

# LausanneWorldPulse.com

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

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## **WORLD NEWS BRIEFS**

### **AROUND THE WORLD**

Thanks to volunteer knitters from the United States and abroad, more than 250,000 impoverished children around the world now enjoy the comfort and warmth of handmade sweaters. [World Vision](#) has partnered with [Guideposts](#) magazine in its “[Knit for Kids](#)” sweater project that encourages people to knit or crochet sweaters for needy children. The sweaters are distributed to children in countries such as Azerbaijan. The Knit for Kids project began in 1996; last year World Vision delivered about 4,500 sweaters. ([World Vision](#))

### **CHINA**

China's official media has confirmed that two people have been arrested after reports that about three thousand Christians in eastern China's Zhejiang province clashed with police over the demolition of a church building for a denomination not officially recognized by the government. The acknowledgement of the arrest by the official Xinhua news agency came after the Hong Kong-based Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy said that up to five hundred Chinese police clashed with Protestant Christians on 29 July when authorities demolished a partially built church building. The centre said the clash left about twenty people hurt, four seriously. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

### **CHINA**

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, is set to visit China 8-23 October 2006. The visit is at the invitation of the senior leadership of the post-denominational Protestant churches in China. Dr. Williams' trip will include visits to cities such as Beijing and Shanghai and is designed to give him a deeper understanding of the Church of China and the context in which it is developing. During his travels he will engage with religious leaders, academics, government officials, NGOS and business leaders concerning the contemporary challenges facing the Church and society. ([Anglican Communion News Service](#))

### **CZECH REPUBLIC**

The Brno Sports Blitz, the largest event that the Majak Ministry Center has ever hosted, took place 8-18 June. Eighty-three student athletes, coaches and support staff from several colleges in the US converged in Brno. After two days of intensive training, the teams began visiting schools, conducting clinics and playing exhibition games. Time was taken to share their testimonies and tell about the love of Jesus. An estimated six hundred people were directly impacted by these events and three hundred heard about Jesus through the sharing of personal testimonies. Many seeds were planted during the Blitz and two young people accepted Christ as Savior. ([Wesleyan Information Network](#))

## **CZECH REPUBLIC**

Representatives of the worldwide [Seventh-day Adventist Church](#) and the [World Evangelical Alliance](#) met in dialogue 8-11 August 2006 on the campus of the International Baptist Theological Seminary, located in Prague, Czech Republic. Although informal contacts had occurred during the past fifty years, this was the first official meeting of the two groups. The purposes of the dialogue were (1) to gain a clearer understanding of the theological positions of each body (2) to clarify matters of misunderstanding (3) to discuss areas of agreement and disagreement on a biblical basis and (4) to explore possible areas of cooperation. ([Adventist Press Service APD](#))

## **INDIA**

Christian groups have decried changes to laws said to enshrine "freedom of religion" by legislators in India's central state of Madhya Pradesh, ruled by the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), a party opponents describe as having a Hindu nationalist agenda. Under an amendment to the Freedom of Religion Act passed without discussion in the state legislature, the government now requires persons changing their religion to report to authorities about it one month before doing so. The existing law requires people changing their religion to report this to the government within one month of making the move. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

## **IRAN**

The only Christian player in Iran's national soccer team was named "Christian star of the World Cup" in a poll undertaken by a Dutch ecumenical Christian group. Andranik Teymourian, a 23-year-old midfielder, received 31.3 percent of votes in the online contest, organized by Gristelijk, a group of Protestant and Roman Catholic teachers and lecturers, out of a shortlist of eleven leading Christian soccer players. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

## **NEW ZEALAND**

Mark Brown, national director for [Scripture Union](#) in New Zealand, has been appointed chief executive officer of the Bible Society in New Zealand. Brown will start his post in the early part of 2007. He is succeeding Colin Reed, who retired earlier this year. Brown has degrees in theology and art therapy. Brown says his "calling and passion is to see the Bible returned to its rightful central place within every Christian's life." ([Assist News](#))

## **SOUTH KOREA**

The Rev. John C.A. Barrett of the British Methodist Church is the new chairperson of the [World Methodist Council](#), which includes churches in 132 countries. Barrett was elected by the council and installed at the 24 July closing worship service of the World Methodist Conference in Seoul, South Korea. Quoting from Luke 4:16-19, Barrett declared that God's Spirit is still at work in the world and acknowledged that although the Church is in decline in Great Britain and other places, it is seeing great growth in other parts of the world. "Are you being true to your mission?" Barrett asked those gathered. "Do you understand what it means to be a Methodist Church? John Wesley combined evangelism and social witness. We asked council members to list the priorities for the next five years. Far and away, the most common response was evangelism." He reiterated that the Methodist Church also stands for justice and peace and hears the groans of people who suffer around the world. ([Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church](#))

## **UNITED STATES**

Dan Brokke was recently named president and CEO of [Bethany International](#). He replaces Dave Hicks, who stepped down after five years of service. In his new position Brokke has placed a priority on the expansion of Bethany College of Missions (Bloomington, Minnesota, USA). "The heart of Bethany is to train and send missionaries. We see our role to equip young men and women, working in partnership with indigenous church and mission leaders around the world," he said. More than seven hundred missionaries have been sent out

through Bethany International in the past sixty years. ([Bethany International](#))

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## **WORLD EVANGELISM & MISSIONS REPORTS**

### **The Challenges of Mexico City**

**By Elisabeth Isais**

#### **The Layout of Mexico City**

It has always impressed me that Mexico City is one of the only major cities in the world which was not built beside a lake, an ocean or a large river. When it was founded several hundred years ago, Mexico City was on a shallow lake bed, but that water has been drained off and one of the city's biggest problems today is insufficient liquid. There seems little hope of improving the quality of the water, but if there were simply enough water for all the people in Mexico City, we would be thrilled. Praise God that the tropical mountain climate does include a wonderful rainy season, which helps.

Another advantage of being beside a large body of water would have been more possibilities to transport goods, food and raw material which could be transformed into manufactured products in the thousands of factories in Mexico City. Instead, trucks are used to transport almost everything, leading to more pollution, increased traffic and loud motors. The train system is nearly dead and the immense international airport handles mostly people, with only a relatively small amount devoted to carrying cargo.

#### **Life in Mexico City**

In spite of marvelous natural resources in the country as a whole, poverty in rural areas has become so bad that millions of Mexicans have abandoned their fields and tried to find work and opportunities in Mexico City. This migration has not solved the problem; at least ten million Mexicans have given up and risked their lives trying to enter the United States illegally in hopes of finding decent-paying jobs. In turn they have shown an incredible love of family, sending money back to their home towns in quantities equal to what Mexico's entire petroleum industry produces annually.

The overall population in the metropolitan area of Mexico City is about twenty-four million people; this includes some of the poorest of the poor (perhaps fifty percent of the population of the city), as well as prosperous middle class professionals. Traffic here is slow and dense; non air-conditioned subways are crowded to capacity most of the time and thousands of people spend as many as four hours a day going to and from their jobs, thankful to have even a small paycheck. On the political scene, after seventy-one years of having a one-party government, the region has begun to awaken to new opportunities for democracy.

Despite this, Mexico's principal problem is corruption, which can be found in many levels of government and society. Businessmen and women and industrial leaders spend huge amounts of their income on protection and security. The government complains that few people pay their taxes. The country has the world's highest rate of kidnapping (topping even Colombia). Much of the crime is not even reported because it seems so few criminals are ever caught and punished. Usually a bribe can get people out of anything.

#### **Christ—The Answer**

There is only one answer for corruption: a spiritual revolution, a turning to Christ. When people follow Jesus Christ as Lord, they attempt to live as their Saviour lived by serving others, being honest, working hard, obeying the laws and sharing the good news. Simply put, they fear God. *Mexico City is indeed one of the world's greatest challenges for the gospel, but praise God that many hundreds and thousands of its citizens are accepting that new way of life.*

Historically, Mexico is a country where foreign missionaries have played a very limited role. The Christian Church (generally referred to here as evangelical, covering all types of believers) is definitely a Mexican Church, and everyday new congregations spring up throughout the metropolitan area. There are hundreds of people worshipping in historic church buildings, but many groups also meet in hotels, social halls and homes. *Although there are no precise statistics on the number of evangelical Christians in Mexico City, it is estimated that at least fifteen percent of the population have trusted in Christ.*

Another phenomenon is the curious arithmetic seen in Mexican churches. Mexican Christians laughingly say that they multiply by dividing, often because of personality clashes, doctrinal disagreements or resistance to new ideas or styles of worship. However, the fact is that they are multiplying. Still, evangelical Christians are a minority and are still largely ignored by the national media. The traditional religion here does everything possible to discredit and discount the evangelicals, leading to prejudice in many forms.

### **Latin America Mission, Milamex and Mexico City**

Because the challenges in Mexico City are so vast, we who are working with **Latin America Mission** (LAM) sometimes feel like tiny ants struggling to make an impact on an entire football field. Our motto has been to serve, not to be served. Some LAM missionaries have started churches on the north side of the city while others work among victims of poverty to the east side of the city. However, the goal of Milamex (**Latin America Mission of Mexico**) has been to concentrate on ministries to help and strengthen the existing Church. We believe in fostering a spirit of unity.

Milamex was founded in 1964 by evangelist Juan M. Isais and today is directed by his daughter Sally Ramirez. Milamex has attempted to serve in four key areas:

**1. Evangelism.** Our principal emphasis is on “evangelism in-depth,” an evangelistic movement pioneered on a nationwide basis by Latin America Mission during the 1960s and 1970s in many Spanish-speaking countries. More recently we have focused on citywide efforts, particular denominations or groups of churches or local congregations. This past June 2006, for example, the president of the **Mexican National Baptist Convention** hosted two seminars in his church and was tremendously enthusiastic about the teaching. The courses are given in churches of all types, whenever requested by local leaders. It must be noted that *throughout all of our ministries we emphasize evangelism not as a method, but as the first love of true believers as taught in scripture.*

**2. Christian camping.** All of the tensions of a metropolis like Mexico City, where most families live cramped in tiny apartments with no yards (plus all the problems mentioned above), made us realize the need for places for Christians, particularly children and young people, to have opportunities to live with nature and enjoy clean air, blue skies, star-studded nights, walks in the woods, broad grassy playing fields and places for quiet meditation. Day to day the Christians in Mexico City are victims of unhealthy television programs, video games, boredom, drug pushers, overcrowding and other negative influences that counteract the joys of the gospel. They need a refuge.

Well-planned camps provide leadership training, healthy competition, nutritious food, Bible study and prayer, relaxation and new Christian friends. **Camp Kikoten**, a large wooded property located in the mountains near Mexico City, is now independent of Milamex, with its own installations, staff and programs. Churches can rent the camp or people can attend camps planned by the staff. Another camp called **Kikomar**, on the beach of the Gulf of Mexico, is being developed with its own legal organization but under the Milamex umbrella. Praise God that many significant decisions for salvation, Christian service and even finding Christian mates has happened at the camps.

**3. Christian literature.** This aspect of the ministry has been growing although Milamex’s publications began more than thirty-five years ago. We publish a monthly tabloid newspaper called **Noticiero Milamex**, which

contains (a) relevant news about what is happening in church affairs in Mexico and other countries, (b) a section for prayer on the increasing persecution and intolerance of Christianity around the world and (c) items about missions and evangelism. This newspaper is now given away free of charge to churches which request it. This type of ministry requires us to be a center of information concerning the Church here. We also publish a bimonthly family magazine called *Prisma*, which includes testimonies of conversion, a photo novel (similar to a comic book story told in pictures) and articles on varied subjects. Beginning in 2002, Milamex started to also publish **books**; we now have a dozen titles, including five books with advice for women, two with advice for men, children's stories, a juvenile novel, two biographies and one title on discovering the will of God. These have been widely read and accepted and we expect this publishing house to continue to grow, Lord willing.

**4. Biblical teaching in special events.** Milamex has pioneered a variety of courses open to Christians and their non-Christian friends. Christian journalism and writing courses are held at least once a year. We have sponsored three courses on **Christian comics** with Nate Butler, president of **COMIX35**; another is scheduled for February 2007. One-day **gala events for women** have been enthusiastically received four years in a row, and a fifth event is planned for the city of San Luis Potosi in October 2006 plus a sixth one next spring in Mexico City. A third **special event for men** will be held in Mexico City in November 2006. Our workers are involved in key ministries in local churches as well, and interdenominational activities are always encouraged. We believe in Bible studies with friends and neighbors.

As God opens new doors and encourages us to pass through them, Milamex will continue to pioneer new avenues for extending the gospel in the midst of the tremendous needs in Mexico.

**Elisabeth Fletcher Isais** has been working with **Latin America Mission** since 1951. She has been working in Mexico since 1964. She is the editor and author of various Spanish publications.

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## **Transforming Slums: Will We Hear the Cries of One Billion People Before It Is Too Late?**

**By Ashley Barker**

**Humanity has existed for thousands of years, yet we are just now beginning to experience a new kind of community—the slum community.** The fact that one million people live huddled under corrugated-tin sheets in a ditch outside of Nairobi, Kenya, is something new to the human experience. *Today' slums collectively hold one billion of the earth's people.* The slums are marked by crowded conditions, makeshift housing and dubious sanitation. Overwhelming unemployment rates and desperate poverty bring despair. *Despair is the most destructive force among the urban poor and is essentially a spiritual issue.* When slum dwellers lose all sense of hope, they stop caring about what happens to themselves, their families and the people around them. Despair can rule the slums.

### **Demonstrating Christ's Love and Power**

Slum communities are on the rise at an alarming rate. *It is estimated that every day there are fifty thousand new urban slum dwellers.* The presence of Jesus is among these masses and hears the cries of each of the lost, poor and broken ones. He is pleading with the whole body, the Church, to respond to this spiritual, social and environmental reality as he would.

Most governments, churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are at a loss to know what to do with slum communities. This provides a unique arena to demonstrate the transformative power of Christ for whole communities. Will we have the courage to follow Jesus into the heart of these communities?

To fail to follow Jesus into the slums, to attempt to ignore or lock out two billion slum dwellers, will put everyone on the planet at risk. *The powers of radical evil are exploiting the most vulnerable who are gathered in*

*slums* and can create, for example, hot houses to nurture radical terrorism. However, this volatile environment can also provide opportunities for radical discipleship with Christ. Will the whole Church do whatever it takes to “seek the shalom of the city” in thoughtful, prayerful and committed ways? Or will the world suffer the consequences of ignoring the “least of these brothers and sisters” of God?

### **Understanding Slum Communities**

Urban slums go by many names, according to their context. In **Thailand**, they are called *chim choms*, in **Brazil** they are *favelas* and in **Argentina** they are called *villa iseries*. What they have in common is that they are catch-basins for the poor and vulnerable of a city and nation. The rural poor, AIDS orphans, labourers and refugees pour into these makeshift towns and then they become home. Often mainstream people fearful of a community’s reputation try to hide slums away or even destroy them altogether as they reveal a reality of life few want to acknowledge.

What are slum communities? Put simply, they are communities built the wrong way around. In a regular neighbourhood a local government recognizes land as fit for housing, provides deeds and develops utilities such as sewers, water and electricity. Builders draw up building plans. Eventually foundations for homes are laid and construction starts. Once the house is completed and utilities connected, the family who buys or rents the house is able to move in their belongings and have the chance to make a home.

Slum communities begin when people move onto vacant, often undeeded, land first and put whatever belongings they have on it. Then they build whatever shelter they can quickly get over their heads. Later—if at all—utilities may be developed, and shelter is improved. Rarely are deeds granted. Over time more shanty houses pop up and more layers of infrastructure are added “over the top.”

Technically speaking, **the United Nations defines a slum household as one that lacks any of the following:**

- **Access to improved water** or access to sufficient amount of water for family use, at an affordable price, available to household members without being subject to extreme effort
- **Access to improved sanitation** or access to an excreta disposal system, either in the form of a private toilet or a public toilet shared with a reasonable number of people
- **Security of tenure** or evidence of documentation to prove secure tenure status or de facto or perceived protection from evictions
- **Durability of housing** or permanent and adequate structure in a non-hazardous location

### **Transforming Slum Communities**

There are many barriers to the transformation of slum communities. They are complex and vulnerable social structures that require careful understanding if appropriate responses are to be made. If you pull what seems to be a loose thread at one end, things begin to unravel at the other end.

For example, consider the garbage collectors of Cairo, **Egypt**, with whom a group from Intervarsity Christian Fellowship lived for a summer. First, imagine a city growing by hundreds of thousands of people a year. How do you find housing, jobs and sanitation for such a yearly influx? The simple answer is that you don’t. Infrastructure essentially collapses; industrious poor people take advantage of the infrastructure vacuum and begin to gather trash. Soon there is a thriving garbage village right inside the city limits (there are at least five in Cairo). Within that community there is a steady source of waste for the compost with which to raise animals, so a farming complex also grows within the garbage village.

“The sights and smells of living among rubbish, animals and people were quite shocking to us at first,” said one of the group members. “Our immediate thought was, How could we work to get rid of this place? But after living there a while, we began to see how thorny the solutions become. The sanitation system is actually pretty efficient. Eighty percent of the trash in Cairo is recycled or reused because of this hands-on method of dealing with waste. In the West we bury eighty percent of our garbage. To hire a waste-management organization that would bring in heavy equipment and create massive landfills is not only worse for the environment but would also jeopardize the livelihoods of those who depend on the trash.”

Obviously, the living conditions of a garbage village are unacceptable. Humans should not suffer the kinds of sicknesses and hardships that exist in that place. But urban transformation is a tricky business. If you rescue children from working in a sweatshop, you plunge their families into even more desperate poverty. You might deliver a fifteen-year-old girl from the horrors of living in a brothel, but unless you deal with the physical, emotional, familial and spiritual consequences of child prostitution, she will return to the group of people who can relate best to her situation: the brothel from which she came. After all, she can hardly go home to the family that sold her into that life in the first place.

### **Seeking the Shalom of a Slum**

What then are strategic places to put our energy? If the whole Church is to seek the shalom of the world’s slums then the following needs cannot be ignored in any slum.

#### **There is the need for:**

- healthy housing
- property rights
- sustainable employment
- adequate healthcare
- healthy local economies
- engaging the principalities and powers
- support of people living with AIDS and AIDS orphans
- healthy advocacy and policy
- mental health and keeping despair at bay
- healthy environment
- population control
- healthy local institutions (e.g. solidarity groups, co-ops, businesses and government)
- healthy church movements “of” the slum

### **Evangelisation of Urban Slums**

The following are a call to action to the Church in order that urban slums might be impacted by the good news of Jesus Christ:

1. For the whole Church to take seriously the need to **stand in solidarity with local churches, ministries and Christians already living and serving in these slums** to share Christ holistically.
2. For the whole Church to take seriously the need to **raise up a new generation of incarnational workers, willing to go and live among unreached urban slums**, seeking holistic transformation through Christ with their new neighbours.
3. For the whole Church to take seriously the need for **thoughtful, prayerful and passionate advocacy** in the areas of: (a) property rights of urban slum dwellers, (b) business rights of urban slum dwellers, (c) urban slum upgrades (rather than demolishing, ignoring or forcing relocation of slums) and (4) slum

communities support to determine their own futures together (especially helping to provide the opportunity for the Bible and the Spirit of Christ to help guide communal decision-making).

*If all three action steps are not taken seriously, the sacrificial work of slum ministry will be undermined by insecurity.* For example, slums dwellers will be dispersed before transformation is an option, people will die, the image of God will be marred and the life God intends will be thwarted.

### **Awareness and Mobilization**

As in all mission in the city, it is critical to work with the community and urban structures to eliminate slums and every depressing condition that dishonours God by degrading human life. If each church, mission agency and association of churches gave attention to the following recommendations, a huge difference would be made in reaching urban slum dwellers for Christ:

1. **Create awareness for the whole Church of the plight of urban slum dwellers.** Few Christians know what slums are like or the needs of the slum dweller. In a city like Bangkok, for example, there are one million slum dwellers but only a handful of small churches. Who will create the media and other tools to let the church know of Jesus' cry for the urban slum dweller?
2. **Identify some of the experiments in urban slum transformation and "role model" responses that others can learn from.** Many churches and agencies have put urban slums in the "too hard" basket. Funding, too, is hard to maintain, as traditional responses such as child sponsorship are often unstable in slum communities. Who will create new, sustainable models and help others to reproduce them?
3. **Pray, mobilize, train and support a new generation of Christian slum workers from the whole Church to the whole world of urban slums.** While not all Christians are called to serve in slums, many whom God has called are not being recognized or supported. With an estimated two billion urban slum dwellers by 2025 every Christian would need a good reason not to be personally involved in slum transformation. Who will go among the least of these brothers and sisters of Jesus?
4. **Develop solidarity between slum and non-slum Christians.** For example, there could be "sister-church" or "mentoring" relationships between urban slum Christians/churches and non-urban slum Christians/churches. Who will find the bonds of friendship and solidarity with slum Christians?

Strategic alliances for Christian communities and agencies are needed so that all can take seriously the above four areas of advocacy (property rights, business rights, slum upgrades and self-determination). To make a difference in these complex areas we need such macro advocates as the **Micah Challenge** as well as grassroots ones such as local legal teams and activists. Who will stand with the slum dweller until "justice rolls down like a river and righteousness like a never ending stream?" **Let us all rise up to be the feet and hands of Jesus to the more than one billion people living in slums around the world.**

*(This article was written in collaboration with Dr. Delia Neusch-Olver of the United States, Me Evangeline Gurram Sita of India and Nakuku Imbumi of Kenya.)*

**Ashley Barker** lives with his wife and two children in Klong Toey, a slum of eighty thousand people in Bangkok, Thailand. They live in the midst of extreme poverty and their house consists of two rooms and is about the size of four double beds.

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**Ministry in Croatia**  
By Eva Gonzalez-Mrsic



**“How are we going to start the work here? We don’t know anybody!”** I asked my husband as we drove into the city of Split with all our belongings in the back of a borrowed van. It was July 1991 and my husband Danijel and I were moving from Osijek, a city in northern Croatia, to Split, the second most populous city in the country with 360,000 inhabitants, to start a church. Croatia had just begun its journey to independence from ex-Yugoslavia with a war that lasted until the end of 1996.

Croatia is located in Southeast Europe and is part of the Balkan region. It is a beautiful country with a surface area of fifty-six thousand square meters, 1,200 kilometers of sea coast, 1,300 islands and 4.5 million inhabitants. Seventy-eight percent of the population is Roman Catholic, seventeen percent is Serbian Orthodox and the rest are Muslims, Protestants and others. The percentage of newborn Christians is 0.09%. ***Matthew 9:37 is a reality in this country: The harvest is great but the laborers are few.***

Danijel’s answer to my worrying question was his typical response: “Trust in the Lord!” Indeed, there was no other way than to trust the Lord for his daily guidance. When we came to Split there were no evangelical churches and we only knew of one newborn Christian—the aunt of one of our friends from Bible school. We spent the first months looking for an apartment and getting to know the city and its people. We wanted to discover the key needs in this area so that we could minister effectively. Two groups of people stood out: drug addicts and war refugees.

### **Meeting Needs**

The number of **drug addicts** was overwhelming. We kept running into young men and women enslaved to drugs or parents asking us to help their children. Even if we did not feel adequate for this kind of ministry (although we had both taken a Teen Challenge intensive course) and did not have a center where we could receive these youth, *we decided to love them, show them there is hope and practically help them.* It was not always easy; we were robbed, lied to and deceived. However, we started to see young people enter a Christian rehabilitation program and leave delivered from drugs. We started to see parents seeking the Lord and giving their lives to him. After some time we established a rehabilitation center in the north of Croatia which ran for several years. Today we still do prevention and re-entry programs for people with life-controlling problems.

From 1991 to 1997 there were more than twenty thousand **refugees** from Croatia and Bosnia in the Split county. With donations from churches and world organizations such as **World Vision** and **Feed the Hungry**, we were able to distribute nearly twenty-four thousand tons of relief aid to refugees not only in our area, but in several cities in Bosnia. Today we are still helping a group of seventy refugees placed at a camp thirty kilometers from Split. We are the only group visiting them and throughout the years we have earned their respect as well as sown the seeds of the gospel into their hearts.

In the summer of 1992 we started a home group at our apartment with the acquaintances we had made in town. D.L was a young student of theology whom we met at a flower shop. G.D. was a nurse who asked for help for her drug addict son. M.P. was a construction worker who took many books from the table we exhibited on in the main walking area downtown. *They were all eager to hear the good news of the gospel, learn from the word of God and invite friends over.* A year later our place was too small and we rented a public hall for our meetings. The number of visitors grew rapidly. People were convicted in their hearts, made a commitment to Christ and were water baptized. Being the first generation of Christians in a very traditionally religious place, many were rejected because of their faith; however, their love for Christ gave them courage and strength to persevere and grow.

### **Growing Together in Christ**

Through many challenges and hardships, our church has grown and today we have a regular weekly attendance of 250 people, making it one of the fastest growing and most dynamic fellowships in the country. Besides the three weekly worship and Bible study services, we have a weekly discipleship class for new believers and a

weekly prayer meeting. Almost every day of the week there is a different home group meeting or outreach ministry. Each group or ministry presents a great opportunity to touch the lives of many people who will further influence others.

The number of children is growing rapidly both through the coming of new families to the church and through the birth of new babies. There are about fifty children at our church now (0 to 12 years old). It is a joy to see the commitment and enthusiasm of each teacher as they work with the children several times a week. Nearly forty kids (half from two orphanages and a special needs school) gather each Saturday for the weekly children's club, Awana. There are about thirteen teens meeting every Saturday for fellowship and Bible study. It is encouraging to see them inviting their friends and being involved in church life. Friday evening a group of about twenty-five young adults meet. Our desire is to see the youth and young adults more involved in missions. About fifteen young couples meet every Friday to study God's word and to find guidance for their daily responsibilities as partners, parents and working people.

Women are the majority of the church family and enjoy fellowshiping with each other and spending time in worship, the word and intercessory prayer. There are two women's groups meeting every Thursday and a MOPS (Moms of Pre-Schoolers) group meeting every second Saturday. The "Deborah" (wives with unbelieving husbands) group meets once a month for prayer. Once a year we have a special evangelistic event where we invite friends. The last one was in May 2006 where some of the 125 women in attendance gave their lives to the Lord.

We have realized that if men, who are the head of the family, have no vision for their lives the whole family will suffer. Every other Saturday a group of men meet to share their struggles and find guidance in the word of God. We also have time for fun activities such as barbecues and sporting events.

### **Advancing the Kingdom of God**

We are very thankful to God for what he has done in Split and it is our desire to be an example and encouragement to other believers and cities not only in Croatia but in neighboring countries. We have committed ourselves to help the advance of God's kingdom in Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro by giving of ourselves and our resources.

We believe it is time for us to not only receive but give. We have also been able to organize four conferences in Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia for pastors, their wives and their children. These have been times of renewal and refreshment.

Another practical way to bless the Balkan nations is through the establishment of "Focus," a Christian camp (discipleship training and retreat center). The purpose of the camp is to encourage the leaders of existing churches through discipleship programs and train the youth to serve on the mission field. The camp is a place of fellowship and reconciliation among the nations of ex-Yugoslavia.

It is our ultimate desire to see a strong multiplying missions-minded church in Split, Croatia and the Balkans. With this purpose in mind, we give ourselves to God to be used as instruments in his hands for his purposes to be accomplished.

**Eva Gonzalez-Mrsic** was born in Spain but now serves with her Croatian husband Danijel as leaders of Good News Evangelical Church in Split, Croatia. She is also a part of the Lausanne Young Women Leaders Mentoring Network.

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### **Developing Women for Ministry in Southern Africa: PACWA Leadership Development Program**

**By ESMé Bowers**

**The Pan African Christian Women's Alliance (PACWA) is the women's commission of The Association of Evangelicals in Africa, established in 1989.** One of our goals is to sensitize Christian women to the role they can play in the transformation of the African continent.

### **Gender Stereotypes and the Church**

Religion is a key factor in the perpetuation of gender attitudes and values from one generation to the next. Those who have opposed women in ministry often refer to tradition and scripture to support their views. Nevertheless women have been in ministry since the inception of the Church and have continued to fulfill their calling and ministry in spite of opposition.

One of the goals of PACWA is to develop credible Christian women leaders who can impact the continent and world through the power of the gospel. We recognize that the development of Christian women has been neglected. One way of redressing this imbalance is through training that provides time to interact with other women and identify mentors who will help them navigate the road to successful Christian leadership.

*In South Africa the demise of Apartheid and the New Constitution with its Bill of Rights saw women empowered at all levels of society. Women in churches were asking for more opportunities to serve; however, they lacked the skills and materials for entry level leadership. Many of the courses offered were expensive, lengthy (meaning that women would have to spend weeks away from home) and not tailored to womens' needs.*

The role of the minister's wife was becoming more demanding and many were finding that expectations from both the local church and their spouse demanded they grow together as partners in ministry with their husbands. *For too long these women had to accept a lesser role even though they were fully involved in the ministry and their contribution was minimized as they had no formal training.*

In 1996 I was able to do a survey at a national evangelical church conference attended by both ministers and their wives. The following were identified as hindrances to women working together with their spouses in ministry:

- **Lack of theological training**
- **Husband's inability to accept wife as ministerial partner;** he was trained, she was not; he is called, she is just a support
- **Women's insecurity** and low self-esteem
- **Lack of interpersonal and leadership skills**
- **Poor understanding of the role women could play**
- **Fear of failure**
- **Need for healing of past hurts and rejection by male leadership**

Many courses offered as refresher courses to ministers required that some previous theological qualification had been completed. This marginalized the women as there were no materials aimed at meeting their needs. They nevertheless wished to become better servants of God.

The **World Evangelical Alliance** conducted a leadership course in Nairobi, Kenya in 1995 for key national leaders and emerging women leaders in Africa. Thirty percent of the participants were women. At this course I noticed that women engaged with the material presented in a different way to the men and were eager to share what they had learned with other women. The women decided to work together as PACWA and tailor the course for women who needed to gain confidence in leadership so as to work with men as equal partners in the local church and other initiatives.

*The goal of PACWA is to develop Christ-centered servant women leaders who are able to lead with confidence, skill and humility and partner with men in fulfilling the Great Commission.*

## **Program Development**

The program was developed after an in-depth needs assessment in PACWA with key national women leaders, ministers' wives and local church women leaders. Each of the groups had specific needs and programs were designed for each.

**1. Ministers' wives.** In 1998 the first program for ministers' wives was presented to women leaders in the Salvation Army in South Africa. This program consisted of:

1. *the making of a leader, which included personality, life experience and spiritual gifts;*
2. *the qualities of a leader;*
3. *the functions of leaders;*
4. *leadership styles; and*
5. *the development of vision, goals and strategy.*

The material is very interactive and no more than fifty people can participate at a time. The course is held over two days and mentoring and sharing of experiences are cornerstones of the meeting. Over 2,300 ministers' wives have attended the course in South Africa, Swaziland, Madagascar, Namibia and Zimbabwe. A second module, which focuses on evangelism, discipleship and organizational leadership, has been developed at the request of those who participated in the first module.

**2. Key national leaders.** A pilot program was conducted with key national women leaders in South Africa in 2000. *This course used the spiritual formation materials as in the ministers' wives modules one and two and also includes financial management, project management and women's health issues.* In 2002 forty-eight women leaders from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended the first Southern Africa regional leaders training in Pretoria. A second module was held in 2004 in Swaziland.

## **Finances**

Sustainability and African ownership is key to the ongoing success of these programs. Programs are held at Christian conference centers or local churches to keep them affordable; in rural areas sponsorship is found to cover the costs. Many women use buses, taxis or drive sharing expenses; some travel for as long as thirty hours to attend the seminars.

## **Impact**

In March 2006 PACWA leadership evaluated the impact of the training and concluded the following:

- **Women have grown in confidence and are participating in and strengthening** national evangelical fellowship structures.
- **Male leaders are recognizing these women as partners in the gospel and are opening doors for women to minister and lead**, thus strengthening local churches.
- **Christian women are participating in civil society, politics and governmental structures**, thus impacting their nations.
- **PACWA national structures have strengthened** with team leadership as the model.
- **The "servant leadership model" has replaced autocratic leadership** and women have moved from "power over people" to "power with people" which is more in sync with the way women naturally lead.
- **Some women have gone to theological seminaries** and have used this as a first step toward their training.

- **New projects that address the needs of women have been started** in Southern Africa. These include: a new AIDS orphan project in Zambia, a home-based care AIDS project in Swaziland, a prison ministry among women in South Africa and a childcare and development center in Namibia.
- There has been a **multiplication of the leadership programs at the national level where women at the grassroots level are developed for effective leadership** in the local church and community structures.
- **Evangelism programs** now include proclamation, discipleship and responding to the challenges in society.

Our challenge is to multiply the teaching and to make this available to Christian women in Africa who hunger for new skills in ministry and leading as they reach Africa for Christ. In November 2006 these modules will be taught in Monrovia, Liberia. As this country rebuilds their torn society we as PACWA want to partner with the Christian women in bringing God's kingdom to that nation.

**Esme Bowers** is with the Pan African Christians Women's Alliance (PACWA) in South Africa.

## **Tea for China: Write Short Stories for God with ABC111.net**

**By John Doe**

**I really looked forward to meeting her.** *After all, I had heard so much about her. However, my first encounter with the young lady did not live up to my expectations. She was tentative at first, gazing at me with big, round eyes under long eyelashes that looked like Chinese fans. Soon, the corners of her mouth dropped and a torrent of tears followed. I thought she needed some room to grow and mature and I did not press the issue. A year later we met again and she was so upset at seeing me that she greeted me with a hostile stare and a bloodcurdling cry. I had no idea what I had done.*

*I talked with someone she trusted and was told she had a dislike for a certain part of my face. "I can fix that!" I thought, and proceeded directly into the bathroom. A few minutes later I emerged with a new look and walked cautiously toward her. She studied my face and decided that this version was more agreeable. A few minutes later I was holding her in my arms. My two-year-old niece no longer had to look at my offending moustache!*

To reach your target audience, you have to look at things from their perspective. Just as you probably enjoyed the story above, most audiences love stories. **Trans World Radio** (TWR)-Asia did an online poll which showed that more than ninety percent of the respondents said they liked stories. Movies, television dramas and books are attracting large audiences because people love a good story.

And it is not just modern media that uses narrative to hold its audience's interest. A large portion of the Old Testament comprises accounts of God's dealings with his people. And these accounts are often filled with story. For instance, the prophet Nathan used a story to awaken David's own sense of justice, which screamed out to him about his own sin (2 Samuel 12). Jesus told stories to teach and illustrate his points as well, often letting the stories sink in without giving explanations.

Even the five-year-olds in my Sunday School class, known for their short attention spans, become totally enthralled in a well-told story. A compelling story draws great interest and is an effective tool to reach a target audience. Like those five-year-olds, Internet users have short attention spans--so short that they are measured not in minutes, but in seconds. A BBC news report states that most online viewers spend less than sixty seconds at an average website.<sup>1</sup>

### **ABC111.net, Story and English**

When it comes to using the Internet for ministry, we might be tempted to treat it as a street corner, a place to

distribute “one size fits all” tracts or as a self-service library where visitors can come on their own to get whatever they need 24/7. Those models work well for certain sectors of society. [ABC111.net](http://ABC111.net), however, wants to serve as a sidewalk cafe, a place where relationships can be built and nurtured as we see our cyber neighbors weekly or even daily. ABC111.net is a place where we can minister to the needs of those who do not know Christ. We view stories as the starting point--the cup of coffee or tea over which we can become a friend with a visitor.

Today, millions of people in China are learning English for school, work and advancement. It is their new cup of tea. Most college students want to pass level four of the College English Test, which requires competency in both listening and speaking English. Since most of them have limited contact with native English speakers, it is difficult to practice. But as a ministry experienced in audio, TWR can brew a sound cup of tea! We aim to (1) provide the kind of material visitors find truly useful, (2) format it in such a way that visitors do not feel overwhelmed and discouraged when they use it and (3) schedule it to help them progress in their abilities.

Since listening to and reading stories are great ways to learn English, TWR-Asia is committed to making them the main ingredient on ABC111.net. In May 2006 the story section of ABC111.net was viewed almost twelve thousand times. This is compared with just 4,400 visits for the nonfiction columns. Each week we have three stories, plus excerpts of some classics.

TWR-Asia desires to offer more “cups of tea” so that visitors might recognize that it is water that makes the tea, and be attracted to investigate the source of that water! Many who visit are in agony and are thirsting for a solution to the problems in their lives; some women, misled by the decaying moral values exported by the West, chose the wrong path of premarital sex with a boyfriend, only to find themselves later rejected by their husbands once it was unveiled. One such young woman even emailed saying, “I have often thought about suicide. What should I do? Please save me!”

They need some good living water.

### **Trans World Radio-Asia is Looking for Stories!**

To cater to our Internet audience who is learning English, TWR-Asia prefers stories written in somewhat simpler English, like children and youth stories. We need stories that are morally and ethnically sound. The stories will be published one episode at a time, each of which is 150 words for beginner level English and 200 to 250 words for slightly more advanced levels.

One of the biggest challenges our Chinese audience faces is the lack of native English speakers to listen to, especially at a speed and vocabulary level that they can understand. For this reason we provide recordings along with the text whenever possible. If you can make a clear recording at home in a storytelling or conversational style, we can use your help.

For more information, visit [www.abc111.net/tea4China](http://www.abc111.net/tea4China).

## Endnote

1. "Turning into Digital Goldfish." BBC News, Friday 22 February 2002.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/1834682.stm>

**Teacher John Doe** (pseudonym) leads a small team at Trans World Radio-Asia to minister to Chinese youth through the Internet. He is a trained engineer who also enjoys creative arts. He lives in Hong Kong.

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## Dayasagar and the Life of Christ in India

By John Gilman

**Five thousand Hindu villagers sit on the ground watching a movie on the life of Christ.** They see an Indian Barrabas, just released from prison, running toward Calvary with outstretched arms. Barrabas cries in Hindi, "Babu! Babu! You have died in my place!"

The concept of substitution plants itself indelibly in the audience's mind. The powerful visual seed begins to germinate in answer to the question that so many scream out during the movie: "Why are they killing this innocent man?"

The movie is *Dayasagar*, which means *Oceans of Mercy*. The villagers watch over two hours of unforgettable scenes—the beheading of John the Baptist, the healing of the blind man, the forgiving of the adulterous woman, the healing of the lepers—with nearly fifteen minutes devoted to a brutal portrayal of the crucifixion followed by a glorious resurrection.

*All the dramatic, action-packed, entertaining and emotional events of Jesus' life, from birth to ascension, are portrayed by their own people, in their own spoken dialect, with the very music and sound effects that stir their Indian hearts.* The film team showing this movie is also Indian—people who were formerly just like the villagers but now are dedicated to spreading the good news. Thousands of local pastors and film team members have said, "*Dayasagar* is the most powerful tool we have for sharing the love of Jesus with our people."

### History of *Dayasagar* and Evangelism

While in a movie theater in Haiti in 1970 I first got the idea for such a film. My wife and I had used money we had saved for a down payment on our first home for this mission to Haiti. To our horror we watched, along with a crowd of several thousand of the world's poorest people, an American movie that was filled with gratuitous evil. My heart sank as I thought of how the so-called "greatest Christian nation on earth" could export something like this to such needy and hungry people. I vowed that that someday I would bring the gospel to movie screens in developing nations around the world. In 1978 we sold our home and I took our savings and went to India to produce a movie on the life of Jesus, to be acted with Indian actors. The movie I had in mind had a biblically accurate script, beautiful music and state-of-the-art camera work and special effects.

When I arrived in India, I was astounded to see that a new movie on the life of Christ was just released in theaters and was showing in the very town where I was! It was starring a popular Indian actor. That evening I went to the movie. **The script was overly melodramatic for my American taste, and the Indian music sounded raucous to my American ears. However, the audience was enthralled.** They cheered when Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple and wept softly as he healed the lepers, the lame and the blind. They cried "Why are they killing this innocent man?" as he was brutally nailed to the cross. At Jesus' resurrection, a great cheer and applause went up.

It was then that I knew I was not called to make a movie with my talents and my taste; instead, I was called to take this culturally relevant movie into every village of India. My movie would have had Indian actors and

language, but this movie had all the other nuances embedded in the Indian culture. We purchased the world rights and went to an Indian tailor who made a huge movie screen out of eight bed sheets. My Indian friends worked hard to sink bamboo poles into the ground and hoist the screen as curious crowds began to gather.

That first night, under threatening monsoon rain clouds, more than two thousand people watched the story of Jesus for the very first time, and several hundred gave their hearts to Christ. We baptized them the next day in a nearby canal. Isaiah's prophecy was coming to pass: *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light"* (Isaiah 9:2).

Our ministry is named **Dayspring International** and is based on Luke 1:76-79 when John the Baptist's father, filled with the Holy Spirit, says to his newborn son, *"You shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways . . . whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us, to give light to them who sit in darkness."* We also work to bring the dawning of the light of the world to people who sit in darkness.

In the past twenty-eight years our film teams have made over 190,000 village presentations to more than 120 million villagers. More than five thousand churches have been birthed, some immediately after the showing, when excited new believers were eager for discipleship training and community.

### **The Faithfulness of New Believers**

A large percentage of converts remain faithful and grow in their faith. Natraj is one example. Eighteen years ago he and his parents lived in a remote Indian village hardly touched even by India's popular Hindu religion. These people were animists who worshipped the spirits in the forest. However, when *Dayasagar* shined the light of God's love into their lives, Natraj and his parents committed their lives to Christ. Today Natraj is a vibrant believer who coordinates the ministry of sixteen Dayspring mobile film teams in two states in India. He has personally presented the film in more than four hundred villages and impacted thousands of lives.

There is also Ven Kutura, a leper who waited in the shadows until the end of a film showing to come forward and approach a team member. Ven asked, "Can this Jesus help me too?" Our team leader not only prayed with him right there, but got him medical attention as well. Today Ven has his job and family back and serves the Lord in a local church.

Recently we received testimonies from India of people coming to such a faith in Christ. Many were facing great persecution as a result of their decision. Some people said, "We were dragged out of our homes, and we were beaten several times." Others said, "Our heads were shaved. They said, 'We're going to pour gasoline on you and burn you alive if you don't renounce Jesus.'" Several women were dragged from their homes into the streets naked and chased out of the village. None of them renounced Jesus Christ. One of our pastors helped them escape from that village, began to teach and disciple them and encouraged them in their journey of faith. To this day these people are taking a stand for Jesus Christ.

Dayspring teams, too, face persecution for showing the film; however, **because *Dayasagar* is not perceived as being a foreign film about a foreign god, our teams are less likely to be attacked, and in most cases they are even welcomed.** Sometimes the local Hindu priest will even invite them to set up their screen in front of his temple and plug into his electricity.

My idea more than three decades ago to make a film on the life of Christ and present it to those who live in India was nothing compared to what God had planned. This was his film. These are his people. And our prayer is that he will continue to use *Dayasagar* to bring people to himself.

### **Why This Film Is More Effective than Other *Jesus* Films**

This film is culturally relevant. It is totally produced, scripted and acted in India, with an all-Indian production



team and cast of actors. Often the audience response is, “This must be true! It’s our own people telling the story!”

Every month, our film teams (all Indian national missionaries) hold more than 1,750 film showings. **These are uniquely effective in several ways:**

- **Showings are intimate and personal.** Everyone has a close-up view, and film team members go face to face with individuals to pray, answer questions, teach and disciple—sometimes spending hours praying for every person in line.
- **They have lasting results.** Our follow-up teams help create new home discipleship groups and plant churches.
- **They are highly cost effective.** They only cost about ten cents per person.
- **Showings are extremely mobile and convenient to villagers.** They are shown right in the village marketplace or in the most remote and forgotten areas. For example, one of our teams went into the Himalayas to show *Dayasagar* to the Gaddis, a tribe of shepherders who, in the summer, take their sheep higher and higher to graze. No mega-crusade could reach them, but our teams did! Several churches were established among the Gaddis where no evangelist had ever gone before.
- **Showings are unforgettable.** Memories are indelibly engraved with the images of Jesus. The villagers may never know who the team members are or hear the name Dayspring, but they will know Jesus.

Both the film and the follow-up ministry are in step with the local culture.

### **What’s Culture Got to Do with It?**

Jesus set the pattern for us when he laid aside his glory and came to speak to us in our language and culture. *The Bible is clear: God does not destroy a culture, but he does want to redeem it.*

A revolution has begun in the nation of India that will transform the society forever. For 3,500 years Hinduism’s caste system has oppressed a majority of its people, calling them “untouchables.” Today these nearly 250 million Dalits are being led by their leaders to publicly renounce Hinduism and look for hope and dignity elsewhere.

The worship of a hundred million gods will disappear. Idolatry will be cast down. But what will replace it? *National Dalit leaders plead to the Church in India, saying, “Come and tell us about your Jesus. Teach us your scriptures.”* They believe this is the only hope for India, a nation that could be on the brink of a bloody civil war—or on the brink of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit unlike any in history. **There has never been a better soul-winning opportunity than right now in the nation of India.**

This year, in alliance with **Operation Mobilization India**, our 225 full-time film teams will reach over 9.5 million villagers, many of whom have never heard the full story of Jesus and his love.

**John Gilman** is founder and president of **Dayspring International**. He has over thirty-five years experience in television and film production, programming and distribution. He is an author, speaker, board member and an ordained Baptist minister.

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## **WORLD PERSPECTIVES**

## The Challenges of Urban Mission

By Glenn Smith

**In 1700 fewer than two percent of the world's population lived in urban places.** Beijing and London were the only cities that had populations surpassing one million. By 1900 an estimated nine percent of the world's population was urban. London was then the only “super-city” on the globe. *In 1950 twenty-seven percent of the world's population lived in cities* and seventy-three percent of the world's people lived on the land. *By 1996* however, the world was growing by 86 million people a year and for the first time *more than fifty percent of the world's population lived in cities.* While the rural percentage of the world's population is declining, rural population is still growing in absolute numbers. The **United Nations**—which offers the most conservative growth estimate—projects that *by 2025 over sixty percent of the world's estimated 8.3 billion people will live in urban areas.*

According to the **World Heritage Centre**, *by 2020 the urban population of Asia will be around 2.5 billion, having doubled in twenty-five years.* By then more than half of the urban areas of the planet will be in Asia, and those urban areas alone will contain over one-third of the world's population. The same organization predicts that the cities of Asia will be growing twice as fast as cities in the rest of the world.

For all the challenges of urban areas—traffic, pollution, noise, high cost of living, crowded and often substandard living conditions, economic disparity, stress, psychological overload, long hours of commuting and violence—cities provide people in the developing world the best hope of education and income. People continue to be drawn to the city through migration and immigration.

As a heart pumps blood back and forth throughout a body, cities pump people around, on both a short-term and long-term basis. This makes it harder to develop stable churches in cities, but it creates the opportunity for global evangelisation as people find themselves relocated from one city to another.

Surely, God has a purpose in this.

Often, people who move to the city are not just moving away from something, but moving toward something as well. People move to the city wanting change, yearning for new things, expecting to be exposed to new ideas and desiring to make a new start. Whether through migration or immigration, the socially dislocating experience of moving into a city tends to “loosen ties to local divinities,” and opens doors for the gospel.

Given these facts and predictions, any discussion about the mission of the Church for the twenty-first century must include urban strategy. Furthermore, because of the strategic nature of cities as (1) centres of influence, business and finance and (2) hubs of communication and transportation, education, entertainment, power and influence, to reach the world for Christ we will have to not merely include urban ministry but prioritize it. In fact, **we cannot evangelize the world unless we reach the vast, growing and influential urban centres of the world.**

Developing strategies for reaching the world's urban areas for Christ cannot be based on the same methodologies or approaches that may or may not have worked elsewhere in other times. If we continue doing what we have done, we will end up with no more success than we are currently experiencing. When we talk about urbanization, we are talking about a context that is crowded, diverse, dangerous and intense. *To pursue mission with the world's cities implies that we will have to re-discover, develop and make known theologies of urban mission that speak to people where they live and touch them where they hurt.* Our strategies must be holistic and relevant. They must direct the gospel and transformational ministries toward the most urgent social and economic challenges.

This article is an attempt to formulate a biblical and urban hermeneutic that will help urban ministry practitioners to take the categories of “place” and “space” more seriously, however challenging this might be.<sup>1</sup> Included is an emphasis upon the lived experience of practitioners because this is at the heart of all urban reflection and action. It is our desire to illustrate what this looks like for urban ministry practice.<sup>2</sup> However, city/regions cannot be divorced from the philosophy of urbanism and globalization.

### **Pursuing the Transformation of City/Regions**

Some people look at the spiritual and social plight of the city, ask, “Where is the Church?” and then rush to critique its lack of significant involvement in the complexities of the city. It might be better to ask “What will the Church look like?” in the midst of this plurality and the competing worldviews that a practitioner runs into on a weekly basis. *There are two principal sources of information that inform contextual urban ministry and help to understand what the Church will look like: (1) our Christian traditions and (2) worldview and culture.*

### **Christian Traditions: Listen and Learn**

The first source of information that informs urban ministry comes from our Christian traditions: *our study of the scriptures, Church history and Christian theology.* However, pursuing the mission of God in our city/regions is always done in a specific social context. The practitioner and the congregation need to listen and learn from that context. (Padilla 1979; Schreiter 1986; Smith 1996).

The process of interpreting the biblical text and the context (referred to as hermeneutics) becomes a true exchange between gospel and context. We come to the infallible message with an exegetical method to understand a biblical theology of place. We ask, “What does God say through scripture regarding this particular context?” This includes place, problems, values and worldviews. This initial dialogue sets us on a long process where the more we understand the context, the more we will experience fresh readings of the Bible. *Scripture illuminates life and life also illuminates scripture!* This dialogue must also include the practitioner’s worldview and that of the community in which he or she bases his or her initiatives.

Studying the biblical text and the context in this fashion represents a holistic enterprise in which the Holy Spirit guides the interpreters to a more complete reading and understanding of scripture and a more complete understanding of the culture. There is an ongoing, mutual engagement of the essential components of the process. As they interact, they are mutually adjusted. In this way, we come to scripture with relevant questions and perspectives. This results in a more attentive ear to the implications of the exegetical process and an ensuing theology that is more biblical and pertinent to the culture. As we move from the cultural context through our own evolving worldview to the Bible and back to the context, we adopt an increasingly relevant local reflection and more appropriate initiatives.

As we listen to scripture and walk through our various situations in life, we are faced with the question “How can we hear and apply God’s word in our cities and neighbourhoods?”

### **Urban Worldviews and Culture**

Many people do cultural studies and wrestle with the sociology of place. On a different track, other practitioners try to get their heads around the philosophies that make up the personality of our cities (sometimes referred to as a *horizon*). The urban ministry practitioner should be able to put these two approaches together so that in examining the city as a place, he or she is also learning to look closely at the worldviews that are reflected in the urban context. Urban practitioners need to be able to identify local worldviews in order to understand the spirituality in their particular context. **A worldview is primarily a lens through which we understand life.** Generally speaking, it includes a series of presuppositions that a group of people holds, consciously and unconsciously, about the basic make-up of the community, relationship, practices and objects of daily life, whether they are of great signification or of little importance. They are like the foundations of a house--vital but invisible. The make-up of a worldview is based on the interaction of one’s ultimate beliefs and the global

environment within which one lives. They deal with the perennial issues of life like religion and spirituality; yet contain answers to even simple questions such as whether we eat from individual plates or from a common bowl.

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

This is in contrast to traditional societies where culture was transmitted directly from one generation to the next within the community structures. Modernity still transmits some aspects of culture like language and basic knowledge directly through the bias of the school system, but once this is done, the transmission of culture through friendship, peers and socio-professional status becomes more important. **Our understanding of social context raises several foundational questions:**

- **How do we know a context when we see one?**
- **How big is a context?**
- **How long does it last?**
- **Who is in it and is out of it, and how do we know?**

In reality, the complexity of the city means we constantly ask these questions. The following representation inspired by the work of urban ministry practitioners in Montreal, Canada, seeks to take into account most of the factors that determine context.

This hermeneutical approach to the *missio Dei* or *mission of God* in city/regions reaffirms “the scandal of particularity.” Urban mission is rooted in the very particular stories of the Bible and especially of the good news of Jesus’ incarnation and the cosmic goal God has undertaken to re-inaugurate his reign through his death on the cross (Hall 2003). This very notion has alienated a great number of modern theologians from the historic understanding of the Christian faith. There has been a tendency to question the uniqueness of God’s participation with creation through the history of Israel and in the person of Jesus Christ. Instead, the concept of mission was broadened almost to the point that the Church was stripped of any responsibility for proclamation and service; the Church was excluded from mission. This exclusion of the Church resulted in an argument that God was “working out his purposes in the midst of the world and its historical processes.” It was simply the Church’s responsibility to serve *missio Dei* by pointing to God “at work in world history and name him there.”

This focus on God’s action in the world and its historical processes, to the exclusion of the Church’s mission of witness and service, was closely tied to what could be described as an exaggerated eschatology in which the fullness of God’s kingdom, of God’s shalom, was expected to be accomplished through the social and political motions of history. In order to avoid the severing of the *missio Dei* concept from the teachings of classical Christianity, and in an attempt to hold together the whole *mission of God* for the whole city, it will be important to hold the universal concept of the *missio Dei* together with the particular history of God’s plenary revelation in the person and work of Jesus Christ and read the story in our own unique contexts.

### **Contextualisation and Transformation**

Contextualisation literally means a “weaving together.” In this article it implies the interweaving of the scriptural teaching about the city and the Church with a particular, present-day context. The very word focuses

the attention on the role of the context in the theological enterprise. In a very real sense, then, all doctrinal reflection from scripture is related in one way or another to the situation from which it is born, addressing the aspirations, the concerns, the priorities and the needs of the local group of Christians who are doing the reflection.

Contextualisation begins with an attempt to discern where God by his Spirit is at work in the context. It continues with a desire to demonstrate the gospel in word and deed and to establish groups of people who desire to follow Jesus in ways that make sense to people within their (cultural) context, presenting Christianity in such a way that it meets people's deepest needs and penetrates their worldview, thus allowing them to follow Christ and remain within their culture.<sup>3</sup>

*The task of contextualisation is the essence of urban reflection and action.* The challenge is to remain faithful to the historic text of scripture while being mindful of today's realities. An interpretative bridge is built between the Bible and the situation from which the biblical narrative sprang, to the concerns and the circumstances of the local group of Christians who are doing the reflection.

- **The first step of the hermeneutic involves establishing what the text meant at the time it was written;** what it meant “then.”
- **The second step involves creating the bridge to explore how the text is understood in meaningful terms for the interpreters today;** what it could mean “now.”
- **The final step is to determine the meaning and application for those who will receive the message in their particular circumstances,** as present day interpreters become ambassadors of the good news (Hiebert 1987).

Contextualisation is not just for the one communicating, nor about the content that will be passed along. It is always concerned with what happens once we have communicated and about the ultimate impact of the message on the audience.

### **Holistic Transformation**

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

The 1990 Population Fund Report on cities laid out interesting strategies for more livable urban areas. The Population Crisis Committee carried out the most complete study ever done. Data was gathered from the world's largest one hundred metropolitan areas. Based on a thirteen-page questionnaire, the researchers wanted to determine the quality of life in these places. Ten parameters<sup>4</sup> were chosen to determine the livability of these cities. Based on these criteria an urban living standard score was calculated. The parameters provide a glimpse of what transformation might include.

Beatley and Manning offer this picture: “To foster a sense of place, communities must nurture built environment and settlement patterns that are uplifting, inspirational and memorable, and that engender a special feeling and attachment...a sustainable community where every effort is made to create and preserve places, rituals and events that foster greater attachment to the social fabric of the community” (1997, 32).<sup>5</sup>

Inspired by John de Gruchy reflections<sup>6</sup>, I would suggest that *a transformed place is that kind of city that pursues fundamental changes, a stable future and the sustaining and enhancing of all of life rooted in a vision bigger than mere urban politics.*

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

In Jewish writings and tradition is the principle of shalom. It represents harmony, complementarity and establishment of relationships at the interpersonal, ethnic and even global levels. Psalm 85:10 announces a surprising event: "*Justice and peace will embrace.*" However, a good number of our contemporaries see no problem with peace without justice. People looking for this type of peace muzzle the victims of injustice because they trouble the social order of the city. But the Bible shows that there cannot be peace without justice. We also have a tendency to describe peace as the absence of conflict. But shalom is so much more. In its fullness it evokes harmony, prosperity and welfare.

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

### **The Church—Participating in City Transformation**

In light of all these realities an increasing number of congregations in my (Glenn Smith) city, Montréal, have adopted the following schema and the twelve indicators as a vision of what our transformed city would look like. Rooted in four concentric circles that represent God's concern for all of life, beginning with the congregation that embodies shalom and reconciliation and subsequently demonstrates the good news in their community, society and in all of the created order. But so as to measure realistically the vision, we have articulated twelve indicators of the type of transformation we are pursuing. These address contextual concerns in our city. Accompanying these indicators are baselines based on research on the state of life in the city. Congregations work together to pursue the welfare of the city.

This vision seeks to help the Church participate in the transformation of the city, particularly in an era of human brokenness.

### **Endnotes**

(1) One of the few texts on urban geography that takes these two distinct categories seriously is by A. M. Orum and X. Chen, *The World of Cities: Places in Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). For these authors, *place* is the specific locations in *space* that provide an anchor and meaning to who we are. (see pages 1, 15, 140 and 168) Our sense of place is rooted in individual identity, community, history and a sense of comfort (11-19). Space, on the other hand, is a medium independent of our existence in which objects, ideas and other human persons exist behaving according to the basic laws of nature and thought (see pages 15, 140 and 160-170).

(2) This approach to urban mission hermeneutics is intentional on the editor's part. A lived experience in context is a preliminary step in all contextual theologies. This is certainly true in theologies of liberation. Leonardo Boff and Clodivis Boff call this the preliminary stage of all theologising, a living commitment with the poor and oppressed. Robert Schreiter summarizes the biblical foundation well, "...the development of local theologies depends as much on finding Christ already active in the culture as it does on bringing Christ to the culture. The great respect for culture has a Christological basis. It grows out of a belief that the risen Christ's salvific activity in bringing about the kingdom of God is already going on before our arrival. From a missionary perspective there would be no conversion if the grace of God had not preceded the missionary and opened the hearts of those who heard." (*Constructing Local Theologies*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986, 29).

(3) This reflection is inspired by an article by David Whiteman "Contextualization: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge" *IBMR*, 21:1, January 1997, 2-7.

(4) Public safety based on local police estimates of homicides per 100,000 people; (2) Food costs representing the percentage of household income spent on food. (3) Living space being the number of housing units and the average persons per room. (4) Housing standards being the percentage of homes with access to water and electricity. (5) Communication is the number of reliable sources of telecommunications per 100 people. (6) Education is based on the percentage of children, aged 14-17 in secondary schools. (7) Public health criteria are based on infant deaths per 1,000 live births. (8) Peace and quiet based on a subjective scale for ambient noise. (9) Traffic flow being the average miles per hour during rush hour. (10) Clean air based on a one-hour concentration in ozone levels.

(5) The United Nations Millennium Development Goals provide a marvelous starting point for a reflection on transformation as well for a local congregation. The reader is invited to consult the webpage: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>.

(6) John W. de Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the struggle for Social Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

*(This article was written in collaboration with Rev. Klaus Keid of Germany, Rev. Robyn Pebbles of Australia, Dr. Delia Neusch-Olver of the United States and Dr. David Koop of Canada.)*

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## **Theological Education for Ministry with City-Regions**

**By Randy White**

**It is necessary to affirm formal, non-formal and informal methods of education for ministry and influence in the city.**

### **Formal Training**

Time-bound classroom settings, academic expectations, scholarship, the transfer of information and the organized interaction of ideas exemplify *formal* education. The Apostle Paul used formal androgogies in the urban context. He wrote letters to his churches which were essentially formal instructions and a contextualized theology to Christians in cities. Paul also conducted forums in cities (e.g., the School of Tyrranus), and interactions with educated elite leaders (e.g. Mars Hill in Athens). *Contemporary examples of formal urban education are city-centre Bible schools, seminaries, certificate programs and colleges.*

### **Non-Formal Training**

*Non-formal* training in the city is characterized by immersing an apprentice in direct ministry experience, and correspondingly by seizing the serendipitous, teachable moments that arise in the context of ministry by a mentor or leader with more experience. Paul's androgogy included this tool. For example, he conducted non-formal training when he took urban disciples with him on his mission trips, sometimes as individuals and sometimes as small, multi-ethnic teams, or, for example, as he exercised individual influence with key disciples during his imprisonment in Rome.

### **Informal Training**

*Informal* training in the city uses orchestrated, experiential learning pedagogies that combine hands-on ministry in the city with reflection, debriefing and interactive instruction. Jesus often used this method as he sent his disciples out and debriefed their experiences upon their return. He used urban experiences as teaching tools (Mark 13:1-2, Luke 13:4-5). *Contemporary examples of this form of training might include urban service and learning projects where college students spend from one to eight weeks serving and learning alongside*

*indigenous ministry partners.* These are to be distinguished from merely service projects, which do not incorporate intentional learning and debriefing components, as well as evaluation, follow-up and introduction of the students to further opportunities for service.

Each of these forms of training must be fashioned for various levels and kinds of leadership in the city, including both clergy and lay leadership, both indigenous (originating from within the city) and those who will become indigenised (that is, relocating to the city).

## **Content**

All forms of training must expose the leader to several foundational, biblical components related to carrying out an effective ministry in cities. These begin with basic biblical literacy in general; that is, knowing the text. They continue with the biblical record regarding the presence and prominence of the city in the Bible and God's concern for cities. There are many elements of content that are relevant to ministry in cities. What follows below is by no means comprehensive; there are many ways to engage and train leaders. Below are six examples of these and corresponding action steps.

**1. Holistic Urban Transformation.** *Each leader must be grounded in a holistic understanding of urban transformation and an image of what reconciliation might look like between classes, races, castes and sectors or systems of the city.* Urban training must ground the leader in a theology of shalom, which pursues wholeness, completeness, righteousness, justice, reconciliation and flourishing of all that God has created in all of its remarkable diversity. This includes placing all material, physical, social and spiritual systems under the lordship of Christ. And each leader must develop a mature understanding of how the biblical themes of love, grace, justice and judgment get worked out in these systems.

*Corresponding action:* Some groups have engaged in on-site Bible study, looking at themes of poverty from the physical context of a meeting place in a slum, alongside slum dwellers or themes of shelter from the physical context of substandard housing.

**2. Urban Theology.** It is desirable that these biblical perspectives begin to form an urban theology that will sustain the urban worker. One of the skills necessary in the midst of that enterprise is the ability to engage in urban theologizing. *This includes looking at the forces and systems shaping life in a city through the biblical lens,* and formulating a response.

*Corresponding action:* Some have routinely broken groups of leaders into two groups, one to study Philippians; the other to study Colossians. They are to demonstrate one difference between how a Philippian theology (incarnational; the delivery of direct compassion) and a Colossian theology (Jesus is Lord over the systems; the pursuit of justice) might influence strategies for ministries that want to have a balanced and holistic approach in the city.

**3. Contextualization.** In order for theology to be linked with specific arenas of ministry in a city, the practitioner must not only know the text, but the context. *She or he must be able to conduct appropriate forms of urban research, including detailed exegesis of the city.* The practitioner will want to access insight into urban sociology and anthropology, city systems, religious and historical contexts of the city, its needs and its assets. Urban ministry training must help the practitioner have an overall view of the city, reflecting on designing strategies that address its various components, including the *urbs* (infrastructures), the *civitas* (the behaviours) and the *anima* (the unconscious worldview or spirituality of the people of the city).

*Corresponding action:* Some groups have sent leaders out in simulations designed to help leaders observe and even experience the forces shaping cities, including social service realities, language barriers, transportation difficulties and housing challenges.



**4. Biblical Missiology.** The training of leaders for ministry in the city must include basic components of a biblical missiology. This *might include training in Jesus' form of experiential discipleship*, as exemplified in his informal use of the urban laboratory depicted in the Gospels. At the very least this training would include exposure to various examples of holistic mission methodologies in the city.

*Corresponding action:* Some groups sponsor tours of various ministries in cities to expose future leaders to ministry models and introduce them to practitioners.

**5. Women and Children.** All forms of *urban ministry training must expose the leader to the key issues affecting children in the city, including nutrition, education, safety, advocacy and pedagogy*. Correspondingly, the urban practitioner must be prepared for ministries that affect women in the city, such as domestic violence, prostitution, family dynamics and the gender specific pressures of poverty.

*Corresponding action:* Some groups have required leaders to spend the night at womens' shelters or on the streets and then debrief the issues they encountered.

**6. Racial Reconciliation and Solidarity.** Finally, *leaders at all levels must develop an informed view of how ethnic identity and racism operate in urban contexts*. The new global city is comprised of cities within cities, defined by ethnicity and class. Every major city now contains some of the unreached peoples groups of the world. *Urban leaders must understand a biblical theology of reconciliation and solidarity with the victims of class or racial hatred*, as well as develop a mature commitment to anti-racism and a confronting of the systems that perpetuate this sin. The Church must preach a holistic gospel that overcomes racial division. The urban Church must stop perpetuating these divisions and the urban leader must be willing to help the Church reject silence or the status quo in these matters. There is a rich biblical tradition into which the urban minister can tap. In Acts 6 justice and reconciliation was achieved between Hellenistic widows and the new community. In Acts 15 at the Jerusalem Council, reconciliation with Gentile Christians was inculcated in Christian belief. And Paul and Barnabas (both Jews) were intentionally sent to the Gentile city of Antioch, where they had a transformational influence.

*Corresponding action:* Some groups use personal testimonies by minority voices or the firsthand stories of the oppressed to engage the non-poor. Others sponsor inter-church gatherings that cross ethnic or class lines. Others have sponsored ethnic specific celebrations, and still others have participated in demonstrations or civil disobedience on behalf of the marginalized.

### **Redemption and Transformation**

The challenges of cities worldwide are dramatic. Civic infrastructures are stretched beyond capacity by the influx of migrants. *There are now more than one billion slum dwellers worldwide. Most residents of cities in the developing world lack sanitary sewage disposal; nearly half have no adequate supply of clean water to drink.* Yet cities in general, and even the urban poor themselves, have assets that can be leveraged for their transformation.

In this next decade there will be over twenty cities in the world with populations of more than ten million. *The greatest opportunity facing the Church will be to train the rank and file to exercise the redemptive presence and transformational influence among the people and the systems of the city that the scriptures call them to, and to speak in word and deed the life-changing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

*(This article was written in collaboration with Dr. Atul Aghmkar of India, Dr. Cameron Airhart of the United States, Rev. John Bond of Australia and Dr. Abel Njeraerou of the Republic of Central Africa.)*

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## Exegesis of a City

By Glenn Smith

**When we discuss the task of the Church in a city, immediately we are struck by the necessity to address both macro and micro issues.** In choosing to “address” the city, *we need to remember two foundational issues that are often overlooked by God’s people living in metropolitan areas.*

**First**, it is obvious that **we need to place each individual city in its own context yet understand its place in the larger urban system.** Because of globalisation, no metropolitan area exists in isolation from others. When someone asks you where you live, the answer depends not only on where you are but also on who you are talking to. For example, you would tell a neighbour which street you live on, a person from your region which community you live in, from your country, you would say which province or state you live in, or you would probably name the metropolitan center closest to your place of residence. Each “address” tells something about you: the living environment, the languages you use on a day-to-day basis, your lifestyle and perhaps your social status. Whether one approaches this subject from a perspective of what is happening globally, in city/regions across the world and then more locally, to one’s own municipality, or work in the reverse order, is not all that important. What is important is to see the interrelationships among the different addresses in which we live, from local to national to global. It is also important to adjust these “addresses” for the audience in question.

**Second**, when the Church addresses the city, **we must direct our attention to urban realities.** We also need to understand our own assumptions and framework. As we have seen, we will always want to keep our focus on a biblical perspective on cities.

### Cities, Towns and City/Regions

Richard Sennett defines a city as a human settlement in which strangers are likely to meet. The United Nations Population Fund documents the diversity of definitions for an urban category in its 1996 State of the World Population report. British urbanologist David Clark (1996) has clarified many of these issues in his most recent book. He calls a population of fifty thousand people or less a *town* or a *village*. On the other hand, cities are human agglomerations that have up to 200,000 residents. A *metropolitan area* or *city/region* has more than two million people, but a *megalopolis* is an urban region over five million. These distinctions are helpful because a country like Norway considers any human settlement of two hundred people as urban while Bénin, for example, only uses “urban” for places of ten thousand people or more.

Beyond definitions and the demographic function of cities known as “urban growth,” one may ask, “What is happening in our city/regions?” What were the conditions inherited from the past which have been transformed in these last thirty years that help us understand its present state? This is a fundamental question we need to explore if we are to understand the cultural context in which the Church finds itself. Our concern points in a further direction with a second question: “How will the Church reflect biblically and pursue relevant urban mission in the years ahead?”

To answer these two questions, an attentive practitioner can use an ethnographic analysis of the culture in order to understand how social structures and human behaviour interact and influence a city. *An ethnographic method is an excellent tool for the Christian practitioner who desires to study the knowledge and practices of people and the ways they use their freedom to dominate, transform, organize, arrange and master space for their personal pursuits.* All people do these things so as to live, protect themselves, survive, produce and reproduce. To be successful one must master dominant tendencies so as to grasp where we have come from and where we

are going as a society and what the mission of God in this culture will look like (see Lingenfelter in Greenway 1992; Bakke, Pownall and Smith 1996).

The description for cultural analysis that we use allows a practitioner to take seriously the fact that social activity is culturally and historically specific. Urban hermeneutics allows us to decode the contrasts between social structure and human agency, which is constantly at work in a metropolitan area. Social institutions—the basic building blocks of a city because of their far-reaching impact—are used by human agents to create urban systems and metropolitan structures. Human activities are constrained by these structures but are also enabled by them. In attempting to understand a city, neither activities nor institutions have primacy. This distinction becomes critical as we examine the biblical categories of principalities and powers in God’s project for human history.

By grasping this geography of urban functions, we are looking at issues (the social dynamics, problems, needs, aspirations and worldviews) that are culturally and historically specific. Like the city itself, these issues reflect the prevailing values, ideology and structure of the prevailing social formation. A useful analytical, social and theological purpose is served by the empirical recognition that urban issues are manifest in geographical space. This implies that the resulting description will detail issues “in” the city as well as issues “of” the city. For example, an issue in urban space would include the consequences of population density in a census district that has 11,536 people per square kilometre versus the norm of 847. An issue of urban space includes attention to the socio-economic factors that go hand in hand with such population concentration.

To pursue this analysis, the practitioner will need to bring a high sensitivity:

1. **to micro details in the local context,**
2. **with a concern for the larger worldview influences** (understood as the macro issues),
3. **beyond a simple homogenisation of the data** and
4. **to a true understanding of the differences** so that we can appreciate the specifics of the area and the mission of the Church in the situation.

### **City/Region Exegesis**

F.B. Meyer once wrote, "Christian missionaries should be strategists, expending their strength where populations teem and rivers of worldwide influence have their rise." In this context, it is little wonder that we must rethink our urban strategies.

There are few experts in this field. Humility and teachableness are absolutely essential. Referring to the urban masses, William Booth, founder of the [Salvation Army](#), asked his volunteers, "Can we weep for them? If you can't weep, we cannot use you." There is no "magic formula" for a congregation to participate in the transformation of a city/region. In the following suggestions, we are attempting to facilitate how a person implements strategies to launch ministries in cities, not just to plant churches. Requirements to begin:

- **Large map**
- **History book**
- **Good shoes**
- **A team within the congregation to study a city/region.** This will make sure the vision and the results of the inquiry are more effective.
- It would be important for **an urban ministry practitioner to learn how to do “community development methodology.”** The writings of Robert Lithicum and Judith Lingenfelter (Greenway 1992) are a good place to start (see [bibliography](#)).

For more information on the Twenty Steps of a City/Region Exegesis, refer to pages 44-46 of Lausanne Occasional Paper Number 37, [Towards the Transformation of Our Cities/Regions](#).

*(This article was written in collaboration with Rev. Klaus Keid of Germany, Rev. Robyn Pebbles of Australia and Dr. David Koop of Canada.)*

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## **Homelessness and Poverty: Reaching Out in Christ-like Manner to the Vulnerable**

**By Gordon Russell**

**I remember sitting on a bus filled with pre-schoolers and their parents.** We were on our way to an outing that was organized by the nursery school my daughter attended. At the time I was beginning a pastorate in a small Mennonite Brethren church in southwestern Ontario (Canada). I was sitting next to a young woman whom our family was just beginning to befriend. The “befriending” was mutual and I decided to casually begin to explore matters of faith.

Up to this point, approaching anyone this directly involved some angst and fear, so you can imagine the care with which I approached the topic. My friend sniffed out my approach as sharply as a dog sniffing for illegal drugs. Although I do not remember her exact response to what I said, it is safe to say that she did not want to discuss matters of faith. Yet fifteen years later I still call her and each member of her family friends. Over the years we have had a number of opportunities to discuss faith issues, generally in a “back door” kind of way.

What’s the point of this seemingly insignificant story? Well, it raises a number of questions regarding my personal desire to invite people into a relationship with Jesus. Also, since I have moved from the pastorate to a social service agency which reaches out to those struggling with homelessness and poverty, it also raises contextual questions such as:

- **What does it mean to invite others to Jesus from a position of power, where on the surface we claim that everyone can decide, but in reality we make the decisions?**
- **What does it mean to invite others to Jesus, where the culture appears to be the same, but in reality it is fundamentally different?**
- **What does it mean to invite others to Jesus, where dependence can undermine our relationship in a world of vulnerability and where motives can easily be confused?** It is not difficult to look like we are trading bread for belief.

There are certainly more questions to wrestle with, but first we will look at the world in which I work and some working principles that I am attempting to implement with varying degrees of success.

### **Reaching Out to the Vulnerable at the Men’s Mission and Rehabilitation Centre**

The Men’s Mission and Rehabilitation Centre, located in London, Ontario (Canada), is an emergency and transitional to long-term shelter for men sixteen years of age and older. There are 111 emergency beds arranged in dormitories and thirty-five transitional to long-term beds arranged as private rooms. The residents get three

meals a day and there is a guest meal program for non-residents. There is little private space in the building and most of the residents not only have economic issues, but health, mental health and addiction issues as well.

The most significant conversations with the men in the shelter generally involve me being silent. Listening and probing with questions so that I can listen further seems to be the one strategy that encourages these men to begin to open up. *For a group of people who struggle to have a voice, deciding to give them a voice, even to the exclusion of your own, is perhaps the only way to engage them and build a relationship beyond professional parameters.*

Yet vulnerable people still know about boundaries. They will tell you when you have probed too much and since you need to earn their trust, *you are going to need to invest time and energy into these individuals.* In the rough and tumble world of transience it will take work and intentionality to connect deeply enough to explore the world of the spirit in a person's life.

### **Working Principles to Interact with the Vulnerable**

Recently I had the opportunity to share some thoughts on the subject of “evangelism in a social service environment” at a conference in Ottawa called **Streetlevel**, which was sponsored by the **Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's Roundtable on Poverty and Homelessness**. Although I felt slightly overwhelmed, I was able to come at the issue from a somewhat different angle than the rest of the participants. Prior to the Streetlevel conference I had presented on the same subject at a secular conference on poverty and homelessness. At that conference we did not speak of “evangelism”; rather, we spoke of “spirituality.” The topic was uncomfortable for a number of the participants as there was an undercurrent of suspicion that the workshop was simply a pretense for religious manipulation. Discussing spirituality in the context of serving those struggling with poverty and homelessness raised some good questions and forced me to rethink my approach.

What do we need to remember and where do we need to begin if we hope to enter this world with the truth and love of Jesus? Here are three principles to remember:

1. **“I needed to move away from thinking about ‘them,’ and learn to think about ‘us.’”** Sometimes working principles must begin deep in the heart and mind. The above statement by author Greg Paul<sup>1</sup> was written in the context of Paul's very intentional desire to connect with a world that was foreign to him; sadly, many of us would have referred to that same world as “them.” When I first joined the Roundtable at the Streetlevel conference I was struck by the use of the word “friend” that was liberally sprinkled in our conversation about the homeless. I did not use the word, but it quickly became apparent that my colleagues used it not as a warm and cozy label, but as a way to describe a relationship that meant something.
2. **Everyone believes something.** I remember reading a story about two men who were participating in a Christian conference. In between seminars they struck up a conversation with a couple of students and asked them what they believed in. Thinking the question was only related to a religious answer, the students responded with, “Nothing.” The two men probed further and discovered that the students in fact placed their faith in many things and ideas not related to religion. We need to remember that faith is not just about religion.
3. **There is no “universal translator” when interacting with others.** Translation involves more than just going from one language to another; it may mean waiting, fumbling around in a relationship and being willing to learn from the other person a new vocabulary that involves words and visual cues. *People do not come to poverty and homelessness overnight. It should not surprise us that we cannot parachute in and hope to gain trust and understanding in a short period of time.*

## **Dependence, Independence and Interdependence**

In social service circles we often recoil from the dangers of creating dependence and herald the virtue of independence. We do not want those to whom we extend services to somehow become dependent on those services. Although we encourage independence, in reality none of us lives completely independently. We are interdependent, but that interdependence is better suited to a community where professional designations like staff and client are absent. We must walk a fine line when interacting with those we serve in both professional and non-professional environments.

I heard a story recently where two people met at a streetcar stop in Toronto. The one asked the other a faith question and the other answered that she did not have a strong faith commitment. When the conversation turned to the individual's church affiliation, the woman's face brightened as she recounted the story of how one particular church had reached out to help her troubled son. Suddenly it was no longer about "religion"; it was about community. **Faith needs to have feet and hands; it needs to be faith in action. It need to listen and it needs to love. This is how we reach others for Christ.**

### **Endnote**

(1) Paul, Greg. 2004. God in the Alley: Being and Seeing Jesus in a Broken World. WaterBook Press, 12.

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## **PEOPLES OF THE WORLD**

### **An Overview of South Asia**

**By Justin Long**

*(Editor's Note: Our Peoples of the World section consist of three parts: an overview of a specific region of the world, a deeper look into the least-reached peoples of this area and a focus on a specific unreached people group. We hope this gives you both a macro and a micro look at specific areas of the world.)*

**The region defined by the United Nations as South-Central Asia—comprising the states from Bangladesh through to Kazakhstan and Iran—has the largest and fastest-growing population of any region in the world.** In 1900 nearly 313 million people lived in this area; by 2025 this number is expected to climb to over two billion, one-third of which will live in urban areas. Over 525 million children (twenty-nine percent of the world total, more than any other region) are growing up here.

South-Central Asia is resource rich and has a multiplicity of cultures and religions: the Muslims of Pakistan, the Hindus of India and the Buddhists of Bhutan and Nepal being the best known. For the purposes of describing the [Ethne06](#) global prayer campaign, we will separate Central Asia (comprising Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan) out and cover it in the October issue of Lausanne World Pulse.

There are a dizzying array of ethnic groups, particularly in India, that are split by language, culture and caste group (which still exists in practice if not formally accepted). The [World Christian Database](#) lists nearly forty "World A" (heavily unevangelized) people groups with one million or more members. In addition to these large, least-reached groups there are hundreds of smaller unreached peoples as well.

Despite its massive human-power resource, however, South-Central Asia produces only ten percent of Asia's total Gross National Product (GNP) and three percent of the world's GNP. Certain regions of India have benefited greatly from globalization, and Bangladesh may be next in line, but the rest have been too unconnected or undeveloped to participate much in the information age—yet. *Some of the world's largest slums—extremely poor urban regions where adequate safe water, sanitation, shelter and power are not reliably available—can be found here.*

### Christianity in South-Central Asia

The governments in the region are either non-Christian or based on non-Christian cultures. Most are generally opposed to mission work, especially if it is done by foreigners. India's long-standing democracy has had religious freedom in principle, but extremists have led the charge against both Muslims and Christians and persecution has increased sharply in recent years. Whether this continues over the next twenty-five years depends on prayer and Christian activism.

Religious issues and tensions have a central role in the events and history of the region. According to tradition, Christianity was first brought to India by the Apostle Thomas.

One particularly colorful legend depicts the apostles initially throwing lots to divide the world amongst themselves, and Thomas' lot falling to India. When he refuses to go, Christ appears in a vision to a traveling Indian merchant who is seeking a carpenter. "I have a slave who is a carpenter," Christ tells the merchant. "I will sell him to you" (In those days the disciples often called themselves "slaves of Christ."). The next day Christ appears in a vision to Thomas and leads him to the Indian merchant, who tells Thomas he had bought Thomas from "his master."

Whether or not this story is true, Christianity had a very early start in Asia and likely Thomas and those who followed him had much to do with it. Today, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity all have significant numbers of adherents. Fundamentalists and liberals war with each other: mostly with words but sometimes with violence. *Islam and Hinduism together form a solid majority in the region. Christianity is a distant third; as with East Asia, however, India's small percentage translates to large numbers.*

There are an estimated 100 million Christians in India. Christians are increasing their share in most of the region (with Sri Lanka and the Maldives being the exceptions). Nepal has a substantial church planting movement as well. There are several mission mobilization efforts in the region. The **India Missions Association** is a network of dozens of mission agencies; India is and will continue to be a large mission-sending country over the next two decades. Missionaries are also being sent from the other nations (even small Nepal). There are national and regional consultations for nearly all the countries here.

Yet for all this activity, South-Central Asia remains widely unreached. If a Christian network touched over one million people in India, this still would account for less than one percent of the nation. The reality of this enormous population continues to be a significant challenge to evangelism and church growth.

Name	P'00	P'25	C'00	%	C'25	%	75-00	00-25	Issues affecting the future
<b>Bangladesh</b>	128.9	193.8	0.9	1%	1.8	1%	++	++	Restrictions, political instability, economic development
<b>Bhutan</b>	1.9	3.2	0.0	1%	0.0	1%	++	++	Heavy restrictions, civil unrest, strong Buddhist culture
<b>India</b>	1,021.1	1,395.5	61.3	6%	107.1	8%	++	++	Religious conflict, globalization, caste issues, warfare

<b>Maldives</b>	0.3	0.5	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	++	+-	Restrictions, unrest
<b>Nepal</b>	24.4	38.6	0.7	3%	2.1	5%	++	++	Peace and government rebuilding, persecution of believers
<b>Pakistan</b>	142.6	229.4	3.6	3%	7.3	3%	++	++	Liberalizing, poverty, war on border with Afghanistan, drug trade
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	19.8	23.4	1.9	9%	2.2	9%	++	+-	Civil war

**Key:**

P'00 - Population, AD 2000

P'25 - Population, AD2025

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

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

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

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

00-25 - Growth rate projected for AD2000-2025

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

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## A Focus on South Asia: 2,899 Least-Reached People Groups Remain

### Overview

“Variety is the spice of life,” and there is certainly much variety in one of the world’s spiciest regions South Asia. In these seven countries live almost three thousand least-reached people groups. Islam controls the hearts of many of the peoples of Bangladesh. Buddhism was born in India, spread to Nepal, China, Bhutan and Southeast Asia, but it was embraced mainly in East Asia. Hinduism, that diverse cluster of traditional religions, has nearly one billion adherents in India and Nepal. The high caste Brahmins may be harder to reach for Christ than any Muslim people, while lower caste peoples turn to the Lord by the thousands. Some of the peoples of southern and northeastern India are Christian, but only two percent have embraced Christ. *Over 920 million people in some two thousand people groups remain to be reached in India alone.* Christians from these nations are making heroic efforts to reach this region for Christ and God is at work.

### Prayer Points

- **Light.** Pray that the Holy Spirit would cause the least-reached peoples to become dissatisfied with their traditional religions and would make them hungry for the bread of life.
- **Laborers.** Pray that the Lord would call people who are willing to go to the most remote groups to share the love of Jesus.
- **Linguists.** Pray for God to raise up qualified linguists to translate the Bible into those languages with no scriptures, in a format that will be used for new believers to be grounded in God’s word.
- **Local Church.** Ask the Lord to raise up a strong local church among every least-reached people group.
- **Leaders.** Pray that God will open the hearts of governmental leaders at every level to the truth.



- **Radio and Audio Ministries.** Pray for God to empower audio ministries such as [Words of Hope](#), [Gospel Recordings](#), [Faith Comes by Hearing](#) and [Audio Scriptures](#) to proclaim the gospel in relevant ways. Pray particularly for those which connect with people not reached in any other way.
- **Itinerate Evangelists.** Thank God for the itinerate evangelists and pray for God to raise up many more. Pray they live the message, as they are his voice to bring good news and hope to those living in spiritual darkness.
- **Missionary Senders.** Pray for more laborers to be raised up as new believers. Pray they are compelled by God’s love to go to others who still have not heard and share Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. Pray for God to meet all their needs according to his riches.
- **Outcasts.** Pray for the Lambadi-speaking Banjara, and other groups who are considered outcasts of society but who are precious and beloved by Jesus. Pray they will know his love and acceptance and find hope and healing in him.
- **People of Peace.** Pray for God to direct workers to those who had their hearts prepared to hear and receive the gospel. Ask God to give messengers courage to share and disciple others.

## Links

[Resources](#) to pray and mobilize prayer and outreach

[Discover](#) Southeast Asia

[Pray](#) for the peoples of South Asia. Read a testimony from Nepal [here](#).

Obtain daily [prayer guides](#) for peoples of this region

## Background

**The Unreached Peoples of South Asia: India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives Islands**  
(Prepared by [Keith Carey](#), managing editor of the [Global Prayer Digest](#))

*Although there are roughly 800 million Hindus in the world, they are mostly concentrated in South Asia. Nepal is officially a Hindu kingdom and India has a Hindu majority. Although Hinduism is a flexible and diverse religion, it is easy for westerners to try to reach them on foreign terms, but these efforts are likely to fail if we do not understand the Hindu system or cultures. There are millions of Hindu gods, but many forward caste Hindus worship only one or two of them. There are not many central Hindu religious doctrines, but people in this part of the world (like any other part) resent having outsiders expect them to turn from their culture when they give their allegiance to a different God. Is it possible to present the gospel in an Indian cup?*

For this reason, it is important for us to pray for groups like the [Friends Missionary Prayer Band](#) and [India Gospel Outreach](#). These groups send only Indian nationals who are financially supported almost entirely by Indian believers; Western funds only give the Hindu majority the impression that Christian evangelism is turning their people away from their cultural roots. Pray this month that Hindus in Nepal and India and Muslims in Bangladesh and the Maldives Islands will turn their sole allegiance to Jesus.

## The Complexities of Reaching Hindus

How do you define a religion that has so many misconceptions? *What we call Hinduism is actually a cluster of religious beliefs that came from the Aryan invasions of 1,500 BC and the Dravidian peoples who already lived in the Indus Valley. Some would say that Hinduism was beginning to develop five thousand years ago. But the term “Hinduism” was coined about two hundred years ago by British colonialists who were trying to put a label on the religious beliefs of the people they encountered in the Subcontinent.*

There is no founder of Hinduism. Many scholars agree that Hinduism began with the first Vedic writings. These Vedic writings and the caste system are important elements of traditional Hinduism. Around 600 BC belief in reincarnation became more common among Hindus. You would attain a better rebirth or a worse rebirth, depending on how well you had conducted yourself in this life. Gradually Hindus began to want to become free from the endless cycle of rebirths. With many believing that animal sacrifices brought bad karma, this practice became less popular as well. Today some Hindus practice animal sacrifices, while others would find blood sacrifice to be revolting.

Around 300 BC Hindus began to worship new gods that did not require animal sacrifices. Although they had already been worshipping Brahma, their supreme god, they added Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer. Now there were three main gods, but many incarnations (or variations) of these soon followed. Some Hindus worship only one god, while others worship many. *There are millions of gods in this diverse and flexible religious system.*

### **Hinduism is Forced to Change**

Various Muslim empires began to carve up and dominate parts of India beginning in the eighth century. Many of them razed Hindu temples, destroyed idols and made converts to Islam. Needless to say, Hindus greatly resented their presence. By the late 1700s the Moguls were becoming less powerful and the British saw their chance to advance their empire. By the mid 1800s England controlled almost all of what is now called India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Hindus resented the Christian mission efforts that followed, seeing them as a variation of the Muslims efforts to destroy their religion.

These Christians brought with them schools and hospitals that catered to the needs of the “untouchables” who had been rejected by the Hindu establishment for centuries. For the first time, those who had known nothing but oppression under Hinduism had a chance of finding a better life. Even today many of these peoples still flee Hinduism and embrace Christianity. The question is, are they embracing Jesus Christ or just a different religion than their oppressors?

An unexpected consequence was a reform movement within Hinduism. *Even many high caste Hindus like Mahatma Gandhi favored modernization within Hinduism.* Rational thought, humanism, egalitarianism and a universalized form of religion became the norm. Gandhi changed the name “untouchable” to “harijans” meaning “children of god.” (they are now known as Dalits). *Many, including Gandhi, went so far as to reject the caste system and call it a curse.*

### **The Rise of Militant Hinduism**

Other caste Hindus were not so accommodating. In 1948 Hindu militants assassinated Gandhi, mainly because of his willingness to accommodate members of other religions in the newly independent India. They believed their land had been dominated by foreigners and foreign religions for centuries and believed it was time to take back control. They believed non-Hindus should be converted or be expelled from India just like Hindus were ejected from Pakistan in 1947. Today the main political party of militant Hindus is the BJP, and their more forceful ally is the RSS.

These militants view Hinduism in similar terms as Islamic militants view Islam. To them, religion is integrally tied in with a political system. *Militants do not see religion as a means to change the heart; it is a means to bring about political control.* They would not understand Jesus’ words to Pontius Pilate that “the kingdom of God is within.”

One of their accusations is that Christians are not patriotic. Untouchables who converted to Christianity during colonial days did not whole-heartedly join the independence movement, and the stigma remains after fifty years. The militants believe these people saw the British as their protectors. The militants do not understand why the

Christians dress differently and change their names after they convert. They do not understand why the Christians do not play India's national anthem at church events.

### **Questions Left Unanswered**

Today there is an ongoing conflict in India's northeastern tribal belt. Many of the Christian tribal peoples in this region feel marginalized. According to Herbert Hoefler in a 2001 edition of the *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, "American Baptists have publicly urged their church members to fight hard to preserve their faith and culture. But some local tribal leaders, deeply resentful and suspicious of their longtime mainland oppressors, have moved beyond that and called for outright secession."

Hoefler went on to say, "The mission work had sown seeds of social revolution. Those in economic power in the land had reasons to oppose the spread of this 'dangerous' thinking. With political elections, conversions were no longer just a religious matter. Conversions changed constituencies. A convert from Hinduism would be far less likely to accept his previous Hindu political leaders....They had political reasons—though couched in religious terms—for inhibiting conversions as much as possible."

Then there is the issue of caste. In his 1984 article, "Breaking Caste Barriers in India," former missionary to India, Vern Middleton writes, "For the high-caste Hindu of India the good news of Jesus Christ is regarded as the bad news about caste. From the beginning of the Protestant Era of missions, caste has been recognized as the prime barrier to the advance of the gospel and the extension of the kingdom of God. The missionary educational methodologies developed in India were expressly designed to destroy caste."

He went on to say, "Church leadership in India vigorously opposes anything to do with caste. These leaders are of the opinion that the church is above caste." It is true that caste has its roots in the Hindu religious system, and that it is a repressive system. *But the problem is that a high caste Hindu believes that he is one reincarnation away from nirvana and Christians tell him that all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.* If he converts, he must give up his hopes as a religious Hindu, his political power and his status in his family. It is no surprise that high caste Hindus have always rejected Christianity!

Seen another way, caste is a social grouping promoted by the Hindu scriptures. Is any Brahmin going to attend a church led by Dalits? And will any Dalit-led church leaders want Brahmins to join, posing the threat of taking control of the only thing that the Dalit controls? Neither group wants to mix. For that reason, some believe that it would be best to have separate fellowships for different caste groups.

*Some believers would say that Christian efforts unnecessarily turned people away from Hindu culture when they turned away from Hindu religion. They call for an "insider movement" that would make it possible for people who come from a Hindu background to retain Hindu culture, while turning their allegiance to Christ alone.*

Believers in Christ may never agree on what is cultural and what is religious Hinduism. Even something as simple as the dot used on a Hindu woman's forehead is interpreted by some as a beauty mark, while others call it a religious symbol. To some, it is imperative that a new believer in Christ no longer has a Hindu name because he or she no longer gives his allegiance to a Hindu god. To others, a rose by any other name smells as sweet. But we all agree that it is the work of the Holy Spirit that draws sinners to Christ.

Let us pray that despite cultural and political hurdles, members of all Hindu sectors will hear of and turn their allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord.

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### **Into Their World...The Dakpa of Bhutan**

**By Laurie Fortunak**

**Nearly one hundred percent of Dakpa in Bhutan are Buddhist.** Add to this the fact that this tribal group which dwells in the eastern area of the country is distrustful of outside groups and one can see the challenges in sharing the gospel with the Dakpa.

Bhutan sits to the north of India and to the south of China. Four main groups are found in this small but important nation--the Bhotia of Tibet, the Eastern Bhotia, the Nepalese and many tribal groups. The Dakpa fall into this last category and are made up of mostly farmers. The Dakpa speak Mira Saktengpa and live mainly in the Sakteng Valley.

Because only three percent of the land in Bhutan is available for agriculture, many of the crop fields are built on terraces up the mountainsides. In addition to farming, many Dakpa also herd yaks and sheep and spin and weave wool.

Dakpa women wear red and white silk ponchos, red silk jackets decorated with animal designs and red wool capes. They keep their hair long and wear turquoise earrings. Dakpa men wear leather or cloth pants under big, white wool trousers., red wool jackets and sleeveless garments made of leather or felt. The Dakpa wear flat, felt hats made from yak hair which have five tail-like sprouts that allow water to drain and the head to stay dry.

There is no rigid caste system within the Dakpa but social status is based on economic position. Many of the Dakpa follow the "Red Hat" sect of Tibetan Buddhism; many also practice traditional Tibetan shamanism. Shamanists (priests or priestesses) communicate with ancestral spirits, demons and gods on the people's behalf. Most Dakpa also have some type of shrine (whether large or small) in their homes for worship.

For centuries these people have been isolated from other nations. As a result, they are distrustful of outsiders and hold tightly to ancient traditions. There are very few known Dakpa Christians. Pray for Christ's light to shine on these hard-working peoples.

For more information on the Dakpa of Bhutan, visit:

[http://www.raonline.ch/pages/bt/peop/btpeop\\_sakten01b3.html](http://www.raonline.ch/pages/bt/peop/btpeop_sakten01b3.html)  
<http://www.joshuaproject.net/print.php?rog3=BT&rop3=102397>

(Information compiled from <http://www.joshuaproject.net/>)

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## **STRATEGY, TRENDS & STATISTICS**

### **Ministerial Leadership: 2005-2040**

**By Peter Brierley**

**Although churches can grow in numbers whether they have a pastor or not, a greater proportion of churches report growth when they have a pastor (sixty-eight percent) than when they do not (thirty-seven percent).** This is one result of a detailed 2003 report from the **Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches** (FIEC, a UK denomination). Still, churches without a pastor were more likely to have remained stable (thirty percent) than those with a pastor (twenty percent). This relationship between leadership and growth is neither new nor confined to the FIEC. Other studies have shown such a link. Why is leadership important in

this context? *Leaders often provide vision, and it is this sense of dynamic and purpose which is attractive to new people joining congregations.*

### **Number of Ministers**

In 2005 there were 34,400 ministers for the UK's 47,600 churches—1.4 churches for every minister. Some denominations (Anglicans and Methodists especially) share ministers across several churches; one study found that up to four churches could often be reasonably handled by one minister, but more than that was often beyond a single individual's ability to cope. Other denominations, especially Pentecostal, look to part-time ministry rather than full-time leadership. As a consequence several ministers may be needed for an individual church, one person being appointed as responsible for preaching (not necessarily doing it all by him or herself), another as responsible for pastoral work, another for prayer, another for prophecy and so on. *The concept of team ministry is likewise increasingly popular, with one person in a senior leadership role.*

### **Gender and Age of Ministers**

The proportion of female ministers in the UK was seven percent in 1992; by 2005 that number was up to twelve percent. Some denominations, like the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox, have no female ministers, while others, like the Salvation Army, have over fifty percent. In 2000 twenty-two percent of ministers in the United Reformed Church were women, nineteen percent of Methodist ministers were women, fifteen percent of ministers in the Church of Scotland were women and twelve percent in the Church of England were women. And these percentages are slowly increasing.

The average age of a minister across all denominations in 2003 was 53, slightly less than the average age of 55 for churchgoing adults. Roman Catholic priests were the oldest and those leading new churches were the youngest (58 and 48 respectively).

### **Duration of Ministry**

According to a 2003 survey, ministers had been in their present post an average of ten years. Those in Independent churches stayed the longest (fifteen years) and those in Methodist churches the shortest (seven years). In a detailed survey of Anglican ministers, both age and length of ministry were important for church growth. This was more likely to occur when a minister had been in a post for seven to nine years, and, as **Figure 1** shows, when he or she was either in their early 40s or in their 60s.

### **Future Trends of Ministers**

How will the number of ministers most likely change in the next few decades? There are a number of different elements to be taken into consideration. **Figure 2** shows that the overall trend is downwards, so that by 2040 there could be only twenty-six thousand ministers in the UK.

Figure 1: Growth by age of incumbent

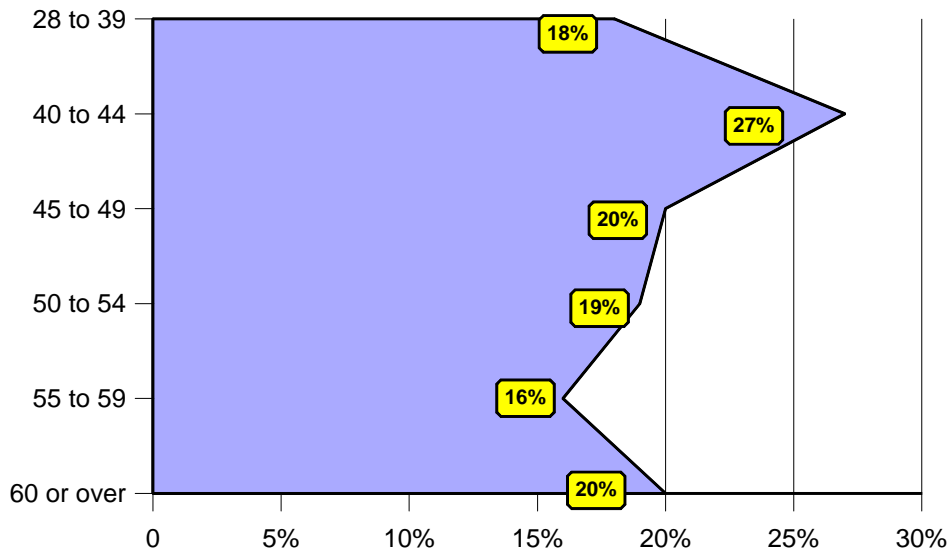
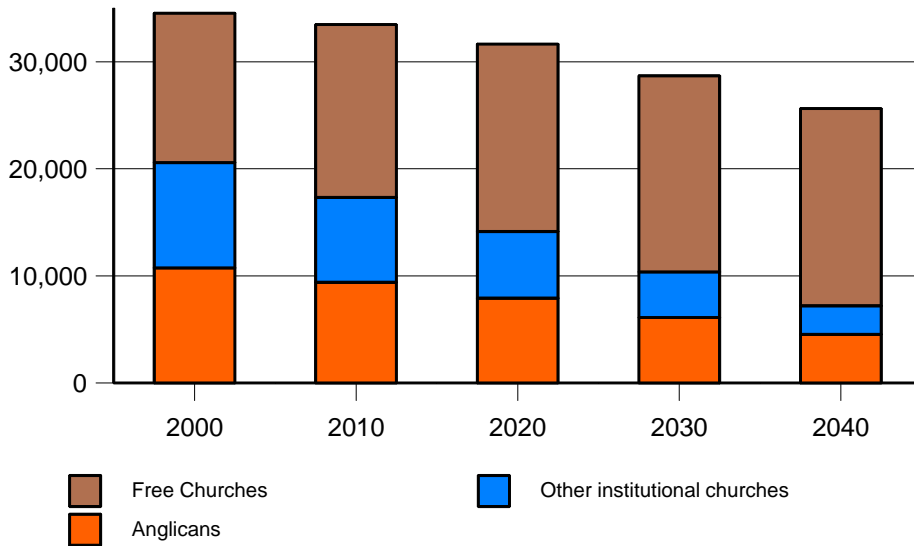


Figure 2: Number of ministers in the UK, 2000-2040



The possible decline in number is especially seen in the “other institutional churches” which reflects the decreasing proportions of Roman Catholic priests. Fewer men are entering the priesthood, and those already serving average the oldest of all ministers and will have to retire within the next twenty years or so, even if Catholic priests serve until they are 75 or 80. Anglican numbers are declining also, but will be compensated by an increased number of non-ordained or locally-ordained “readers” or ministers appointed to serve in specific congregations.

**Figure 2** shows an increase in the number of Free Church ministers. This increase is entirely within the Pentecostal group where more part-time ministers will be needed to serve the likely continuing increase in numbers of black and other ethnically diverse churches. These churches are currently growing both in number and size and this is expected to remain the case for at least another twenty years.

While the number of church members, church attendees and churches are also set to decrease within the next three decades, the rate of decline in the number of ministers is the smallest of all. Their leadership therefore becomes more important, and the way it is exercised becomes increasingly significant for the future of the Church.

*The calibre of that leadership, and its vision for the future becomes critical for the well-being of the Church over the next three decades.* Some of the key issues to be considered therefore are:

- How are these men and women selected?
- How are conditions of service presented to attract new ministers?
- What are the key giftings ministers will need for their churches?
- How do they obtain the necessary experience for ministerial service?
- What are the best models of training for future ministers?
- How much freedom will they be allowed in order to lead in an imaginative but responsible way?
- What structures have to be put in place to enable ministers to stay long enough to effect strategic change?
- What can the churches learn from the way the ethnically diverse churches are led?

Ultimately leaders lead because of the vision they have for the future. How is that vision formed? How is it best communicated? These are not just academic questions; they are ones of vital importance if the Church that Jesus is building in the UK is to be ready to meet the storms that undoubtedly will come.

**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](mailto:admin@christian-research.org.uk).

## LAUSANNE REPORTS

### **The Missionary Game: A Tool for World Missions**

**By Anders Torvill Bjorvand**

**Although small, Norway has been a pioneering nation in world missions for quite some time.**

Unfortunately, it has become increasingly difficult to recruit new missionaries to tell unreached people groups the good news. The focus among new generations has been on relief work without the eternal perspective of missions to go alongside. As Christians, we should of course not preach the gospel to empty stomachs, but to merely feed the body is indeed short sighted. We need effective tools to teach coming generations of holistic missions where relief efforts and the good news of eternal salvation go hand in hand.

For several years, some of the largest missions organisations and children's ministry organisations in Norway have joined forces to create websites for children. The aim has been to present the gospel to those who do not know it, and to teach the gospel in depth to those who already profess the faith. Several methods have been used

along the way, but after several years of both failing and succeeding, the conclusion is clear: *if we want to teach children something through the Internet, nothing beats games.*

### **Values-based Games**

Values-based games are hard to make. When you have an underlying agenda for making the game, it will often reflect negatively on the game, making it less fun and with a much poorer gameplay. After years of experimentation, several games have been produced which are engaging and attractive to children. Many of these games were presented at the [issue group for media and technology](#) at the [Lausanne 2004 Forum](#) in Pattaya.

In the spring of 2005, the largest secular television station in Norway aired a show in prime time which featured Norwegian missionaries in Mali. Inspired by this major opportunity to show what everyday life as a missionary looked like, work began on The Missionary Game. The first version was launched both online and in twelve thousand CD copies in the summer of 2005. The second version was launched in the summer of 2006. The game was first released in Norwegian; however, during the June 2006 Global Christian Internet Alliance conference in Seoul, Korea, the English version was finally released (along with the web address of [www.themissionarygame.com/](http://www.themissionarygame.com/)).

### **The Missionary Game: An Overview**

The game takes place in a country where the gospel is not well known. The “player” travels from village to village, sharing the good news, handing out Bibles, building churches and providing food, water, medicine and clothing. The player travels through jungles, savannahs, waterfalls, mountains and swamps. After providing Bibles, the player can build a local church together with the people he or she meets.

If the player also provides for the congregation’s needs, the church will stand. If not, the church will disappear after a short while. This reinforces the idea that missions is indeed holistic. When the player has planted a few churches, he or she is given the option of letting the nationals take over the mission. If the player is in a tight spot and no natural solution seems at hand, he or she can press the 'P' button to kneel down and pray for God to intervene. Every missionary, both in games and in real life, depends on God's provision and intervention. During the game the missionary can: see logs surfacing in a river where the distance is too great to jump; streams freeze over, thus offering a safe path for travel; snakes dying; lions falling asleep; and more.

[The Missionary Game](#) aims to instill values of evangelisation and world missions in children in a way that is fun, interactive and adventurous. So far the feedback has been encouraging, and thousands of games have been played. Although providing inspiration and training for world missions cannot be achieved through games alone, [The Missionary Game](#) helps children to view missions work as both natural and filled with joy.

Although the online game that is currently available at [www.themissionarygame.com/](http://www.themissionarygame.com/) is in English, work is in progress to translate the game into Spanish and other languages. Since Africa has been an important mission field for Norwegian missionaries, the environments and peoples of [The Missionary Game](#) might resemble what one may encounter in parts of Africa. The initial players/characters also have a Caucasian look (similar to the majority of Norwegians). Future plans for the game include internationalisation, with missionaries coming from all parts of the world and reaching lost people everywhere. Spoken in Lausanne terms, this means that “the whole Church can take the whole gospel to the whole world.” In order to achieve this, the project is dependent on establishing international partners.

[The Missionary Game](#) might become one of several effective tools for inspiring new generations of missionaries. Try it out at [www.themissionarygame.com/](http://www.themissionarygame.com/).

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**Anders Torvill Bjorvand** is chief executive officer of the Norwegian, Christian media and communications company Kommunion, Inc. He is also an author, composer and computer scientist.

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## LEADERSHIP MEMO

### Not a Small World After All: Glimpsing the Kingdom Church

By Lon Allison

**"We live limited lives until we cross over into the concrete world of another country, another culture, another tradition of worship," Sister Joan Puls once said.**

When did this crossover happen to you, dear reader? Or is it yet to occur? Have you left the valuable, yet "small world" of your culture to breathe the fresh air of the kingdom Church?

My crossover occurred in late 1989. I was planting a church in northern California (USA) and seeking to reach people who were remarkably similar to me. I loved my work and I loved the people God was bringing to our church. They spoke like me, looked like me, even drove cars that I would like to drive. We listened to similar music, read similar books, saw the same films and enjoyed similar foods. Little did I know that God had a magnificent awakening in store for me.

I was surprised and deeply honored to receive an invitation to a global meeting on "world evangelization." The Lausanne II Congress would be held in Manila, Philippines, and leaders and thinkers from all over the world would meet to strategize, worship and pray for the salvation of the world. I expected to be no more than a "fly on the wall." In Manila I joined men and women from over one hundred nations in listening to leaders and thinkers such as J. I. Packer, Leighton Ford and Ajith Fernando. The world became larger and more diverse while the gospel of Jesus held us as one. On several occasions I remember being overwhelmed by the diversity of the Church. Music from many lands and people dressed in colorful, national attire filled the meeting halls.

My hotel was a few miles from the stadium in Manila and each morning my new friends and I would walk to the meetings together. I experienced the beauty and the sorrows of the Filipino people and their kindness gentled me, a brash American. One night I was unable to sleep so I took the elevator to the first floor of the hotel. I found the lobby filled with Western men, drinking and cajoling with prostitutes. Although I was shocked, this did not surprise me nearly as much as the night when I heard gunshots out my window and saw a street fight in action. I learned that Manila needs Jesus, just like Chicago or New York or any other city in the world needs Jesus.

It is difficult to express how much those two weeks changed my view of the Church and the world. But I was indeed changed. For the first time I had glimpsed Revelation 7, where every tribe and nation is gathered in worship of God. There is nothing quite like worshipping while Latinos play music, Thai people dance, Africans sing and Koreans pray. Oh for the sheer joy of it! I long for it again. But even more, I long that the whole world may know of Christ. **Although the task of taking Jesus to the world is daunting, the king who proclaims through us is more than able.**

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