



Lausanne World Pulse

Providing Evangelism & Missions News, Information and Analysis

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

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PUBLISHER'S MEMO

Christ in Culture: At the Very Heart of the Mission of God

By Doug Birdsall

This issue of Lausanne World Pulse features a theme that is at the very heart of the mission of God: "Christ in Culture." Throughout the twenty centuries of Christian history, missionaries have drawn inspiration and instruction from the model of Christ's life and ministry.

Next year, four thousand evangelical leaders from two hundred countries will gather in Cape Town, South Africa, for the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization ([Cape Town 2010](#)). We will gather together to consider the ways in which we can most effectively live and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all cultures and all people.

In John 1:14, we read, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." Christ's ministry was sacrificial, incarnational, gracious, and truthful. We pray these qualities would increasingly be the hallmarks of those who are his witnesses.

As you read and reflect upon the issues in this month's LWP, I trust you will draw instruction and inspiration that will strengthen the ministry that has been entrusted to your care.

Cape Town 2010 Update

Let me update you on the planning for Cape Town 2010. This is an exciting time in the [Lausanne Movement](#). The Participant Selection Committee, under the leadership of Bishop Hwa Yung of Malaysia, is working with national committees to select the four thousand participants. It is our expressed desire that the participants will reflect the demographic, theological, cultural realities of the global Church. They plan complete their work of identifying and inviting participants by June 2009.

Dr. Chris Wright, international director of John Stott's Langham Partnership, is convening the Theology Working Group for its annual meeting which will take place this month in Panama City. This year, they are dealing with issues related to "The Whole Church."

An International Fundraising Team is working under the leadership of Eran Wickramaratne of Sri Lanka. This team is committed to raising funds from churches, Christian organizations, foundations, and individuals in every region of the world. The vision of the team is to build unity and ownership for the congress by ensuring that the congress is fully funded through a truly cooperative effort of joyful giving for the work of world evangelization.

In October, we will begin the Global Conversation Project in partnership with *Christianity Today* (CT). Every month for the twelve months leading up to Cape Town 2010, we will produce an article for CT that will feature

one of the issues in the congress program for Lausanne III. These articles will be translated and published in magazines around the world. Conversations will then be facilitated in each of the official languages of the congress so that Cape Town 2010 will be enriched by perspectives and wisdom from around the world.

Volunteers: Every week we receive inquiries from individuals and organizations eager to help with congress preparations. If you are interested in helping with communications, information technology, logistics, serving as a steward, etc., please send a note with your interest and availability to: info@lausanne.org.

There is much more we will be sharing as we proceed toward Cape Town 2010. Please continue to visit the following websites for additional information: www.lausanne.org and www.capetown2010.com.

Please keep the leadership for the congress in your prayers. The team is made up of women and men from every region of the world. As such, there are special challenges inherent in having a team distributed so widely around the world. Thank you for your kindred spirit and for your prayers on behalf of the Lausanne Movement. May God enable us to be people who bring hope and peace to our cultures throughout the world as we serve Jesus Christ.

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

NEWS BRIEFS

ARABIAN GULF: Frontiers Begins New “Gap” Program

Frontiers will soon begin a new “Gap” program in the Arabian Gulf. In the past, the program, which prepares new overseas workers through on-the-job training, has been held in northern Iraq. The new program will operate in the Arabian Gulf where Muslims are less needy and the cost of living is higher. More than eighty Gap workers have been sent to Iraq in the last five years, and more than seventy percent of Gap graduates go on to long-term service with Frontiers or other agencies. ([Frontiers](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: Youth Gearing Up for Online Mission Trip

Nearly two thousand teens have signed up to participate in the “Online Mission Trip,” an organized effort to inundate popular social networking sites with the message of Christ. For two weeks, 1–14 February 2009, students from the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, Bermuda, and elsewhere will electronically share the gospel with those both far away and right next door. Training for the event was held in January. Participants will upload videos and photos, post links and blogs, and use status updates to share their personal walks with God. ([Assist News](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: JAARS Gets New Wings

JAARS, established in 1948 by **Wycliffe Bible Translators** co-founder William Cameron Townsend, has acquired a new Kodiak aircraft. JAARS is the first mission or humanitarian organization to purchase and receive the new plane, which it will use in its mission to provide support to Bible translation efforts. The Kodiak comes at a time when JAARS’ primarily piston-driven fleet is aging to the point of affecting the group’s ability to carry out its work. The Kodiak seats ten, has a turboprop engine capable of short take-offs and landings, uses jet fuel, and can carry a 3,100-pound load. ([Assist News](#))

CHINA: Pastor Escorted Out of Beijing Again

According to [ChinaAid](#), on 18 December 2008, Pastor “Bike” Zhang Mingxuan was forcibly escorted out of Beijing by Public Security Bureau officers. The officers dropped Mingxuan off in Hubei with twenty yuan to pay for a hotel room. This was the second time in two weeks the pastor had been forcibly escorted out of Beijing. The previous incident occurred 9 December 2008, when police broke into a home where Mingxuan was

staying with another pastor. ChinaAid reports there have been a series of attacks by government officials against Mingxuan and the house church network of which he is president, the Chinese House Church Alliance. In October 2008, Mingxuan and his family were reportedly kicked out of their homes, his sons beaten, and he and his wife held by police for several days. ([ChinaAid](#))

CONGO: Hundreds Killed in Christmas Massacre

Several news sources have reported that a Christmas massacre took place in the Democratic Republic of Congo, killing an estimated four hundred people. The killing spree is reported to have happened in various villages in northeastern Congo. One of the sites was a Catholic church where forty-five civilians, mostly women and children, were reportedly hacked to death. Ugandan officials are said to be placing blame on the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a Uganda-based rebel group. The LRA denies responsibility for the attacks on 25 December 2008 and in the days following. Armies of Uganda, south Sudan, and Democratic Republic of Congo were reported to have carried out a joint offensive against the LRA in mid-December after its leader refused to sign a peace deal. ([Mission Network News](#))

FINLAND: Nokia Revival Gathers Thousands over the Years

Over the past eighteen years an estimated fifteen thousand people have come to Jesus through the "Nokia Revival," a celebration that began when former Lutheran vicar Markku Koivisto was miraculously healed of terminal cancer in 1991. After Koivisto parted with the Lutheran Church, the revival continued and is now a denomination called Nokia Mission Church. The revival has reportedly helped heal many others and has been the starting point of numerous church cell groups. In the highly-secularized, sparsely-populated region of northern Europe, gatherings the size of the Nokia Revival are unusual. Finland has an estimated population of about five million people, with only ten percent attending church each month. ([Assist News](#))

GAZA: Palestinian Christians Caught in the Middle

A Baptist church located near a police station targeted by Israeli bombs was reportedly destroyed by the strikes in the Gaza Strip. Carl Moeller of [Open Doors USA](#) described the crisis in Gaza as an "unprecedented amount of violence against the Palestinian people." Moeller said Palestinian Christians are not accepted by Israel nor by their own community, leaving them caught in the crossfire. ([Mission Network News](#))

GAZA: World Vision Appeals for Aid to Thousands Suffering in Violence

[World Vision](#) (WV) has launched an appeal for \$1 million USD to provide emergency assistance to fifty thousand of the most affected people in Gaza. As soon as the situation in Gaza permits, WV plans to provide food parcels to the most vulnerable families. WV will also distribute blankets and other basic supplies to help them cope short term. "Our priority now is to assist those who are living in intolerable conditions with limited access to food, water, or medical facilities," said Charles Clayton, WV's national director for Jerusalem-West Bank-Gaza. "Eighty percent of the people in Gaza are already dependent on food aid, and even those who had relied on a meager daily income now find that it is no longer available." WV continues to advocate for a complete cessation of violence, and for all parties to respect International Humanitarian Law and the Geneva Convention. ([World Vision](#))

INDIA: Gospel for Asia Missionaries Arrested

In December 2008, radical Hindu activists brought a church construction project to a halt in Uttar Pradesh, India. The extremists descended on the church, placing vermilion-red flags on the building, which was a sign that the building had been taken for Hindu use. [Gospel for Asia](#) (GFA) missionary Kushal Samuel was arrested after trying to talk to the extremists; GFA district leader Harish Kumar was beaten and also taken to jail by the attackers. Although false charges were invented by the attackers, police later released both men. Church construction, however, remained halted. ([Gospel for Asia](#))

INDIA: Supreme Court Orders Protection for Orissa Christians

India's Supreme Court has ordered authorities in Orissa to provide protection to thousands of Christians who fled their homes last year during some of the worst religious violence in decades. Founder and president of

Serve India Ministries, Ebenezer Samuel, said the court's decision is significant and not just a political statement. Violence against Christians broke out in August 2008 after the murder of a local Hindu leader. Samuel said that despite the violence, church growth has not slowed. "The Christians in Orissa are not going to abandon their faith," he said. ([Mission Network News](#))

JAPAN: *The Manga Messiah* Comes to Japan

Operation Mobilization (OM) workers will be using a new tool, *The Manga Messiah*, to communicate the gospel in Japan. Published by **New Life League**, the 300-page comic book depicts Jesus' life from birth to resurrection. Comics in Japan are enjoyed by all age groups, with *Manga* now a large part of the Japanese publishing industry. During the Christmas season, *The Manga Messiah* was passed out by volunteers to busy shoppers in the town of Karuizawa. One missionary stated, "For reaching the Japanese, this book is far more effective than showing the JESUS film." ([Assist News](#))

LATIN AMERICA: Latin America Mission Appoints New President

Cypress Community Church (Salinas, California, USA) pastor Steven Rayford Johnson has been appointed the new president of the **Latin America Mission**. Johnson will take office in early February, succeeding the interim president, Jack Voelkel. Johnson was commissioned in 1987 to serve in Argentina with **OC International**. There, he co-pastored an Argentine church for four years alongside the president of the Argentine National Association of Evangelicals. He and the OC team developed a ministry that drew together leaders, pastors, and teachers from Argentina and Chile to provide interdenominational support, training, and encouragement. ([Latin America Mission](#))

MALDIVES: Non-Muslims Declared Non-citizens

In December 2008, the **Institute on Religion and Public Policy** (IRPP) released a full legal analysis of the new Maldivian constitution, which the agency had been watching since August 2008 for its tough stance against religious freedom. While the constitution offers new protections for human rights, including freedom of assembly and expression, the document is severely restrictive in that article 9(d) states, "A non-Muslim may not become a citizen of the Maldives." Recommending that the article be removed, the IRPP noted that such reform would be unlikely without significant international pressure. ([Institute on Religion and Public Policy](#))

PAKISTAN: Christians' Homes Destroyed for Building of a Stable

International Christian Concern reported that a powerful Muslim village elder and his nephews forcibly evicted approximately thirty impoverished Christian families from their homes to make way for a livestock stable. The incident has left the families homeless in their village near Lahore, Pakistan. Boota Masih, a local Christian elder, said the hard-line Muslim leader of the Kotla Punjubaig village and his nephews carried deadly firearms when they invaded the homes and tossed the people and their belongings out. The leader, Muhammad Mansha, appeared to have permission from local officials in the Land Requisition Department to take over the land where the homes were located. ([International Christian Concern](#))

THAILAND: Book of Hope Continues Working Despite Unrest

Amidst months of political unrest leading up to the selection of a new prime minister, **Book of Hope**, a ministry based in Florida, was able to continue its regular work in Thailand despite turmoil that included protestors occupying Bangkok's main international airport for several days in November 2008. The organization is piloting a new method in distributing its materials, including working directly with families. Innovation manager Wayne Brown believes the recent upheaval in Thailand has led to its people being more receptive to the gospel. ([Mission Network News](#))

UNITED KINGDOM: Summer School Training in Jewish Evangelism

UK-based **Christian Witness to Israel** (CWI) will offer training in sharing the gospel with the Jewish community. "A Kosher Encounter," held in North London at CWI's International Summer School, will explore Jewish life, culture, faith, and history. Attendees will meet experienced workers and share the gospel in the heart of London's Jewish community. The program will be held 21–30 July 2009. ([Christian Witness to Israel](#))

UNITED KINGDOM: New Leader for Evangelical Alliance

Steve Clifford will become the new general director of the [Evangelical Alliance](#) (EA), effective April 2009. Clifford has been behind a range of national church campaigns in the past decade. Former EA general director Joel Edwards stepped down last year to devote more time to the [World Evangelical Alliance](#)'s anti-poverty movement, Micah Challenge. Clifford previously chaired the leadership team of international youth ministry Soul Survivor, where he will remain active. ([Evangelical Alliance](#))

UNITED STATES: SGA Celebrates Seventy-fifth Anniversary

The [Slavic Gospel Association](#) (SGA) is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2009 with a series of publications and special events across North America. SGA was founded in Chicago and will host a major international conference there in September as part of the celebration. In 1934, a young immigrant from Belarus named Peter Deyneka, along with noted pastor Dr. Paul Rood and a group of Christian businessmen, founded what was then known as the Russian Gospel Association in the back room of Hedstrom's Shoe Store in Chicago. Deyneka, a powerful preacher known as "Peter Dynamite," had a deep passion to win the people in his homeland to Christ. President Dr. Robert Provost said that SGA continues to serve faithful evangelical churches, both here and in the former Soviet Union. ([Slavic Gospel Association](#))

ZIMBABWE: Food Supplies Unable to Reach Intended Destination

Responding to the enormous need for emergency food in Zimbabwe, [Serving in Mission](#) (SIM) partnered with the SIM Zimbabwe HOPE for AIDS team, [Multi Ministries](#), and the Central Methodist Church of Johannesburg to distribute a high nutrition porridge meal that has been used extensively across southern Africa in areas of starvation. Unfortunately, permission to import the relief food into Zimbabwe was reportedly withheld. So instead, the food was distributed in two Zimbabwean refugee camps in Johannesburg and Musina, South Africa. The joint relief effort continues to look for ways to reach those in Zimbabwe. Estimates of those in need of food there are roughly 5.5 million people. ([Mission Network News](#))

ZIMBABWE: African Church Conference Calls Zimbabwe Rule Illegitimate

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) has pledged to pray for an end to "illegitimate rule in Zimbabwe." Meeting in Mozambique, the conference said in a resolution dated 11 December 2008 that Robert Mugabe "is using power-sharing negotiations as a strategy for wasting time and exercising continued control" over the nation. The AACC called on the African Union, comprised of fifty-three nations, to declare the current Zimbabwe regime "illegitimate" and stop recognizing it. The AACC set 25 January 2009 as a day for churches around the world to engage in a special Africa Day of Prayer and Fasting for Justice in Zimbabwe. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

THEMED ARTICLES: Christ in Culture

Christ and Culture: Re-educating Congregations for Missional Engagement with Their Contexts

By Glenn Smith

Over the course of the past sixty years there has been a renewed interest in the relationship of local congregations and the contexts in which they minister. The field has been well prepared with many good articles and books on the subject. In this article, I would like to point in a further direction: How do we re-educate our churches and parishes to engage their contexts in a missional manner as we pursue the spiritual transformation of our communities?

Recent Publications

Over the past five years several excellent books have been written to further explore the notions Niebuhr proposed. He used a

Over the past decade several new books have been published on the subject (see sidebar). Each one responds in one way or another to H. Richard Niebuhr's groundbreaking work in 1951.¹

However, this article looks beyond the use of theological or missiological models for cultural understanding. Both Karl Barth and Lesslie Newbigin remind us that the local congregation is the place for members to be trained, supported, and nourished as they pursue God's mission in their situations. We can no longer sit comfortably and debate the relationship of the Church and culture. How do we pick up the challenge that Newbigin raised in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* and re-educate the whole Church to engage their contexts with the good news of God's rule in Jesus Christ? Here are five ideas to begin the re-education.

1. At the heart of our reflections as Christians lies our understanding of God's intentions for human history. These intentions read like a narrative. Numerous writers have summarized.² My best take on the storyline reads like this:

Reality as we know, see, and experience it is the result of a creator who made the world and fashioned creatures in his image to live in harmony, well-being, and peace (shalom). These creatures were given a series of mandates to pursue, so that one day all of creation would be flooded with the creator's life in a way for which it was prepared from the very beginning of the human story. By tragic irony, the creature rebelled against these intentions. This brought dissonance at every level of creation. However, the creator acted astoundingly and solved the problem in an entirely appropriate manner—through Israel and ultimately through Jesus—to rescue creatures/creation from the plight of the rebellion. The full scope of this rescue is not yet apparent, but the story continues with the creator acting by his Spirit within the world to bring it to that purpose originally foreseen. To this end, the creator has created a new community of witnesses to this story. While waiting, this community is called to speak, to serve, to live in loving obedience to Jesus Christ, to be a sign of God's peaceful purposes for the communities, and to dialogue to subvert other ways of telling stories in their situation. One does this in patient attendance to the grand finalé of the story.

It is in the context of the narrative that we as Christians pursue our lives and purposes in the world. More than ever, we need to educate our churches in the breadth of God's story.

typological methodology that has allowed us to better understand the issues. Numerous critiques of his method exist. Below are five recent texts that will help a congregation to learn more about the issues.

1. **Christ and Culture.** Graham Ward. 2005. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. This is by far the most academic analysis of the subject by an excellent British missiologist. Using an apologetic approach, Ward explores a Christology that takes all of culture seriously. This text continues the fine work he did in *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2005).
2. **Christ and Culture Revisited.** D.A. Carson. 2008. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Eerdmans. Originally published in French, this fine piece is Carson's contribution to the subject through the lens of biblical theology. He tackles several contemporary themes to make links to the subject.
3. **Rethinking Christ and Culture—A Post-Christendom Perspective.** Craig Carter. 2006. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Brazos Press. This Canadian scholar tackles Niebuhr's misrepresentation of the Anabaptist tradition and illustrates how the "New Law" Type can find its way in our complex contexts today.
4. **Making the Best of It—Following Christ in the Real World.** John Stackhouse. 2008. New York: Oxford University Press. This is a must-read for congregations seeking to tackle the question with an eye to ethical practices in our complex modern contexts. Stackhouse analyses three authors—C.S. Lewis, Richard Niebuhr, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer—on the subject and then articulates a Christian practice for today.

2. Congregations need to be able to identify worldviews in order to reflect upon their particular contexts.

Worldviews are primarily lenses through which we look at what life is all about. Generally speaking, they are the series of presuppositions that groups of people hold, consciously and unconsciously, about the basic make-up of the community, relationship, practices, and objects of daily life, whether they are of great signification or of little importance. They are like the foundations of a house—vital but invisible. The make-up of a worldview is based upon the interaction of one's ultimate beliefs and the global environment within which one lives. They deal with the perennial issues of life, such as religion and spirituality, and contain answers to even simple questions, such as whether we eat from plates or how to launder our clothing.

3. Congregations need to understand that worldviews are communicated through the channels of culture.

We should be careful to not confuse culture and worldview, although they are in constant relationship with one another. *Culture* is foremost a network of meanings by which a particular social group is able to recognize itself as such through a common history and a way of life. This network of meanings is rooted in ideas (including beliefs, values, attitudes, and rules of behaviour), rituals, and material objects, including symbols that become a source for identity, such as the language we speak, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, and the way we organise space. This network is not a formal and hierarchical structure. It is defined in modern society by constant change, mobility, reflection, and ongoing new life experiences.

This is opposed to traditional societies where culture was transmitted from one generation to another vertically within the community structures. Modernity still transmits some aspects of culture like language and basic knowledge vertically through the bias of the school system, but once this is done, the horizontal transmission of culture through friendship, peers, and socio-professional status become more important.

Worldviews may be studied in terms of four features: characteristic stories, fundamental symbols, habitual praxis, and a set of questions and answers. These presuppositions interact with each other in a variety of complex and interesting ways. By studying the intersection of these big themes, the practitioner can unearth the worldview of the context under study.

Communities often reveal their worldviews by the cultural network they produce and constantly reproduce in social interactions, objects, and symbols: from dollars to metro tickets, from office towers to streetcars, from pottery to poetry, from places of worship to sacred texts, from emblems to funerary monuments, from stadiums to crosses.

Symbols provide the hermeneutic grid to perceive how the world is and how we might live in it: these symbols provide a vision *of* reality and a vision *for* it. Symbols describe the typical behaviour of a society and vice versa: the celebration of important events, the usual means of dealing with dissonance, and the rituals associated with birth, puberty, marriage, and death. And in many communities, their symbols and characteristic behaviour are also focused in stories. Furthermore, the answers to fundamental questions such as “Who are we?” “Where are we?” and “What are the problems we face and how will we solve them?” give us great insight into the worldviews of a community.

4. We need to help our members rehabilitate the place religion plays in culture and worldview. The polemic between religion, faith, and spirituality is not helpful in the re-education process. *Religion* is that which one holds to be of ultimate importance in a more or less explicit belief system, through oral or written traditions. Religion maintains an indistinguishable link with spirituality. It is at the heart of our human nature. *Spirituality* is the kind of life that is formed by the religious dimensions of a worldview. It is the expression of faith that is formed by reference to understanding (the rational component) and by experience (the spirit component) with the ultimate.

Christian spirituality is our self-transcendent capacity as human beings to recognize and to participate in God's creative and redemptive activity in all creation. The interest of Christians in the subject is not new, although there is a renewed awareness of the subject in the past several years. Our understanding of the word *spirituality*

should not be separated from previous expressions like *holiness, godliness, walking with God, or discipleship*. All of these words emphasize a formal commitment to being alive to God the creator and connected in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. Spiritual formation is a synonym for spiritual growth. It focuses our attention on how the Holy Spirit works in us to conform us to the image of God in Jesus Christ. The Spirit works in us because of God’s love for us and because of the consequences of evil in the world since the fall. It is the Trinitarian work of the Godhead to stimulate followers of Jesus in their individual lives.

In the local community of faith, we are stimulated to participate in God’s project for human history through the ways and means revealed in scripture. Spiritual formation is also about those spiritual practices that the follower of Jesus pursues under the guidance of the Holy Spirit so as to more readily receive God’s transforming grace.

But this transformation is intimately linked to God’s mission in the world. We need to constantly affirm that the creator is in the process of reconciling the *whole created order to himself*. God has called the Church to *embody* this reconciliation that he desires for all that he sustains.

The marginalization of the social significance of religion and church involvement in modern civil societies (also defined as *secularization*) calls us to reconsider our devotion to Christ much more seriously.

Spiritual formation is about empowering Christians to live their faith in the world. True Christian spirituality cannot be divorced from the struggle for justice and care for the poor and the oppressed. The essence of following Jesus means living a fully human life in the world in union with Jesus Christ and his people and growing in conformity to his person. Following Jesus is a grateful and heartfelt “Yes” expressed to God both in act and attitude. It is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminded his readers as he wrote from prison,

Jeremiah says that at the moment of his people’s great need still one shall buy houses and acres in this land, as a sign of trust in the future. May God give it to us daily. I do not mean the faith which flees the world, but the one that endures the world and which loves the world and remains true to the world in spite of all the suffering which it contains for us. Our marriage shall be a “yes” to God’s earth; it shall strengthen our courage to act and accomplish something on earth. I fear Christians who stand with one leg upon the earth and also stand with one leg in heaven.³

Description	Fundamental Principles	Key Biblical Notations	Notes from History
Christ against culture; a decisive break	There is an opposition between what God says and what Jesus Christ represents. Christians are to withdraw from culture.	1 John 2:12-17	Tertullian at the end of the second century; monastic movements and many modern-day fundamentalist movements
Christ of culture	There is an implicit accommodation and common agreement between theology and culture—there is no conflict.	Christendom	Gnosticism in its historical and modern-day versions. Abélard in the eleventh century.
Christ above culture	Christ accomplished the demands of culture—a new synthesis emerges.	Matthew 5:17-19; Romans 13:1-7; Matthew 22:21	St. Thomas Aquinas in the twelfth century; most modern-day academic assessments of the subject
Christ and culture	Obedience in spite of conflict, but	Paul in Romans	Martin Luther’s assessment of

in paradox	Christ overcomes the duality.		two kingdoms and two vocations
Christ transforms culture	Transformation	John 1:1-18; Revelation	St. Augustine; John Calvin

Endnotes

1. See the summary at the conclusion of this article. Numerous critiques of Niebuhr's typology exist. The best one is the 1996 book edited by Diane Yeager, *Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture*. Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Abingdon Press.

2. In the past decade, many Christian authors have attempted to summarize God's project in human history in a succinct paragraph. Tom Wright (*The New Testament and the People of God*, p.133) and Richard Hays (*The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, p. 190) employed the most recent insights in narrative theology, while maintaining an historical focus on the faith. This helped the Church understand God's story in fresh ways in theology and ethics. Brian McLaren (*The Story We Find Ourselves In*) applies the method in an altogether different literary genre, which he calls creative nonfiction. He employs it for the broader theme of the authentic mission encounter of the Church with our culture that has been explored by many authors since Lesslie Newbigin first published his 1987 work *Foolishness to the Greeks*. One fascinating summary of the Christian story is found in the Montréal novelist Yan Martel's fascinating novel, *Life of Pi* (ch.17).

3. 1972. *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Ed. Eberhard Bethge, translated by Christian Kaiser Verlag. New York: Macmillan.

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Shalom & Eirene: The Full Framework for Health Care

By Apolos Landa Tucto

Our present world and society is longing for meaning and wholeness. A major contributor to this state is the dualistic worldview legacy of modern, Western culture. Rich and poor, male and female, white and black are asked at every corner to choose between different dimensions of human life, as if the lines of these dimensions were not crossing each other at one point: the person. According to Kenneth Luscombe,

Body and soul, health and disease, individual and community, order and freedom, power and love, God and the world, subject and object, fact and value, science and religion and so on, are viewed as if these were irreconcilable opposites.¹

Cradled in this context, the mentality of the Church and Christianity has not given enough centrality to wholeness and harmony in all spheres of human life, especially in its temporal and physical conditions and relationships. Thus health, equity, and justice, as key conditions for reconciling humanity and the world into wholeness, tend to be neglected.

Preparation for Just Eternal Destiny?

Western theology did not escape that tendency and became profoundly influenced by Greek speculative philosophy. A dualistic distinction was drawn between what is considered the eternal, spiritual, and unchanging reality and what is the temporal, material, and changing world. Within that view, the end purpose of being truly human belongs only to the eternal and spiritual and not to the body, the organic, the communal, and the ecological relationships. Furthermore, the human as an immortal essence does not depend upon the material and

temporal dimensions of existence. Therefore, the ultimate need of a human being is the salvation of his or her immortal “soul.”

This has biased the scope of missions and health care. Consequently, mission’s duty in the traditional theological term is to save humans, either collectively or soul by soul, from hell to heaven. Thus, any other temporal concern for status or relationship is viewed only as a preparation for that ethereal destiny.²

On the other hand, health care is becoming increasingly more concerned with technology and medical means than with the total welfare of a person and community in the search of common wellness and wholeness. We should not be surprised, therefore, by the tremendous human longing for wholeness and the no-less-tremendous search for holistic deliverance and healing that characterize the emerging postmodern society.

The Interconnection between Spirit and Body

The Western influenced dualism of “spirit” versus “body” in today’s Christianity is totally alien to the biblical view of the person. When God formed Adam’s body from the dust of the ground and breathed life into it, he became a living *nephesh* (Genesis 2:7); that is, a living “soul,” a living being.

This Hebrew word for “soul” indicates a human individual as a totality, in complete integration. And as God created male and female in his own image and likeness, “humanity bears the divine imprint, not just as disembodied soul, a spark of divinity locked up in the flesh,” but as a person that, in every dimension of his or her being, relates to and reveals the glory of his or her creator in harmonious mode with the rest of creation.³

When Paul says that our “...whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless” (1 Thessalonians 5:23), he is not talking of these as superimposed and separated realities or entities, but rather of a multidimensional, integrated totality as he wishes that “the very God of peace [*shalom/eirene*] sanctify you through and through.”

In healing the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda, Jesus gives us a true picture of his perspective on wholeness for the human person. With his question, he exposes the cause of his physical condition beyond what is apparent or rationally explained. By asking “Do you want to get well?” or “Wilt thou be made whole?” (as rendered in the King James Version), Jesus confronts the sick and disempowered man with the reality that his actual condition is the combined effect of his psychological hopelessness and low self-esteem, his social alienation and oppression, and his spiritual obstinacy and rebellion. His complete healing is made possible only when all these diseased dimensions, pulling apart his total person, were dealt with.⁴

***Shalom* as Completeness or Wholeness**

The word that denotes this state of completeness, harmony, soundness, and well-being is the Hebrew word *shalom*. From the way Gideon labelled the altar he built for the eternal one (Judges 6:24) as “the LORD is [*shalom*],” the Talmud (Shabbat 10b) recognizes it as one of the designations of God himself. This name of God derives from the perception of Gideon that peace and integrity emanate from his countenance as it is bestowed in the priestly blessing (see Numbers 6:22-26). This is of the very nature of God, and that is what he is determined to establish in the whole realm of his creation.

According to the 2003 *Nuevo Diccionario Bíblico Español Certeza* (NDBC), the word is used in the Old Testament to bid welfare or express harmony and concord among people. It is also used to indicate the wellness, material prosperity, physical safety, and peace of a person, a city, a country, or between two entities that relate to each other. It mainly denotes health, inner peace, and spiritual well-being. It is always found in association with righteousness and truth, but not with wickedness.

The original source of all *shalom* is God. When he harnessed chaos into order in creation, he bestowed *shalom* for the whole of it. In fact, he claims, “I make [*shalom*]” (Isaiah 45:7). Therefore, John Goldingay concludes:

God is the maker of *shalom* ... [that] stands potentially for all forms of well-being. It covers peace, but it is another positive term that embraces much more than the absence of conflict; it suggests a community enjoying fullness of life, prosperity, contentment, harmony, and happiness. Its antonym is *ra*, an all-purpose word for what is bad, both covering evil and adversity.⁵

This recognition has for centuries found a place as a concluding declaration chanted in much Jewish liturgy (including the *birkat hamazon*, *kaddish*, and personal *amidah* prayers). The full sentence translates into English as “He who makes peace in his heights, may he make peace upon us and upon all Israel; and say, Amen.”

True *shalom*, then, is not the absence of conflict or the cessation of hostility, but a state achieved by bringing equilibrium to what is unbalanced, justice where there is inequity, integrity where there is unrighteousness, wholeness where there is disintegration, and healing and health where there is sickness and disease.

It is in this regard that *shalom* has become another way of approaching the meaning of health, which poses great difficulty and challenge to articulate, as it also touches all dimensions of life inscribed in the human person.

***Shalom* and Health as a State of Well-being**

Just as *shalom* is not a mere “element in the description of [human] essential nature... [health] is not a part of or a function of [him] as are blood circulation, metabolism, hearing, breathing.”⁶ Health, then, is not just the absence of disease or sickness, but “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being.”⁷ It is also the harmonious and balanced relationship spanning from the spiritual to the economic life dimensions of a person, in harmony with God as well as with the natural environment.

Paul Tillich says that “the multidimensional unity of life in man calls for a multidimensional concept of health, of disease, and of healing, but in such a way that it becomes obvious that in each dimension all the others are present.”⁸ Therefore, the wholeness of *shalom* includes health, and the quest for wholeness includes healing. Health is disease conquered and healed, as *eternal shalom* is *shalom* by conquering chaos and disharmony.

The *NDBC* also informs us that the corresponding Greek word for *shalom* in the New Testament is *eirene*. This word, despite its primarily negative force in classical Greek by the way it is used in the Septuagint (LXX), ends up being used in the NT with the full meaning found in the OT. Likewise, it is used in greetings and benedictions. *Eirene*’s meaning links with other key words of the NT (such as grace, life, and righteousness), and its use is holistically applied to the total human person.

The multidimensionality of *shalom* exchanges easily for the multidimensionality of health, as both are related to the multidimensional nature of a human person. That is why either *shalom* or *eirene* in biblical times had become the best expression to greet one another. By saying “*Shalom Aleichem*” or “Peace be to you,” one wished for the most complete state of welfare and wholeness for a person.

The Greek translation of this greeting is mentioned in the Gospels, as this is the way Jesus often greeted people. Also, it is how he instructed his disciples to greet people when he sent them to proclaim the advent of the Kingdom of God. Similar connotations are found in how the apostle John greets Gaius, when he says, “I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well” (3 John 1-2).

Endnotes

1. 1991. “Discipleship as a Paradigm for Health, Healing and Wholeness.” In *Health, Healing and Transformation*. Eds. E. Anthony Allen, Kenneth Luscombe, Bryant L. Myers, et al. Monrovia, California, USA: MARC/World Vision International, 51.

2. *Ibid*, 52-53.

3. Ibid, 54.

4. Allen, E Anthony. 1991. "The Church's Ministry of Healing: The Challenges to Commitment." In *Health, Healing and Transformation*. Eds. E. Anthony Allen, Kenneth Luscombe, Bryant L. Myers, et al. Monrovia, California, USA: MARC/World Vision International, 12-18.

5. 2006. *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Faith, vol. 2*, Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press Academic, 79.

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Shalom & Eirene: Ministering to the Whole Person

By Apolos Landa Tucto

The biblical concepts and categories relating to the person portray the individual as a multidimensional relational totality. To be fully human is to be a constitutive part of the whole creation in an enhancing relationship with God, with others made in his image and likeness, and with the rest of God's creation.

The ecosystem, culture, family, friends, and education unavoidably influence the individual, as do the choices he or she has already made. Thus to be "a responsible partner" with God in the creative process of *becoming and making shalom*, humans need to be self-reconciled and then become reconciled one with another, in family, in community, and in all other spheres of their cosmic context. It is this that proves a person to be truly reconciled to God first and makes him or her fully human.

Creation and Human Wholeness

The creation narratives give us an understanding of what God's ideal is for human wholeness in regards to physical and social health. In Genesis 1 and 2 God's creative project is pronounced good and finished, up to the stage at which humanity is created.

From there, male and female, as a human partnership, are commanded to subdue and rule the creation and the powers of creation with a view to the fullness of God's cosmic intention, even in the aftermath of the fall (see Genesis 1:26, 28; Psalm 8:3-8; and Hebrews 2:6-9). Yet due to disobedience and sinfulness, there is a dramatic failure and the task of establishing *shalom*, health, and wholeness remains far from being completed.

The good news is that God has not given up on his creation. In the Pentateuch (Torah), we gain an understanding of how God chooses and calls from fallen humanity those with whom he will work. Moreover, God restores and saves, prepares and involves, this people in his ongoing quest to bring back his humanity and creation to completion.

John Goldingay agrees with Juergen Moltmann and concludes that "Genesis does recognize that creation was the beginning of a project, not the end of one."¹ In fact, he goes further, asserting that

...the statement that God's relationship with the world involves "creation, conservation, and transformation" does not say quite enough. Even before it went wrong and needed restoration, it was a project still on the way... God would hardly have given humanity the task not merely of maintaining it, but of subduing the world. So the renewed world is not merely a world restored to its Edenic state, but one taken to the destiny God intended when creating it. God's creation commission was that humanity should subdue the earth (Genesis 1:28), win it to the internal harmony that was apparently not built into it even though it could be described as "good," and God is still committed to the fulfilling of that creation project. There will come a day [as Isaiah 11 and 65 envisions, in which there will be total harmony] ...without human beings or animals eating one another [and that] is part of the dream vision of Genesis 1, of a world that reflects Yhvh's abode in heaven... a new creation in which the great limitation of the old, the reality of death, is overcome.²

Paul Tillich calls this process "cosmic healing" and states that "when salvation has cosmic significance, healing is not only included in it, but salvation can be described as the act of 'cosmic healing.'"³ In a person the cosmos converges and is united, and, therefore, in a person it has to be reconciled, healed, saved, and subjected again.⁴ Tillich says,

[Not to see salvation and healing related]...implies a conscious or unconscious rejection of the idea of cosmic disease, the universal fall, and of cosmic healing, the universal redemption. It does not see that the eternal fulfillment is actual in the fragmentary fulfillment in time and space. Healing as well as salvation are temporal and, at the same time, are eternal. Healing acquires the significance of the eternal, and salvation the actuality of the temporal.⁵

Healing=Salvation?

The New Testament Greek Lexicon and the *El Nuevo Diccionario Bíblico Certeza* (NDBC) informs us that the meaning of healing is closely related to salvation, as the meaning of the Greek word *soteria*, *sozo* (to save, to heal) in the New Testament parallels the meaning of the Hebrew *yasha'* (from which the words *moshiah*—*messiah* and *Yeshua*—Jesus derive) in the Old Testament. This Hebrew verb, according to *The Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, means to save, be saved, and be delivered.

Salvation, known as the Greek word *soteria*, is merely a derivative noun from *sozo*, which is the verb form, and derives in turn from a primitive *sos* (contracted for the now obsolete word *saos*, "safe"). It has also been found that the root of the word "salvation" in many languages indicates healing, as Paul Tillich illustrates:

Thus, the Greek word *soteria* is derived from *saos* (sic); the Latin word *salvatio* from *salvus*; the German word *Heiland* from *heil*, which is akin to the English word "healing." *Saos*, *salvus*, *heil*, mean whole, not yet split, not disrupted, not disintegrated, and therefore healthy and sane. ... The English translation of *sesoken se* ["has saved thee," referring to an act of healing by Jesus in Matt. 9:12] reads: "made thee whole." Salvation is basically and essentially healing, the re-establishment of a whole that was broken, disrupted, disintegrated.⁶

Both in the Bible and in the mythological narrative of many pagan witnesses, Tillich finds a basis for saying that salvation, in the sense of making whole or healing, equally applies to the physical, psychological, and social dimensions of human life. He explains that

...every specific state of health or salvation represents the cosmic wholeness in a being which is a fragment of the whole, and whose wholeness is, therefore, always conditioned, threatened, imperfect, and pointing beyond itself.⁷

A vision of the Kingdom of God is a vision of a creation brought to wholeness, that is, to a state of *shalom*. It is also a vision of a society in which the values of justice, peace, and joy in relationship prevail without exclusion. Therefore, healing also "involves a struggle against injustice by making the necessary resources available to the

poor,” the agents of healing—themselves risking poverty.⁸ This is the attitude in which the mission for salvation or healing must be forwarded in the world.

The Place of Suffering in Healing

The journey toward *shalom* and wholeness includes pain and suffering. These are not realities that can be ignored. Health is not simply the absence of illness. If it were so, then the chronically sick, the disabled, and the frail elderly would be discounted from a healthy society—a reality which, although unacceptable and reproachable, is never far away in our Western lifestyle.

Therefore, there is no guarantee that the healing agents will not be wounded in the process of fulfilling their mission. Sometimes, the healing that deals with relationships and values includes breaking, wounding, and even permanent scarring for those seeking healing and wholeness. As in the case of Jacob, after healing his relationship with his brother Esau, he walks away to a full life with a conquered blessing from God, with a dignifying new name, but with a permanent limp. Thus, Tillich concludes:

This is the function of reconciliation, to make whole the man who struggles against himself. It reaches the centre of personality, and unites man not only with his God and with himself, but also with other men and nature. Reconciliation in the centre of personality results in reconciliation in all directions, and he who is reconciled is able to love. Salvation is the healing of the cosmic disease which prevents love.⁹

Such are the powerful values and insights that the biblical *shalom* and *eirene* shed for our health care concerns and practices of today. To recover them provides reasons to reject the “patent-evergreening,”¹⁰ free-market deformation of pharmaceutical, medical, and health developments¹¹ for commercial profit.¹²

Conversely, they provide reasons to equally reject the abuse of users and beneficiaries of the blessings of health and care by running senseless risks, by carelessness and negligence that overload the health systems unnecessarily, thus revealing no personal or collective concern for those in real need.¹³

Anything less than an integrated approach to health and healing, in the search for wholeness for the human person and creation, will result in mere patchwork efforts and disillusionment. It can also wound and corrupt the healers. As those in mission, sent to heal in the comprehensive approach of God’s intention, healers need to rediscover the biblical view of the person, as well as of health and healing.

Endnotes

1. 2006. *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Faith*, vol. 2. Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press Academic, 728.

2. Ibid, 729.

3. 1990. “The Meaning of Health.” In *Writings in the Philosophy of Culture*, vol 2. Ed. Michael Palmer. New York: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 211.

4. Ibid, 214.

5. Ibid, 216.

6. Ibid, 211.

7. Ibid, 216.

8. Allen, E Anthony. 1991. "The Church's Ministry of Healing: The Challenges to Commitment." In *Health, Healing and Transformation*. Eds. E. Anthony Allen, Kenneth Luscombe, Bryant L. Myers, et al. Monrovia, California, USA: MARC/World Vision International, 23.

9. Tillich, 214.

10. A full new patent for the same slightly-modified product, to avoid patent expiration and to extend profiting monopoly. For pharmaceutical products, this means an extended monopoly that excludes generic drugs from the market.

11. See Mudur, Ganapati. 2007. "MSF Challenges Novartis's Action over Indian Patent for Imatinib." *BMJ* 334: 172.

12. See Blech, Jörg. 2006. *Inventing Diseases and Pushing Pills: Pharmaceutical Companies and the Medicalization of Normal Life*. New York: Routledge, 17, 21-23, 66-68.

13. Lessig, Lawrence. 2004. *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity*. New York: Penguin Press, 211-213.

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The Spiritual Mission of Microfinance

By Mark Russell

Poverty is a daily reality for billions of people. The numbers are so staggering that we can simply become numb. Approximately three billion people live on less than \$2USD a day. The World Bank estimates that 1.4 billion people are living in extreme poverty. (Extreme or absolute poverty is defined as living on less than \$1USD per day.) The result of this is real.

Consider the following facts:

- Over 140 million children in developing countries are underweight, and over two billion are undernourished.
- Every year, more than ten million children die of hunger and preventable diseases—that's over thirty thousand per day and one every three seconds.
- 800 million people go to bed hungry every day.
- Every year, nearly eleven million children die before their fifth birthday.
- 600 million children live in extreme poverty.
- The three richest people in the world control more wealth than all 600 million people living in the world's poorest countries.
- Income per person in the poorest countries in Africa has fallen by a quarter in the last twenty years.¹

And the situation is only going to get worse. Recent increases in the price of food have had a direct and adverse effect on the poor and are expected to push many more millions of people into absolute poverty. What are we, as the people of God, supposed to do about this?

Responses to Overwhelming Poverty

One unfortunate response many people have could be defined as fatalistic. The problem is so immense and overwhelming that some Christians simply throw up their hands and say it's up to God. They believe that not much can be done and they refrain from trying to make a difference.

Another subpar response is despair and depression. Some Christians are so focused on the horrors of poverty and the immense suffering it produces in the lives of others that they become increasingly negative, hostile, and judgmental. They are depressed and think it is wrong to be otherwise. Often they cast spiritual stones at others who are not so engaged in eliminating poverty.

However, there is a third way that I believe is God's way when it comes to responding to global poverty. This third way has two major components:

- recognizing that how we treat the poor is a reflection of how we treat Jesus and
- focusing on approaches that work.

Many people become confused when they read these words of Jesus: "The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me" (Mark 14:7). On the surface, this statement appears to absolve us of responsibility of caring for the poor. However, two things must be pointed out.

First, Jesus said this after Mary had poured valuable perfume on him. Within the context, Jesus' statement is not absolving anyone of any responsibility, but showing that the orientation of a heart toward him is what is most important.

Second, what is little known to most readers of the scriptures today is that many statements in the New Testament had the purpose of directing people toward Old Testament scriptures. This comment from Jesus starts off with a near quote of the OT verse, "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land" (Deuteronomy 15:11). Jesus is not saying we should not care for the poor; rather, he is saying we should first have a heart committed to him. Then we should be "openhanded" toward "the poor and needy" in our world.

This truth is brought home when Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). Perhaps sensing that many people might just choose to opt out of doing something good, Jesus makes it clear that not doing good is the equivalent of doing bad when he flips the phrase, saying, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me" (Matthew 25:45).

How we treat the poor is indeed a reflection of how we treat Jesus.

God created a beautiful world, prepared for those created in his image to be enjoyed with abundance and blessing (Genesis 1:28). But this world has been corrupted and broken, and we are in a world of scarcity and cursing. The ones who suffer the most are the poor.

God created us to build community together and to work his creation (Genesis 1:28). Poverty tends to disrupt genuine community and prevents people from engaging in the dignified work that God intended. Even in prosperous, developed countries, finances are a primary cause of stress and problems within marriages. The same is true the world over. Where there are financial pressures, relationships tend to dissolve. Where that pressure is immense, rioting and war can result.

Microfinance and Restoring Those in Poverty

Part of the mission of the Church is not only to treat “the least of these” with respect and dignity, but to find real and practical ways to restore them to the life God intends for them. We need to focus on interventions that work.

A recent United Nations Millennium Development goal report said that the number one intervention that has worked to eradicate poverty in the last eight years is microfinance. *Microfinance* is an umbrella term that refers to the provision of small loans and other financial services such as savings and micro-insurance to people who are cut out of traditional banking structures. Microfinance has helped many of the world’s poor to increase their incomes. In 2006, microfinance institutions provided loans to approximately 113 million clients worldwide.

Although there are 113 million microfinance clients in the world, there are approximately another 550 million people who would benefit from microfinance but who do not have access to it. We are reaching less than twenty percent of the people who most desperately need it. Of the people who are being reached, only about one percent are being served through Christian microfinance institutions (CMFI). That means that CMFIs are serving less than one fifth of one percent of the need.

At churches and academic conferences I frequently talk about the lack of access to basic microfinance and ask if this reflects the fact that CMFIs and the Church as a whole are not making a bigger impact. Often, the general response is that the biggest problem is that people do not have access to these basic financial services and it does not really matter who the provider is. These responses demonstrate that many people of faith still do not understand poverty and the spiritual mission of microfinance.

As a citizen and resident of the wealthiest nation in the history of the world, I have observed that access to financial capital is not the solution to the world’s problems. Increased wealth can lead to decreased spirituality. Greed can flourish where the economy prospers. However, in saying that, the extremity and scale of poverty in the world today needs a financial response. Those in poverty need financial capital; however, that is not all that they need.

Recently, I visited with a microfinance client in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He was a microfinance success story. He had built his salon business and was generating significant profits. He had been able to construct a new building for his business. However, he was a functional alcoholic (someone who consumes alcohol as an addiction and extensively, but who is still able to function as a well-performing person).

The vast majority of his profits had been consumed with his business and his alcohol. When his loan officer at a CMFI confronted him and offered him new life in Christ, the man was changed. He became a follower of Christ and gave up his expensive alcohol habit. When I asked him what tangible result this had on the lives of others around him, he confessed that he was now able to buy milk for his six children. Although this man was a microfinance success story, the benefits of that improved lifestyle did not even trickle down to his own children until God changed his heart.

The spiritual mission of microfinance is not to simply help the poor be less poor; it is to radically transform their lives and give them the practical and spiritual tools to live life as God intends. We want to help the poor, but it is not like solving a math problem. Microfinance is a solution that works, but it only helps insofar as we understand what the real problem is. We are working to change the world in which we live, not just make people wealthier. We need to eradicate spiritual and physical poverty. That is the spiritual mission of microfinance.

Endnote

1. United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

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Digital Ministry—Incredible Mission Opportunities

By Tony Whittaker

In 1996, a birth took place that dramatically affected many of that year's other eighty million babies.

After its gestation period as a minority “hobby,” the Internet emerged as a mainstream communication medium. It is now clear that the Web is becoming as significant as Gutenberg's invention of the printing press—an invention that transformed society, communication, the Church, and the entire way the gospel was proclaimed.

Rex Miller, in *The Millennium Matrix*, proposes that we now live in a “digital communication culture,” rapidly superseding the previous “broadcast communication culture” (radio/television from mid-twentieth century) and the preceding “print communication culture” started by Gutenberg.

Children who have grown up with computers were born into this new “digital country.” People who were adults before the computer revolution are at best “immigrants” and perhaps only occasional “tourists” in this strange new land.

God-given Digital Tools

With over one billion current users, and “the second billion” expected to come online in the next few years (almost entirely in the non-Western world), the Web has enormous potential for pioneer evangelism (including in 10/40 Window countries), as well as for discipling believers.

Unlike previous communication media, it is not primarily a one-way linear medium (“print on a screen”), but is a powerful 2-way relationship builder that can target any affinity group and initiate relationships.

The number of mobile phones already exceeds half of the total population of the world. Increasingly, mobile phones are used to access the Web. Phones in Africa outnumber those in the United States and are seen as contributing to development, micro-finance, and improved local trading.

And there are growing opportunities to use **mobiles in evangelism and discipleship**. One pastor in India writes, “I am working as an ordinary pastor with the Church of North India in a rural area. It is good for me that I download your worship and outreach songs on my PC and through that to my mobile phone to show the rural people how to worship by heart.”

Radio ministries have a wonderful opportunity to create MP3-download web pages of selected past programs. These programs are especially helpful in cultures where there is little printed material. These pages can also explain how to place MP3 downloads into mobile devices and suggest ways to share them with others.

We thank God that some ministries and missions are already “seizing the day” and using the Web and other digital tools effectively for outreach. Unfortunately, these are still the exception rather than the rule. Although there are vast numbers of Christian websites and blogs, the **overwhelming majority** are only for Christians. In fact, many church websites can be very **off-putting to outsiders**.

The situation is even worse for non-English languages. Japan, for instance, has huge potential for digital evangelism; however, few ministries **are involved** in this area. In some languages, there are no evangelistic websites! The Middle East is an exception to this; indeed, remarkable things are happening online (without much publicity for security reasons).

Missions and the Web

Missions have enthusiastically adopted the Internet for mission communications and home-end publicity to existing or potential Christian supporters. The digital revolution has also significantly boosted Bible translation, audio and video editing, desktop publishing, networking, prayer information distribution, research, and many other aspects of mission.

But surprisingly few missions use the Web (and related digital media) for direct outreach. There may be several reasons for this:

- *Mission Web ministry has been perceived as belonging primarily to the publicity and communication departments, rather than for outreach teams on the ground.* It may also be that some mission policymakers grew up before the days of computers and still have that sense of being uneasy “immigrants” in the digital world.
- *Missions have long known that real evangelism is costly, incarnational, and relational, and requires a deep understanding of and engagement with culture.* (Incidentally, it is interesting to note that Western churches are realizing that these mission principles are needed in evangelism in the West also.) They are rightly suspicious of mediums or methods offered as a quick fix, especially if these bypass the creation of relationships. They may also worry that email is too impersonal and distant to build real relationships, or that Internet ministry requires technical knowledge.
- *Web ministry is not yet taught in most Bible colleges.* Although some Web-related skills can be learned from journalism and communication courses, there is a big need for students to understand the nature of the Internet as a medium and the many different ways it can be used effectively.

Building Relationships

The truth is the unique properties of the Web make it a valuable “fit” for evangelism on a worldwide basis. The Internet is now almost anything you want it to be—the largest encyclopedia in the world, a marketplace and “water cooler” meeting area, a twenty-first century version of the biblical “Roman Road” system which enabled travel and evangelism, a comprehensive news agency, a means of self-publishing and opinion-sharing, etc. At its heart is “connectedness.” By connecting one computer to another, it links people with ideas and builds relationships. Since evangelism is also based upon connecting and 2-way relationships, there is a perfect match.

Most missions proceed from the “provider” (e.g., the missionary) to the “recipient” (at whatever point he or she may be at on the Engel Scale (or its valuable modification, [the Gray Matrix](#)). In one sense, online evangelism often reverses this direction. Instead of our going out to “seek seekers,” they may come to us; Web users take the initiative to find online material that is of interest or helps them.

The Web has a unique ability to target specific affinity groups based upon their background, interests, and felt needs. Even very narrow segments of a population can be targeted. [The Bridge Strategy](#) is very significant in web evangelism. To reach someone who is not an active inquirer (by definition, active inquirers are a very small part of any population), we can offer web pages about the things they are interested in: hobbies, sport, culture, or life problems. (Note: Barna Group research suggests that one-third of people in any community are currently suffering a crisis.) “Bridge” or “felt need” sites can make an appropriate and ethical transition into engaging with spiritual issues. It is a vastly under-used strategy.

[Incarnational social networking](#) is another valuable approach. Some missions also teach [IT skills](#). Relationships are a key to any web strategy. Websites are not like Tibetan prayer wheels, “spinning in the wind and mystically transmitting a spiritual message.” They are instead “connectors,” allowing someone to link with ideas and challenges, and then discuss more questions with a real person.

Such mentoring connections, whether they remain as email discussions or develop into face-to-face interaction with evangelists on the ground, are integral to effective evangelism. The “anonymous intimacy” of email often enables inquirers to be very open. Most stories of people finding Jesus online reveal a considerable period of relationship, discussion, and mentoring, leading to eventual faith.

There is growing potential for integration of different digital media—web, radio, literature, DVD, mobile phones, and SMS—into both evangelism and follow up. Several mentoring software applications have been developed which enable incoming email, voicemail, or SMS inquiries to be routed to volunteer email or telephone mentors, and/or follow-up on the ground by local teams. This follow-up synergy is hugely strategic.

Returned or retired missionaries can also be involved in mentoring or other web ministry to “their” country. [Click here](#) for vacancies. Technical knowledge is not required.

The Guide Network and Internet Evangelism Day

The [Guide Network](#) is an informal group of people involved in web, mobile phone, or digital outreach. It is linked with Internet Evangelism Day, the [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#), [Internet Evangelism Coalition](#) (IEC), [visionSynergy](#), and the [Global Christian Internet Alliance](#). We offer several smaller networks for digital ministry to specific areas of the world. We will gladly advise any mission wondering how to integrate the Web or mobile phones into their evangelism and explain the growing potential for involvement in computerized integration of follow-up ministry. [Speakers](#) are available for any mission consultation or conference.

Internet Evangelism Day is an initiative of the IEC, a grouping of ministries with a vision for online outreach. We encourage the worldwide Church to understand and employ this powerful new tool using a dual approach: an annual worldwide focus day on the last Sunday of April and a year-round training resource [website](#).

Our site explains the nature of the Web as a medium and explores principles and strategies to reach non-seekers in both Western and non-Western countries. We believe that these are insights which any Christian in full-time ministry (whether pastor, evangelist, or missionary) needs. It also offers [free downloads](#), such as: PowerPoint, video clips, drama scripts, music, discussion questions, and handouts. These enable a church, Bible college, or mission team to create a web awareness focus spot or seminar. Our [free articles](#) are available for reproduction in magazines and newsletters.

College Modules Needed

One major hope for the future is that many Bible colleges will begin to teach web ministry ([click here](#) for our Open Letter to Bible Colleges). Few yet do. Many of our [resource pages](#) provide seminar source material, including a possible [curriculum](#) and a [book list](#). We also offer seminar [speakers](#) in person or via video-conferencing.

Is it time to think Web? Can we help?

Tony Whittaker is the coordinator of Internet Evangelism Day and a moderator for Guide Network. He lives in Derby, United Kingdom, and is a member of WEC International. He co-edits the free, easy-English SOON outreach paper.

PERSPECTIVES

Desperately Needed: More Outsiders. A Biblical Mandate for Cross-cultural Missions

By Craig Greenfield

John Perkins suggests that three types of people are needed in order to see real transformation of an urban neighborhood:

1. The “relocators” are those people who were not born in the neighborhood, but who move into the area to tie their well-being to that of their neighbors.
2. The “returners” were born and raised in the community and then left for a better life. They are no longer trapped by the poverty of their neighborhood, yet they choose to return and live in the community they once tried to escape.
3. The “remainers” are the ones who could have fled the problems of the neighborhood, but who have chosen to stay and be part of the solution to the problems surrounding them.

Although Perkins was talking about inner-city USA, this is a helpful framework within which to think about international missions. Over the last few years, however, as the Church has gained a deeper appreciation for the contribution the poor can make in reaching their own people and rebuilding their own communities as “remainers,” I have observed the Church losing confidence in what we as westerners might have to offer as long-term international “relocators” among the poor.

The roots of this insecurity are complex. Partly it is a natural reaction against wrong emphases in the past. Yet somehow we must avoid the theological equivalent of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. So I want to briefly survey four reasons why we might have lost some of our confidence in long-term, cross-cultural missions.

1. We have rightly recognized the importance of language and cultural understanding. We cringe today at the colonial excesses carried out under the banner of “king and country,” yoking missions with imperialism, crushing local cultures condescendingly, and sneering at local customs and tongues. The correction of this sinful attitude was a long time coming. But to lovingly lift up one culture, it is not necessary to devalue everything that outsiders have to offer. The answer is to approach missions with humility and grace, seeking to learn first and serve rather than overpower.

2. We confuse empowerment with disengagement. The concept of empowering people is central to good mission work. But it takes wisdom to discern the difference between empowerment and disengagement. Just as a good manager of people will know just how much to delegate and how much support to provide, so a foreign missionary needs to learn how to empower rather than overpower. However, not showing up at all is not empowerment; it is apathy.

3. We have only partially embraced a theology of “from every nation to every nation.” It is a beautiful and exciting thing to see African, Asian, and Latino missionaries spreading out across the globe, and there is much more that can be done to assist and support them. But when Jesus told us to go into all the world and make disciples, he wasn’t letting any nation off the hook as though their contribution was not worthy or useful. We must come alongside our brothers and sisters from around the world and joyfully do our part in the Great Commission.

My pastor, Emmanuel, came to North America eight years ago as a refugee fleeing war in Burundi. Emmanuel was so poor when he arrived that he faced homelessness. But God brought him to one of our church ministries—a transition home which provides space for refugees to find their feet.

Before long, Emmanuel became an integral part of our church. And the rest is history. Does Emmanuel, as an outsider, have an important role to play in building God’s kingdom in North America? Yes! In fact, while local believers will always be central to God’s kingdom purposes, every place on earth desperately needs prophetic outsiders who will bring an alternative perspective.¹ Every culture and society (including North America) has its

major blind spots that can only be identified and challenged by outsiders, who, called by God, will come in humility and courage.

4. We have been seduced by corporate thinking about return on investment. A common pitfall is to base our arguments solely on pragmatic or economic concerns, rather than theological ones. In our relentless drive to get more “bang for our buck,” we realize we can “get” ten local evangelists for the price of one Western missionary. Jonathan Bonk, in his challenging book *Missions and Money*,² correctly points out that Western missionaries have for too long lived at a level above the local people, so there is some truth in this critique.

For this reason and others, missionaries sent out to the megacities of Asia by [Servants to Asia’s Urban Poor](#) (Servants) live simply in the slums alongside local people. But we must be careful not to reinterpret God’s call to missions through a simplistic financial lens. This way of prioritizing economics above calling is a uniquely Western bias and an unbiblical one at that.

Toward a Theological Perspective

For these reasons and many more, the mission pendulum has swung heavily toward resourcing local people (remainers)—supplemented by short-term missionaries who focus on transferring their skills without learning the language and culture. But we must strive to find balance by remembering the rich biblical tradition of prophetic outsiders—which includes both relocators and returners. Throughout biblical and recent history, God has used outsiders to bring about his purposes in foreign nations.

Does God Call Returners?

Moses was a “returner”; although ethnically the same as the people he was leading, he was in every other way a complete outsider. His name was foreign (it comes from the Egyptian word “mos,” which means child), he couldn’t speak their language well (Aaron was his interpreter), he dressed funny, and he looked different (Exodus 2:19). Sounds like a few missionaries I know! Yet God chose to use Moses to lead the Hebrews to their promised place.

Other returners in the Bible include: Nehemiah, the high-powered government-sanctioned returner; Naomi, the low-powered refugee returner; and Ezra, the theologian-returner.

The Moses narrative echoes in the story of my wife. Nay was born in Cambodia; however, at a tender age, her mother was forced to flee the Khmer Rouge. The family came to New Zealand without Nay’s father, who was killed by Pol Pot. When Nay returned later to live in the slums of Phnom Penh as a member of the Servants Cambodia team, her language was rusty and our neighbors thought she must be Japanese or Korean. But God used Nay to befriend and lead young women out of prostitution into his promised place for them.

Imagine if Chinese-American, Korean-American, or Indo-Canadian returners answered God’s call in droves to serve God in the nation of their ancestors. They could move right into the slums, under the radar of local authorities, and model the kind of downward mobility Jesus taught. In the words of Isaiah: “They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.” (Isaiah 61:4)

Does God Call Relocators?

Ruth was another outsider, a relocator whom God used to accomplish his kingdom purposes in a foreign land. She turned up in Israel so poor that her first year in town she was forced to scavenge leftovers. The point stressed most frequently in the story is that Ruth was a foreigner (1:4, 22; 2:2, 6, 10-13, 21; 4:5, 10). Still, Ruth the outsider comes to share in the salvation and heritage of Israel.

Other relocators in the Bible include: Jonah, the reluctant relocator; Paul, the serial relocator; Daniel, the youthful relocator; Joseph, the upwardly-mobile relocator; and Esther, the beauty queen relocator.

Of the thousands of missionary examples I could give, perhaps the most well known is a young Englishman named Patrick, who God used to spread the gospel throughout Ireland. St. Patrick's methods were incarnational and highly creative as he sought to contextualize the gospel (e.g., he described the Trinity by referring to a shamrock—the 3-leafed clover so beloved by the local people).

From Moses (a cultural outsider with poor language skills who led the people of Israel to freedom) to Ruth (an economic refugee who shared in the heritage and salvation of Israel) to Jonah (who saw the conversion of an entire city) to Patrick (who helped in the conversion of an entire nation), there is no doubt that God uses outsiders.

In fact, Jesus chose to model this way himself, by relocating from the most exclusive gated community in the universe to live among us, embracing the culture of the time, and walking alongside us in all our messiness. And he prayed that we would follow his footsteps into the world (John 17:18). This call to imitate Christ in his incarnational approach to mission comes home to me every time I see Emmanuel, whose name means, “God with us.”

It is time for the Church to regain our confidence in all three approaches to transformational mission: to encourage and support the remainers, mobilize the returners, and to celebrate the relocators.

Endnotes

1. In some ways, the biblical role of the prophet is always to be an “outsider” rejected by the community (Luke 4:24). These two roles are intricately bound up together.
2. 2007. Maryknoll, New York, USA: Orbis Books.

Craig Greenfield is the international coordinator of Servants to Asia's Urban Poor. For the past six years he and his wife, Nay, have lived among the urban poor in the slums of Cambodia. They are now pioneering a new Servants team in downtown Vancouver, Canada. Greenfield is the co-founder and former director of Project HALO (Hope, Assistance, and Love for Orphans), a ministry of Servants Cambodia, which has helped Cambodian communities care for nearly one thousand children orphaned and affected by AIDS. Greenfield is also founder of Big Brothers and Sisters of Cambodia, a rapidly spreading youth movement mobilizing and training Christian young people in Cambodia to be mentors to orphans. He is the author of *The Urban Halo: Hope for Orphans of the Poor*.

Living Humanly in the Coming Kingdom

By Daphne Eck Coppock

*Kushi¹ is a young woman from India who was abandoned by her stepmother at age fourteen. A woman soon approached Kushi and offered her a “good job.” Instead of the promised job, the woman sold Kushi to a brothel, where she was drugged and kept locked up until she stopped fighting. After ten years in the sex trade, Kushi heard about a business called **Sari Bari** where she would be taught how to sew blankets and be given a good wage. More than anything, Kushi was excited to learn to read and write. Kushi is now able to attend “school” at Sari Bari. She is also saving money to buy her own home.*

Sarah Lance and her community (who are part of Word Made Flesh [WMF]) started Sari Bari two years ago and are the ones who have given Kushi a chance to try on freedom. “New life in the making” is its mantra; Sari Bari is in the business of freedom. The business employs women who want to leave the sex trade to sew bags and blankets out of recycled saris. Women who want to find freedom receive a fair wage and generous medical, savings, and educational benefits for themselves and their families.

Their workday starts with a short devotional and prayer. Then the women roll out their blankets and begin to work—smiling, helping each other, chatting, laughing, and asking questions as they learn to sew straight lines.

The women have dignity now and best of all, their eyes reflect a scattering light of hope. This is a picture of resurrection.

Resurrection in Community

Just three days separated Christ's suffering and resurrection, and the WMF community in Kolkata is aware of this truth. Each staff member who works at Sari Bari commits to participating in the community's coinciding ministry in the brothels. At least one day a week, they visit the red-light district, making and maintaining friendships, drinking tea, visiting the women's rooms, and playing with their children. They go because the WMF community in Kolkata recognizes its need to follow the suffering Christ into the brothels where their friends' bodies are being used up for \$2USD a customer.

They believe that the resurrected Christ cannot be celebrated at Sari Bari without also ministering to the wounds of the crucified Christ in the brothels. Likewise, the WMF staff who lead the brothel ministry always work at least one day a week at Sari Bari. The two groups of workers—those who serve primarily in the brothels and those who serve primarily at Sari Bari—need each other. The suffering found in the red-light districts can be endured, and even embraced, when the hope of redemption found at Sari Bari is present. And the hope of Sari Bari motivates those who would otherwise be crushed by the despair of the red-light districts.

The Bigger Picture of Redemption

Indeed, when we look at the current realities of the world, we are tempted to despair. UNICEF estimates 158 million children aged five to fifteen are engaged in child labor. An estimated two million children are exploited in prostitution or pornography. Approximately 1.2 million children are trafficked around the world every year.

According to the U.S. Department of State's 2007 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, eighty percent of transnational trafficking victims are women and girls, and up to fifty percent are minors—and most are trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation. The most vulnerable—women and children living in poverty—become victims because they can be used and abused to gain or keep something that many people believe is more important than a human being's life—money.

However, we are in a time when there actually is potential for real change to happen in the world. Some of the worst news, while still bad, is taking a turn for the better. For example, UNICEF reports that “in 2006, for the first time in the modern era, the number of children dying before their fifth birthday fell below ten million, to 9.7 million.”

We are growing more and more toward kindness. And yet, although I am hopeful, I worry that we are becoming over-saturated with all the facts, news, crises, and even good opportunities to be involved that are coming at us.

Responding in and through Worship

As our awareness of world poverty, suffering, and injustice sets in, we immediately and rightfully must consider how God would call us to respond. Yet many of us skip past an important step: worship. This includes prayer, silence, and the proclamation of God's goodness, mercy, and love. We cannot jump from awareness into action unless we are first refined by love. Full life awaits, but it starts out very small and very, very quietly.

- Ponder.
- Think.
- Sit with it.
- Quietly. (You may need to stay a long time. Or many long times).
- Let it change you.
- Silence.
- Listen.
- Grieve if you are able.
- Let go.

- Breathe.
- Listen.
- Listen a little longer.
- Hear your name—*beloved*.
- Experience peace where you are now.
- Yield to the moment.
- Yield to love.
- Let the yielding heal you.
- This love can change me.
- This love can change us.
- Love can create a world where we want to live.

In quietness we can hear God speaking and moving. We begin to *see*; we realize there are open doors that never seemed to be there before. More and more frequently we hear a whisper, “This is the way, walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21). Jesus’ mother, Mary, was a faithful witness to the cycle of action and reflection—she “treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19).

Long, quiet, honest reflection on our life choices often reveals skewed or contradictory values. One of our Word Made Flesh USA board members, Bob Mabrey, often tells the story of his battle with cancer many years ago. Before he became ill he would tell people that his relationship with God came first, his wife and children came second, and work and ministry came third.

While he was sick, he was forced to examine his life. He came to realize that for many years his life had actually reflected the exact opposite of what he had always boasted. His work and church activities regularly took first priority. His wife and children received the remaining attention. If any energy was left after that, he spent it with God. Many long hours in bed cured him of a life of contradiction.

A Reconnection with Our Humanity

Along with curing us of contradiction, prayerful contemplation reconnects us with our humanity in new ways. We become aware of our bodies, our breathing, our senses, our emotions. Being in tune with and growing in respect for our own humanity awakens a deeper desire to respect the humanity of others as well. When fortified by love, we cannot continue on as we did before, living lives of contradiction, or simply living for ourselves. Love compels us to act on behalf of a world that is desperately in need.

The economic hardships we are experiencing now, while devastating for many, provide us an opportunity to step off the treadmill, think, pray, and ultimately reorient toward a more human way of life. We can become free from the overconsumption under which we suffer. We can embrace our humanity and the humanity of others. Below are a few small practices that can become signs of the coming kingdom in these days:

- **Watch and listen for Christ.** Consider whether your life reflects both the crucified and resurrected Christ.
- **Practice love.** Love the people God has placed directly in your life—even when it’s hard.
- **Recognize that resources aren’t limited to money alone.** Time, emotional energy, skills, and talent are resources that can be shared and given away in love.
- **Rethink your spending.** You probably long for a human touch or a quiet moment more than you really want the next “thing.”
- **When you do shop, buy fair trade.**² In doing so, you can celebrate the dignity of humanity rather than participate in modern-day slavery. Women like Kushi thank you for it. Visit www.saribari.com or find a free trade store near you at: www.transfairusa.org.

- **Support an organization that is bringing dignity to human life.** In doing so, you embrace the coming of the new kingdom. Visit www.wordmadeflesh.org.

In love, these small acts of worship can reorient us toward the God who became flesh. They touch the lives of women like Kushi and become signs of the coming kingdom.

Endnotes

1. Kushi's name has been changed to protect her privacy.

2. For example, a large, upscale retail-clothing store sells the exact same kind of blankets as Sari Bari (in fact, the quality of Sari Bari products is higher). This company pays workers \$2.50USD per blanket with no benefits and takes a one thousand percent profit. Sari Bari pays its employees about \$12USD per blanket, plus benefits, and re-invests profits back into the women.

Daphne Eck Coppock is the international associate director of advocacy for Word Made Flesh. She has served with the community for more than nine years. Daphne and her husband, Caleb, reside in Omaha, Nebraska, USA.

HIV/AIDS: An Open Door to the Gospel

By Dan Hitzhusen

An Evangelistic Cube

In the year 2000, God gave an idea to [e3 Partners Ministry](#) of using a cube (an idea taken from the world of advertising) to share the gospel. No one at e3 Partners had any idea of the impact this simple tool would have. Frankly, most of us had been sharing our faith for decades and were not looking for another tool.

Nine years later, Christians throughout the world are employing this very simple pictorial cube, called the EvangeCube, to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. (EvangeCube: www.simplysharejesus.com, Instruction sheet: www.e3resources.org/Download/E_CubeInsert.pdf)

We have been astounded at the effectiveness of this simple Rubiks Cube-sized device. Since it has no words, it can be used in any culture, especially oral cultures.

We have seen thousands of people make professions of faith and thousands of churches planted as volunteers share their faith one-on-one or in small groups using this little puzzle. These wonderful results are then multiplied many times over by new believers who take it to their own friends and countrymen.

Manasseh Wandera, a Rwandan leader, recently emailed: "EvangeCube is the simplest and yet most effective tool to share the gospel of Jesus Christ I have ever seen. Its pictorial appearance and coherent, clear message of salvation is too attractive, capturing, appealing, and powerful to be ignored. We had three thousand confessions of faith in Nyabihu and eight new churches in June 2008 in just five days by use of this anointed cube. We had over two thousand people accepting Christ in Gahini and ten new churches in May 2008."

It has taken some people awhile to warm up to the idea. My friend Brad Catron says, "As I have worked with many pastors and church leaders in Uganda and Kenya, some are a bit skeptical of the EvangeCube upon their initial encounter. They say, 'Here we do crusades; that is what works for us.' Yet once they learn how to use the EvangeCube and do witnessing with it, they change their tune and say, 'By far, the EvangeCube is the best way to do evangelism. It is personal!'"

The "cube," as it is sometimes nicknamed, has proven to be an unthreatening door-opener, especially to Muslim audiences. Paul Buhwahwaha, a Tanzanian coordinator, explains, "The EvangeCube attracts Muslims that are

scattered by the sight of a Bible!” He also says that not only were pastors impressed with attracted Muslim audiences, they were also emboldened to share with Muslims, solely because they believed the Lord had given them the EvangeCube.

Brian Helstrom, executive director of **JESUS Film Harvest Partners**, has seen people empowered: “There are people who would never have shared their faith before using the EvangeCube. It gives them a very user-friendly, non-threatening evangelistic tool to reach the lost in their communities.”

Just as the story of the gospel unfolds as the EvangeCube is opened, turned, and folded, God had yet another surprise in store for us as he turned it one more time to show us a new way. The cube was about to become a new and powerful weapon in the war against HIV/AIDS.

The Cube for HIV/AIDS Prevention

With the incredible effectiveness of the EvangeCube in communicating truth to oral cultures, many people asked e3 Partners to create a cube for other purposes: personal hygiene, malaria, HIV/AIDS, clean water, etc. Since e3 Partners’ primary mission is to plant churches, not to promote public health, we demurred. Then one of our factories in India asked if they might use the factory to make an AIDS Cube. They made a simple cube with clip-art diagrams to show us. It sat on our shelf for a couple of years until I went to a 2006 Saddleback Global Summit on HIV/AIDS at **Saddleback Church** in Lake Forest, California, USA.

At that conference, God broke my heart for HIV/AIDS victims and I/we determined to do something. I met Bob Bles and John Barnshaw from **Serving In Mission** (SIM) at the conference, and after showing them the EvangeCube, they immediately saw the opportunity. Together we produced a new cube to use in explaining the key points for people to protect themselves and their families from HIV/AIDS. Within ten and a half months the cube was produced and field-tested by e3 Partners in Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda.

Like the EvangeCube, the HIV Hope Cube uses no written words, so it can be shared in many cultures, even where there is no tradition of written language.

Former Harvard University Dean Zege Tsiege spent some time field training health care professionals in Ethiopia and was pleased at the results. One health care professional said, “We have notebooks of complicated AIDS training. This tool boils most of what we have learned down into a very simple, transferable method that we can immediately share.”

To date, there have been over twenty thousand cubes placed in the hands of medical professionals. But the doctors and nurses are most excited about the fact that the cube allows ordinary people to teach proper information about preventing HIV/AIDS. Bles and I shared the vision for this tool to a group of HIV/AIDS advocates at Saddleback Church in November 2007 during which we heard, “This cube gives ordinary people the tool to share the facts about AIDS. Now imagine one million ordinary people being equipped to share about AIDS!”

After more than a year of prototyping, testing, reworking, and getting advice from leading HIV/AIDS professionals, it was very gratifying to hear from so many that we had a medically-correct, effective tool to help stop this terrible disease. By God’s grace, the Church will help lead the way.

The Local Church and the Cube

The HIV Hope Cube has raised the status of the local church in people’s eyes. Not only does it give a message of how to prevent HIV, but it gives hope to those with HIV and can be an easy conduit to the gospel. During and after the HIV presentation, listeners are found to be thinking about life and death.

One Rwandan pastor says the HIV Hope Cube has helped the local church deal with this terrible epidemic:

We didn't know how to address HIV for fear of talking about condoms. You have given us a tool to share with our people the methods of presenting HIV without violating our faith. We can present it as a familial problem without the solution being a license for immorality. A lot of emphasis has been put on the ABCs of HIV/AIDS by the government. They say A=Abstinence, B=Be Faithful to your Spouse, C=Condom. We agree on the A and the B, but the C has to be Christ.

Whether they find themselves before a secular, Muslim, or Hindu audience, workers can move from the disease prevention presentation to showing the EvangeCube. Workers find a natural tie-in by describing how HIV and all disease come from the fall of humanity and real hope comes in a personal relationship with Jesus. One Indian pastor likens it to John the Baptist: "It's not the gospel, but is a bridge to the gospel."

I shared Christ with a Muslim mom and her son in a public hospital in Uganda where two hundred people heard the life-saving message of the HIV Hope Cube and also heard about eternal life found in Jesus. Both the mom and her HIV-positive son professed faith in Jesus.

Saddleback pastor Rick Warren spoke excitedly about the Cube at the Saddleback conference a year ago, calling it "an incredible teaching tool! ... Pick up some of these and use them when you take your mission teams on the road and when you're [doing] ministry in your local area." (Warren on the HIV Hope Cube:

www.e3resources.org/hiv_aids.aspx, Hope Cube Instruction sheet:

www.e3resources.org/Download/HIV_AIDS_insert.pdf)

Yoseph Mena, an Ethiopian church planter, perhaps summed it up best as he held an HIV Hope Cube in his hand and said with a twinkle in his eye, "I believe this is a key that will unlock closed villages for the gospel all over the world."

The Lausanne Strategy

It is interesting to see how the features of the cubes mesh with the three of the focuses set out by the 2007 Lausanne Movement Strategy Working Group meeting in Budapest:

- evangelism
- oral learners
- HIV/AIDS

The HIV Hope Cube, especially when paired with the EvangeCube—touches all three areas. A simple tool like this—like one of the simple stones David used to slay Goliath—in the hands of caring Christian workers all across Africa and Asia can give the hope that leads to life. Both cubes lead to life, one to save someone's life on earth and another to offer him or her eternal life.

The impact of both cubes has continued to be significant, immediate, and surprising. Recently, on a mission trip to Uganda, doors that had been closed to gospel presentations were opened to this new cube. A Ugandan pastor said, "In my town they would never let us share the gospel with six hundred school kids, but with the HIV Hope message we not only were able to share about physical life found in the knowledge of HIV and AIDS, but we were able to share eternal life in Christ."

For more information about the EvangeCube and the HIV Hope Cube contact e3 Partners at:

www.e3resources.org.

Dan Hitzhusen is vice president of e3 Partners Ministry and serves as e3's African continent director. He has been doing cross-cultural ministry around the world for the last twenty-four years and serves on the Lausanne Strategy Working Group.

Zimbabwe Today: A Nation in Need of Prayer

By June Dickie

“We r fasting 5 days a week, no food” was the SMS from our friend Trymore (Try), a pastor of four churches in rural, northern Zimbabwe. Try was one of the students in the Bible school in South Africa at which I taught last year. He is a fine man of thirty-six years, well educated with A-levels. Although he had an opportunity to leave Zimbabwe, he chose to stay to serve the Lord.

When I was asked to join an outreach visit by a local South African church to Zimbabwe, I hoped this would give me opportunity to meet up with Try. And so it was. As there is no public transport operating, he hiked the one hundred miles from his rural area to the capital, Harare. The journey took him three days and cost him a considerable amount. I had hoped to see his wife, Bester, as well; however, she was due to deliver their third child any day.

“She may have to be induced, but there are no government clinics operating,” he said. “And private maternity clinics charge \$1,500”—a figure way beyond his reach. (In fact, his salary as a pastor only pays for him to be able to get to Harare to pick up his wife’s salary. And she, as a qualified teacher, earns \$2USD a month!)

Unspeakable Hardship in the Land

That afternoon, we visited an orphanage run by Eternal Word Ministries. The leader of the ministry and Try’s mentor, Pastor Tatemba, has two hundred churches under his care, each of which also has a home for AIDS orphans. In Harare they run four; the one we visited showed happy, well-cared-for children in a positive environment.

However, we heard that three of the children at one of their other orphanages in Harare had contracted cholera, and one had died the previous day. With no drips or rehydration fluid (even sugar and salt are unavailable locally, and thus one cannot make up a solution), the little child had succumbed.

This is the reality of life in Zimbabwe today for the majority of the people who do not have access to foreign currency. Their own currency has become worthless so much so that a church that received a check in their collection for “six quadrillion dollars” (that is, six with fifteen zeroes!) did not even bother to deposit it in the bank.

An apple costs fifteen million dollars; a single loaf of bread costs two months’ salary for workers at an informal chrome mine outside of Harare. (At this mine, they work twelve hours a day, with no safety precautions, tunneling one hundred yards into the earth, lighting the way with candles. They then drill holes into the sides, push in dynamite, ignite it, and run for their lives. Astonishingly, their monthly salary of six million dollars buys half a loaf of bread!)

We visited two government hospitals in Harare. The first was completely empty, apart from five pediatric wards, which are run completely by a Harare church that buys the medicines, cleaning materials, etc., to give hope to forty-two seriously-ill children.

The other, built nine years ago by the Japanese, is in disrepair; the silent halls echo eerily with the lack of a single patient. The matron, a godly woman, is assisted by a handful of nurses who all continue at their posts and care for, out of their own pockets, seven abandoned children who have nowhere else to go. Under normal circumstances, this hospital would care for one thousand terminally-ill children, as well as adults with every kind of illness. Where then are these critically-ill people? Dying with no relief for their pain?

The matron’s words continue to challenge me: “I never thought Zimbabwe could get this low, but it can’t get any lower.” The economic system has collapsed, as has the medical system, the educational system (no government schools are operating), the transport system, and the social care system. Indeed, the only things that

are functioning for the average person (orphanages, schools, and one clinic) are those run by local Christians. And they are making a difference, shining in the darkness, being salt in their society.

Crying Out to the Lord

Several times during our week's visit, local Christians made reference to the parallels with the Israelites' situation in Egypt, the Pharaoh's hardness of heart, and the Lord sending plagues to break his opposition. They see the cholera as part of what the Lord is doing to deal with Mugabe. They, along with most Zimbabweans, are peace-loving people, determined to wait for God to remove the tyrant.

But they cry out to God, bringing their pain in lament to him. A notice on the matron's door said this: "Pour out your heart like water before the face of the LORD. Lift your hands towards him for the life of your young children (Lamentations 2:9)."

So as one who has felt the pain of a land in crisis, I urge you to cry out to the Lord for his deliverance to come to Zimbabwe. Thousands are coming into the kingdom, day by day, but pray that they will have food to eat and be healed from their diseases.

Pray that Christians, in Zimbabwe and outside, will continue to sacrifice and give and share and care—that the Kingdom of God would be established in a vital way in Zimbabwe, and be an example to the rest of the world.

June Dickie is a South African member of Wycliffe Bible Translators and is involved in the translation of the scriptures into the Kimwani language of northern Mozambique.

New Publication Examines North American Short-term Missions

By Naomi Frizzell

Engaging the Church: Analyzing the Canvas of Short-term Missions

Edited by Laurie Fortunak and A. Scott Moreau

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For some North American churches, the number and frequency of short-term mission trips can be a badge of honor of sorts. Short-term mission trips "overseas" can be incredible times of ministry, connection with other cultures, and personal spiritual growth—or they can be a "rite of passage" for teenagers, something to add to a college application or to put on a FaceBook page, or, at their worst, an exotic vacation that offers "a great way to purchase souvenirs from around the world." In many circles, the debate continues over the long-term (and even the immediate) impact of such trips on the goers, senders, and host groups.

Have we gone too far in encouraging churches to engage their members in short-term mission trips? If so, at what expense—both literally and figuratively? Do the national and field workers who play host to these trips find them beneficial—or are they more of a distraction to their real work? Are there lessons that can be learned?

Engaging the Church: Analyzing the Canvas of Short-term Missions is a new book from the [Evangelism and Missions Information Service](#) at the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College that seeks to offer a historical perspective on short-term missions, while also providing an honest critique of this decades-old trend that is a fixture in many churches.

The book, edited by Laurie Fortunak, editorial coordinator for the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College, and A. Scott Moreau, professor of intercultural studies at the Wheaton College Graduate School, brings together more than thirty articles from past editions of [Evangelical Missions Quarterly](#) (EMQ).¹

Articles have been placed in six sections that allow the reader to focus on one particular area or read through the entire book, thus allowing the articles to build upon one another. The sections include:

- Biblical and spiritual foundations of short-term missions
- History and trends of short-term missions
- Critiques and suggestions for change and improvement in short-term missions
- Types of short-term missions
- Case studies in short-term missions
- Resources for short-term missions

Mission leaders such as Scott Bessenecker, Gary Corwin, Paul Borthwick, Jim Reapsome, and others remind us of the costs of ill-prepared and self-centered short-term mission volunteers while also emphasizing that short-term mission trips are vital to many churches' commitments to cross-cultural mission.

Fortunak says the book is designed as a resource for churches and individuals who are beginning short-term mission work and for those who are managing others involved in short-term mission work.

She adds that the desire is “to help make short-term mission efforts as God-honoring and effective as possible,” by offering a sobering, realistic look at the question of short-term missions, a trend that seems here to stay. After reading *Engaging the Church*, it's likely that churches will feel compelled to closely examine their short-term mission outreaches and, the editors hope, come away challenged and encouraged to make necessary changes to the glory of God and the advancement of his work around the world.

Engaging the Church sells for \$19.95USD (quantity discounts are available) and is available for purchase online by [clicking here](#).

Endnote

1. Access to EMQonline requires a subscription. A one-year subscription, which is \$13.95 USD, includes access to forty-four years of EMQ archives.

Naomi Frizzell is director of communications for the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. She also serves as managing editor for Lausanne World Pulse.

URBAN COMMUNITIES

Engaging in Art with Missional Intent in Paris

By Steve Thrall

Art, as a human artifact, has value in and of itself, being created and produced by people who are themselves made in the creator's image. This is part of God's intentional design, part of what he labeled “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Art produced by men and women who become Christians will gradually reveal a change in values—a worldview shift. These values may cause little or no change in the style; however, the content may well reflect changes, revealing, for example, a renewed hope, joy, or new ethical concern. The work of all Christian artists, given the body of their work over time, will reflect the values of the Kingdom of God.

The focus of the reflections below are narrower, however. The thoughts expressed in this article concern artists in France who feel called to intentionally testify to God's grace within French culture through the expression of their art.

Art in French History

Art is recognized as an important integral part of French history. It is a highly valued element of the social and cultural context. The call to mission by engaging in art with missional intent may be quite new to most Christians. Yet given France's long-established love affair with the arts, cultural shifts taking place, and the renewed spiritual interest being expressed, the time for this kind of missionary activity is now.

For most of human history the arts have been centered in the urban sphere of influence. Artistic expression is a public expression. Art depends upon groups of people for its production, distribution, and appreciation.

In France, Paris has been (and is) the undisputed center of this artistic interest with its museums, concert halls, art schools, theaters, and galleries. In addition, the commercial production and distribution of a wide variety of media (which depend upon art such as film, music, literature, radio, and television) are city center businesses. The arts together with the city function as one to communicate and influence the values of society.

The Church and Mission with Artistic Gifts

And it is not just individual artists who are called to engage in mission with artistic gifts—it is the Church as a broad community of believers (including artists) who are called to labor together. For missionaries to be effective in ministry, whether they be evangelists, apostles, artists, teachers, or administrators, they need the multifaceted support of the whole Body of Christ.

Those who are part of this support network do not all need to be versed in theology, art, or business; they simply need to be convinced that these gifts are vital to the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ. The use of artistic gifts presents a significant God-designed opportunity to open doors to the heart of French culture that have been shut for a very long time. There are several reasons why the use of art as a way to witness for Christ in France is ideal.

First, a Christian witness through the use of art is a *public witness*. Mission thinking in France will need to be expanded in scope with a renewed appreciation for cultural and societal changes, which the gospel brings. Art provides creative access to public forums and public institutions, with which French churches historically do not have much experience. When the Church is absent from this public dialogue, the salt and light are missing. However, if the Church is willing to embrace it, art can give it a public voice that it has not had before. To do so, new attitudes must be adopted.

Art is capable of touching large numbers of people through its subtle, indirect, metaphoric communication of truth. For many people, however, an artistic presentation will be one of the first steps in a long process of seeking spiritual answers.

The French Church must allow God to broaden its understanding, and learn how to nurture the sometimes slow process of kingdom growth. That process needs continued cultivation long after the first individuals become Christians. Mission includes individual transformation, but is not limited to the gospel's private impact. The goal of the gospel is transformation on all levels of society; the gospel is public truth. It is not, as French culture would have us believe, limited to private belief. Art will have an impact on individuals, but it will also have a public, society-wide impact over time. The transformation must be both bottom up and top down.

Lesslie Newbigin writes that the Church is the hermeneutic of the gospel.¹ French society is beginning to pay attention to what the Church does and thinks. A Church that is not afraid to take a thoughtful public stance will attract attention, and the arts will facilitate the process. A unified multi-ethnic Church which is arts-oriented would be a powerful hermeneutic in French society before the first word is ever spoken.

Direct verbal presentations of propositional truth have been prized by the Church as the only faithful way of communicating the importance of the gospel. Communication implies a mutual understanding of shared points of reference, even when there is not agreement. In France, however, the commonly shared experiences,

symbolism, and points of reference in the spiritual realm are often missing, so real understanding between two individuals does not take place. A verbal expression, no matter how clear, does not guarantee that communication has occurred.

Second, art, by its very nature, is *indirect*. A majority of French people are not yet ready to interact with God's truth directly. For this reason the indirectness of art can be very important for mission. Art, as a metaphor, is capable of disclosing truth for the first time; it can lead to the first steps on a long spiritual journey. Art's allusiveness suggests, prods, points, and indicates truth subtly and consistently. Art can, at times, become God's "still, quiet voice" speaking to the French soul.

French culture, like other Latin cultures of southern Europe, emphasizes indirectness as a value in communication. It is a way of prompting the person to discover something on his or her own without an offensive direct confrontation. By contrast non-Latin Europe and North American culture emphasize directness, efficiency, and getting right to the point. Because of its indirectness, art can prompt *reflection* and invite *dialogue*. Art can raise questions in the mind that require a response. Being asked a question and choosing not to answer is like trying to stop a sneeze. It can be done, but only with conscious effort. The questions raised can push people toward revelation. Art engages and invites dialogue; it pushes toward active participation.

Third, art asks questions. It does not give answers. Many forms of art can do precisely what Jesus did with parables. They can simply be offered to the crowds for reflection. Discussions can be initiated later with those who take time to ask questions. Artists can determine what people really want or need to hear by asking a question rather than making a statement or describing what they were supposed to perceive.

Art can naturally enter into a dialogue with French culture, thus allowing for the gospel to become contextualized and be heard in new ways. The artist who senses God's call to produce art with missional intent must first humble him or herself and become a learner, as was the Apostle Paul in Athens.

He or she must also be active and intentional about his or her dialogue with culture and his or her artistic contacts, yet allowing God to open the right doors at the right time. When both artist and his or her art are deeply rooted in the person's context—naturally reflecting a love for art and God's kingdom—a multi-level transforming communication can happen which may often surpass the artist's conscious intention. From the perspective of mission, it is at this point that we clearly sense God directing the process. It is God's work to place meaning where meaning is meant to be.

Storytelling in the Postmodern Context

In the emerging postmodern context, the art of *storytelling* is exercised not only verbally in the sharing of personal stories and experiences, but also in a wide variety of creative ways through the use of music, film, and a variety of artistic media. In modernity, storytelling was not taken very seriously; stories were reserved for children's entertainment or for adults who needed to escape and relax.

The postmodern context seems to broaden the scope of storytelling. Novelists, poets, and playwrights can creatively draw from the wealth of the French language's vivid word pictures and subtly nuanced expressions to convey meaning in a wide variety of ways and at various levels. Writing plays, sketches, or scripts can be like the writing of modern parables. The stories can be rooted in real experiences, but told indirectly through the voice of a character. Storytelling can also be expressed through dance, mime, painting, instrumental music, and other ways through the magic of metaphor.

Integrity and the Arts

Good art is complex, requiring the intricate blending of diverse and necessary layers in order to communicate as it is intended. When this happens and it forms a unified whole speaking with one voice, then the work can be described as having *integrity*.²

Nicholas Wolterstorff speaks about the *fittingness* of the art within the context for which it was made.³ Art which achieves this quality has both internal integrity as well as contextual integrity. It is art that is *contextualized*. It fits perfectly and speaks from within the context of a worldview to others who instinctively understand. This level of artistic craftsmanship, hard work, and time are essential for good communication.

When art is valued for its integrity, then the message it carries will be the fruit of work that is well done. This high standard must be a natural but essential quality of art that is done with missional intent. Without integrity in our works of art, there will be a sudden slip toward Christian propaganda that resembles Communist era art, which “accomplishes nothing more than to comfort and affirm those who are already believers.”⁴

However, “When form and content fuse in this way they create a *context* in which ideas are carried as natural allies, rather than...[as] blunt instruments to club the...mind into submission.”⁵

Avoiding the “blunt instruments” of propaganda is essential for the compassionate contextual communication of divine truth.

Because of art’s unique capacities it can also be subversive. But good, creative, artistic communication can turn its subversive abilities toward deconstructing values stemming from false gods. For example, art and artists are idolized in French society, so it is natural to bring art into play in order to communicate the gospel in such a way that challenges those idols. Elements of the secular or postmodern worldviews can be challenged from the inside; values can be turned on their head. Christian artists who use their gifts missionally must become “as wise as serpents, but as harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

Integrating Art into Outreach

Practically speaking, for churches in France to begin to integrate art into their outreach and involvement in their community, there are quite a few cultural venues in which they can participate.

The Church can begin by choosing to invest in one art that particularly corresponds to the talents of Christian artists they know. Solo artists or groups can be encouraged to seek and accept concerts in bars, cafés, and clubs with the full support of their churches. Churches can look for opportunities to join art associations, or enter local music, painting, dance, or film festivals.

Local churches can offer various kinds of art courses for the general public. Courses can also be offered for the homeless, the elderly in a retirement home, or for youth in a troubled neighborhood. Teams of believers from different churches can be encouraged to labor together to produce larger events—such as major concerts, plays, musicals, dance performances, competitions, or the production of short films—for a city-wide impact.

Churches with a vision for the use of art can help provide artists with much needed administrative help. Gifted administrators can help artists advertise, draw up contracts, and book galleries and concerts.

As with any new task there will undoubtedly be a steep learning curve at the beginning, and everything will seem new and a bit daunting. Yet, as with any job, once the adaptation period is over, the fear will be replaced by the excitement of doing what we were meant to do and seeing God work in new ways. Steve Turner wonders,

Can we imagine Christians who are called to be artists rather than preachers, not only making an impact in their chosen form, but doing so in a way that draws attention to a worldview that is different from that of their contemporaries, a worldview that gets people talking? Could it be that Christians could actually change the nature of the big debate?⁶

In France, this kind of public witness is desperately needed and the potential already exists. What we do with that potential remains to be seen.

(This article was part of Thrall’s final project for a Doctor of Ministry degree from Bakke Graduate University in Seattle, Washington. The project was entitled, “Engaging in Art with Missional Intent: A Contextual Approach to Mission in France.”)

Endnotes

1. 1989. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Eerdmann, 222-233.
2. Brand, Hilary and Adrienne Chaplin. 2001. *Art and Soul: Signposts for Christians in the Arts*. Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press, 48.
3. 1980. *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Eerdmans, 96-121.
4. Turner, Steve. 2002. *Imagine*. Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press, 52-53.
5. Brand and Chaplin. 148.
6. Turner, 105.

Steve Thrall has been working in creative urban ministry—including church planting, teaching, networking, and ministry through the arts—through International Teams in Paris for the last twenty years.

LAUSANNE REPORTS

Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering West Africa Report

By Mark Kolo

The Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering West Africa (YLGWA) was held 30 November - 4 December 2008 in Nigeria. On the eve of the programme major ethno-religious riots broke out in Jos, where the gathering was supposed to be held. Within twenty-four hours the venue was changed to Abuja. With several uncertainties due mainly to the Jos crises and the change of venue, the YLGWA opening session started with praise and prayer.

The gathering brought together fifteen mentors/speakers and fifty younger leaders from the English-speaking West African countries of Liberia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. The breakdown of attendance was as follows:

Ghana	14 participants
Liberia	7 participants
Sierra Leone	2 participants
Nigeria	40 participants
Other	8 participants who came for part of the gathering

Delegates were selected on the following criteria:

- Church and mission leaders and/or Christian leaders in the marketplace
- Generally aged twenty-five to thirty-five

- Balanced geographical spread across countries and zones
- Gender balance (male/female)

The younger leaders unanimously voted to adopt the theme: “Live and Lead Like Jesus.” Plenary speakers included:

1. Pade Tokun, Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) in Democratic Republic of Congo and Central Africa
2. Rev. Steve Asante, president, Ghana Baptist Convention
3. Rt. Rev. Emmanuel Egbunu, Bishop of Lokoja Diocese, Anglican Communion
4. Gideon Para-Mallam, Lausanne English, Portuguese, Spanish-speaking (EPSA) International Deputy Director

Participants identified six critical issues concerning evangelizing West Africa:

1. Orphans and Vulnerable Children
2. Transforming the Sub-Region through Prayer
3. The Remaining Unreached People Groups
4. Unveiling the Giant of Islam
5. Understanding Youth Culture
6. The Challenge of Liberal Theology and Nominalism

Although five workshop topics were identified, only two were held, since most of the resource persons were unable to make it due to either the crisis in Jos or the last minute changes. The two held were:

1. **Growing as an “EZRA” Younger Leader: How to Develop an Effective Devotional Life and Skill in Expository Bible Preaching for Transformation** by Rev. Dr. T.B. Dankwa, senior pastor, Accra Chapel, Accra
2. **Team Building and Networking with Others as a Younger Leader for World Evangelization** by Rev. Reuben Ezemadu, international director, Christian Missionary Foundation, Ibada

Additionally, the countries represented had an opportunity to share the challenges and opportunities for the gospel in their various countries.

Participating younger leaders were divided into ten small mentoring groups. Participants then spent time getting acquainted, sharing challenges and testimonies, praying together, and learning about what God is doing in different contexts.

The main thrust of the messages at YLGWA was the need to re-evaluate leadership styles and take personal note of Jesus’ calling on Christians to live and lead like him as revealed in the Gospels and Epistles. Participants left with a clear understanding that it would not be possible to lead like Jesus unless they live like him. This remains a fundamental call Jesus made to all his followers. Christians cannot respond to this call without re-focusing on the cross of Christ as his followers in their leadership journey.

To lead like Jesus means answering the call to servant leadership—a scarce commodity within the African Church setting today. Participants were reminded that they “have no mission of their own”—only the mission of the master and those they serve on the mission field. The vision for world evangelization will receive further boost if Christians intentionally invest in growing younger kingdom-minded leaders.

Participants were given a closing charge by Ghana Younger Leaders team coordinator, Nana Yaw Offei-Owuku, who summarized the joy of learning together. He said that God had done three things during the gathering:

1. Jesus had called them back to himself through fellowship and learning together.
2. Participants had been challenged to move out of their comfort zones to finish the work of world evangelization in the sub-region, continent, and beyond.
3. Participants had been encouraged and charged to submit to mentorship and to commit to identifying other younger leaders and seeking out practical ways to mentor others until Jesus’ return.

Para-Mallam told participants that the YLGWA 2008 started as a faith project and ended as such. He reminded all present that the planning suffered many “hiccups” along the way, but God’s faithfulness saw them through each challenge.

Para-Mallam took time to appreciate the mentors and facilitators for their efforts and noted the doggedness and personal initiatives of the younger leaders, even some who could not be present at the gathering. A brief DVD presentation on Lausanne was shown, and participants sang “In Christ Alone” as a closing rallying song of collective declaration of commitment.

Mark Kolo is facilitator of the Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering West Africa.

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