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PUBLISHER'S MEMO

Migration and Evangelism

By Lon Allison

Two of the guiding Great Commission passages, “Go and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19-20) and “You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8)—can, if we are not careful, *limit mission*. Both suggest that we evangelize by “going” to distant places and reaching other ethnic communities. And that is true, we do. Scripture commands it and church history verifies its effectiveness.

But Acts 2 displays another very powerful means of evangelization, namely, reaching many cultures in and through the local church. At Pentecost, the Spirit rushes upon the believers and they immediately begin to preach the gospel in numerous languages. Why? Because the listeners were from, as Luke has it, “every nation under heaven” (2:5). He later lists a minimum of fifteen distinct people groups gathered to hear about the “wonderful works of God” (2:9-11). Much can be drawn from this passage; however, my emphasis is that the first recorded gospel message was to peoples of many cultures *already in Jerusalem*. Peter didn’t “go” anywhere to preach to the world, for the world had “come” to him. The world was his parish and it was resident in his neighborhood.

I have tasted this wonder in my own preaching life. Just a month ago, I declared Christ in Lexington, Kentucky, USA. Lexington is not known for its diversity, being part of the American South. But one church, birthed a year ago, is a literal replay of Acts 2. The Church of all Nations had about 150 people that morning, and the congregants were from more than ten nations in Asia, Africa, South America, and North America. I was one of about eight “whites.” The co-pastors come from India and Nigeria.

How could a one-year-old church reach that many diverse peoples in one year? The pastors simply went to the University of Kentucky in Lexington, met the leaders in the international students department, and through them built redemptive friendships with immigrant students and refugees who have migrated to Kentucky. Lexington is primarily a mono-cultural city, or so most believers would think. But reality suggests this is not so. Education, economics, the need for sanctuary from oppression, and the accessibility of affordable global transport are changing the world. People are migrating from one nation to another unlike any time in recorded history.

The implications of this are immense. How do churches, which by and large don’t even reach the people most like them, reach the people least like them? That is the topic of this issue of Lausanne World Pulse.

Thanks to Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Claudia Währisch-Oblau, John Morehead, Jehu Hanciles, and others for helping us understand what we can do better.

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NEWS BRIEFS

AROUND THE WORLD: World Vision International President to Retire in 2010

[World Vision International](#) (WVI) president, Dean Hirsch, announced he will retire in September 2010. Hirsch has served as chief executive since 1996. WVI board chair Denis St. Amour noted that the organization has seen its revenue grow from 550 million USD to 2.4 billion USD under Hirsch. Hirsch has also made public advocacy an integral part of WVI's work and mounted major campaigns responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the Asian tsunami, child mortality and malnutrition, and the recent food crisis. St. Amour added Hirsch returned WVI's focus to children in need. ([World Vision International](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: NIV Bible Version Available for Download to Cell Phone

First published in 1979, the New International Version (NIV) is currently the most popular English Bible translation in the world. Now the NIV will be downloadable to cell phones thanks to a partnership between Ecumen, a company that provides downloadable Christian content, and United Kingdom Christian publisher, Hodder and Stoughton. Cost to download is approximately 15USD. For more information, go to: www.ecumen.com or www.hodderchristianbooks.co.uk. ([ASSIST News](#))

AZERBAIJAN: Global Advance Conference Well Received

[Global Advance](#) (GA) recently held a well-received Frontline Shepherds Conference in Azerbaijan. This is the second conference GA has held in the country. It carried a lively atmosphere not present during the first conference, which was held two weeks after 11 September 2001. Enthusiastic church leaders have asked the GA team to return in the future, saying the training received accurately addressed their needs. Outside of the Russian Orthodox Church, there are approximately ten thousand active Christians in this country of over eight million people. ([Global Advance](#))

BELARUS: Belarusians Seek Help from EU in Struggle for Religious Freedom

On 27 May 2008, Belarusians presented a petition, which calls for the revision of a 2002 law restricting religious freedom, to European Parliament president Hans-Gert Pöttering. The Belarusian government had rejected the petition, which was signed by 50,400 people, saying it was not carried out properly. An additional petition was also filed by Belarusians asking the European Union to take action on the issue of religious freedom in their country. Stuart Windsor, national director of [Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#), remarked that little has changed in Belarus since the days of the Soviet Union; however, Christians there are gathering across denominational lines to demand their right to worship freely. ([Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#))

COLOMBIA: Christians Meet with Left-Wing Rebels Over Church Closures

Netherlands-based [Open Doors International](#) recently met with Columbian left-wing rebels to discuss the closure of more than 130 churches in the country as well as death threats against Columbian Christians. Both left-wing rebels and right-wing paramilitaries have forced church closures, according to

Open Doors, an organization devoted to helping persecuted Christians. Commanders of the left-wing Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) can order Christians put to death for violating rebel orders. FARC rules prohibit preaching against violence. Ongoing conflict in Columbia has killed an estimated forty thousand people in the last decade alone. FARC founder Manuel Marulanda recently died of a heart attack; however, it is unclear how his death will affect the situation of Christians as well as scores of hostages held by rebels. Under Marulanda, FARC grew to seventeen thousand members, controlling large parts of the country. Some believe rebel forces have weakened with several top leaders killed and one commander deserting in the past year. ([Bos News Life](#))

INDIA: Five Thousand Tribal People Attend Rural Convention

Five thousand people from various tribes gathered in rural Maharashtra, India, recently for Christian fellowship and worship. The 2-day conference, which was organized by native missionaries from [Gospel for Asia](#) (GFA), witnessed attendees traveling by foot and other simple means in order to reach its location about thirty kilometers from the nearest town. Along with mealtime fellowship, worship songs in different tribal languages were shared during an evening meeting that continued late into the night. The conference ended with a pledge to share the gospel with many more of the area's people in the coming days. ([Gospel for Asia](#))

LATIN AMERICA: WEA Theological Commission Deepens Latin American Connections

In April, the World Evangelical Alliance [Theological Commission](#) (TC) furthered connections with Latin America during an extensive tour by its executive director, Dr. David Parker. The tour covered five countries: Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Peru, and Guatemala, and included visits to seminaries and universities, and meetings with theological groups. Planning to hold its annual meeting in Latin America in 2009, the TC also hopes to appoint a Spanish-speaking theologian to its top board to represent the area's fast growing Christian community. Next year's meeting will also involve a consultation to address important issues facing the Church in Latin America. This year's TC meeting will be in Bangkok, Thailand. ([World Evangelical Alliance](#))

MYANMAR: GFA Aid Received in Yangon

[Gospel for Asia's](#) (GFA) first shipment of relief supplies reached Myanmar in May 2008 and was received by the GFA/Believers Church. GFA's local churches and its national leader have a good relationship with government leaders as a result of previous service during the country's times of need. Despite media reports of aid supplies being diverted, GFA has assurances that shipments will reach the victims. The Myanmar government has also granted permission for GFA to open medical clinics in its four hundred churches within the country. In Rangoon, GFA's Bible college is serving as a shelter, although its buildings are badly damaged. Storm toll estimates vary from 78,000 to 127,000 dead and as many as 2.5 million people left homeless. GFA's five hundred native missionaries in Myanmar will continue to serve victims long term. In addition to GFA's efforts, [World Vision International](#) (WVI) and [Samaritan's Purse](#) (SP) also continue to send aid, with WV raising more than ten million USD and SP sending sixty tons of supplies from Thailand into Myanmar. ([Gospel for Asia](#))

PHILIPPINES: Fast-Growing Church Ministers to Filipinos at Home and Abroad

Founded in 1981, the Free Believers in Christ Fellowship (FBCF) is one of the fastest-growing evangelical churches in the Philippines, a predominantly Roman Catholic nation. With its beginnings in Bible studies done in a small business office, the FBCF now reaches into China, Hong Kong, North America, Europe, and the Middle East. FBCF's founder, Bishop Moses Chungalao, and assistant senior pastor William Guzman say that rather than proselytizing, the church's growth can be attributed to the working of the Holy Spirit, responding to invitations people make to hear the gospel and passionate examples of service to God. Guzman oversees 263 established churches in the Philippines, with registered members numbering about ten thousand. Meanwhile Chungalao, now in London, concentrates on the

fellowship's overseas mission work, which encompasses fifty-seven churches and outreaches catering to Filipino migrant workers in Asia, Europe, North America, and the Middle East. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

SUDAN: Border Area Taken by Northern Forces

[International Christian Concern](#) (ICC), a Washington, D.C.-based human rights group reports Northern Sudanese troops have taken control of Abeyi, an oil-rich border area of conflict between Khartoum government forces (SAF) and the Southern Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army. This takeover is in direct violation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the North and South. Indications are that ninety percent of homes in the area were burned down and thousands of people have been displaced. ICC says the SAF has begun ethnic cleansing in Abeyi, displacing the South Sudanese and moving in North Sudanese. A referendum is slated to be voted on in 2011, whereby the people of Abeyi will decide on whether to be part of North or South Sudan. ([International Christian Concern](#))

UNITED KINGDOM: UK Celebrates Global Day of Prayer

As one of at least 201 nations participating, the UK marked the fourth annual Global Day of Prayer on Pentecost Sunday with events in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Under the theme "Your Kingdom Come, on Earth as in Heaven," thousands of Christians of all denominations and traditions gathered in London's Millwall Stadium, praying particularly for communities plagued by violent crime. Inspired by 2 Chronicles 7:14, South African businessman Graham Power founded the Global Day of Prayer movement almost ten years ago. London organizers hope to hold their event at Wembley Stadium in 2010. ([ASSIST News](#))

UNITED STATES: World Mission Centre Launches Arabic Translation of Live School

In March 2008, the [World Mission Centre](#) (WMC) introduced the Arabic translation of its Live School curriculum, a practical training tool used to equip indigenous people for the task of spreading the gospel. After a presentation with three hundred Arab church leaders attending, WMC was inundated with requests for Live School course sets. However, presenters had only ten sets to pass out. WMC is appealing to individuals and churches to help fund production of more sets. The next scheduled Live School translation will be into Swahili. ([Live School](#))

UNITED STATES: Leaders of Homeless Missions Gather Together

The [Association of Gospel Rescue Missions](#) (AGRM) held its 95th annual convention in Dallas, Texas, 23-28 May 2008 with approximately 650 rescue mission leaders attending. The conference addressed the latest methods in providing care for hungry, homeless, abused, and addicted individuals. Founded in 1913, AGRM represents about three hundred rescue missions, collectively working in areas of rehabilitation, education, job training, and life skills programming. Often working without government funding, these missions serve forty-two million meals and provide fifteen million nights of lodging each year. In addition, more than eighteen thousand people also graduated from addiction-recovery programs run by the missions. ([Association of Gospel Rescue Missions](#))

ZIMBABWE: Open-Air Prayer Meetings Banned

As Zimbabwe faces waves of politically-motivated violence, police have imposed a ban on open-air prayer meetings in parts of the country. Churches in Bulawayo, a coalition of churches in the nation's second largest city, reports open prayer meetings may only take place on church premises. Churches in Bulawayo has been openly critical of President Robert Mugabe, as have other religious groups, such as the Christian Alliance. Groups such as Churches in Bulawayo and the YWCA are providing shelter for families displaced by violence. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

THEMED ARTICLES: The Effect of Migration and the Growing Diaspora on Evangelism Efforts

Migration, Diaspora Communities, and the New Missionary Encounter with Western Society

By Jehu J. Hanciles

The biblical record—from the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden in Genesis (3:23) to the magnificent vision of the Apostle John, who is exiled on the Island of Patmos in Revelation (1:9)—reveals a profound interconnection between human mobility or dispersion and the unfolding of salvation history. The same link is manifest throughout the history of Christian missions. As a prominent case in point, the Western missionary movement, from the sixteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, was shaped by international migrations. European missionaries not only benefited from the projection of Western political power, but they also formed a segment of the massive tide of European movement that dominated international migrations. By 1915, twenty-one percent of Europeans resided outside Europe and Europeans effectively occupied or settled in over one-third of the inhabited world.¹

Global Migrations from 1960

With the end of European colonialism, or from the 1960s, international migrations have escalated in volume, velocity, and complexity, and transformed into a truly global phenomenon.

The earlier flows which were mostly defined by European initiatives and economic priorities have given way to a far more complex pattern of migration involving vastly greater non-European or non-white migrations from the developing and under-developed, non-Western world to the Western world—generally considered South-to-North flows.

By the 1980s, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia had become net exporters of millions of people to Western countries, initially as labor migrants, subsequently as asylum seekers, but increasingly and predominantly as economic migrants. By 2000, non-Western migrants accounted for seventy percent of immigration into most wealthy developed nations in Europe and North America.

The Religious Divide

It is often overlooked that the global South-North divide is as religious as it is economic. In Western societies, the process of modernization has produced distinctive cultural changes associated with the secular ideal of liberal democracy, including: stronger individualism; a greater push for gender equality; sexual permissiveness; greater tolerance of divorce, abortion, and homosexuality; and a massive erosion of institutional religion. Non-Western societies are not static, but they remain resistant to secularization (at least Western forms of the phenomenon) and retain strong allegiance to religious systems and traditional values. Perhaps the most conspicuous testimony to this trend is the phenomenal growth of Christianity in the non-Western world accompanied by a corresponding decline in the West over the last half a century or so. This “shift” has seen the emergence of Africa and Latin America as the main Christian heartlands in the twenty-first century.

Due to the pervasive religiosity of non-Western societies, the South-to-North migration movement is essentially a religious movement. This is to say that, in addition to the economic and cultural benefits which the new immigrants bring, they are also impacting Western societies in fundamental ways related to religious life. In other words, contemporary global migrations implicate the West as a site of new

religious interactions. This is particularly true of the growth of new Muslim and Christian populations; however, it is the latter that forms the focus here.

The West as a New Missionary Frontier

It is a most extraordinary historical coincidence that the momentous “shift” in global Christianity’s demographic and cultural center of gravity to the southern continents has occurred at almost precisely the same time as the equally momentous reversal in the direction of international migrations. *This means that, as in the previous five centuries, the continents which represent the chief sources of global migration movement are also now the main heartlands of the Christian faith.*

Thus, in the same way that unprecedented European migrations from Christianity’s old heartland provided the impetus for the European missionary movement, phenomenal migrations from Christianity’s new heartlands (in Africa, Latin America, and Asia) have galvanized a massive non-Western missionary movement. This movement from the new heartlands of Christianity to the old centers where the faith is experiencing dramatic erosion and marginalization essentially incorporates missionary initiatives; not only because every Christian missionary is a migrant in some sense, but even more so because *every Christian migrant is a potential missionary.*

Christian Immigrants in America

America is the definitive immigrant nation, and it remains the chief destination of the world’s international migrants. By 2005, international migrants accounted for roughly thirteen percent of the American population. Significantly, the overwhelming majority of recent (post-1960) immigrants are of non-European stock and come from over 150 countries.² The majority—sixty-five percent, according to one estimate—also claim to be Christian.³ The impact has been striking. Across all Catholic and Protestant groups (mainline or evangelical), the new congregations or “ethnic” churches formed by the new immigrants provide the cutting edge of Christian growth. Their distinctive expressions of faith and ways of doing church, even when adapted to the new context, have contributed to a “de-Europeanizing of American Christianity.”⁴

Here is a glimpse of what is going on:

- Largely due to massive Hispanic immigration, Latinos now account for one-third of all Catholics in the US; and this Latino segment will continue to rise for the foreseeable future.⁵
- The fastest growing churches in America over the last two decades have arguably been Korean. By 1990, there were over two thousand Korean congregations belonging to various Protestant denominations nationwide.⁶
- African immigrant congregations are also flourishing in major cities throughout the country, founded by enterprising migrant-pastors.⁷ For example, in August 1990, when the outbreak of the Liberian civil war left him stranded in the US, pastor (now Bishop) Darlington Johnson got together a group of seventeen Liberians and started Sunday worship at Blackburn Center at Howard University (Washington D.C.). So began Bethel World Outreach Church. In the space of ten years, what began as a small Liberian fellowship flowered into a community of faith comprising people from forty-two nations with a membership of about three thousand. In the fall of 2006, after ten consecutive evenings on the streets of downtown Silver Spring, Maryland, the evangelistic team from Bethel World Outreach ministries collected contact details from 1,132 respondents!

Christian Immigrants in Europe

Unlike the US, where the majority of new immigrants are Christian, the majority of post-1960s immigrants in Europe are Muslim. Islam represents Europe's fastest growing religion and its second largest faith. But among Europe's new immigrants are also huge numbers of Christians whose presence has contributed to an explosive growth in the numbers of churches. Largely confined to major metropolitan centers, these immigrant congregations display extraordinary spiritual vigor and dynamism, in startling contrast to much older homegrown churches. In 2001, the number of African Christians throughout Europe was estimated to be in excess of three million.⁸

Here is a glimpse of what is going on:

- A 2005 assessment of church growth and attendance in England reported that non-white groups account for fifty-eight percent of churchgoers in London (outside London the percentage drops to thirty-one).⁹ A century ago, Charles Spurgeon's 5000-seater Metropolitan Tabernacle at Elephant and Castle (south London) was the largest Baptist church, with thousands of white, English worshippers; today, the largest Baptist church in Britain is composed of African immigrants.¹⁰
- The Nigerian-led Kingsway International Christian Center has the largest congregation (over ten thousand) in the entire United Kingdom; while the Redeemed Christian Church of God (a Nigeria-based movement), which established its first church in Britain in 1989, had grown to 141 churches with a total of eighteen thousand members by 2005.¹¹
- Perhaps the most powerful testimony to the dynamism and drive of contemporary African Christianity is the fact that the largest single Christian community in all of Europe (the former heartland of the faith) is the **Embassy for the Blessed Kingdom of God to All Nations** in Kiev, Ukraine, founded by Sunday Adelaja, a Nigerian pastor. Established in November 1993 as a Bible study group of seven people meeting in Adelaja's apartment, the new group registered as a church three months later with only forty-nine members.¹² By 2002, after adopting an outreach strategy which focused on the marginalized groups within Ukrainian society, the church had grown to twenty thousand. Over one million Ukrainians have reportedly been converted to Christianity as a result of its ministry.

Assessing the Missionary Function

The growing presence of immigrant Christian communities in Western societies is no longer open to debate. But many question the capacity of these new Christian initiatives to reach across the cultural chasm that often separates newly-formed, non-white communities from the predominantly white mainstream society. They imagine that immigrant congregations are primarily ethnic based, inward-looking entities specifically designed to address the parochial needs of particular immigrant groups. In this view, the overwhelmingly Ukrainian, but Nigerian founded and led, Embassy for the Blessed Kingdom of God to All Nations, is seen as a singular exception.

This outlook reflects less an understanding of the nature of Christian expansion through the centuries than the influence of Western missionary models and assumptions. Throughout the history of the Christian faith, migrant Christians who settle in new areas and form settled fellowships that provide long-term witness have formed the main thrust of cross-cultural expansion; not the few gifted specialists serving in distant lands, dependent upon the superior resources of their church and country.¹³ Meaningful assessment of the emerging non-Western missionary movement calls for new forms of analysis.

Partly because they hail from countries where the Christian experience is dynamic, and partly due to the hardships and travail of the immigrant experience, these congregations are characterized by marked

spiritual vitality and a strong commitment to evangelism. Many (if not most) exhibit a strong missionary vision—one engendered in no small measure by the fact that they confront societies in which Christianity is experiencing marked decline. At the very least, their growing presence provides a counterweight to the downturn in Christian observance and church attendance within Western societies.

In truth, a good proportion of immigrant congregations are veritable ethnic enclaves given to self-maintenance and insulated from the wider society by non-English usage in their worship and fellowship. But the vast majority function as both centers of community life and sites of negotiated adjustment to Western society. Yet, even if all they did was evangelize other immigrants—many of whom were not Christians before they migrated and most of whom are beyond the outreach of Western churches in the countries they now reside—the new immigrant congregations will be making a significant contribution to the growth of Christianity in the Western world.

Often located in inner city or urban areas, these congregations also represent the face of Christianity to a goodly proportion of the nation's disadvantaged and marginalized population, where effective missionary function depends upon sustained daily interaction with others who belong to the same neighborhood and deal with similar daily challenges.

Undeniably, racial divisions, cultural rejection, and social demarcations represent significant missionary challenges; however, the missionary-mindedness of immigrant Christians and congregations is well attested.

The outlook remains complex. The encounter with Western societies is attended by complex assimilation patterns and transnational existence which enables these congregations to bridge non-Western Christian experiences and Western forms. There is also strong evidence to suggest that their outreach capacity increases over time with critical adaptation to the cultural environment; which in turn indicates that the next generation may hold the key to greater missionary effectiveness.

Unlike generations of Western missionaries, many de facto members of this non-Western missionary movement have acquired citizenship and their congregations function as spiritual training grounds for the next generation of citizens. Given these considerations, the question is not whether these new Christian communities formed by migration will impact Western society, but rather to what extent.

Endnotes

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African-Led Christianity in Europe: Migration and Diaspora Evangelism

By Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu

A massive growth in Christian presence in the southern continents meant that by the middle of the twentieth century Christian faith had developed into a “non-Western religion.”¹ With the rise of churches and prophet movements of African provenance at the turn of the twentieth century, Christianity grew by leaps and bounds in sub-Saharan Africa.

These developments, together with the emergence of Pentecostal/charismatic varieties of the faith, led to seismic changes in the African Christian landscape from the dominant era of historic mission Christianity. With increasing global trends in migration, Christianity in Africa has now gone international.

Today, some of the largest congregations in Europe—Western and Eastern—are either founded by Africans or are led by people of African descent. Discussions on African immigrant Christianity usually focus on churches whose memberships tend to be constituted by Africans or people of that descent. A good example is the Kingsway International Christian Center (KICC) in London, led by the charismatic Nigerian pastor, Matthew Ashimolowo.

My research has taken me to the doors of another type of African-led church whose membership is entirely European. This means the designation of these churches in the diaspora as “African churches” is no longer tenable. For example, Sunday Adelaja’s Church of the Blessed Embassy of the Kingdom of

God for all Nations is based in Kiev, Ukraine. Founded some fourteen years ago, it has a membership of approximately twenty-five thousand adults.

Mission, Migration, and Diaspora

In African hands, mission and evangelization have truly gone international and African diaspora Christianity is at the forefront of the new initiatives. Originating in the Jewish biblical tradition, the term “diaspora” now enjoys growing importance in the study of religion precisely because of some of the developments relating to the dispersal of African Christians in the modern West.²

For many of these people, however, the word “return” usually associated with the diaspora does not exist in their vocabulary. Although it is possible to encounter a significant number who may fall within the categories of *academic* and *political* migrants, a majority of Africans in Europe are *economic* migrants. Gerrie ter Haar, a pioneer in the study of Christianity among Africans in Europe, has noted that human migration is something of all times and ages and that “religion has always been a significant aspect” of it.³

Into whichever category they fall, African migrants have always carried their faith with them to the diasporas.⁴ Unlike the cries of diaspora Jews who, out of exilic despair, could not fathom singing the Lord’s song in a foreign land, modern migrants are doing just that with the formation of churches.

Witness of Presence

Although African churches in Western Europe do not attract many Europeans, there is such a thing as the “witness of presence” in mission studies. The very presence of African-led churches in Europe is a testimony to the dynamic quality and significance of the African evangelical witness. This, to use Pauline language, testifies to how God chooses “the foolish things of this world” to serve his purposes:

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

It is not insignificant that Africa, a continent despised, deprived, trampled upon, marginalized, and shamed in many ways has emerged as the beacon of Christian mission and evangelization in the global spread of the faith. This does not render European Christianity irrelevant; rather, it shows that at a time when the faith is under siege in its former heartlands, God has placed its destiny in the hands of the people of the South. Thus, for many African Christians in the diaspora, the recession of Christianity among westerners is a call to evangelism and the re-establishment of kingdom values in the lands of nineteenth century missionaries. Mission is in reverse.

Varieties of Churches in Mission

African-led churches in Europe come in different varieties and categories. The earliest ones began as fellowships among migrants who felt unwelcome in the established churches of Europe on racial grounds. These interdenominational fellowships served a second purpose of making up for the spiritual and liturgical poverty of worship life in the European Church. As the churches of the missionaries continued to lose their spiritual fervor and sense of the supernatural, the Africans took their spiritual destinies into their own hands and reconstituted fellowships into churches where faith could be expressed in ways that resonated with African and biblical pieties. To quote Jehu Hanciles:

In Western Europe, the rise of African immigrant churches and other non-Western Christian congregations has been dramatically visible because of the stark contrast between the dynamism of new immigrant Christian groups and the often moribund tone of the traditional churches.⁵

The first immigrant churches to form in Europe were the African independent churches known in Ghana as Spiritual churches and in Nigeria and South Africa as *Aladura* (“praying people”) and Zionist churches, respectively. African members of mainline denominations in their home countries initially joined similar denominations in Europe, particularly in the UK and Germany. With time, many have pulled out of those communions and throughout Europe today, one encounters Ghana Methodist, Nigeria Anglican, or Ghana Roman Catholic churches operating under the pastoral leadership of their own kind often posted from the home countries. The meaning of this development is that Methodism, Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, and Presbyterianism have all, in African hands, acquired new ecclesial identities, liturgical structures and styles of worship that differ markedly from those inherited from nineteenth century missionary endeavors.

Within the last quarter of the twentieth century, the range of churches filled with African migrants has broadened widely. Africa-based classical Pentecostal churches such as Ghana’s Church of Pentecost and Nigerian William F. Kumuyi’s Deeper Christian Life Bible Church have brought together their own and established congregations throughout Europe. In more recent years, African neo-Pentecostals have also taken Europe by storm. Ashimolowo’s KICC and Adelaja’s God Embassy belong to this category; however, as stated earlier, the former attracts mostly Africans and the latter is filled with Europeans.

Neo-Pentecostal churches that have burgeoned in Europe include A.A. Adeboye’s Redeemed Christian Church of God and many other autochthonous charismatic churches that are completely transforming the European religious landscape through the mission of “presence.” The primary intention of these churches is not to establish congregations for only Africans so those belonging to the independent category usually cast themselves as “international churches.” Thus, my preferred designation, as evident in the title of this article, is “African-led churches in Europe” in order not to create the impression that these communions are not intended for non-Africans.

Social versus Religious Roles of Immigrant Churches

The questions of ethnic and cultural identities are important for people in the diaspora; however, African immigrant Christians “see themselves as international churches, thereby consciously labeling themselves not in exclusive but in inclusive terms.”⁶ Quoting Gerrie Ter Haar,

African Christians in the Netherlands generally identify themselves first and foremost as Christians and only secondly as Africans or African Christians. In their own view, their public adherence to Christianity constitutes the most important element of their identity.⁷

There is no questioning the fact that the immigrant churches in Europe founded and dominated by Africans provide members a social safety net from the harsh immigration conditions that are worsening by the day due to the reconstitution of the European Union. For many of them, however, “their religion helps them to achieve a degree of security and inner strength” within a hostile European environment.⁸ Some even see parallels between the pains of being “aliens” in a foreign land and the experiences of Jesus Christ. Christ’s own life and ministry, as Hanciles shows, included the travail of a refugee, the pain of uprootedness, and the alienation that comes with being a stranger. Even the emptying of status to take on the form of a servant has its parallels in the migrant experience.⁹

Mission and Evangelism in the Diaspora

Painful experiences notwithstanding therefore, African Christians and African-led churches in Europe interpret their presence in terms of a call to mission and evangelism. In his book, *The Go Between God: The Holy Spirit and Christian Mission*, John V. Taylor defines mission as “recognizing what the Creator-Redeemer is doing in his world and doing it with him.”¹⁰ I have often revised this definition to read,

“knowing what the Creator-Redeemer is doing in the world and allowing him to engage you in the enterprise.”

For the purposes of this work, I use mission and evangelism as synonymous expressions encapsulating the active prosecution of an agenda to restore and reconcile a broken world to God in Christ. That has been God’s business and the African-led immigrant churches in Europe are serving a deep-seated religious need that lies neglected in the evangelism efforts of the churches belonging to the former heartlands of Christian mission. The Spirit of God seems to have chosen the Church in Africa for a spectacular advance. I believe that the ministries of immigrant churches are serving the purposes of the Spirit in his work of renewal and mission. There are five reasons for this:

1. **Christianity in African hands serves to challenge the moral relativisms in European culture by getting people to offer their lives to Christ in ways reminiscent of what occurred in the Book of Acts.** The people reached by Sunday Adelaja’s God’s Embassy, for example, are predominantly former drug addicts, prostitutes, and leaders and members of mafia gangs who have now, under the powerful influence of the Spirit, turned to Christ. The state of Ukraine has been forced to take notice and the authorities are now too happy to turn over drug addicts to the church because clinical psychology and expensive rehabilitation programs have proven inadequate in dealing with them. Under the powerful influence of the Spirit however, lives that were being destroyed by evil have now been turned around for Christ.
2. **Through these churches, the Bible has returned to the life of the Church as the authoritative Word of God.** It is the main book from which preaching is done and is considered sufficient for teaching, rebuke, and training in righteousness.
3. **African immigrant churches take the worldviews of Africans seriously as far as pastoral care is concerned.** Thus, as Ter Haar believes, African Christians find ample evidence for their beliefs in the Bible, which represents forces of good and evil as having power over life and death. African churches in the diaspora, irrespective of their particular persuasion, address the issue of spiritual forces explicitly.¹¹ Right from missionary times in Africa, worldviews of spiritual causality had been dismissed by white missionaries as psychological delusions and figments of people’s imagination. Not so with African churches in Europe, who, irrespective of whatever abuses may be associated with those worldviews, do take them seriously and articulate Christian responses to them in ways that may look alien to Western rational and cerebral Christianity. The sense of fear, uncertainty, and insecurity associated with being an immigrant makes the ministry of spiritual warfare an important aspect of the mission of diaspora churches.
4. **Diaspora churches are experiencing liturgical renewal.** African churches generally prefer worship life that is experiential, expressive, exuberant, and dynamic in nature. Whether they belong to the Pentecostal/charismatic stream of Christianity or not, renewal seems to be an important element in the lives of these churches, the point being that the active presence of the Spirit is what gives the Church of Jesus Christ its identity.
5. **The churches in the diaspora provide much-needed moral and physical support for their fellow “aliens in the foreign lands of Europe.”** The African immigrant lives within a very precarious and difficult European world, and spiritual and material support from the churches cannot but be considered high priority on the agenda of the Church. In that respect, these churches have chosen a path of evangelization that is not discontinuous with what we encounter in the Book of Acts, where the believers bonded together to provide for each other’s needs in the spirit of Christ.

Conclusion

There are many rough edges as far as churches in the diaspora are concerned. Several of its leaders have been accused of using the enterprise for personal and material gain. Others blatantly abuse their position by playing on and exploiting the fears and insecurities of people whose lives are full of uncertainties.

But perhaps one of the greatest lessons we learn from the “ministry of presence” associated with the African diaspora initiatives is that through these immigrants, God may be preserving the life of his Church. It recalls the days of his birth when the life of the baby Jesus came under threat from Herod and his henchmen. Under the direction of the divine messenger, the child and his parents took refuge in Egypt until the time when it was considered conducive for mission to resume.

In African hands, Christianity has virtually returned “home” to the continent that granted refugee status to the Lord of mission when his life was in danger. With the recession of Christianity in the modern West and the siege under which the faith has sometimes come, immigrant churches may well be the institutions through whose efforts God would like to keep his presence active in the West.

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New Religions, Subjective Life Spiritualities, and the Challenge to Missions in the Post-Christian West

By John Morehead

Globalization has made the world a smaller place and introduced people to a wide variety of religious practices and ideas. Migration from one country to another, international travel for business and recreation, and a variety of communication technologies have contributed to an increasingly pluralistic context, bringing diverse peoples together, and providing an expansive pool of religious and spiritual options to choose from. This is particularly the case in the Western world.

The Western Subjective Turn

One of the greatest challenges the Church faces in the modern Western context is the general turn away from interest in and involvement with institutionalized forms of religion, such as Christianity, and the corresponding move toward an inward and subjective expression of spirituality. Robert Wuthnow has referred to this as a shift from a “spirituality of dwelling” in institutions such as churches to a “spirituality of seeking,”¹ involving an individualized spiritual quest.

This spiritual seeking takes place in consumerist fashion wherein the seeker selects from an expanding “spiritual marketplace,”² looking for resources that facilitate an inward development of the self with its desires for wholeness, personal development, and meaning. Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead have described the inward turn in Western spirituality as “subjective life spirituality.” They note that those forms of spirituality which emphasize a holistic personal life are far more able to thrive in the present environment than those which do not.³

Increasing Spiritual Options

These developments in the ways in which people pursue their religious and spiritual practices mean that the spiritual marketplace is not only made up of institutionalized forms of alternative spiritualities expressed in more familiar groups such as Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses, but also in more fluid and individualized forms of spirituality such as Neo-Paganism and Western esotericism.

In addition, large numbers of people pursue their own unique forms of Do-It-Yourself Spirituality constructed in eclectic fashion and drawn from elements of popular culture and diverse religious traditions.

Although the total number of adherents of new religions is small in light of the overall religious population in the West, as Christopher Partridge has noted, “New religions and alternative spiritualities should not be dismissed as superficial froth or the dying embers of religion in the West, but are rather the sparks of a new and increasingly influential way of being religious.”⁴

The question remains, however, as to what might be considered the best ways for the Church to engage the new religions, as well as the broader Western turn to self and holistic spirituality.

Options for Engagement

The Church has responded in a variety of ways to this situation, from ignoring cultural developments in Western spirituality, to the expression of various forms of church that attempt to woo spiritual seekers to the church community and building in order to interact with the gospel, to apologetic refutation of doctrinal and worldview elements of those new religions and spiritualities considered heretical or “cultic.” The latter option has been most prevalent among evangelicals,⁵ primarily in the United States, where many ministries produce resources that seek to counter the teachings of various new religions in relation to Christianity.

While recognizing the biblical call for discernment and warnings about false teaching within the Church (Matthew 7:15ff; Acts 20:26-32; Ephesians 4:11-16), and the continuing need for the Church to engage in apologetics and the defense of the faith (1 Peter 3:15), some evangelicals have recognized the limitations

of such approaches when used as evangelistic methods and have called for a broader and more holistic response that incorporates the insights of cross-cultural missions.

Cross-cultural Missions and Contextualization

Many evangelicals, particularly those associated with Lausanne Movement Issue Group 16,⁶ are reflecting on the biblical examples of the communication of the gospel across cultures, particularly in the example of Jesus (John 4: 4-26; 12:20-24) and the Apostle Paul (Acts 13:13-52; 14:8-20; 17:16-34), who modeled differing missional approaches when engaging Jews and Gentiles.

In addition, they are reflecting on the history of Christian missions with the examples of those like Patrick among the Celts in Ireland, Matteo Ricci among the Confucian literati in India, and Karl Ludvig Reichelt among Buddhist monks in India. The discipline of missiology also provides an important resource, and each of these areas come together so that the lessons learned might be applied to the development of missions models to new religions and Western subjective life spiritualities.

Two aspects of a missiological approach stand out as most significant.

1. **This approach moves beyond viewing new religions as “cults” to consider them as dynamic religious or spiritual cultures or subcultures.**⁷ While still recognizing the doctrine and worldview of these groups that are at odds with biblical teaching, a missiological approach seeks a broader framework for understanding and engagement that includes not only doctrine and worldview, but also other important considerations such as vocabulary, customs, rituals, and sense of community and social identity.
2. **A missiological approach involves a process of contextualization.** As New Testament scholar and missionary Dean Flemming has defined it, “Contextualization has to do with how the gospel revealed in scripture authentically comes to life in each new cultural, social, religious, and historical setting.”⁸ As Flemming discusses, the biblical writers framed the gospel message and developed theologies that were appropriate for effective communication and living for different segments of the ancient Mediterranean world. This provides an example and pattern for the Church to emulate for successive generations, which then requires careful reflection by Christians as students of both theology and culture.

Practical Examples

Participants in Issue Group 16 at the Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization in Thailand, as well as the subsequent **meeting** in 2006 in Hong Kong, have been interacting carefully with these ideas and examples. As a result, participants have developed contextualized mission approaches to new religions. Some of these examples are highlighted in the Issue Group’s 2004 **Occasional Paper**. These and other examples have received more extensive treatment as case studies and practical, field-tested models in *Encountering New Religious Movements*,⁹ a book devoted to the exploration of a cross-cultural missions approach to new religions.

Moving Forward

It is our hope that the efforts of those of Issue Group 16, and others who are developing new models of cross-cultural missions and contextualized theologies to new religions and alternative spiritualities, can provide fresh starting places for Christians grappling with new ways to live and communicate the Christian faith in the West.

But the work has just begun. Representatives of the issue group will be meeting in October 2008 for a **“Consultation on Post-Christendom Spiritualities: The New Unreached People Groups.”** Many

leading scholars and practitioners working in the field of new religions and spiritualities will present papers and interact with missiological methods of engagement. During the consultation, the issue group will meet to reflect on its past accomplishments, its present activities, and where it needs to go as we plan for the Lausanne gathering in South Africa in 2010. We invite the participation of others who are interested in this ministry context and its relevance to other areas of ministry and missions.

The Challenge of the Western World

Over two decades ago Lesslie Newbigin asked a question that has yet to be sufficiently grappled with. Returning from India (where he had served as a missionary) to his home in the United Kingdom, he discovered that the Western world was just as much a valid mission field as the India he had departed from, and that Christians needed to be thinking missionally in the Western context just as much as outside of it. This prompted him to ask the question, “Can the West be converted?”¹⁰ a query that has consumed the thinking of increasing numbers of church workers in the Western world. Sadly, as Newbigin surveyed missiological literature for application to the West he concluded:

The weakness, however, of this whole mass of missiological writing is that while it has sought to explore the problems of contextualization in all the cultures of humankind from China to Peru, it has largely ignored the culture that is the most widespread, powerful, and persuasive among all contemporary cultures—namely, what I have called modern Western culture.¹¹

With the global shift of Christianity’s growth from the Northern to the Southern Hemisphere, and the increasingly pluralistic and post-Christian nature of the West, the presence of the new religions and subjective life spiritualities may provide us with a context by which we can work through answers to Newbigin’s question and experiment with the development of new approaches at contextualization and new theologies for the rapidly changing Western world.

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Getting Ready to Receive? German Churches and the "New Mission" from the South **By Claudia Währisch-Oblau**

In 1998, the German region of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) asked me to start a ministry with migrant Christians. At the time, there were few concrete ideas: It was only clear that Christian migrants might be in need of fellowship and a place to worship. (The aim of the project was not to evangelize—the evangelical churches in Germany see their role toward migrants more in diaconal and advocacy terms. Evangelical Free churches, on the other hand, have long seen Muslim and atheist migrants coming to Germany as an evangelistic opportunity; these Christians hope to convert people who would move back to their home countries as Christian leaders and missionaries.) The plan of UEM was to start one or more international congregations, gathering migrants from different cultural and possibly denominational backgrounds.

Instead of coming across *individual* migrant Christians in need of pastoral care and a Christian community, I was met with *organized churches*. Within two years, more than six hundred such churches were identified in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia alone. They are Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal. A surprisingly large number of such congregations describe themselves as non-denominational; however, they are clearly charismatic in character.

Orthodox Christians tend to come from Eastern Europe, the Near East, and Ethiopia. Catholics come from all over the world, although Eastern and Southern Europeans dominate those denominational churches. Protestants are usually European or East Asian, while Pentecostals and non-denominational charismatic groups are overwhelmingly African (although there are also sizeable numbers of Asian and Latin American churches). In major cities like Dusseldorf or Cologne, likely as many migrant Christians attend a "migrant church" on any given Sunday as Germans attend a German church.

It soon became clear that a ministry with migrants should not consist of starting new churches; rather, it should concentrate on supporting existing congregations and efforts toward closer cooperation between indigenous and migrant churches.

Reverse Mission Movement

As the years went on, I learned that new Pentecostal and charismatic migrant churches were constantly forming. Some of them split from existing churches, but others were consciously planted as missionary endeavors. Talking to founders and pastors of such churches, I learned that while outwardly they have

come to Germany as refugees or economic migrants, they really see themselves as missionaries brought there by the Holy Spirit.

Some talk of a “missionary call” they received even before coming. Most did not realize their calling until after they arrived. Seeing a country where large Christian churches dot the landscape, but where worship services on Sunday are only attended by a handful of elderly people, they came to understand themselves as charged with bringing revival to a dying church and to “bring Germany back to Christ.”

These churches do not constitute a “diaspora,” a group of displaced people who stick together in a foreign land to protect their cultural and religious identity; rather, they make up a “reverse mission” movement.

To reach out to Germans, most missionary migrant churches engage in street evangelism. In addition, a number have switched to bi-lingual or even completely German-language Sunday worship. Pastors are learning how to preach in German, or use interpreters to get their message across. Some gospel choirs even sing in German.

To date, these evangelistic efforts do not seem very successful. Even large, very international churches have relatively few German members. In some migrant churches, Germans who were evangelized and baptized there eventually left and joined a German-majority church, saying that, in the end, they never felt at home in a migrant majority environment. But the migrant mission to Germany is still young, and more fruit may be seen in the coming years.

The Reaction to Reverse Mission

So how have German churches reacted to this reverse mission? For a long time, they did not realize what was happening. Because most missionary migrant churches have been operating outside of German church networks, they were hardly ever noticed. This, despite the fact that many rented worship spaces from German Protestant churches. German Protestants tended to view all churches started by migrants as diaspora churches exclusively serving the spiritual needs of migrants. As awareness of the huge number of “missionary” migrant churches started to spread, however, German churches and Christian groups began to realize the need to engage with them.

In general, evangelicals have been more welcoming to migrant missionaries than mainline Protestants. The Coalition for Evangelism, a network closely related to the German Lausanne Committee, has been making a conscious effort to inform its members about the presence of migrant missionaries and has been inviting migrant church leaders into its leadership. However, this has not been as effective as many hoped it would be, since migrant churches are typically more interested in practical projects than in building structures and organizations.

Evangelical/charismatic evangelistic projects like “Halleluja Ruhrgebiet,” a large, open-air rally during the 2006 World Soccer Championship, have been more successful in integrating missionary migrant churches.

Evangelical Free churches have also been increasingly welcoming. Baptist churches are working hard to integrate migrant groups into their existing congregations, often offering a second worship service in a language other than German.

However, since most missionary migrant churches are Pentecostal or charismatic in character, it is not surprising that the Federation of Free Pentecostal Churches in Germany (*Bund freikirchlicher Pfingstgemeinden*, BfP) has been most open toward these new church plants. Within the last ten years, the

BfP accepted more than 120 migrant congregations into its fold, so that they now make up about twenty percent of its base.

Nevertheless, the Protestant churches have begun to assist missionary migrant churches in certain ways. In Hamburg, Wuppertal, Frankfurt, and Neuendettelsau, churches and mission agencies have devised courses to train leaders of migrant churches for their missionary role in Germany. Course content includes: intercultural hermeneutics and intercultural communication; German theology; history and sociology; and practical exercises like preaching in a German congregation.

Facing Obstacles

The Protestant churches' ministry with missionary migrant churches has faced many obstacles. Some are social and political in nature: migrant churches are often structurally and financially weak and hope for support to establish their own structures. German churches, facing financial cutbacks and shrinking resources, have been reluctant to provide such help; at the same time, they have expected migrant churches to get involved in international worship services and other "multi-cultural" events. Not surprisingly, migrant Christians sometimes feel exploited. The fact that they are usually asked to provide music and food, but rarely the sermon, strengthens this suspicion.

When it comes to cooperation in concrete projects, the difference in the lives of marginalized migrants and (usually) middle-class, indigenous Christians can cause difficulties. A German church which invites a Nigerian speaker for a Saturday afternoon seminar has little understanding when the speaker must cancel at short notice because his boss has ordered him to work overtime.

Other obstacles are theological:

- differing concepts of mission and evangelism
- many missionary migrant churches follow a strong "spiritual warfare" theology which rather repels German Protestants and evangelicals
- differing interpretations of migration
- few Germans are able to see migrants as more than economic or political refugees who are here on sufferance
- differing definitions of what makes someone a pastor; most missionary migrant church leaders have had little or no theological training and insist that a spiritual call and charismatic giftedness are all that is needed for their ministry

Next Steps

Dialogue is overdue on all of these issues. Only the UEM has begun a theological dialogue on reverse mission between German Protestant and missionary migrant churches; it will run a series of consultations on spiritual warfare beginning later this year.

This dialogue is needed to prevent missionary migrant churches from becoming ghettoized and even more isolated from the general German church context. There needs to be a willingness to really make contact and accept each other, despite deep theological and social differences. The German churches must learn that Germany is no longer a Christian nation and needs missionaries from abroad—even if they weren't invited. Migrant churches need to learn that to effectively evangelize, they have to contextualize their message and their church life.

There is also a political dimension to this problem: Who is allowed to define Christianity in Germany? So far, it has been the German Protestants. It is the German churches who are featured in the media, who have money and political and social influence. In the national discourse on migrants and religion, the question of Islam dominates to such an extent that most Germans do not even realize that there are almost as many Christian migrants in the country as Muslims.

There is also an ecclesiological question that needs to be asked: Are churches defined by denomination and/or by nationality? In the German Evangelical Church, both national identity and denominational identity are strictly upheld. In such a context, migrants remain *the other*. If your skin is black, it does not matter if you were born and raised in this country and hold German nationality—you remain a foreigner. Similarly, migrant majority churches are, by definition, “foreign” churches to which we have an ecumenical relationship; they cannot really be part of “us.” For true integration of migrant churches, the German churches will have to relearn what it means to be part of the multinational Body of Christ.

Claudia Währisch-Oblau is a pastor of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland in Germany. From 1998-2006, she coordinated the “Program for Cooperation between German and Foreign Language Churches” of the **United Evangelical Mission** (UEM). Since 2007, she has been serving as UEM’s executive secretary for evangelism. She is also a member of the German Lausanne Committee.

PERSPECTIVES

MANI Southern Africa 2008 Consultation: "Working Together to Finish the Task"

By Reuben E. Ezemadu and Dean Carlson

In February 2008, official delegations from thirteen nations in southern and Portuguese-speaking Africa converged in Johannesburg, South Africa, for the MANI SA 08 Consultation. This was a unique moment for the Church in Africa as three hundred leaders of national, regional, and global influence gathered to discuss the next steps involved in completing the Great Commission.

United by the theme, "Working Together to Finish the Task," MANI SA 08 encouraged leaders from nearly two hundred denominations and organizations to celebrate the advance of God's kingdom across the region and to assess the status of the remaining task.

Leaders were inspired to prayerfully and creatively envision the day when...

- life-giving churches express the love of Jesus in *every* African community and among *every* kind of people
- Christians from all backgrounds join hands to pray and live out the good news within their communities and nations
- thousands of Africans are sent around the world as bearers of hope for the least-evangelized peoples of the world

MANI: An African Movement

The Movement for African National Initiatives (MANI) is a grassroots African movement committed to catalyzing the Body of Christ in Africa to work in strategic partnership to disciple the nations and to send Africans in mission around the world.

MANI emerges from a 40-year history of African national movements. Building upon this legacy, in 2001 leaders from thirty-six African countries gathered at the Africa Millennial Consultation in Jerusalem. They affirmed God's powerful work across the continent and committed to accelerate the advance of the gospel through networking and collaboration. This gathering gave birth to a continental network called the Movement for African National Initiatives.

Five years later, the world watched as 520 leaders from forty-nine African nations gathered at MANI 2006 in Nairobi to pray, share best practices, and assess the unfinished task in Africa. They celebrated the dynamic growth of the African Church and faced up to critical challenges. Commitments were made to advance national initiatives and to cooperate regionally to advance the Great Commission.

MANI flows out of the conviction that: (1) the Church in Africa has a crucial role to play in the fulfillment of the Great Commission in the twenty-first century; (2) the Church in Africa has the ministry gifts, manpower, and material resources to complete this task in Africa and to make a significant contribution toward global evangelization; and (3) through the focused deployment of the resources of the African Church, we can partner with the global Church to achieve the target of "a church for every people and the gospel for every person" in the countries of Africa and the world.

As an indigenous movement, MANI is helping churches and ministries work together and linking strategic networks for the mobilization of the African Church. It has a working partnership with the [Association of Evangelicals in Africa](#) and serves to bridge the African Church with global networks and African Christians in the Diaspora. Members of the MANI team relate closely with the [WEA Missions Commission](#), the [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#), the [Great Commission Roundtable](#), the Third World Missions Association and with global initiatives such as [Joshua Project](#), and [Operation World](#).

Strengthening African National Initiatives

An African national initiative is a strategic, national process designed to mobilize the whole Body of Christ to complete the Great Commission within its borders and to send Africans in mission to the least-evangelized of the world. The goal is to see healthy churches transforming every community throughout a nation and beyond. United by common vision and solid information, national initiatives take a unique form in every country and assume a local name.

Nearly half of the countries in southern Africa are engaged in some expression of a national initiative. The first national initiative in the region was launched in Zimbabwe in the early 1990s. Called "Target 2000," this strategic partnership involved sixty denominations in an effort to plant ten thousand congregations in unchurched areas by the end of the decade. Intrigued by what was happening across their borders, Swaziland sent a group of leaders from thirteen denominations to attend the Target 2000 national congress in 1992. Profoundly challenged, they returned home and helped the three major church associations to launch a partnership called the "Swaziland Evangelism Task."

The [AD2000 & Beyond Movement](#), and in particular, [GCOWE 97](#), was used by God to light the fire of additional national movements across the region. The Namibia delegation was inspired to launch the Transformation Namibia movement, with significant strides made in networking church, business, and government leaders. Building upon the foundation of the Love Southern Africa initiative, The [Evangelical Alliance of South Africa](#) helped to initiate the [World Evangelisation Network of South Africa](#) (WENSA), which serves as a network of ministry streams within the country.

The Malawi National Initiative for Missions and Evangelism took initial steps following GCOWE 97 and the Copperbelt Survey began as a pilot project in Zambia in the years to follow. Lesotho has explored the

initiation of a national initiative and strong interest has been expressed in Botswana. The Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa converged at MANI 06 and voiced their commitment to encourage one another in the formation of national movements.

Each initiative is at a different stage of development. Several are vital and growing. Some are in the exploratory stage. Others may need revitalization. Yet all are expressive of the desire among many African leaders to mobilize the whole Body of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission within their nation and beyond.

MANI SA 08 Highlights

MANI SA 08 drew attention to thousands of communities still beyond the practical reach of existing churches. Each delegation shared an update on the unfinished task in their nation and, in turn, received prayer and encouragement from their counterparts. MANI challenged the southern and Portuguese-speaking nations to send missionaries to least-evangelized peoples across the continent, with particular emphasis upon the compelling needs in Francophone Africa and the Horn.

Plenary speakers highlighted the challenges of church planting, transformation, and mission-sending. Delegates were stirred by the call to transformational discipleship from Dr. Obed Uzodinma and inspired by Dr. Reuben Ezemadu (MANI continental coordinator) and Rev. Ndaba Mazabane ([World Evangelical Alliance](#) chair) regarding the African Church's growing impact upon the world.

As African leaders gathered to pray for each nation, God's presence was powerfully felt. Tears flowed when Zimbabwean and Kenyan delegations were invited forward. Compassionate hands were extended and dozens of languages heard as the assembly broke out in heartfelt intercession for their hurting sister nations.

MANI SA 08 was highly interactive, with a significant proportion of the consultation devoted to nineteen working groups, which ranged from mission mobilization to church-planting movements to community transformation. Best practices were shared by cutting-edge practitioners and synergistic relationships established. Significant time was invested in country and regional discussions as leaders analyzed the current situation in their nations and laid out plans for ongoing collaboration.

MANI SA 08 sought to uniquely link national initiatives with regional, continental, and global networks. Lausanne younger leaders explored the contribution of emerging leaders to the national initiative process. [Interdev Partnership Associates](#) served an instrumental role throughout the consultation as partnership coaches for working and country groups. The WEA Missions Commission was deeply involved and provided encouraging feedback on behalf of the global Church. The [International Orality Network](#) served a working group and held a special training workshop following the consultation. [Transformation Africa](#) highlighted the 2008 Global Day of Prayer in which MANI has played a key networking function across the continent.

Delegates received a 348-page MANI SA 08 Handbook with contributions from fifty authors. It is available online or can be downloaded from the resources section of the MANI website: www.maniafrica.com.

Next Steps

MANI SA 08 was designed to serve as a catalyst in an ongoing national mobilization process. Upon returning to their countries, delegations are encouraged to involve as many denominations as possible in discussions toward the formation an indigenous national research and mobilization strategy. Countries plan to cross-fertilize by inviting one another to national consultations and future training events. Each

country is encouraged to develop a national research process with coaching input from the MANI research task force. Concurrently, the Ethne Information System Database is being formulated, people group lists are being updated, and relevant information compiled for use in mobilization.

MANI SA 08 working groups were encouraged to strengthen existing networks, and where none exist, to form linkages for ongoing collaboration across the regions.

Rev. Joao Barbosa de Oliveira was affirmed as the MANI regional coordinator for Portuguese-speaking Africa. Peter Tarantal (South Africa) received the baton of MANI leadership for southern Africa from Dr. Dean Carlson. In May, national coordinators from across the region will gather in Botswana for a MANI leadership retreat focused on relationship-building and peer learning.

On the continental level, the MANI African Diaspora Consultation 2008 will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 2-8 August 2008, highlighting the opportunities and challenges before the African Church in the Diaspora. For more information, please consult the MANI [website](#).

Conclusion

An African proverb states, "No one person can embrace the baobab tree." Many people joining hands together are required to encircle the massive trunk of this African giant. This picture aptly conveys the biblical principle that leaders must join hands and hearts in partnership under God to disciple their nation and world. MANI SA 08 served as a catalyst, stimulating partnerships that can change nations.

Rev. Reuben E. Ezemadu is the international director of Christian Missionary Foundation, having served previously as general secretary and chairman respectively of [Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association](#). He is also the continental coordinator of [MANI](#) (Movement for African National Initiatives). **Dr. Dean Carlson** is a member of the MANI continental team and a facilitator of MANI SA 08. Having served in Africa for twenty years, he is currently moving into a new role as vice-president of field Ministries for [OC International](#).

From Buddha to Christ: An Interview with Jeab

By Deborah Colby

Jeerakan (Jeab) Duksukgaew is Thai. Although she was raised a Buddhist, she became a Christian when she was fourteen years old. Now twenty-eight, she works as a translator and secretary at the Greater Grace Church of Bangkok, Thailand, and is in her third year of Bible College. I recently sat down with her at the church office.

Q: What was it like growing up in a Buddhist family?

A: My family is not strong Buddhists, so they do not go to the temple everyday—just on holidays. I worshipped Buddha before I became a Christian; we had an idol of Buddha in our home. We did Buddhist activities like making merit (doing good works to win points in the afterlife). My parents taught me how to be a good person and not to harm people, and to be a good student at school. They were a very good example to me.

Q: Obviously, the idea of worship in the Christian context is very different from what you understood as a Buddhist. What did your worship entail? What were you thinking when you were worshipping Buddha?

A: Buddhists believe if you do good things, you get good things added to your life. Buddha's teaching is good. We did not worship Buddha as God; however, Buddhists believe he was a real person who died. When we worship, we just do what he taught us to do. He taught us to believe in reality, the things that have been proven and are scientific. For example, he taught that if you fast, your body lacks food and you die. If you eat good food, you will be healthy. The heart of Buddhism is to escape suffering.

Q: So how did you actually worship Buddha?

A: The idol of Buddha is there to remind you to be a good person. Some people wear a miniature idol around their necks as a reminder to be good. That is their worship.

Q: Wherever you go in Thailand, you see spirit houses. Could you tell me how they tie in with Buddhism and if you ever personally worshipped spirits?

A: Most people think that spirits can protect them. If you respect or worship them, they won't harm you. There are good and bad spirits. Good Buddhists worship good spirits—the spirits of monks or kings who have died. There is a lot of fear with people here. They live in fear of the bad spirits.

Q: Were you also taught Buddhism in school?

A: Yes. Our teachers taught us to meditate to help our minds relax and to forget our problems. I did not like meditating. I always fell asleep during that time. The teachers taught us that if we were in a very deep meditation, we would see a glass ball in our mind.

Q: Did you ever pray? If so, were you praying in the sense that you thought Buddha would somehow help you?

A: Every morning, in school, we would sing the national anthem and pray to Buddha. We prayed so we would feel good and relaxed. Buddhists believe that if you do what Buddha says, your life will be like Buddha's and you will enter into Nirvana.

Q: How did God break through and touch your heart?

A: Before I became a Christian, I saw people come to God because they had problems and needed someone to help them. So I knew God could help people. I was introduced to Jesus by a friend when I was fourteen. Although I didn't know a lot about Jesus, I prayed to accept him into my life. I went to church to find out more, but my parents found out and my dad was very angry. He went to the church and took me away. My parents thought I was being deceived by some strange religion. Jesus is nobody for us Buddhists. My dad did everything he could to stop me from being a Christian, but thank God I never forgot about Jesus. I knew there was something in my heart after I believed in Jesus. I never worshipped Buddha after that. In the temple, I would wai (the traditional Thai greeting, but also a sign of respect and reverence) to Buddha, but in my heart, it felt wrong. I did not know Jesus or the Bible at all. I just believed Jesus was real. I prayed to God that he would take me back to the church so I could learn more. It was six years before I was able to go back to church. I think God was always with me, though, and I think because he loved me so much, he brought me back to church.

Q: What is the most effective way to reach Buddhists with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

A: First, they just need to hear the gospel. Most do not believe the first time they hear it—for some, it can take years. Christians need to prove God’s love to them and let them see God through our lives. Although I had a loving upbringing, the love I saw among Christians was different. It was real. Some people love and then expect something from you, but Christians never expect anything in return. Second, they need to have a deep realization that they are in need.

Deborah Colby has been serving as a missionary in Bangkok, Thailand, for the past seven years. She teaches in the Greater Grace Bible School of Bangkok and is actively involved in evangelism and discipling Thai women.

Audio Bible Ministry Reaches Amazon Tribes

Audio Bibles are reaching the farthest corners of the earth. In the Brazilian rainforest, the small village of Makita sits along the muddy banks of an Amazon River tributary. When the conditions are ideal, the trip takes two days by boat. American church leader Jeff Scott and his short-term mission team arrive at Makita and are welcomed by villagers, mosquitoes, and flies.

Scott and his team notice a small church built by a previous mission team. Inside, bats rest overhead and tarantulas patrol dark corners. In this village, and the thousands like it which dot the Amazon’s riverbanks, people live with limited access to clean water, the outside world, and the Word of God.

In fact, Brazil has 258 tribes, and almost as many different languages—235. More than ninety of these tribes are cut off from the outside world, living deep in the rainforest and firmly protected by the Brazilian government. Of these 258 tribes, only twenty have strong, indigenous church leadership.

Despite their remoteness and restrictions, these villagers are eager for the Word of God. “I have never encountered people so hungry and begging for help in their walk with Christ as in this place,” said Scott. While working among this tribe, he and his team realized the power of teaching God’s word orally, discovering that many in the village, including the local church pastor, could not read.

The lack of education and the inability to read broke Scott’s heart. He and his team presented this pastor with the Proclaimer, a self-powered digital playback device that has an Audio New Testament pre-loaded on an embedded microchip. The Proclaimer was designed by **Faith Comes By Hearing** for the most rugged and remote areas, like the Amazon Basin. “The Proclaimer seemed to turn on a light bulb and empower this pastor in a way he had never known,” said Scott.

At other Amazon villages they visited, Scott and his mission team continued to witness how effective God’s word in audio is among “oral” peoples who pass on their beliefs, heritage, and values through stories, parables, proverbs, music, and dance. Currently, oral peoples make up two-thirds of the world’s population.

To disciple the world’s oral majority, Faith Comes By Hearing records and uses heart-language Audio Bibles and works through numerous partners, like **Wycliffe Bible Translators**, the **United Bible Societies**, and Campus Crusade for Christ’s **JESUS Film**.

To reach the 380,000 people in the oral cultures of the Amazon Basin, Faith Comes By Hearing recently trained two new recording teams.

“Adding these two teams means that people from the minority language groups in Brazil will soon have the opportunity to hear God’s word in their own language for the first time,” shared Faith Comes By

Hearing's language recording manager, Ray Warrior. "Prior to the addition of these recording teams, only the Portuguese Audio New Testament was available. And while Portuguese is widely spoken, many people are monolingual, speaking only their heart language."

With thirty-six New Testaments completed and ready for recording, these teams have no shortage of work. The first indigenous Brazilian New Testament recording is slated to begin in this month among the Wáiwai tribe, with the first listening groups expected to gather in the summer of 2009.

(This article was edited from a news release of [Faith Comes by Hearing](#).)

URBAN COMMUNITIES

Global Sporting Events and the Urban Poor By Glenn Smith

Next month the Summer Olympics will be held in Beijing. In this issue on ministry with slum communities we are highlighting the poor in Chinese cities.

Dr. Peter Foggin of Lanzhou University in north-western China explains the massive and rapid urbanization that is going on in China today. When you compare his figures with global figures (see sidebar), you understand the magnitude of the changes taking place in the twenty-first century. Two practitioners tell stories of the plight of the urban poor. Y. Lee describes how the Olympics are affecting the poor in Beijing.

The story of God's Spirit at work in China in general, and in cities in particular, is being increasingly documented. I invite you to read Rob Moll's informative [article](#) in the May issue of *Christianity Today*. However, it is far from obvious how the whole Church will take the whole gospel to the eight hundred thousand slum dwellers in Beijing. These mangliu are caught in the hukou system (see Foggin's [article](#) for details). They are captives within the exploding global economic and sporting system that has taken over China's cities. Due to the precarious situations of these congregations, it was difficult to put these articles in this section of LWP together.

United Christian outreach efforts at Summer Olympics go back to Montréal in 1976. At the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974, Canadian church leaders decided to work together for the games of the XXI Olympiad to be held in Montréal. The 7th Lausanne Occasional Paper, "[Cooperating in World Evangelisation](#)," documents these initiatives. Ramez Atallah of the Egyptian Bible Society has recounted how his involvement in the executive Committee of Aide Olympique (the organizing committee) influenced his life. I orchestrated all the youth outreach and saw

Working Definitions and Facts

"Urban poor" defined: Those living on less than US\$1 or US\$2 per day (Millennium Development Agenda). Those living with inadequate income, shelter and access to infrastructure and basic daily services. Those who have an unstable asset base, little to no access to their rights as citizens and are voiceless and powerless in their communities.

Number of urban poor: est. 2 billion

"Slum community" defined: Communities with inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation, poor structural housing, overcrowding and insecure residential status (UN-Habitat).

Number of people living in slum communities: est. 924 million

firsthand how the Church united is a powerful force used by the Spirit to touch lives during a global event.

But we all saw what happens to the poor in a city during these events. As the games of the XXIX Olympiad draw near, pray for the united outreach. Even more, pray for the poor who suffer because of events like this.

Glenn Smith is senior associate for urban mission for the [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#) and is executive director of [Christian Direction](#) in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. He is a professor of urban theology and missiology at the Institut de théologie pour la Francophonie at the Université de Montréal and at the Université chrétienne du Nord d'Haïti. He is also professor of urban missiology at Bakke Graduate University in Seattle, Washington, USA.

Urban Poverty and Urban Slums in China

By Peter Foggin

Between 1978 and 2004 the urban population of China grew from eighteen percent to forty-one percent of the total population, commonly said to be 1.3 billion.¹ Given the annual increments in this massive urbanization process, it is not hard to estimate conservatively that China's urban population is now close to forty-five percent of the total number of people in the country.

By 2010, probably close to one half of the national population will be urban dwellers. That's *600-700 million urbanites* of one sort or another, the most massive single urbanization in the history of the world.

The Floating Population

One of the compounding factors in getting a true figure is the phenomenon commonly referred to as the "floating population"—rural migrants who temporarily move to urban areas, most often living in ghettos filled with people who come from the same province. The proportion of returnees varies: one study says between two and fifteen percent of migrants return to their rural communities²; another suggests the number is closer to thirty-three percent.³

Thus in Beijing, for example, one finds the so-called Zhejiang village (the name of a coastal province south of Shanghai) with its tens of thousands of densely-packed people living in conditions often of squalor and a total lack of physical and social infrastructures. Michael Dutton⁴ describes the police action reflecting the Beijing government's desire to suppress the "floaters" or *mangliu* of Zhejiang village, which (along with many other such "villages") are generally considered to be a "blight" on the urban landscape of the national capital.

In China, there have been two classes of urban dwellers: those who have the official city residential permit (the notorious *hukou*) and the more recent arrivals who do not. These people are part of China's floating population. *People's Daily* **reported in July 2005** that "China's floating population has increased from seventy million in 1993 to 140 million in 2003, exceeding ten percent of the total population and accounting for about thirty percent of rural labor force."

The Hukou System

According to Hong Kong's Department for International Development (DFID), the *hukou* system in China was designed to prevent the free movement of people from rural to urban places and to protect the industrial development in the cities in the planned economy. By attaching different welfare entitlements

(subsidies) to urban and rural *hukou*, the system divided the people into two societies separated by an invisible wall.

However, as the market economy has deepened, particularly as rural migrants have become an indispensable part of the urban economy, the need for the traditional *hukou* system is being challenged. The recent relaxation of the *hukou* system began in 2001. At that point, the government fully recognized the importance of urbanization for overall development and began to take its new strategy for its tenth 5-year-plan. The *hukou* system has been further relaxed and the importance of the hukou permit for migrants is now much diminished. In Shanghai and many other big cities in China, a “green card” system, in which there is no basic difference between the local residents and the green cardholders, is emerging. (Click [here](#) for full report).

It is doubtful that more than a small portion of these were even counted in China’s most recent census in 2000. The latter do not have any of the entitlements—such as subsidized food and housing (even with the growing trend to purchase private housing, interest rates are subsidized and therefore very low), schools, and healthcare—of the official residents of the city. The migrants come to the city because there is no work for them in the regions from which they come, and the jobs they do manage to get are usually comparatively low-paid and often temporary (e.g., domestic and construction workers, menial factory jobs, illegal sidewalk vending of goods or services).

According to [the DFID report](#), about one-fifth of the entrants in the urban labor force came from rural areas. In spite of their economic fragility, most of these workers manage to send or take a large portion of their meagre wages back to their rural families. A recent report estimated that the approximately 100 million rural residents who work away from their villages sent or carried home a total of 370 billion CNY (about thirty-five billion USD) in 2003, an increase of 8.5% on the previous year. Estimates of the amount sent/brought back by migrant workers range from between three and four thousand CNY.⁵

Chinese-style Slums?

This is the context through which we, as Christians, must see the development of urban “slums” in China. Recently in Beijing, a deputy minister of construction admitted that many “villages” within cities had become “Chinese-style slums.” They are indeed distinctive. In spite of the rapid influx of rural labor into the cities (by official estimates, an average of 8.4 million people a year between 2001 and 2005, bringing the total to around 120 million), they have not spawned huge shantytowns. Instead, scattered villages within cities are often behind walls built to hide their squalor, and old state-owned apartment buildings have filled the gap. In fact, the traditional notion of what a slum is appears difficult to find in modern China.

Instead, we have the phenomenon of migrant, disenfranchised, and underprivileged people grouped in villages in each major city.

In 2002 in Beijing, there were 332 such villages in which lived at least one-third of the so-called “floating population.” It is here, more than anywhere else in China’s cities, where the various manifestations of urban poverty can be seen.

Urban Villages

The eventual goal of Beijing's onslaught is still unclear. A government survey in 2002 found 332 villages with a total population of more than 800,000 migrants in the eight urban districts of the city proper—nearly one-third of the total migrant population of Beijing. Urban villages⁶ are a unique phenomenon that is part of China’s urbanization process.

The villages appear on both the outskirts and the downtown segments of major cities. They are surrounded by skyscrapers, transportation infrastructures, and other modern urban constructions. Urban villages are commonly inhabited by the poor and transient, and as such they are associated with squalor, overcrowding, and social problems, and are considered by some as no better than Chinese slums. However, they are also among the liveliest areas in some cities and are notable for affording economic opportunity to newcomers to the city.

Endnotes

1. National Bureau of Statistics. 2004. *China Statistical Yearbook 2004*. Beijing: China Statistics Press. 32.
2. Bai, Nansheng and Yupeng He. 2003. "Returning to the Countryside Versus Continuing to Work in the Cities: A Study on Rural Urban Migrants and Their Return to the Countryside of China." *Social Sciences in China*. Winter, 151.
3. Zhao, Yaohui. 2002. "Causes and Consequences of Return Migration: Recent Evidence from China." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 30: 376-394.
4. Dutton, Michael. 1998. *Street Life in China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 147-159.
5. Bai and He in <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/asia/China/urban-poverty-study-english.pdf>.
6. Chinese: 城中村; pinyin: Chéng Zhōng Cūn; literally: "village in city"

Peter Foggin is retired professor of cultural geography (Université de Montréal) and continues to pursue his international development and research interests, particularly in China. He is adjunct professor of geography both at the University of Ottawa and at Lanzhou University in northwestern China. He is also international coordinator for the Canadian conservation and development NGO, Plateau Perspectives, which works in the Tibetan Plateau region.

Beijing's Poor and the 2008 Olympic Games

By Y. Lee

With all the excitement of Beijing being at the center of the world stage by hosting the 2008 Olympics, it may be easy to overlook the question of what is happening to the city's poor in the run up to the games.

Forced Evictions

Since the Olympics were awarded to Beijing in 2001, there has been a boom in construction in the capital of a country that was already rapidly developing and urbanizing. With construction of the new has come much demolition of the old. In 2004, **Human Rights Watch** (HRW) issued a report called "Demolition: Forced Evictions and the Tenants' Rights Movement in China." The report covered all of China, but highlighted how the Olympics, with its accompanying surge in demolition and construction, has brought an increase in the problem of forced evictions. In a December 2007 report, the Center on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) said that an estimated 1.5 million people have been displaced because of the preparation for the games.

According to the HRW report, some evictions have been violent. Compensation can often be far below market value, and there are cases of compensation funds being embezzled. Protests by evicted residents have been suppressed and some tenants' rights advocates have been jailed. Legal recourse is often hard to come by since the weak court system is subject to pressure from Communist Party officials. Also, the

national regulations concerning disputed evictions state that eviction and demolition will not be halted while a lawsuit is pending.

Migrant Construction Workers

Another aspect of the plight of the poor is that of migrant construction workers. The HRW report “One Year of My Blood” (March 2008) documented these areas of violations: faulty or non-existent labor contracts, unpaid wages, substandard wages, inadequate food and housing, unsafe working conditions, lack of insurance coverage, and denial of basic services linked to China’s household registration or *hukou* system. The government has attempted to improve the plight of the migrants by doubling their salaries (at least in theory) during the pre-games construction.¹

Some academics, such as Li Xiaorong, a political philosophy professor at the University of Maryland (USA), claim that in order to project the image of being a rich and powerful country, the Chinese government has tried to “clean up” the streets of Beijing by forcing the homeless from them. Xiaorong claims that some have been sent back to their hometowns or villages, or have even been institutionalized.²

Although the Beijing government denies it, there have also been claims that the government will encourage the one million migrant workers in the city to leave during the Olympics.³

Some in government, such as Shen Jianguo, vice president of the All-China Federation of Industry & Commerce, are urging charity donations and the private sector to help with the needs of the poor, including children of migrant workers.⁴

Endnotes

1. [“Beijing Increases Migrant Workers' Salary for Construction of Olympic Venues”](#)
2. Mooney, Paul. [“Beijing Olympics: Shadow Over a Coming-Out Party”](#)
3. [“Beijing Says Not to Expel Rural Migrant Workers during 2008 Olympics”](#)
4. [“Olympic Mascots Bring Love to Needy People”](#)

Y. Lee (pseudonym) is a practitioner in Beijing.

Many Faces of Poverty in China

By Richard and Haruyo Platt

In 2003, my wife, children, and I lived in a province of China located in the most southwestern part of the country. We were there to study Mandarin at the local university. During our time there, we noticed the many faces of poverty. One of my teachers, a local journalist, explained many local realities to me.

Children. One of these is the tragedy of some children who are reduced to work for their “owners.” They are intentionally amputated at a young age; someone brings them to their assigned street corner to collect money. My teacher told me that those responsible for these atrocities are often rich and living as far away as Guangzhou (a wealthy city near Hong Kong).

Migrant workers. Another face of poverty is the many migrant “workers” who come from the villages hoping to make a living. Some walk around the city looking for anything they can trade for money at a recycling warehouse located far away in the suburbs. On their backs (or by bicycle) they carry a very heavy load of cardboard, plastic, or paper. They are easy to recognize as their tan is dark from all the hours spent in the sun. Their young children are often with them. Many belong to one of the ethnic minorities present in this part of China.

Other migrant workers live in crowded dorms to cut down the cost of housing. After their employers deduce the room and board fees, there isn’t much left to bring back to their village after months of hard work. Additionally, the working conditions on the construction sites are not very safe and accidents are common. The children do not have access to local schools because the workers are in the city illegally.

Street vendors. After trying to make a living selling roasted corn, some street vendors have their equipment confiscated by local authorities (police). Closure of factories. Many government factories have closed, thus leaving workers without a job. This has created a major problem in some parts of China.

Taxes and inflation. Farmers in the countryside are struggling to survive due to heavy taxes and a rise in prices.

Is There Hope?

There are several non-governmental organizations working in this province. For example, we saw a school for disabled children who no opportunity to go to a regular school. The school has occupational therapists, and there are teachers who teach them various trade or language skills. There are also medical teams which offer clinical services and teachings on basic hygiene and nutrition (to avoid some of the common medical problems).

There is also a group of local Christians building and renovating homes for a small colony of lepers. They live on top of a mountain, very isolated from the rest of the world. New homes are built with water tanks that have solar-powered heating systems. These tanks were donated by a Chinese company. This project is a ray of hope for lepers who remain there even after they have received treatment for their condition. It would be hard for them to re-integrate into society. This is home for them.

Richard and Haruyo Platt are on the team of Christian Direction in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. They run a weekly program where they and a team of Christian volunteers welcome newcomers from China. They have two children, Jonathan and Aiko.

RESEARCH

Lausanne Fifth International Researchers’ Conference Report

By Peter Brierley

Sixty-seven delegates representing every continent attended the 5th International Lausanne Researchers’ Conference in Melbourne, Australia, 8-12 April 2008. Special emphasis was given to research among youth and their spirituality. More than twenty different organisations working in research around the world also presented what they have been working on.

Thirty-three **papers**, reflecting ongoing research by the different members who attended, were presented. The Lausanne Researchers’ International Network—a Lausanne Special Interest Group dedicated to

research, but open to all who are interested in researching mission, the Church, Christianity, and other religions in the context of evangelism in the world of today—was formed during the conference.

The conference was chaired and organized by Rev. Dr. Philip Hughes, executive director of Christian Association in Australia, and his team. Fellowship took place as attendees went on tours of various parts of Australia.

The sixth conference is in the planning stages and will hopefully be held in Brazil in April 2011. For more information, visit the Lausanne Researchers' International Network at: www.lrin.org.

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

LAUSANNE REPORTS

Evangelism in Southern Asia

By Adrian De Visser

The countries in South Asia have the fastest growing churches in the world, with some estimates showing a 3.6% annual growth in Asia. Protestant and Independent Christians increased from under four million in 1900 to over 193 million in 2000.¹ Yet, this region also faces some of the strongest, most systematic forms of persecution against Christians and against those who engage in evangelistic ministries.

With almost half of the world's poor people living in this region, poverty, deprivation, and marginalisation are key challenges. Many Asian countries are still entrenched in civil or military conflicts, while others are slowly emerging from decades of civil war. This region has huge disparities: some countries are experiencing phenomenal economic growth, while others are mired in weak development strategies and rampant corruption. Civil liberties have been largely overlooked, and many Asians do not enjoy the freedom of speech or of religion.

The Church in Asia serves within this context of great disparities, of widening social and economic divides. Multiple religions, diverse cultures, and hundreds of languages and dialects mean that there is no single strategy for reaching Asia for Christ. There are many different worldviews through which the gospel needs to be preached.

A rising tide of nationalism in many countries across this region has led to Christianity being

By the Numbers...

- Over eighty-three percent of the 4.4 billion non-Christians in the world live in Asia.
- Over eighty-seven percent of the world's unevangelised individuals live in Asia.
- Of the fifty-five countries in the world that have less than ten percent Christian populations, forty-four are in Asia.
- Asia is the birthplace of two of the major non-Christian religions: Buddhism and Hinduism, with the largest concentration of Buddhists worldwide in Asia.
- Three of the largest Muslim countries—Indonesia, Pakistan, and India—are in Asia.

Source: *Operation World: 21st Century Edition*

viewed as a foreign, imperialistic religion being imposed on the locals. The Asian Church has been slow to make Christianity relevant to local culture and social needs. I strongly believe that we—the Asian Church—need to urgently develop evangelistic strategies which are biblically sound, missiologically-focused, culturally relevant, and sacrificial in love.

Asian churches need to send out their own people as missionaries to reach those who have not yet heard the gospel in Asia. We also need to learn from each other; indeed, there is a rich diversity in culture, language, and history. Asians also share many common characteristics. We need to study church growth patterns and identify trends and learnings which we can share with each other.

The Asian Church needs to strengthen its networks so that we can come alongside each other, and strengthen individual churches, Christian leaders, and missionaries to build the Kingdom of God in Asia.

Endnote

1. “Renewal and Growth: Our Evangelical Pursuit.” *Compendium of The Asian Church Congress*.

Rev. Adrian De Visser serves as the Lausanne International Deputy Director for South Asia. He is founder and senior pastor of Kithu Sevana Ministries, based in Sri Lanka. De Visser entered Christian ministry in 1979 as the first local-language ministry worker for **Youth For Christ, Sri Lanka**. His work took him to remote and marginalised communities and gave him a deep conviction and passion for reaching them for Christ. In 2007, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Government of Sri Lanka in 2007 for his social development and community-oriented work for more than two decades and was also awarded the title of Deshabandu by the Government of Sri Lanka, one of Sri Lanka’s highest civilian honors, for his work among the poor in Sri Lanka. De Visser is also vice-president for partnership development for **Asian Access** and a member of the Governing Board of Colombo Theological Seminary in Sri Lanka.

The People Clusters of Southern Asia

By Justin Long

This month, we look at the people group clusters of southern Asia.¹ This region of the world is essentially India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan.

South Asia is home to seventy-three people group clusters. However, there is a significant population difference: thirty-nine of the groups have populations in excess of 100,000 people (thirty are larger than one million), while the remaining thirty are small groups of under 100,000. These smaller groups make up 500,000 (mostly expatriate) people, including: Anglo-Americans, Bantus, Filipinos, Japanese, Lao, etc. We will not address these very small groups in this particular survey, but one should not forget their presence.

The “major” thirty-nine groups represent 1.3 billion people in southern Asia. Of the thirty-nine groups that are larger than 100,000 people in size, twenty-nine are unreached; these account for 1.2 billion people. Despite the many wonderful reports coming from this section of the world, there remains a substantial amount of work to be done in southern Asia.

The thirty-nine clusters include:

People Cluster	Population (in millions)
Adi	0.4

Assamese	5.4
Baloch	0.1
Bengali	217.9
Bhil	14.3
Bhojpur-Maithili	0.4
Bhutanese	1.3
Bihari	0.3
Burmese	0.4
Garo-Tripuri	4.8
Gond	16.1
Gujarati	31.0
Gypsy	6.7
Hindi	416.8
Jat	26.0
Kannada	36.4
Kashmiri	6.3
Kuki-Chin-Naga	4.9
Malayali	35.7
Maldivian	0.4
Marathi-Konkani	59.2
Miri-Kachin	0.7
Mizo-Lushai	0.7
Mon-Khmer	1.3
Munda-Santal	15.5
Nepali-Pahari	14.5
Oraon	4.2
Oriya	16.3
Other South Asian	7.2
Pathan	12.5
Punjabi	16.6
Rajasthan	45.9
South Himalaya	4.8
Sindhi	0.3
Sinhala	14.4
Tamil	52.8
Telugu	53.8
Tibetan	1.2
Urdu Muslim	159.9

The Super Giant Clusters

Of these clusters, perhaps the most visible are the three “super giants”: the Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu Muslims, each with populations in excess of 100 million people (the Hindi cluster, in particular, comprises over 400 million). Together, they total 800 million. For comparison, this is nearly three times America’s 300 million, slightly smaller than the population of Africa (900 million), and greater than Europe’s 700 million.

The **Bengali** cluster has 220 million people and is centered primarily in Bangladesh. Ninety-nine million of the people in this cluster are Bengali. Some twenty-five other groups have populations in excess of one million; the largest of these include the: thirteen million Rohingya, ten million Mahishya, seven million Kayastha, seven million Koiri, and five million Namasudra. In addition, there are some three hundred smaller groups with populations ranging from just under one million to less than one hundred. Nearly all of these groups, however, speak one of the major trade languages of southern Asia, with the vast majority speaking Bengali. By our current projections, over two thousand cross-cultural pioneer teams would be needed to reach this cluster.

The **Hindi** cluster has 400 million people and is centered primarily in India. The Joshua Project lists eight large groups: sixty million Brahmans, fifty-five million Yadava, forty-eight million Chamar, thirty-eight million Rajput, sixteen million Teli, thirteen million Kumhar, eleven million Dhobi, and ten million Nai.

Beyond this, there are another thirty-eight groups with populations in excess of million, and 350 groups with populations under one million. Nearly all speak Hindi. While different approaches are required with some of the larger groups, many smaller groups might be “lumped together” where strategy is concerned. Over four thousand pioneer teams would likely be needed to fully reach this cluster; perhaps more, given the geographic and ethnolinguistic complexity of the region.

The **Urdu** cluster has 160 million people in over 250 groups. The largest include the: seventy-three million Shaikh, twenty-five million Kunbi, fifteen million Kurmi, and ten million Ansari. There are an additional eight groups with populations greater than one million, and some 223 groups with populations of less than one million. There is a greater variety of languages spoken within this cluster: Urdu dominates, but Telugu, Hindi, Bengali, and other languages are also found in great numbers. Over two thousand teams would likely be needed for this cluster.

The Joshua Project does not carry easily-available statistics for the percentage of a group that is either already reached or already Christian. However, cross-checking with the World Christian Database (WCD) gives us an idea of the scope of the issue. The Bengali in India are 1.2% Christian, having just under one million believers. The Hindi, likewise, are just 1.5% Christian, having about two million believers. The Urdu are less than 0.1% Christian. We have an immense task before us.

No initiative to evangelize the world—or even to evangelize any significant portion of Asia—can ignore these three super clusters. Reaching any single one of them will require a massive concentration of resources, workers, and unity. Nearly ten thousand pioneer teams (thirty thousand cross-cultural workers) would likely be required. This is the equivalent of five mission agencies the size of the International Mission Board, or perhaps the whole of Operation Mobilization, focused on these three super clusters alone.

At a cost of 100,000USD per year per team (not unrealistic, and perhaps too conservative), the total cost of this effort could easily reach \$1 billion—annually. And that’s just the pioneer teams—one per every 100,000 people. These teams would do pioneer work like translation, contextualization, resource creation, distribution, and so forth. This number does not include home workers.

The Smaller Clusters

However, these three super clusters are only half of the challenge. Taken altogether, the smaller clusters of southern Asia add up to an additional 500 million people. These represent peoples speaking numerous languages (adding an ethnic and linguistic challenge) on both sides of borders (adding a diplomatic challenge), often in the midst of war or natural disaster zones. Consider these:

- The 4.8 million people in the Southern Himalayan cluster. Most of this cluster is the 2.2 million Magar, 0.8 million Gurung, and 0.6 million (widely Christian) Monpa; however, there are dozens of groups which remain unreached. These are mostly Hindu and Buddhist groups found on the southern border of the Himalayas in Nepal and Bhutan.
- The 5.3 million people in the Assamese cluster. This cluster includes the 2.6 million Assamese Muslims and 1.9 million Hindu Arlengs (the latter with a wide church planting effort). These groups are located in the region of India to the east of Bangladesh.
- The 7.8 million people in the Tibetan cluster. The Tibetan peoples are strongly Buddhist and very unreached, centered on the Tibetan region of China. Work here is difficult and dangerous.
- The 8.4 million people in the Kashmiri cluster, on the Indian side of the war-torn border. Kashmir is a war-torn, disputed province where work remains difficult.
- The 9.4 million people in the Baloch cluster. The Baloch cluster is mostly Muslim peoples from Pakistan. All are highly unreached.
- The 10.7 million Other South Asian peoples cluster. This cluster is comprised of over 122 groups, most with Hindu-professing populations numbering a few thousand. There are a few Muslim groups, and equally a few groups with church-planting efforts (including the Gamit, Dhanka, Gadaba, and Goanese).
- The fourteen million people in the Sinhala cluster. Most in this cluster are Buddhist and live in Sri Lanka. Several Sinhalese groups outside Sri Lanka have established church-planting efforts.
- The fourteen million in the Nepali cluster. Although Nepal has enjoyed massive church growth in the past several years, virtually all of the groups still remain majority-unreached, strongly Hindu.
- The sixteen million people in the Gond cluster. The people in this cluster are part of the thirteen million-member Gond of India, an unreached tribal Hindu people found mostly in the east-central states in India.
- The sixteen million people in the Oriya cluster. There are several very large people groups within this cluster, including some with established churches (such as the one million Saora and the 0.6 million Shabar).
- The 6.6 million people in the Gypsy cluster. Many Gypsy groups throughout the world have strong church movements. This is particularly true of the largest Gypsy group in the world, the Banjara of India.
- The twenty-five million people in the Jat cluster. Of these, some 14.9 million belong to a Hindu group, and some twelve million belong to a Sikh group. Both are very unreached.

- The thirty million people in the Gujarati cluster. There are over 130 groups in this cluster, many of whom are very small. All are very unreached, and most are Hindu. They are centered primarily on the western coast of India.
- The thirty-six million people in the Kannada cluster. There are over 165 groups in this cluster, the largest being the nine million Lingayat and six million Vakkaliga. Most are unreached Hindu groups centered in Karnataka.
- The twelve million people in the Pathani (Pashto) cluster. Most of the people in this cluster are refugees and immigrants from Afghanistan. These are Northern Pashtun immigrants to India, staunchly Muslim, found throughout India, but primarily in the northeast near the border of Nepal.
- The fifty-three million people in the Telugu cluster. Found primarily in the southeast of India in the state of Andhra Pradesh, the cluster has 137 groups, over a dozen of which are fairly large. Several large groups have well-established churches.
- The fifty-nine million people in the Marathi-Konkani cluster. There are 112 groups in this cluster, the largest being the twenty-eight million Mahratta. While a few groups have established church-planting efforts, most are strongly unreached Hindu groups, particularly the Mahratta, as well as the eight million Mahar, seven million Nau Buddh, and 2.2 million Matang.
- The sixteen million people in the Punjabi cluster, part of the 105 million cluster centered in Pakistan. In Southern Asia, this group is unreached and Muslim.

There is an enormous challenge to grapple with in South Asia. Fortunately, there are many resources available. Unfortunately, the resources we presently have are not enough to meet the challenge. The Church needs to focus on mobilizing new resources—more prayer, more financial support, more workers, more media, more literature, more of everything!

Endnote

1. Giving an overview of Southeast Asia is complicated by the fact that the [Joshua Project](#) database (which we are using) approaches the peoples of Southern Asia in a way that is different from other databases (such as the International Mission Board, the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, or *Operation World*). Nevertheless, abstracted to the cluster level, these complications should be kept to a minimum.

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