidence does one have that he or she will do better with a second code? These religions are fraught with the fears and insecurities which attend themselves to human weakness and moral lapse.

Distinguishing Characteristics of Christianity

1. The Doctrine of the Trinity

It is at this point that Christianity stands apart in distinction from the religions of the world. The Christian faith asserts that human beings cannot fix what is broken in themselves; only God, in his mercy, can do such a thing and reconcile estranged human beings back into proper relationship with the divine. Christians believe that God is one, but that he is a Trinity of persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is fundamentally a being who exists in relationship; in other words, that is he is a relational being. This sets Christianity apart from all other religious monotheisms at that very place where the theology of the other religions becomes illogical and flawed due to a contradiction embedded in their doctrine of God. No amount of appeal to divine mysteries can fix this flaw.

Only Christians assert with confidence that relational attributes in a non-contingent being presupposes that relationship is necessary in that being. On the other hand, non-Trinitarian monotheisms are quick to claim that God is a non-contingent being; in other words, he is uncaused and self-existent. Furthermore, most non-Trinitarians would assert that God is a God of love; however, the question these people must ask is, “Who is the object of God’s love?” As soon as someone answers, “Creation,” they have denied God’s capacity to love except by means of his creation, thus suggesting that he must be contingent upon his creation to fulfill his nature. Therein lies the contradiction embedded in this particular false notion of God; God cannot be both contingent and non-contingent at the same time.

2. The Incarnation of Christ

Christians must also distinguish themselves by virtue of the fact that they believe that the second person of the Godhead, God the Son, became a man and walked on this earth to communicate God’s love and forgiveness to his creatures. Before his conversion from atheism to Christianity, Lewis speculated that if there was a personal God, he could no more know God personally any more than Hamlet could know Shakespeare. Two years later when Lewis finally became a Christian he revisited his Hamlet-Shakespeare analogy. Certainly, Hamlet the character of the play could never break out of the play to get to know Shakespeare, the author of the play. Nevertheless, Lewis speculated that it could be possible for Shakespeare the author of the play to write himself into the play as a character, and this way an introduction between Hamlet and Shakespeare could be possible. Lewis also believed that something like this actually did occur when God the Son became a man in the Incarnation. And it is this coming of God the Son into the world to mend what was broken in humanity. He died sacrificially for humanity’s sin, reconciling men and women to himself.

3. The Exclusive Claims of Christ

Some may suggest that there are many ways to God; however, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made exclusive claims to be the only way to God. This exclusivity is offensive to some because of its narrowness. At this point it is necessary to be reminded that all truth claims are narrow and limited by the reality they seek to describe. Truth is always narrow. To jump off the Empire State building will result in grave consequences; being open about this does not make the consequences less severe. Neglecting a fire alarm in a burning building is not to be justified because the alarm signals a very intolerant warning. Heeding the warning, although it is narrow, is the

better part of wisdom. Jesus' claim to be the only way to God may or may not be true, but it is not false because it is narrow. Further investigation will reveal the merit behind the claim. Those who dismiss Jesus claims by virtue of the narrowness of them may need to remind themselves of the very nature of truth. Why should some disregard the claims of Christ because others who cannot discern the very nature of truth want us to believe Jesus is wrong because he is narrow?

4. The Uniqueness of the Love of God

Christians assert that God loves those he has created and those to whom he has given life in this world. The great world religions developing systems of works and efforts to merit favor from God vector away from anything resembling the love of God as it is presented in the Bible. God's love, as proclaimed by Christians, is a love which is without condition. The scriptures say, "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). A corollary of this might be that imperfect love breeds anxiety, fear and insecurity. We have all received the liabilities of imperfect love—and we have produced anxiety in the lives of the very people we say we love, for none of us loves perfectly. Pride, especially religious pride—and the kind of religious "group think" which comes from it—is predicated on fear.

Christians believe that the only antidote is the love of God which knows us completely, and because of the death and resurrection of Christ, has the power to forgive us thoroughly. We are likely to struggle with besetting sins all of our lives; the gospel allows us to look honestly at these things and find victory. It is good news. Furthermore, a person on the mend in Jesus will become more empathetic of others and able to see others at their point of deepest need and tell them about Jesus. The claims of Christ and the benefits of the gospel are exclusive and narrow because only Christ can love us perfectly and save us from our sins.

Endnotes

- (1) Lewis, C. S. 1948. *The Case for Christianity*. New York: Macmillan. 31.
- (2) Lewis, C. S. 1977. *The Problem of Pain*. London: Fount. 14-20.

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The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ

By R. W.

How on Earth Did Jesus Become God? That is the title of a book by Larry Hurtado. Although this may look like an attack on the divinity of Christ, it is in fact a well-researched and well-presented defence of the traditional Christian doctrine that the man Jesus of Nazareth is not only the awaited Messiah of the people of Israel, but also the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine and thereby unique in a way that gives the word "unique" an altogether new and intensified quality.

Why Does it Matter?

When the [Lausanne Covenant](#) emphasises the uniqueness and universality of Christ in article three, it does so with good reason. Today we do well to remember this central emphasis, especially as it seems the forces of relativism have influenced the Church in an ever more intensive and pervasive way since the Covenant was written. Not only does the continuing rise of other world religions put in question the validity of the historic Christian claim that there is "no other God and saviour," but secularism with its companion relativism continues to influence the minds of secular and Christian people alike.

Whereas Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and others assert the truths of their respective faiths, many Christian leaders seem to be uncertain and only half-convinced when it comes to the question of the uniqueness, universal relevance and exclusivity of Jesus Christ.

This uncertainty in many segments of the Church is a great obstacle for all parts of the life of the Church, but especially and primarily in the areas of evangelism and world mission. Why should anyone seek to carry the name of Christ to where he has not been known and recognized if the biblical claims about Jesus Christ are only partially or relatively true? The question on the uniqueness and universality of Christ can therefore be reframed: Is Jesus Christ indeed the one who the Bible describes him to be? Is he the way, the truth and the life, or not? Is he the only saviour or are there other equally capable saviours?

The Western Church is no longer quite sure of its foundations. No wonder that it is beset with many problems, and that—alas!—vibrant growth is not one of them!

“The Uniqueness and Universality of Christ” Lausanne Covenant Statement

Below is what is stated in the Lausanne Covenant on the uniqueness and universality of Christ:

“We affirm that there is only one Saviour and only one gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. We recognise that everyone has some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for people suppress the truth by their unrighteousness. We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies. Jesus Christ, being himself the only God-man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and people. There is no other name by which we must be saved. All men and women are perishing because of sin, but God loves everyone, not wishing that any should perish but that all should repent. Yet those who reject Christ repudiate the joy of salvation and condemn themselves to eternal separation from God. To proclaim Jesus as ‘the Saviour of the world’ is not to affirm that all people are either automatically or ultimately saved, still less to affirm that all religions offer salvation in Christ. Rather it is to proclaim God’s love for a world of sinners and to invite everyone to respond to him as Saviour and Lord in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith. Jesus Christ has been exalted above every other name; we long for the day when every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess him Lord.”

What Is at Stake?

In reconsidering this historic statement in light of today’s religious and spiritual climate, three concepts stand out: revelation, salvation and judgment. All three are as relevant now as they were when the Covenant was crafted.

1. **Revelation—The question of reliable communication.** We could phrase this question as follows: Where and how has God revealed his will and true knowledge about his purposes? And is it true that God has spoken and revealed himself? Are there many “revelations” of God, or is there one central and decisive revelation, as the Bible claims? This complex of questions leads directly to the second theme.
2. **Salvation—The question of a certain foundation.** How can a person be reconnected with God? How is forgiveness of sins and a cleansing from guilt possible? How can we find assurance of salvation and of being forgiven and accepted by God? Or do we have to strive all our lives and try to earn our salvation? This question leads directly to the third theme.
3. **Judgment—The question of our ultimate destiny.** How can we be certain of heaven? Is assurance possible? What will be the ultimate outcome of our lives? Is there a way to be acquitted in God’s judgment?

The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ in Light of Other Religions

The message of the Bible is good news indeed. While other religions fail to give adequate and satisfying answers to the three questions of revelation, salvation and judgment, the gospel shows that in Jesus Christ there is a perfect and complete answer to them. This is an answer that focuses on and converges in him. A short comparison with other religions underlines this point.

1. **Revelation.** In *Islam*, revelation only concerns the will, the “right guidance” of God. In no way, however, does God reveal himself. He remains utterly unknowable and unreachable. His heart remains aloof and unmoved. In *Buddhism*, there seems to be no God to be revealed. All one can hope for is “enlightenment,” which will free the human out of the endless circle of rebirth with its accompanying suffering. In *Hinduism*, there are many “gods” who seem to contradict each other. The nature of the one and true God is hidden. Jesus, however, not only reveals something about God, but is God himself, incarnated into a specific historical context. His self-sacrifice on the cross reveals God’s heart as love beyond measure.
2. **Salvation.** Similarly, salvation is at best an incomplete concept in other religions. *Islam* does not know salvation, but only the absolute transcendence of a God who punishes whom he wills and admits to paradise whom he wills. *Buddhism* puts the onus of “salvation,” (the freeing from the curse of never-ending rebirths into a world of suffering) entirely on the individual. Jesus, however, not only offers salvation, but is himself the saviour. On the cross, he took the sins of all humanity on himself and paid fully and completely for all wrongs. He himself is the bridge over the chasm that separates us from God.
3. **Judgment.** In *Islam*, God is the ultimate judge; however, the Muslim view of “judge” is not pleasant. God as portrayed in the Quran seems to be unconcerned about the sufferings of the lost. In *Buddhism*, human existence is itself the judgment. Through its negation of a good creation, Buddhism locks humanity into an utterly pessimistic view of life. The only way out is into non-existence or “nirvana,” a goal that can be attained by rigorous discipline of mind and body. In *Hinduism*, “salvation” as in “salvation from judgment” is not an issue; as in other traditional religions, the many gods are points of referral for specific needs such as protection, fertility and help in war or love. The eternal destiny of an individual remains uncertain. Similar to Buddhism, in Hinduism there is the hope that in the end, through a seemingly unending cycle of rebirths, the soul will enter into a state of oblivion by being immersed into the principle of all existence. In Jesus Christ, however, all is reality. Sin is a reality; judgment is a reality. The individual person is real; heaven and hell are real alternatives; and grace and forgiveness are real in Jesus Christ. Jesus is himself the judge and the one who takes the judgment on himself. In him, therefore, the necessities of law and grace are completely fulfilled. Whoever accepts and believes in Christ has passed from judgment to forgiveness, from death to life everlasting.

In highlighting the themes of revelation, salvation and judgment, the Lausanne Covenant shows how Jesus Christ is unique and how his person and work are of universal relevance. It spells out the centrality of Jesus to the most pressing questions of humankind, questions to which all religions have sought to find answers, but failed to provide them in full measure. Either they did not know or they have purposefully rejected Jesus, the one in whom all questions find their answer, all hopes and longings find their fulfillment and all sorrows find their comfort.

Jesus holds the key. He is the door, the way, the light, the truth and life indeed.

R. W. (pseudonym) has worked in many majority-Muslim nations around the world.

Keeping the Globe in View

By Victor Tukura

Anytime I watch Business International on CNN or Business News on BBC, I am always fascinated by the mergers and takeover bids of companies and corporations. Across the Atlantic, and from the Pacific to the Mediterranean, business empires are being built to dominate the globe. The trend these days in the business parlance is to keep the globe in view.

In my home country of Nigeria, we have also had our own fair share of mergers, acquisitions and consolidation, especially in the financial sector. One of the cardinal reasons for this quest is the desire to transform local companies into global players. Whatever is done these days seems to have an eye on the global perspective rather than local considerations. Gradually, national boundaries are losing their significance in commerce, industry and international politics. Governments formulate, shape, revise and reform policies through the lenses of the globe. “Globalisation” has suddenly become a re-occurring decimal in our daily vocabulary. All over the world, this is the trend we see.

However, this is not the case in the Church, especially in Africa. Christians in this part of the world seem to be more concerned about their local congregations. Even those who try to reach out hardly transcend their denominational boundaries. All our time is consumed by our local church programmes. Sunday is devoted to regular worship services. The elders board or committee of deacons meets on Monday; Tuesday is devoted to a series of teachings on the “twenty-one steps to success,” which more often than not spans throughout the year. The mid-week special anointing service is held on Wednesday while Thursday is set aside for visitation or Bible study. Friday is for the power-packed prayer service. Even weekends are not spared, as various teaching or group programmes are held to keep the sheep busy. The objective here is to keep the people constantly occupied.

But while we glory and rejoice in the growth of our local congregations and the expansion of our denominations, the world is out there perishing without the knowledge of the redeemer. The globe is out there bleeding from the wounds inflicted on it by the cruelty of Satan. The average Christian is not bothered by the unfinished exploits of Hudson Taylor in China or that of Adoniram Judson in Burma. The Nigerian Church is not even perturbed by the consuming effects of voodoo practice in Benin Republic.

While secular organizations and companies are coming together for increased capacity and impact, the Church is instead headed in the opposite direction, increasingly fragmenting in vision and getting weaker in witnessing. I am not against the building up of our local congregations or the proliferation of churches per se, but why must we do so at the detriment of the global mandate? Why must it be at the expense of the salvation of nations?

Our global mandate is that we be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. I am a firm believer in the establishment of a strong and vibrant local congregation as the basic unit and platform for the accomplishment of the global mandate of the Church, but this is not what we see today. We seem to be more concerned about establishing our own little empires rather than accomplishing God’s purpose for the globe. We seem to be more concerned with being occupied in the Church instead of occupying the nations until he returns.

Let us wake up to this divine reality because God sees only two basic compartments on the globe—the Church and the unsaved. Let us also see the globe and stand up to our responsibility of reaching the unreached. This can only be done by active involvement of every Christian. The mandate to hoist the blood-stained banner of Jesus Christ on every unreached nation on the globe is a task that must be accomplished.

Victor Tukura is editor-in-chief for *Helping Hands* magazine, a Nigerian-based publication.

Building Bridges in the West and the World on World AIDS Day

By Brian Considine

Each 1 December since 1988 the world recognizes World AIDS Day as a day to remember the millions suffering globally with this pandemic. Activities are scheduled, campaigns launched, celebrities speak, the media reports and even United States President George W. Bush publishes a statement. A few Christian organizations and churches plan events, but for the vast majority of Christians and local churches, nothing special happens on 1 December; World AIDS Day seems to be a non-event. There are some reasons for this: the day is principally promoted by secular organizations, AIDS remains an essentially distant problem and there is social disconnect with those most affected in the West and throughout the world. But what would Jesus do?

Recently, I met with my dear friend John for lunch. Our visit opened my eyes further to the unconditional mercy God has for each of us. John is a wonderful Christian; he is passionate about the things of Christ and serves the Lord faithfully in missions in South Africa and India. John is HIV positive and has been for several years. He came out of a homosexual lifestyle and is just one of the faces of AIDS in the US.

While much of the news about the HIV/AIDS pandemic filters to us through reports from Africa, how much do we hear about AIDS in our Western cities? For the past sixteen months I have lived in Dallas, Texas, USA. It is here that I had lunch with John. While our conversation focused primarily on the international issues involved with AIDS, just a few miles away many live with the same burdens of the disease.

This particular sector of south Dallas, a predominately black and Hispanic neighborhood, has one of the highest HIV rates in the United States. Nationally, rates among black and Hispanic populations continue to escalate. Although African-Americans and Latinos represented thirteen percent and fourteen percent of the US population, respectively, in 2004, they accounted for forty-nine percent and twenty percent of new AIDS diagnoses today.¹ This is the growing face of AIDS in the US.

Building Bridges Of Compassion in the United States

While much ministry is directed to nations most impacted, little focus is directed to our own HIV positive “Jerusalem.” More than one million people are HIV positive in America. The evangelical US Church for the most part is absent from caring for these neighbors. The number of US churches who have any outreach to the local AIDS population is abysmally small. This has caused a backlash from affected communities and a sense of distrust toward the Church. One leading US pastor has diagnosed that we are known more for what we stand against than what we stand for.

The question we must answer is: “Why?” Until we can answer this, we will not be able to address the “how.” Introspection is necessary to understand this issue. As those who uphold the Bible and desire to follow Jesus Christ’s example, why would we remain complacent in our lack of attention? Our neighbors are lonely, sick and socially outcast, but what role are we playing—the Good Samaritan or one of those passing by on the other side of the road? The heart of the “evangel,” God’s love for the least, last and lost, must inform and direct our lives. However, too frequently fear, judgment, stigma and misunderstanding continue to communicate louder than our message of hope.

John shared a story with me that illustrates this point. He had written a letter to a leading gay AIDS activist who was also an acquaintance of his in New York. This AIDS activist knew that John was a Christian and had left the “gay lifestyle.” Like others in the AIDS community, this leader held a distrust of Christians, feeling misunderstood and judged. John wrote to ask forgiveness for the perceived and real offenses caused by Christians. A bridge was built through this humble act that has become a friendship based on acceptance and love. Isn’t that what Jesus would have done?

It is across such a bridge that the “evangel” becomes effective toward transforming lives. While this AIDS activist does not yet have a relationship with the Lord (as far as I am aware of), barriers have been removed through John’s demonstrated humility in seeking forgiveness. Jesus did command us toward such expressions of forgiveness, acceptance, understanding and compassion. It is across these bridges that the Church must move if we are to minister effectively in this pandemic. The Great Commandment must compel us to build bridges to bear the light of Christ through the darkness of AIDS.

Bridges naturally serve to connect two separated points and allow movement in both directions across a real divide. For too many years, the Church and the populations that live with and die from AIDS have been separated in a very real sense. “They” had AIDS. Evangelicals were absent and confess to be being late in responding. Thankfully, things are changing as notable Christian leaders have begun to call attention to the need for local churches to be at the forefront of the AIDS pandemic. Bridges are being built.

The Great Crisis—The Greatest Opportunity

The opportunity exists for many more bridges to be constructed in what has been called the greatest humanitarian crisis of our time. As has been aptly noted, if AIDS is the greatest crisis, it can also be the greatest opportunity. Consider these bridges that can be built to bring the good news across the divides of the American culture and the world.

- **Person to Person.** Build bridges of compassionate care to someone who is HIV positive or may be at risk of becoming so. Praying with that person is an effective way to build a relational bridge, opening the door to share Christ. A non-judgmental attitude is a prerequisite.
- **Generation to Generation.** Build bridges across the age divide in your church and community. Our global youth are at the greatest risk of becoming infected as they discover their own sexuality. Educating young people in God-honoring behavior is of paramount importance.
- **Church to Church.** Build bridges for the delivery of holistic ministry from church to church. This can be done across international or cultural divides. For instance, a suburban American church can partner with an African church or with an inner-city church. Fine examples of these “bridges” continue to emerge.
- **Church to Community.** Build bridges through humble service to local AIDS agencies. It may take time to build trust, but it will be worth the investment. Humility is the key that will undergird this particular bridge. More models are particularly needed here.
- **Church to Organizations.** Build bridges of partnership with development organizations ministering in regions devastated by AIDS. Local churches can effectively work with international Christian agencies that have developed infrastructure and relationships in nations hit hardest by this pandemic.
- **Church to the World.** Build bridges to our AIDS impacted world through intercession by joining in regular united prayer. The [Global AIDS Prayer Partnership](#) offers resources for this purpose. Plan to set aside a few minutes in your service on Sunday, 3 December, for corporate intercession, asking God to show you where he would have you minister.

Building On A Firm Foundation—Jesus Christ

How should these bridges be built? Since our foundation is Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone, our concrete is therefore his love, our roadway is surfaced with his compassion, his grace is our supporting structure and obedience to the Great Commandment is our master plan. Knowing that no one is beyond the reach of God, regardless of how they have lived their life, must inform our design and direct our efforts. Reaching the world for Christ requires that these bridges be built effectively to support the whole gospel.

Demolition is also necessary in the building of bridges, clearing the way for connecting the divides. For the AIDS pandemic, that demolition must include attitudes that are established firmly on Christ. Stigma, judgmentalism and fear must be demolished as they are an affront to the knowledge of God; such attitudes are sin. Jesus dealt more with wrong attitudes than he did with wrong behavior when he established his kingdom here. But it is wrong attitudes that have kept many from crossing over into the areas of transformational ministry needed to bridge the gap to those suffering from AIDS.

Global AIDS Sunday

On this World AIDS Day we can start building bridges to bring Christ to those most affected by AIDS, whether locally or globally. Find out what is happening in your community, learn more about what is happening globally, determine what events are planned for World AIDS Day in your community and then show up. Organize your prayer teams and small groups and find ways to serve in community-planned events. Prepare sermons and other educational opportunities to present to your church on a Sunday adjacent to World AIDS Day.

One way to participate is on the Sunday immediately following World AIDS Day, Global AIDS Sunday, an initiative of the [Global AIDS Prayer Partnership](#), in cooperation with the [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#) and other organizations. The simple idea is to remember and pray for those who are affected by AIDS. Please join us as we pray to end AIDS!

Endnote

¹ http://www.knowhivaids.org/facts_stats.html#q1

Brian Considine is the international coordinator for the Global AIDS Prayer Partnership. GAPP serves as the official voice of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization on HIV/AIDS.

PEOPLES OF THE WORLD

An Overview of Eastern Africa

By Justin Long

From twenty-eight million people in 1900 to 255 million today (and likely 450 million by 2025), Eastern Africa is the most densely-populated region on the continent. It is roughly the same as the United States and twice Western Europe. Children under the age of fifteen make up a third (100 million in all) of the population. Three-quarters reside in rural areas.

Eastern Africa has the second largest total farmland area and vast natural resources, yet droughts and food scarcity are still serious issues. Ethiopia currently faces a horrific famine. Much of this is due to war, grinding poverty and a lack of infrastructure.

The region's recent history began in the first century after Christ, when the developing Axum Kingdom emerged as a world power to rival Rome and Asia. Supposedly led by the Solomnid Dynasty (with ties to Solomon and the Queen of Sheba), it ruled modern Ethiopia and Eritrea, most of Somalia and Sudan, and collected tribute from states across the Gulf, including Yemen. It traded with Arabia, India and China, and was a world market in ivory. In the third century, so the legend goes, a shipwrecked youth from Tyre was taken in by the king as a servant; he later converted the king to Christianity. And with the king came the kingdom. Whatever the truth of the story, the Axum Kingdom certainly did become Christian. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was founded sometime around 332 AD.

When Muslims came in the early seventh century, the Axum Kingdom—which was made up of Christians—sheltered some of the people. The Muslims did not attempt to overthrow the kingdom and it endured through the tenth century. It was succeeded by the Zagwe Dynasty, which was equally passionate about Christianity and constructed many churches and monasteries. In the thirteenth century, the Solomnids returned to power but were pressured by coastal Muslims and Oromo insurgents. The Europeans were new players on the scene and throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came to dominate the region. The early 1900s saw ongoing battles of colonizers versus colonized, with the result being independence for the countries of East Africa by the mid-twentieth century. Unfortunately, this independence did not yield immediate peace and prosperity.

Saddled with debt and riddled with corruption, the countries in Eastern Africa today are broken and impoverished, with half to three-quarters of their people living in poverty. Many are subsistence farmers, dependent on crops whose value is set by the whims of the global market. Whole crops can be lost to drought or, more often, war. Yet even with this bleak picture, Eastern Africa is responsible for twelve percent of Africa's Gross National Product (GNP).

Virtually every country has been wounded by many decades of conflict. Rwanda and Burundi have barely recovered from the horrific genocides of the 1990s. Comoros has endured more coups than any other nation. Djibouti has only barely kept out of war, and is now a base for Western forces seeking out terrorists; over half of its GNP is related to the French military. Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a costly border war in the late 1990s. Mozambique's civil war only further impoverished it. Uganda's civil war continues to this day. Worse, future wars are not impossible as many of the problems have not been solved. Refugees can be found everywhere; for example, refugees from Ethiopia and Somalia make up ten percent of the population in Djibouti. At the root of many of the conflicts are both ongoing tribal and religious wars which have yet to be resolved.

This political and economic instability is only worsened by rampant disease. Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe have terrible AIDS epidemics. Some nations have between a quarter and a third of all adults infected. Few will live beyond the age of forty, leaving hundreds of thousands of widows and orphans. In addition, they face equally deadly killers like malaria, typhoid, yellow fever and hepatitis.

Christianity in Eastern Africa

Christianity's early Ethiopian roots were extended by coastal missions in the seventeenth century and inland missions in the nineteenth century. Today the African Independent Churches cover the area and there are more evangelicals here than in all of Europe. Kenya is a key base for ministry. Still, tensions simmer between Muslims and Christians, and old beliefs still exist beneath a thin veneer of monotheism. Christianity's share of the population is growing in eleven countries, and declining in seven. It is rapidly declining in four: *Comoros* (poor; densely populated; solidly Muslim; no witness permitted), *Djibouti* (Muslim majority, but freedom to minister), *Mauritius* (half Muslim; work limited but possible; few workers) and *Somalia* (dangerous; severely limited). Some fifteen percent have no access to the gospel.

The Future in Eastern Africa

East Africa will continue to struggle with poverty, disease and war. Hope for a brighter future is dim. The hardest problems of conflict, corruption and contagious diseases are not likely to be solved even by 2010. Microenterprise and leadership and ethics training would all be valued. Water issues and ministry to refugees are particular areas to focus on. Despite these obstacles, this region's substantial Christian base should be utilized, particularly to focus on ministry to Somalia and Comoros.

Statistics for the Eighteen Countries of Eastern Africa

Name	P'00	P'25	C '00	%	C '25	%	75-00	00-25	Issues affecting the future
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Burundi	6.5	14.0	5.9	92%	13.3	95%	++	++	AIDS, few resources, poverty, poor, ethnic war, refugees, no education
Comoros	0.7	1.2	0.0	1%	0.0	0%	++	+-	Poverty, government instability, growth of Islam, no education
Djibouti	0.7	1.1	0.0	2%	0.0	1%	+-	+-	AIDS, water, unemployment, poverty, droughts, war, Islam
Eritrea	3.6	7.4	1.7	47%	3.6	49%	+-	++	AIDS, strategic position, post-war rebuilding, poverty, water
Ethiopia	68.5	118.4	37.4	55%	69.7	59%	++	++	AIDS, poverty, post-war rebuilding, coffee, droughts, famine, wars
Kenya	30.7	55.0	24.4	79%	48.2	88%	++	++	AIDS, church, financial hub, corruption, ethnic war, drought, poverty
Madagascar	16.2	29.4	8.2	50%	15.6	53%	++	++	Poverty, growth, AIDS, refugees, droughts, deforestation
Malawi	11.5	19.7	8.8	76%	15.8	80%	++	++	Development, tobacco, debt relief, corruption, drought, AIDS
Mauritius	1.2	1.4	0.4	33%	0.5	34%	+-	++	Economic growth, diversification, low poverty, sugarcane, business
Mozambique	17.9	27.6	6.9	39%	11.1	40%	++	++	Post-civil war, absolute poverty, AIDS, debt reduction, droughts
Reunion	0.7	1.0	0.6	88%	0.8	85%	+-	+-	Cyclones, rich/poor gap/tensions, rioting, sugarcane
Rwanda	8.0	13.4	6.2	78%	10.8	81%	++	++	Severe poverty, mostly recovered from 1994, dense population, debt
Seychelles	0.1	0.1	0.1	97%	0.1	94%	+-	+-	Tourism, short droughts, stable government, growing economy
Somalia	7.0	13.8	0.1	1%	0.1	1%	++	+-	Anarchy, semi-stable economy, poverty, Islam, persecution, famine
Tanzania	34.8	52.8	18.4	53%	29.5	56%	++	++	Severe poverty, agricultural economy, AIDS, droughts
Uganda	24.3	60.6	21.6	89%	55.8	92%	++	++	Many resources, AIDS, civil war, refugees, corruption, debt
Zambia	10.7	16.4	8.9	83%	14.4	88%	++	++	Severe poverty, horrific AIDS epidemic, drought, corruption
Zimbabwe	12.6	14.4	8.5	67%	10.8	75%	++	++	War recovery, horrific AIDS epidemic, drought, repression

Key:

P'00 - Population, AD 2000

P'25 - Population, AD2025

C'00 - Christianity, AD 2000 (followed by the percentage of the overall population)

C'25 - Christianity, AD2025 projection, World Christian Database (followed by percentage of overall population)

75-00 - Growth rate. The first (+/-) indicates whether Christianity is growing or declining; the second (+/-) indicates whether it is growing faster or slower than the population (thus whether Christianity's influence is growing or declining).

(+-) means Christianity is growing, but not as fast as the population, and so is declining as a share of the country.

00-25 - Growth rate projected for AD2000-2025

Issues - A brief encapsulation of the issues affecting the growth of Christianity in the nation

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

A Focus on East and South Africa: 349 Least-Reached People Groups Remain

Overview

The twenty-seven countries in eastern and southern Africa are already fairly well evangelized thanks to the work of [African Inland Mission](#) (AIM) and [Sudan Interior Mission](#) (SIM); however, there are more than 340 remaining least-reached peoples, especially in the Horn of Africa and among the Hindu and Muslim immigrant groups in East Africa. Ethiopia has over nineteen million people among its thirty-nine least-reached peoples, representing 34.8% of its population. Sudan has over eighteen million people in 137 least-reached groups, representing 56.1% of its population. However, nations like Comoros, Somalia, Djibouti and Mayotte have over ninety percent of their population in least-reached groups. Much work remains!

The peaceful ending of apartheid in South Africa and the transition to multi-racial democratic government was considered impossible; however, the miracle occurred in answer to fervent prayer by millions of Christians in South Africa and beyond. In the past few years a new movement aiming to globalize prayer has sprung up from this area. It began with [Transformation Africa](#) and today is demonstrated in the annual [Global Day of Prayer](#), which begins with a ten-day time of prayer and fasting on Ascension Day and culminates with the Global Day of Prayer on Pentecost. In 2005, over 150 nations participated. Pray with believers around the world that the gospel would penetrate to every tongue, tribe and nation in this region.

Prayer Points

- **Transformation.** Ask God to transform every least-reached people into life-givers rather than life-takers by his power and love.
- **Living Sacrifices.** Ask the Lord of the harvest to bring forth many laborers who offer their lives daily as living sacrifices, so that whether by life or by death the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified.
- **Bridges for the Gospel.** Request that God impart divine revelation of redemptive bridges for the gospel in order to effectively present his truth and good news.
- **Forgiveness.** Seek God to impart the ability to forgive enemies, to overcome evil with good and to bless those who persecute believers who share the gospel.
- **Endurance.** Plead with God for workers with such endurance that they never give up, moved by the great compelling of God to reach even the most remote and difficult least-reached people groups.

Links

- [Resources](#) to pray and mobilize prayer and outreach.
- [Discover](#) East and South Africa's 349 least-reached peoples.
- [Pray](#) for the peoples of East and South Africa.
- Obtain [prayer guides](#) for the peoples of this region.

Background

God Brings Beauty for Ashes in Eastern and Southern Africa

(Prepared by Patricia Depew for the [Global Prayer Digest](#))

As prayer intercessors, we have certainly prayed many times for those who are suffering physically or spiritually. But sometimes it seems that God is not answering our prayers for mercy. People continue to suffer.

Does that mean that he is not active? Not at all! There are many examples in the recent history of Eastern and Southern Africa to show that God brings “beauty for ashes” (Isaiah 61:3), and raises up people who are spiritual conquerors in the midst of horrible circumstances.

Today, destruction is a key word to describe what is happening in these regions of Africa. AIDS is killing millions. There are civil wars, rape, political corruption, poverty, famine, terrorism, moral decay, child soldiers are forced to perform atrocities, lack of jobs, illness, addiction and racial hatred. This may seem hopeless, but God is raising up his people to bring hope and light where darkness has reigned so healing can take place in the lives of broken people. In his book, *Revival Fire*, Wesley Duewel states that there have been several times of revival in these areas. Yet there have also been times when Satan has caused much pain and misery, often at the same time as when revival fires are burning hot. Indeed, in these times of darkness, God’s light shines brightest. The Church is also well-established in these two parts of Africa, thanks to the work of [SIM International](#), [Africa Inland Mission](#) and many other Christian agencies.

Research has shown that two hundred years after the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries in Africa, Christianity is growing faster here than anywhere else in the world. There are more than 390 million Christians in sub-Saharan Africa today, up from 117 million in 1970. This trend is due mostly to evangelism, according to the [Center for the Study of Global Christianity](#). It is the African believers who are doing the evangelism.

Uganda, Home of the East African Revivals

According to Duewel, there was an outstanding revival in East Africa during the 1930s. Today, in the midst of turmoil and upheaval, Uganda, in East Africa, is experiencing another time of revival and setting the pace for other African countries. Uganda’s President, Yoweri Museveni, turned to the Church for prayer when his country was facing defeat by the notorious rebel army, regrettably named the “Lord’s Resistance Army” (LRA). Churches and various prayer ministries came together and prayed, renouncing witchcraft and idolatry. They also prayed against the satanic worship performed by Joseph Kony, an LRA fugitive leader whose campaign has led to the deaths of thousands of people. After weeks of praying, the war shifted and thousands of rebels surrendered or were killed. Some seventeen thousand children who had been kidnapped to fight for the LRA were rescued, and Kony’s chief witches surrendered. Many of them repented and came to the Lord. An aide of Kony’s who was captured reported that Kony said, “The spirits have left me, and it is all the fault of the Christians!” Other evidence of the Holy Spirit’s power in Uganda includes mass conversions, successful AIDS reduction (Uganda at one time had the highest rate of HIV in the world), humanitarian action, building of schools, health clinics and orphanages. Uganda is being transformed.

In the 1970s, under the dictatorship of Muslim Idi Amin, many of Uganda’s Christians were persecuted. Satan was at work, but many were coming to the Lord during this time of hardship. Over 300,000 people were killed and thousands more fled the country. One Ugandan pastor stated, “Thank God for Idi Amin. He was horrible, but God utilized the atrocities he committed to introduce Uganda to a spirit of desperation. We suffered so much, and Satan pressed us so far out; we ended up in the hands of God.”

One of the problems, especially in some of the eastern African countries, is the attitude of Christians toward the lost. Many of the African Christians are acting out of self-defense rather than sacrificial love when dealing with members of other religions. Pray that these African Christians may demonstrate a love and concern for others that transcends ethnic and racial divisions—especially to their Muslim neighbors.

Suffering and Revival in East Africa

Countries such as Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia need special consideration. In Sudan, millions have suffered extreme physical hardship, torture and enslavement at the hands of Islamic militants in an ongoing war. Eritrea and Ethiopia are two areas that are in constant conflict with each other. Christians are often caught in the middle of the political fighting.

Regardless of what they have been through, the Church in these areas continues to grow. After hearing about extreme suffering from a group of pastors in eastern Africa, a Christian reporter cried out, “How can you take it?” The answer was, “Faith in God! God takes care of his people. What is so vital is to bring God to the people to be bearers of the good news to a population drowning in violence and hate. People are tired of listening to empty words. We have to show Jesus. We must give out what we have received!”

Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13-14). Salt combats corruption and light dispels darkness. Salt and light are synonymous with truth. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. As his children walk as Jesus walked, they are salt and light in this region.

The Spiritual Condition in South Africa

In the 1850s and 1860s, there was a massive revival that affected all social groupings in South Africa. White Africaners and Black Zulus alike were affected by a powerful spirit of prayer brought on by the Holy Spirit. Today, South Africa has one of the most severe HIV epidemics in the world. By the end of 2005 there were more than five million people living with HIV in South Africa; according to UNAIDS estimates, almost one thousand people die each day due to AIDS in this area. After ten years of democracy in South Africa, many wounds are still left unhealed and many individuals remain lost. The Church is large, but people with a Christian background have fallen back into the demonic strongholds of racial strife and sexual immorality.

Pray for Perseverance and Integrity

Sometimes the difference between the boldest accomplishments and the most staggering failures is simply the willingness to persevere. Pray that God’s servants in eastern and southern Africa will persevere so that God will continue to bring beauty out of ashes. Many of these servants are ordinary Christians undertaking lifesaving ministries and are facing extraordinary risks in order to bring God’s love to those who do not know him.

Pray that all finances provided to help the Church minister the gospel will be used wisely and with integrity. Financial temptation is heavy in this part of the world where local culture dictates that people provide for their families and friends, often in ways that God’s word calls stealing. Pray for a revival in these regions that will bring healing in spiritual, physical and emotional lives. Pray for revival fire to bring reconciliation between all ethnic groups. And pray these revivals will be of the grandest scale.

Into Their World...The Tunni of Somalia

By Laurie Fortunak

The Tunni of Somalia are part of the Digil group, a sub-group of the Somali, the largest ethnic group in the country. The Tunni speak Af-Tunni from the Afro-Asiatic language family and some also speak Arabic as a secondary or trade language. They share similarities in culture, language and religion with the **Afar** and the Beja.

Many Tunni reside near the Juba and Shebelle Rivers in southern Somalia and are active in farming and agriculture. Bananas are the chief commercial and export crop; however, sugarcane, corn, beans, sesame and fruit are also grown. The Tunni men work through a system of mutual “help work parties,” overseen by a chief, who then sends the men out to work on special “work days.” The men are paid a fee and fed for their efforts. Although women are not members of the work groups, they help the men by either grinding grain for flour or herding cattle or camels, which provide milk, meat and skins.

The Tunni live in round huts that have mud walls and cone-shaped grass roofs; the wealthier families may have a porch attached to their hut. The inside of the hut is divided by a partition; the man sleeps near the door, while

the woman sleeps near the back of the hut. Because the Tunni are nearly one hundred percent Muslim, under Islamic law each man is allowed up to four wives; however, each wife and her children have their own hut.

The Tunni wear mainly cotton cloth and the dress resembles that of a gray or white Roman toga. The cloth is often saturated with butter in order to protect the individuals against the cold.

When a man desires to marry, he must pay a bride-price to the woman's parents. If this gift is accepted, the two marry and the wife comes under the care of her husband as well as all the members of her husband's family. If the wife is murdered, blood-vengeance may be taken by the husband and his family.

Although the Tunni are Muslim and are orthodox in their religious practices, few have a deep understanding of their faith. Although they believe that Jesus was an important prophet, many Tunni think of Christians as inferior to themselves.

The Tunni have no Christian resources available to them. The majority have never had the opportunity to hear the gospel. Pray that God's light and love will penetrate the darkness. Pray that the reality of Jesus Christ will grip the hearts and lives of the Tunni. For more information on the Tunni of Somalia, visit:

http://kcm.co.kr/bethany_eng/p_code5/2529.html
www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=tqq

(Information compiled from www.joshuaproject.net)

Laurie Fortunak is editorial coordinator of Lausanne World Pulse. She also serves as editorial coordinator for Evangelism and Missions Information Service (EMIS) and managing editor of Evangelical Missions Quarterly (EMQ)

STRATEGY, TRENDS & STATISTICS

Building Vision by Seeing Through the Chaos

By Peter Brierley

The Dutchman William van Dusen Wisharm once said, “The core of leadership is vision. Vision is seeing the potential purpose hidden in the chaos of the moment, but which could bring to birth new possibilities for a person, a company or a nation.” He might have added, “Or a church, a denomination or an agency.” Vision is not just the core of leadership, but the core of prophecy as well. So what is vision?

Examples of Seeing Through the Chaos

Vision is seeing the invisible, and then acting in faith on what you see. Moses “endured, seeing him who was invisible,” thereby turning a cluster of slave brick builders into a community of citizens ready to inhabit a new country. He had given them a moral code (via the instructions God gave him), a health code, an environmental code, an organisational code and a set of theological principles by which to live (the Ten Commandments). With the help of his father-in-law Jethro, Moses also gave them a judicial code. What he did not know at the outset, of course, was that he would have forty years to train the children of the Israelites in all these things. His leadership was not simply about taking two million people across a desert; it was about passing on the vision of growing as the people of God and conquering, under Joshua, the land God had promised them.

Abraham had also learned to “see through the chaos” of the moment. As Lot walked down the path toward Sodom and its fertile land, God told Abraham to look around. He saw the desert scrubs and patchy grass in

every direction, but still regarded it as a country. Later, Moses was awakened at night to count the stars; instead, he saw children. On a lonely hill, Moses recognised in the ram rustling in the bushes an alternative sacrifice for his son Isaac, foreshadowing God's eternal sacrificial provision. He had the ability to see the invisible, to look at what we all would see and see something else.

Five years ago I visited the pastor of Fishhoek Baptist Church, located in a suburb of Cape Town, South Africa. We visited a local squatter town where every other person had AIDS. He showed me a field opposite the camp and said, "See that?" South African fields are much the same as English fields, so it was easy for me to say yes. Pointing to the muddy grass in one part of the field, he said, "That's an AIDS hospital," and proceeded to show me where the entrance, the operating theatre, the reception and the out-patients' department would be. He saw through the chaos. When I wrote about this two years later I sent him my draft text to ensure accuracy. "Yes, it's fine," he wrote back, "and by the way, the AIDS hospital is now open and functioning!"

Jesus saw through the chaos also. In Matthew 26, after the last supper and with Judas already on his way to the high priests, Jesus and the other eleven apostles walked through the moonlit streets of Jerusalem en route to Gethsemane. Peter declared he would never forsake Jesus, even if he had to die for him; Jesus told him he would deny him three times before the cock crows. Then Jesus said, "After I am risen, I will meet you by the lake." While facing betrayal, arrest, flogging, an unjust trial, crucifixion and death, Jesus talked about meeting them by the lake. Jesus also saw through his death and resurrection toward his ascension and, through the coming of the Holy Spirit, the worldwide movement of his kingdom. That is strategic thinking!

What Seeing Through the Chaos Looks Like

If "seeing through the chaos" is the meat of vision, how do we do that?

- **Looking ahead to the future.** What will your church be like in 2020? Ask your elders or deacons what they think it will be like in fourteen years' time. If it is very different from what it is now, ask them why. If they find this difficult, instead ask them to explain what has happened in the last fourteen years. Strategic thinking is seeing through the chaos of all the changes to the durable and key elements which will mark the new situation.
- **Looking at the big picture of which your church or agency is just one part.** What will society be like in say 2020? What will the Church be like in 2020? Will it still be here? (Though probably very different, the answer must be yes.) What will churchgoers look like then? Which political party will be in power, and what differences will it have made? How many people will have AIDS? Will violence have been curbed or grown worse? Will education be similar or greatly changed? How will the Internet have changed our lives?
- **Answering the question "What is the one thing that I want to have done by then?"** This means looking at the impossible and believing, with the Lord's help, that all things are possible. It includes stating firmly the specifics of your dream. It must then be worked out; there needs to be a strategy by which it can be accomplished. This is how vision is built—by identifying the key steps by which it will be fulfilled.

William Blake caught the gist of this in his poem "The Everlasting Gospel," when he wrote, "...Leads you to believe a lie,/ When you see with, not through the eye." Seeing through the eye is what is needed. Vision looks through the chaos of the moment to what is beyond, in the context of the big picture. "Here I stand," said Martin Luther, "I can do no other." We need to pray as Origen, one of the early Church Fathers, did: "May the Lord Jesus put his hands on our eyes also, for then we too shall begin to look at not what is seen but at what is not seen."

Dr. Peter Brierley is the Senior Lausanne Associate for Church Research. He attended Lausanne I in 1974 and has been involved with the Lausanne movement since 1984. Formerly a government statistician, he is currently executive director of Christian Research, a UK charity which produces resource volumes like *Religious Trends* and the *UK Christian Handbook*. Brierley can be reached at admin@christian-research.org.uk.

LAUSANNE REPORTS

God Means Business! Seven Brief Observations on Business as Mission, BAM

By Mats Tunehag

1. BAM means being a follower of Jesus.

What does Jesus say are the key characteristics of true followers of him? His followers help the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick and those in prison (Matthew 25:31-40). Unemployment is a major underlying cause to malnourishment, starvation, homelessness, disease, limited access to medical treatment, debt and crime. Providing people with jobs helps alleviate and prevent these dire conditions. One may paraphrase Jesus' words in Matthew 25: "I was jobless and you gave me a job!" Entrepreneurs have a special calling to serve in the marketplace, by doing business "as unto the Lord."

2. BAM is rooted in scripture and history.

God is the original entrepreneur who started with an idea and created a number of good things. We are created in God's image, to be creative and to create good things. God told Adam and Eve to "till the garden," to be involved in a value adding process and to live in trustful relationships. Business is rooted in God's character and in who we are. The central business activity of providing meaningful and sustainable employment is a demonstration of justice and love and is grounded in the character of God. In history there are many examples of God-fearing men and women who have loved God and served people through business. Abraham was a successful businessman. Jesus worked in a small family business for many years. The honorable woman in Proverbs 31 is a businesswoman. We should learn from mission pioneers like the Nestorians who conducted business along the Silk Road and the Moravian entrepreneurs who had a far-reaching impact. "The Father of Modern Norway"—Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824)—witnessed the transformation of people and communities as he catalyzed a church movement and facilitated an entrepreneurship movement.

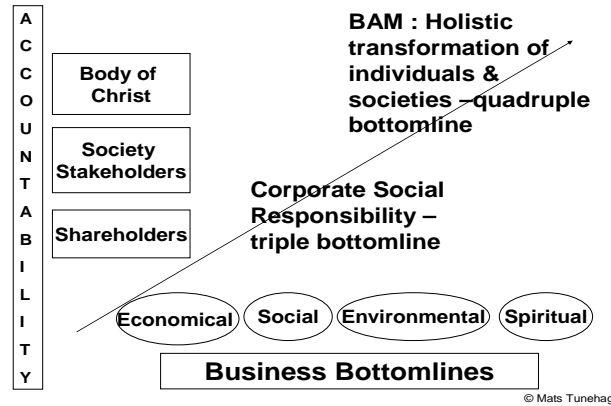
3. BAM is a relevant response to needs.

Where you find the poorest of the poor, you will often see unemployment ranging from thirty to eighty percent. The name of Jesus is rarely heard in these regions and the rampant unemployment makes people vulnerable to human trafficking; little prospect of decent jobs creates high-risk environments for trafficking and prostitution. These evils and dire needs correlate. We can never have long-term, sustainable and relevant solutions unless we address economic issues and business development. BAM gives an extraordinary opportunity to demonstrate the love of God among the least, the lost and the lowliest.

4. BAM has a kingdom of God purpose and impact.

BAM is not just any business activity or job creation scheme. The Russian mafia does business and human trafficking creates jobs. Business as Mission is about real, viable, sustainable and profitable businesses. It has a kingdom of God purpose and impact and it leads to transformation of people and societies spiritually, economically and socially. And it is all done for the greater glory of God.

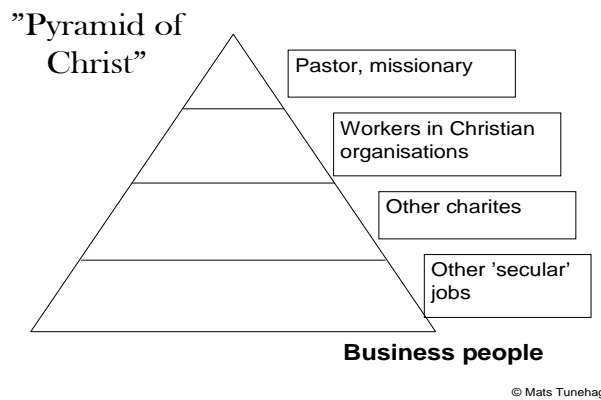
5. BAM includes the holistic transformation of individuals and societies.



The graph shows a continuum. It goes from a limited paradigm where profit for shareholders is the primary purpose of business to a broader paradigm with other stakeholders and bottom lines. Corporate social responsibility considers social and environmental impact of business and also recognizes society at large. The BAM paradigm includes all four bottom lines and also engages the body of Christ among the accountability entities.

6. BAM includes recognising the body of Christ.

We need to tear down the “Pyramid of Christ,” which permeates so much of our thinking, language and actions. We tend to encourage the climbing of the pyramid where “serving God full-time” reaches its climax on the top. The Greek Gnostic thinking values people with “spiritual vocations” and looks down upon people dealing with business. This is not only a heresy; it has also debilitated Christians in business to fulfill their calling as business people. If God has called you to business, do not lower yourself to become a pastor! Your business calling is your highest calling. And if you are called to be a pastor that is your highest calling.



7. BAM is a growing global movement.

There are a growing number of national and regional BAM networks and consultations. The [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#) has acknowledged the biblical imperative and strategic importance of Business as Mission. An increasing number of books and articles (see below) are being published. Churches and mission agencies are developing BAM programs and thousands of business people are moving from merely sitting in church pews and giving money to making a difference around the world in and through business. Perhaps you can be one of them.

Mats Tunehag is a senior associate on Business as Mission for both the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Alliance. He has developed several global strategic alliances for Business as Mission.

LEADERSHIP MEMO

Christ-like Leadership and a Passion for the Gospel in the Lausanne Movement

By Doug Birdsall

It has only been a few short weeks since our wonderful Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering (YLG-06) in Malaysia. Let me share with you some words of great encouragement we have received concerning the conference. One week after the gathering, I received a call from my long-time friend Dr. Paul Borthwick. He opened the conversation by saying, "The Younger Leaders Gathering was the most strategic gathering I have ever attended in my life."

Dr. Peter Kuzmic, one of the YLG-06 plenary speakers, shared his enthusiasm: "I came away from the Younger Leaders Gathering greatly encouraged about the future of Lausanne. It is moving forward with vision, focus, an influx of energetic young leadership and with great promise for the future."

Grace Samson, an exceptionally gifted young leader from South Africa who served on the Program Planning Team, wrote to say, "I cannot say it enough, I am so grateful that God allowed me to experience the best event ever in my life and ministry experience. Now I can confidently tell you that my life has been changed forever. I can sense that God will do far more through my life as a result of being part of YLG-06."

What a powerful experience it was to be gathered together with 550 younger leaders between the age of 25 and 35 from 112 countries around the world! This group represented a microcosm of the global Church. Twenty-eight percent of the participants were from Western Europe, North America and Australia. Seven percent were from Eastern Europe. The majority (sixty-five percent) were from Africa, Latin America and Asia. These younger leaders were joined by 150 men and women from around the world who served as mentors, speakers, supporting personnel and Lausanne senior leaders.

In the course of the week, the younger leaders were familiarized with the heritage and the vision of the Lausanne Movement. They not only developed meaningful relationships with people from around the world, but caught the "spirit of Lausanne," embracing the ideals of the Lausanne Covenant. Inspired by the "spirit of Lausanne," nearly one hundred participants volunteered to help with planning for Lausanne III to be held in 2010.

Plans are in place for follow-up "Younger Leader Global Connections" to be held in all eleven regions of the world in the course of the next two years. These will be coordinated by our International Deputy Directors. We look forward to keeping you informed of these regional gatherings for younger leaders and plans continue to develop and unfold. We are so grateful for the hundreds of people who served in a variety of capacities over the course of the last two years for the Younger Leaders Gathering. Dr. Ted Yamamori stated, "I am hopeful for the future of world evangelization and for the future of the Lausanne Movement. God is raising up an outstanding new generation of leaders."

Many other exciting events are also coming within the next year. Let me share them with you.

1. Budapest '07: International Lausanne Leadership Meeting, June 2007

It is anticipated that the bi-annual meeting of the International Lausanne Leadership Team will bring together

between nearly 250 people in Budapest in June 2007. These meetings will be tremendously important as the public launching of plans for the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization to be held in 2010.

In addition to those who serve on the established leadership groups within Lausanne, four additional groups integral to the work of the Lausanne Movement will be included: Leighton Ford will convene a group of twenty-five senior leaders who were part of Lausanne's "First Generation of Leadership"; Brian Stiller is organizing a 20-year reunion of those who were at the Singapore '87 Younger Leaders Conference; and twenty-five younger leaders from the YLG-06 in Malaysia will be included as we work to intentionally assimilate this new talent into the Lausanne Movement. Finally, the Advisory Council and the Executive Leadership Team for Lausanne III will be with us.

We have invited the [World Evangelical Alliance](#) (WEA) to participate with us in every dimension of planning and leadership for Lausanne III and we are delighted that Geoff Tunnicliffe, international director for WEA, and Dr. Bertil Ekstrom, recently appointed director of the [WEA Mission Commission](#), will be serving with us.

2. Lausanne III: Leadership Team Building a Strong Foundation

Initial meetings were convened by Blair Carlson with Dr. Hwa Yung and Ramez Atallah to begin the planning process for Lausanne III. Yung, the Methodist Bishop of Malaysia and also the vice chair of the Asia Lausanne Committee, will serve as the chair of the Participant Selection Team for Lausanne III. Atallah, executive director of the [Bible Society of Egypt](#) and a long-time leader in Lausanne, will serve as chair of the Program Planning Team. Carlson, who served for twenty-six years as a crusade director for the [Billy Graham Evangelistic Association](#), has accepted the appointment to serve as the Congress director.

3. Oxford Consultation: "Integrity in Funding and Reporting"

A two-day meeting took place on 10-11 November 2006 in Oxford, England, to plan for a Lausanne Consultation to be convened next year on the topic of "Integrity in Funding and Reporting." This preliminary meeting brought together eighteen leaders of foundations, international mission organizations and major ministries in the non-western world. The larger consultation, to be held in 2007, will seek to bring theological reflection and constructive solutions to some of the problems we are currently facing in the world evangelization enterprise. These issues have to do with inflated reporting, which is often generated in response to perceived pressure for quantifiable results. We are seeking to address the ways in which legitimate concerns can lead to unintended consequences.

4. Theology Working Group Consultation, February 2007

Dr. Chris Wright, chair of the Lausanne Theology Working Group (TWG), reports that good progress is being made in preparations for an agenda-setting consultation of the TWG to be held near Nairobi, Kenya in February 2007. This consultation, entitled "Following Jesus in Our Broken World," will convene thirty to thirty-five mission theologians from around the world for a working consultation. This is planned as the first in a series of annual consultations for the Theology Working Group in preparation for Lausanne III. Wright says, "Our title, 'Following Jesus in Our Broken World' is intended to focus on the demands of radical discipleship, and the inseparable ethical dimensions of conversion. The title also encourages us to recognize that we are part of the brokenness of the world, in our very flawed Christian responses, attitudes and behaviours."

Reflections

As we look around at current events, toward future events and continue the development younger leaders, my thoughts come back to the importance of the very theme of the Younger Leaders Gathering: to live and lead like Jesus. This is not just a message for younger leaders; it is a message for all who have been called into Christian leadership and fellowship.

My prayer as we conclude 2006 and set our eyes toward 2007 is that in the face of adversity or uncertainty, we resolve to live even more intentionally and passionately as children of the light. May our lives be reflections and very incarnations of Christ to reach out and transform the world with the power and hope of the gospel.

As I close, I would like to ask for your prayers on two matters. First, please pray for wisdom and for God's blessing as we work to strengthen our Lausanne regional networks in Africa and in Latin America. Second, please pray for Christ-like character, passion and integrity in all our Christian brothers and sisters, particularly those in positions of leadership, for the strengthening of the whole Church to more effectively take the whole gospel to the whole world. May God continue to wonderfully bless you.

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

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