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

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## **PUBLISHER'S MEMO**

### **The Next Generation: Leadership and Communicating the Gospel**

**By Doug Birdsall**

**As the twenty-first century continues to unfold before us, it is fitting to reflect upon the next generation of evangelical leadership in this new millennium and in this quickly changing global context.**

Many current Lausanne leaders, including yours truly, are either in or entering a season of senior statesmanship; yet, the task of world evangelization is too large for any one generation to fulfill on its own. Rather, it requires the cooperative efforts across generations—the strength and wisdom of one generation, as well as the passion and fresh perspective of the next. The need to engage, equip, and learn from the next generation of leadership is critical to bring fresh vision, energy, and relevance to the task of communicating the whole gospel to the whole world.

The 2006 **Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering** in Malaysia was convened specifically to identify, engage, and connect new leaders for world evangelization. YLG '06 was not a one-time event, but inaugurated a *process* that includes mentorship in small groups and Lausanne Younger Leaders Global Connections being held all over the world this spring.

In this media-saturated, skeptical world, it is with the humility of authentic servant leadership that we can effectively serve as models, as well as engage and hear from the next generation. Without a listening posture, it is impossible to gauge what the next generation requires in order to be equipped. In this vastly complex and ever-changing world, no one formula or program fits all. There are endless needs to be addressed, including:

- Training in microfinance ventures
- Literacy work in world relief organizations and seminaries
- Biblical literacy
- Mentorship skills
- Peer accountability skills
- Skills in actualizing visions and partnerships

- Greater training to communicate more effectively
- Greater ear training to be present and truly listen
- Etc.

With the task of world evangelization so great, and with the desire to move forward, we must engage the next generation, not just as mentors, but also as learners. We have much to give and offer from our experience and maturity. Yet there is also much we can learn. We are to discover and celebrate the gifts each group has to offer. We must seek to be connected in one body, with mutual identification, nurturing, and development of gifts. Our goal must be to discover a new equilibrium of multigenerational leadership for the purposes of world evangelization.

Lausanne is committed to finding a new equilibrium in which the Church can communicate the gospel creatively, holistically, and powerfully.

As we plan and pray for the future, let us be mindful and deliberate in the development and refinement of the next generation of leaders who are to energize and lead us into the next era of world evangelization. It is indeed for the whole church to bring the whole gospel to the whole world. This is our shared commitment, vision, and call.

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

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## NEWS BRIEFS

### **AROUND THE WORLD: World Food Crisis Leads to Scaling Back Assistance**

[World Vision](#) (WV), which provides nearly 450,000 metric tons of food to some thirty countries, says soaring food costs and unmet donor-nation aid commitments may result in a twenty-three percent decrease in the number of people it can feed this year. The crisis will also prevent the launch of new food aid projects. WV is calling on donor governments to help with the World Food Program's 755 million USD shortfall. It also hopes the upcoming G8 conference will address the crisis. WV director of advocacy and government relations Robert Kachritz asserts both short and long-term solutions are needed, involving long-range agricultural development, improved credit access for farmers, and enactment of fair trade policies. ([World Vision](#))

### **AROUND THE WORLD: Food for the Hungry Responds to Global Food Crisis**

As rapid increases in staple food prices continue, many of the world's poor are being forced to sell tools, goats, and other livestock in order to survive. [Food for the Hungry](#) (FH), which provides emergency relief and development programs to more than twenty-six countries, is responding to the crisis in areas with the greatest need. FH is using their successful voucher system to help families obtain food locally and is providing dried food packets containing rice, soy protein, and vitamins. FH is also intensifying food production in rural areas, with the goal of increasing production by twenty percent. ([Food for the Hungry](#))

### **BRAZIL: Replica Train Stations Trace History of Scripture in Brazil**

Three replica train stations have been erected at the Museum of the Bible in Barueri, São Paulo, as part of an exhibition to trace the history of the Holy Scriptures in Brazil. In recent years, the Bible Society of Brazil, which is responsible for the museum, has distributed six million Bibles, New Testaments, and portions of the scriptures throughout Brazil. The three train stations that make up the "Paths of the Bible in Brazil" exhibition are intended to draw attention to the beginnings of Bible work in Brazil, the distribution of the Holy Scriptures, and their influence. The platforms of the stations show the historical sequence of the presence of the Bible in Brazil, from 1808 to the present. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

### **ETHIOPIA: Medical Aid Sent to Ethiopian Jews**

[Jewish Voice Ministries International](#) (JVMI) reports bringing medical relief to the “poorest Jewish communities on earth.” From 24 March–8 April 2008, a team of ninety volunteers served in Addis Ababa and Gondar, Ethiopia. The group, led by JVMI executive director Jonathan Bernis, included thirty-three healthcare professionals, who provided aid to the Beta Avraham and Beta Israel communities and their neighbors. JVMI visually documented the effort and is compiling its footage. ([Jewish Voice Ministries International](#))

### **GHANA: President Urges for a Reintroduction of Religious and Moral Education**

President John Agyekum Kufuor of Ghana has instructed authorities of basic schools in the country to revisit the teaching of Religious and Moral Education (RME), which hitherto had been removed from the syllabus. The president expressed displeasure about the negative moral impact of globalization on the youth through the mass media. He therefore urged the school children to balance their academic learning with that of their moral duty. While Christians and Muslims embraced the directive of the president to reintroduce the RME into the basic school's curriculum, a traditional African religious group, the Africanian Mission, did not see the idea as good news. For them, the teaching of RME would promote foreign culture at the expense of African values. ([ASSIST News Service](#))

### **HAITI: Food Shortage Impacts Church of the Nazarene**

The current food crisis in the Republic of Haiti stems from rapidly rising food prices fueled by the worldwide oil crisis. The price of rice and beans, staples in Haiti, has risen dramatically in the past few months. Rice has more than doubled in price in the last 120 days, affecting every one of the more than 100,000 Nazarenes in the country. Six percent of the membership of the Church of the Nazarene live in Haiti. For the past year, Haiti Nazarene Compassionate Ministries (NCM) coordinator Walliere Pierre has helped the Church in Haiti raise money to be used in times of disaster. Haiti field strategy coordinator Bill Dawson has been working with Pierre and NCM to develop a plan to respond to the food shortage. The food crisis has also impacted the Nazarene seminary. The seminary is one of six in the country authorized by the government to offer the bachelor of theology degree. Even before the latest food price increases, approximately fifty percent of the seminary's annual budget was used to feed the students. Now, the seminary is struggling to give three meals a day to the students in residence. Mission employees and pastors have been hit hard by these food prices as well. ([Church of the Nazarene](#))

### **IRELAND: Largest Evangelistic Event in Nearly Five Decades**

Nearly thirty-three thousand people attended Franklin Graham's first Festival of Northern Ireland, the area's largest evangelistic event since Billy Graham visited in 1961. More than 385 churches united for the Celebration of Hope at the Odyssey Arena in Belfast. “Not long ago, people thought Belfast was a hopeless city because of The Troubles,” said Lord Mayor of Belfast, Jim Rodgers. “Now is the time for the Celebration of Hope, and this visit by Franklin Graham is an opportunity to change lives.” The Belfast Celebration of Hope marked the first Franklin Graham Festival to be streamed live on the Internet on [www.billygraham.org](http://www.billygraham.org). ([Billy Graham Evangelistic Association](#))

### **ISRAEL: Caspari Center Celebrates Twenty-five Years**

The Caspari Center, which seeks to train and educate leaders for the Body of Christ in Israel, recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. Caspari offers leadership training and Shabbat School teachers seminars, maintains a library, sponsors tours and study trips, and authors book relevant to believers' daily needs and the history of the Jewish people. It is believed there are nearly seven thousand believers worshipping in one hundred congregations in Israel. ([Caspari Center](#))

### **KAZAKHSTAN: Kazakhstan Weighs Stricter Religion Law**

Kazakhstan's lower chamber of parliament has passed new laws creating greater restrictions on foreign missionaries and evangelical churches. Among other concerns, the new law: imposes quotas of missionaries allowed in Kazakhstan, strictly limits the distribution of religious material, and prohibits the acceptance of anonymous or foreign donations by religious organizations in the country. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev must approve the legislation for it to become law. As this is further evidence of ministry doors closing in the former Soviet Union, Slavic Gospel Association president Dr. Robert Provost urges Christians for fervent ongoing prayer. ([ASSIST News](#))

### **POLAND: Evangelistic Campaign in Poland a Huge Success**

Response to the evangelistic campaign ProChrist in Poland overwhelmed organizers, as approximately twenty thousand visitors made decisions for Christ. The campaign, held in April 2008, was a joint venture of Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist churches working with the regional Ecumenical Council and the Catholic Fokolar Movement. ProChrist began in 1993, when Billy Graham preached in Essen, Germany. Fifty-two churches in and around the city of Katowice will provide spiritual follow-up. ([ASSIST News](#))

### **RUSSIA: Competing for the Next Generation**

For nearly ten years, the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church (MP ROC) has sought to promote its "Foundations of Russian Orthodox Culture" as a compulsory school subject, to try to win children and young people. This divides children by religion and has led to the persecution of "sectarians" (including Protestants), even in schools. The MP ROC also wants to stop children's ministry in Protestant churches, including Sunday School. A Methodist church in Smolensk was liquidated by a court order after a complaint by a Russian Orthodox Bishop. The church was found guilty of giving religious education without an educational license—in a Sunday school of just four children. ([World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission](#))

### **SOUTH KOREA: Christians Willing to Be Martyred in North Korea**

A group of South Korean Christians from the 100,000-member Manmin Joong-Ang Church has been training to preach the gospel in North Korea when and if doors open. According to Johnny Kim, director of Manmin TV, a ministry of the church in Seoul, the group is prepared for the possibility of martyrdom, should North Korea's doors then close up again. Kim explains Manmin means "all creation, all nations, all the people," which is central to the church's vision to spread the gospel "to the ends of the earth." ([ASSIST News](#))

### **TURKEY: Musical Ministry Tours Turkey**

TACO, a creative arts ministry started by [OM International](#), recently toured four cities in Turkey, spreading the gospel with music and audience interaction. The group reported fifty-two requests for biblical literature and thirty-one requests for further conversation about Jesus. "From now on I want to be informed of all your events. I want to meet with someone to talk more about Jesus Christ," said one attendee. ([OM International](#))

### **TURKEY: New Testaments Distributed, Companies Established, Christians Trained**

Over 500,000 New Testaments have been distributed throughout Turkey, [Aslan International](#) (AI) reports. Four New Testament book companies have also been established, and Turkish believers are being trained and sent out to evangelize. In 1987, the first coordinated effort to distribute Turkish New Testaments began. Despite many threats, arrests, and harassments, AI continues its ministry in the country. According to its website, “Praying for the sick, transformed lives, planting churches, training nationals is all a part of Aslan’s vision. Ministry means risk, desperation, new frontiers, and a passion for souls.” ([Aslan International](#))

### **UNITED KINGDOM: Christians Attempt One Million Hours of Kindness**

British Christians are being challenged to donate one million hours of kindness as part of Hope 08, a nationwide grassroots mission. The effort, called “HOPE Where You Live,” is the third of Hope 08’s five initiatives. Believers from all denominations and traditions will engage in practical actions that meet specific needs in their local communities. Hours from the entire year will count toward the one million-hour target; however, May will be the high point of activity, particularly Monday, 26 May, a bank holiday in the UK. Churches can record donated hours on the Hope 08 [website](#). (**Hope 08**)

### **UNITED STATES: International Teams USA Elects New President and CEO**

On 7 April 2008, [International Teams](#) (ITeams) USA elected Rev. Scott R. Olson as its new president and CEO. Dr. Donald Byker, who headed the search and is vice chair of the ITeams USA board, stated, “As we did our diligence and interviews it became clear...that our process was being led by the Lord.” Recently, Olson served as director of operations for Global Partners, an international mission agency, where he travelled to over forty countries and worked alongside missionaries and international leaders. ([International Teams USA](#))

### **UNITED STATES: Boyd Installed as President of MAF**

John Boyd, a native of Scotland reared in South Africa, was recently installed as the new president of [Mission Aviation Fellowship](#) (MAF). Boyd and his wife, Tanya, joined MAF in 1993 following a highly successful business career. The couple served as a missionary pilot family in Zaire, Haiti, and Lesotho, supporting the ministry of missionaries, local churches, and medical ministries, as well as that of relief and development organizations. Boyd was appointed CEO of MAF-South Africa in 1998. Four years later, the Boyd family relocated to the United States where Boyd served as vice-president of ministry advancement. In September 2007, the MAF board of directors appointed him as president and CEO of MAF-U.S. ([Mission Aviation Fellowship](#))

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## **THEMED ARTICLES: The Next Generation: Leadership and Communicating the Gospel**

### **[Leading and Connecting with the Next Generation by Understanding Generational Differences](#)**

**By Graeme Codrington**

**As people, we are shaped and formed by a wide variety of forces and influences, including our culture, language, religion, parents, and life circumstances.** We are also, to an extraordinary extent, shaped by the era in which we were born. In the past century global forces have been at work like never before; therefore, many people throughout the world have had similar experiences or have had to face similar situations at the same time. And since we live in a globalised world, with similar influences at

play in different countries at the same time, people of the same age are likely to have similar value systems, regardless of their country or community of birth.

### **Shaping Moments**

For example, we can look at two major tipping points in recent history. In almost every country in the world, the late 1960s and early 1970s saw significant defining events; 1968 was such a year in Western Europe and the USA, followed by the moon landing in the summer of 1969.

In other countries, we see similar defining moments—Gough Whitlam coming to power in Australia (1972), the Watergate scandal and Richard Nixon's resignation (1972-1974), the global oil crisis (1973), the terror attacks in Munich (1972), Chile's economic collapse and bloody coup (1973), Pol Pot's Cambodian Revolution (1975), and South Africa's youth uprising (1976). The list goes on and on. These events signalled a changing tide in world events, and triggered two decades of social, political, economic, and technological upheaval.

The second set of critical defining moments was the culmination of the chaos that had been fomenting for two decades. In the first few months of 1989, students led a Chinese revolution, culminating in May and June's iconic Tiananmen Square protests. On 9 November of that same year, the Berlin Wall came down. On 20 December, America invaded Panama in one of their early "pre-emptive strikes." On 25 December the Romanian dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu, was hanged outside his palace and Eastern Europe began to open up. The following day, Mikhail Gorbachev announced *perestroika* in Russia and banned the communist party.

On 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela was released after twenty-seven years in jail and his African National Congress and the Communist Party were unbanned in South Africa. In eight short months the world was changed forever!

Because our worldview and value systems are largely shaped and formed in the first ten years of our lives, the Baby Boomers (whose values were moulded in the 1950s and 1960s) found their idealism and "live your best life now" purpose-filled worldview largely unchanged by these tumultuous decades. Not so the young people whose value systems were shaped and formed after 1968.

### **Today's Young People**

The generation of children whose worldviews were shaped during the 1970s and 1980s developed an air of scepticism about those in control of the world, and are characterised by a sense of impermanence and a pragmatic view of the future. These are the so-called "Generation Xers," who are currently entering mid-life, and having an impact as decision-makers in all areas of life. They want flexibility, and prioritise family and friends above work commitments. They are addicted to change and approach life as pragmatic realists.

The youngest living generation, formed by the world after 1989, are known as "Generation Y" or the "Millennial generation." This generation is exhibiting different characteristics altogether as they come of age in the twenty-first century. They have grown up quickly—too quickly, some would say. They are confident—so confident they are almost arrogant. Unlike generations who have gone before them, Millennial kids have been pampered, nurtured, and programmed with a smorgasbord of activities since they were toddlers. They are both high-performance and high-maintenance and have an over-developed sense of self-worth.

Millennials are living in an age of unprecedented diversity and exposure to other cultures, surrounded by digital media. They are goal-oriented, cautious, and idealistic students who understand the value of their

education. They are sociable, optimistic, environmentally aware, collaborative, influential, and achievement-oriented.

### **Differences, Not Divisions**

Inter-generational interactions are commonplace in all spheres of our lives, including our homes, offices, schools, and churches. Whether leading and managing younger (or older) staff; connecting to customers of all ages; recruiting, training, or trying to retain talented young employees; training or teaching people of different ages; or just trying to understand your children (or ageing parents), an understanding of the different generational worldviews is immensely helpful. Once you understand generational attitudes and behaviour, you will have a clearer picture of why other people are like they are, and why they act as they do.

Generational theory has been around for many centuries, but was popularised in its current form by Neil Howe and William Strauss.<sup>1</sup> The theory of generations is a sociological and anthropological model. As such, it deals in generalisations, not specifics. It is in the same style as the book *Men Are from Mars and Women Are from Venus*—over-generalisations that are nevertheless filled with truth, and provide a helpful starting point for discussions and understanding.

While generational differences have existed since the start of recorded humanity, the distinctions between them have not been as dramatic and as overt as they are now, mainly because of the slow pace of life. It was the advent of the Industrial era, with its factories and production lines, which impacted massively the pace of life. Rapid advances in technology and media, combined with changing social mores, have given each generation in the last century its own unique set of experiences and values. As our perception of time and events began accelerating, the concept of generational identity has become more important to describe each new generation.

### **Cause for Conflict**

The challenge for leaders comes from a clash of the generations: a collision of values, expectations, ambitions, and attitudes. In interactions with other people, conflict and resentment can arise over a host of issues. Generational differences are often misunderstood, as younger and older people approach life in such different ways. They have different views of respect—the older generations believe in positional authority while the younger only respond to personal authority. They have different views of many issues, including seemingly innocuous subjects such as: appearance, methods of greeting, learning preferences, team dynamics, and worship styles.

In most of these issues there is a temptation to see one's own preferences as "right," "good," and "normal," and elevate one's culture and preferred style to a normative level. Generational theory suggests we seek to see the world through the eyes of other people. We also need to recognise that every generation has something to teach the others—and every generation has something to learn, as well.

### **Connecting with the Millennial Generation**

If all of this is true, then how does one connect effectively with these younger people? We want be aware of their values and expectations as we decide how we are going to connect with them, lead and motivate them, or communicate with them. Unfortunately, the Boomer approach to solving these sorts of problems is typically simplistic—they want a silver bullet, seven habits, twelve mindsets, twenty-one laws, or something equally as easy to implement. In a short article like this, the best I can do is offer a few helpful hints to get us thinking in the right direction.

1. **Be the leader.** Generation Y has grown up with structure and supervision, with parents as role models. Millennials are looking for leaders with vision, honesty, and integrity. They respond well to leaders who present a clear direction, and who are good mentors.
2. **Don't treat them like kids.** The teenagers and young adults of this generation are quite sophisticated in terms of communication, entertainment, worldview, and relationships. Do not patronise them. Show them respect, and expect it in return.
3. **Use multimedia and expect them to multitask.** They live fast and learn fast. They prefer information to flow quickly and through multiple channels (“multi media” doesn't mean you have to use laptops and data projectors, it just means you need to use more than one means of communication simultaneously, engaging multiple senses and multiple learning styles in quick succession).
4. **Challenge them.** Millennials want learning and development opportunities. They want to be assigned projects they can learn from.
5. **Involve them.** They learn by doing. They want to get involved, and are not afraid to fail.
6. **Give something back.** They want to make a difference in the world, and they want to know that the organization they are connected to is environmentally aware, ethical, and involved in societal issues.
7. **Understand that they are socially networked and have large friendship circles.** They like being friends with the people they work with, and social interaction—both face to face and virtual—is critical for them.
8. **Have some fun.** A little humour, a bit of silliness, even a little irreverence, will make your message more attractive.
9. **Be flexible.** The busiest generation ever has their own priorities, and these supersede work, church, and other commitments. A rigid schedule is the easiest way to lose your Millennial young people.

Too many Boomers think that today's young people are “going through a phase” and if they just hold out long enough, these young people will grow and see things their way. That is not going to happen. One of the most important lessons from generational theory is that each generation retains its basic identity and worldview as it grows older.

Of course, everyone gets slightly more conservative as they grow older, and especially when they have children. But Generation X started a lot less conservative than their parents, just as the Boomers started off less conservative than the Veteran generations before them. Xers won't suddenly become Boomers—they'll just become older Xers. The same will be true as the Millennial generation grows up into its maturity in a few decades time, and newer generations with different values emerge to follow them.

Our task as leaders is to take the time to understand them, adapt our methods for their ears, and engage them where we find them.

#### **Endnote**



1. 1991. *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.

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## **Evangelism and Leadership Development among Young People in Europe**

**By David James**

### **Confronting the Unchurched Youth in Europe**

It is Saturday evening in Villach, Southern Austria. Thomas and I are engaged in a lively discussion about God with a group of young people in our “teabus.” The converted bus is parked in the old town centre close to all the bars and night clubs. Here, we provide free tea and coffee to young people out for the night. As usual, my young co-worker and I are dealing with an interesting group dynamic. The mixed group of 15 and 16-year-olds has been drinking. Several are beginning to engage with the conversation, several are trying to provoke us with their coarse jokes about religion or shock us with their sexual innuendos, one wants to move on to the next bar, and one is just not interested.

“God” is a very loose concept for this largely unchurched group. Some have been to Catholic Mass when their parents or grandparents have pressed them to go; however, they rarely hear about the creator, saviour, personal God there. Some regurgitate the philosophical ideas they have heard in debates in what is termed “religious education” at school: God is energy or God is a human construction. “I am God” says one of the more drunk guys. “Alcohol and sex are my gods” says another. They both collapse in helpless laughter. They decide to move on and persuade some of the others to go with them. Despite the massive group pressure, two choose to stay and talk. Thomas and I know we have perhaps another ten or twenty minutes with these people. What should we say?

Sharing a mini 5-point gospel presentation with such a group is pointless. The basic concepts of God and sin need to be defined first. In a broken world where patchwork families are the norm and alcohol is an escape, our personal testimony has great effect. Sharing our stories, in particular the hope and purpose we have found in Jesus, is far more effective than neat arguments at this stage.

One co-worker used an inspired sentence in the middle of a conversation to completely disarm a vehement attack on our faith from a genuinely interested but provocative young man. After fifteen minutes of debate in which our co-worker had repeatedly and gently countered the visitor’s rhetoric, our co-worker said, “The difference between your point of view and mine is that I am at peace with the world and happy with my faith and myself and you are not. You have inner turmoil.”

Bold but effective, the visitor had no answer. We need to help people see that we were created for a relationship with God. The simple fact that we are out in the world, demonstrating love and care by talking and listening to the young people (and not preaching at them), is a powerful message in itself.

Defining the concept of sin is inextricably linked with an understanding of the absolute authority of the Bible—a hot potato in multicultural, secular Europe. Discussions around the inspiration of scripture and moral relativism usually help. Initially, the Bible will be dismissed as a human work; however, a few key facts about its consistency despite a hugely varied authorship and fulfilled prophecy can quickly break this barrier down.

Then we can build on this platform and explain how God interacts with his world; how he wants a relationship with us but does not force it on us. Relationship is important to the post-modern generation and so we start to awaken more interest as we help them see that relationship is what God wants too.

We don't often get this far in one conversation in the teabus. The average visitor stays for around fifteen to thirty minutes. Hopefully, by showing genuine interest in them and their ideas and by making ourselves vulnerable, we have left the way open for them to return.

And they do return. Each evening, most of visitors have been in the bus before. Many ask for the same co-worker—friendship is important.

On the second or third visit we might still be clarifying the basic concepts. And now is the time for the 5-point gospel. We cannot deny the serious consequences that follow a negative response to the gospel, but we still need to be careful not to condemn. The post-modern generation balks at authority and it is important to help people overcome this. I have often heard it quoted that the average Christian hears the gospel nearly twenty times before understanding and responding.

### **Relationships-Purpose-Patience**

The following principles can be applied to evangelism among young people in many and varied contexts across much of Europe:

- **Value relationship.** We must be genuine in wanting to get to know the young people and listen to them. An initial goal should be to build a long-term relationship.
- **Offer something to those we are reaching out to.** If we do not, they will just think we are selling our ideology. Free tea and coffee could be replaced with sport programs, after school drop-in centres, or some other social action.
- **Do not condemn** (either directly or by offering to help with, say, alcoholism, to quickly). Listen to what God is saying.
- **Be authentic and live out the gospel message.**
- **Establish and define basic concepts of God, the authority of scripture, and sin first.**
- **Do not give up, even if you do not see results.** Sow the seed and leave it up to God to do the reaping. We recently heard of three people who, after visiting the teabus, began thinking about Jesus. They later became Christians and are in another church.

### **Knowledge-Skills-Character**

The discussion recounted earlier in the bus was five years ago. Like many young Christians, Thomas knew he should be reaching out to his generation but was not sure how to go about that. He also had a desire to help other young Christians grow in their faith. Coaching (traditionally called discipling) has helped Thomas realize his potential, and discover and use the gifts God has given him.

Although it has been an intense process, it has also been very rewarding. Thomas is now at Bible college and should return in 2009 to work alongside us and then take over responsibility for the local youth work. Although he always had a nice style when interacting with peers, Thomas was not sure how to share the gospel in the light of the provocative arguments he encountered. In the teabus ministry we always work in teams of two. This allowed Thomas to develop his “natural” gift alongside a mature team member.

Simple role plays as a preparation for each outreach provided some practice. Often, the experienced person could include Thomas in the conversation by inviting him to share his own story with the visitors.

Thomas came into the teabus leadership and into the team of church youth leaders. Initially he felt uncertain in both roles; however, discipling helped him feel more comfortable. His knowledge and skills were further developed through a combination of courses, coaching, and practical experience. Character development was achieved through a young leader's training program with intensive Bible studies, seminars, and coaching discussions based on the lives and characters of biblical role models such as Peter and David.

It was important to see steady parallel development in the three areas of knowledge, skills, and character. Character defines great leaders; however, knowledge and skills are also vital. Again, authentic relationships are important. In an open and honest discipleship context the coach can share his or her own weaknesses and struggles in order to help the post-modern young person understand and acknowledge things about themselves. They need to be encouraged to look in the mirror and then personally recognise, accept, and deal with the true reflection they see.

In Austria, we often need to encourage the young leaders to try new things. They need the opportunity and support to apply new knowledge and skills in the correct setting and at the correct time. The Austrian culture is a shame culture and fear of failure can be debilitating. Mistakes must be allowed, and to a certain extent even celebrated, so that people will lose that fear. Leaders are often required to work alongside their disciples to help them prepare their first Bible study (and the second and the third).

Thomas is not alone. Raimund is at Bible college as well, and others are preparing for significant local ministry. Trying to disciple more than three people at once is too much. Therefore, it is important to use a network of coaches.

There was little surprise when, after a number of years in local youth leadership, Thomas started to consider the idea of Bible college and full-time ministry. I could sense this was the right step. Perhaps I should have been bolder and suggested this was God's calling on his life. In the New Testament the apostles and the church leadership set individuals apart to undertake a particular ministry. We need to rediscover this role in the West.

Distance is no object to a teacher-disciple relationship in the modern era. Although Thomas is five hundred kilometres away, the depth of our relationship means that phone calls and emails can still be enormously beneficial.

The last five years have been a long haul with Thomas. After he returns at the end of this year, there will be a more intensive period of helping him take over the ministry. By the time I step back, a total of seven years will have been invested in one future leader for Austria. But it is an investment that has had, and will continue to have, huge returns.

Below are nine principles for leadership development for young people in Europe:

- Make the teacher-disciple relationship central.
- Remember that character is not learned. It is developed through experience and honest reflection.
- Develop knowledge, skills, and character in parallel.

- Identify and develop natural gifts.
- Help the young leader to develop the skill of reflecting.
- Encourage the young leader to try new things and celebrate mistakes.
- Do not disciple too many people at once. Set up a network of teachers.
- If you feel God calling someone into ministry, be bold and share it.
- Be patient. Discipleship is usually a long-term project with eternal results.

**David James** is Austrian field leader for **European Christian Mission**, which seeks to see second-generation churches planted with significant Austrian leadership and autonomy. He has served in Austria for twelve years, predominantly in local and national youth ministry.

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### **Mission among Young People in “Secular” Europe** By Jonny Baker

**In the United Kingdom, there have been two recent research projects into the spirituality of 14 to 25-year-olds.**<sup>1</sup> Both were based on personal interviews with groups of young people. *Making Sense of Generation Y* was commissioned under the assumption that there is a rise in interest in spirituality among young people. The goal was to try to “tease out” this spiritual interest through discussions of various expressions of popular culture.

The approach to “teasing out” spiritual seekers was subtle, using indirect lures rather than a direct approach. The conclusion, which was initially difficult for the researchers, was that the assumption was wrong: “We argue that the allegedly widespread phenomenon of a growth in eclectic spiritual seeking among young people is illusory.”<sup>2</sup> Researchers concluded that young people are not interested in spiritual things, but rather that it is a story the Church likes to tell itself. Their interviewee’s worldview, what the authors describe as a “happy midi narrative,” revolves around the young person and their friends being happy together in the here and now and overcoming problems through those friendships toward that end.

*Buried Spirituality*, published a year earlier, took a much more direct approach. Phil Rankin sought groups of young people and used two direct questions out of which conversation grew: Would you perceive yourself to be spiritual? and What do you think the word “spiritual” means? His findings were very different. Young people were open and willing to engage in conversation around these questions. He concluded that young people are asking spiritual questions, are keen to reflect upon spirituality, and many are having spiritual experiences. However, this spirituality is often buried within the pressures of everyday life and not always named because young people struggle to find a language with which to articulate these experiences.

Both reports also commented on young peoples’ perceptions of church and here they occupy some common ground which makes for pretty uncomfortable reading. “Boring,” “judgmental,” “hypocritical,” “uncool,” and “culturally alien” come out in *Generation Y*,<sup>3</sup> while Rankin can only summarise the views in the sentence, “Church is s\*\*t.” This may seem shocking; however, he argues strongly that this is the most honest statement: “The vast majority of young people do view the church as irrelevant, controlling, etc., but it is [this] description that seems to combine these negative observations.”<sup>4</sup>

So even if there is openness to spirituality which seems to depend upon where or how you look, the church is not the place young people are looking to find it. According to Lesslie Newbigin,

If the gospel is to be understood...if it is to be received as something which communicates the truth about the real human situation, if it is as we say “to make sense,” it has to be communicated in the language of those to whom it is addressed and it has to be clothed in symbols which are meaningful to them. And since the gospel does not come as a disembodied message, but as the message of a community which claims to live by it and which invites others to adhere to it, the community's life must be so ordered that “it makes sense” to those who are so invited. It must, as we say, “come alive.” Those to whom it is addressed must be able to say, “Yes, I see.”<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, for the majority of young people, at least in the UK, when they look at the Church, it doesn't make sense and they don't see!

“Church on the Edge” is a project in Devon and Somerset in rural areas in the UK. The thinking behind this project is that a typical church in a village has an ageing congregation. Expecting young people to join is simply unrealistic. Therefore, in terms of mission, a new strategy is needed. With the blessing and permission of more traditional churches, church on the edge will seek to engage with young people outside of the orbit of church to share Christ. The goal is not to get people in pews in existing churches; rather, it is to develop a new expression of Christian community in specific cultures.

### **Go with “the Flow”**

In Chard, for example, Richard Passmore<sup>6</sup> has been doing detached/relational work among skateboarders who have no Christian background. He is using a framework for developing church on the edge that develops from a contacting community through stages of being a growing, connected, and exploring community to a practicing ecclesial community. In twelve months, deep relationships have been formed and the group has been on a couple of residential pilgrimage weekends. Additionally, in discussions around God and spirituality, Richard has suggested, in conversation with the skaters, that “Flow” might be their language for God.

This has really taken off and Richard has reworked a few scriptures and parables using Flow (i.e., “In the beginning was the Flow.”). His inspiration comes from stories of cross-cultural mission where the starting point is to try and see what God is doing and join in. Part of this involves naming God in the culture and developing a set of mission instincts to respond and improvise in terms of what God is doing. Many of the skaters have decided to “go with the Flow” and develop church on the edge together. Richard's vision is of a community that has a missional DNA at its core that will then enable people to live out mission as part of their mission discipleship.

### **Setting Sail**

Mark Berry<sup>7</sup> is a mission leader in Telford, UK. He and his wife, Louise, were tasked jointly by the diocese of Lichfield and by the **Church Mission Society** (CMS) to reach out to young adults in Telford. They have taken the story of Saint Brendan as a guiding narrative. Brendan was a Celtic saint who knelt down on the beach on the West coast of Ireland and prayed. He then got into a small leather boat with a band of monks to set sail where the wind of the Spirit would blow them. They travelled for nine years sharing Christ where the Spirit took them.

A small community has gathered with Mark to share a meal and break bread every Thursday. They seek God as to where they should be setting sail in their community. This has led, for example, to involvement in Telford football clubs, leading sessions on spirituality at the local college, holding pilgrimage walks for

families, and running stands at the local mind, body, spirit fair to share Christ and pray with people. The community talks about a missional DNA that Mark seeks to guard at the core of what they do.

### **Missional Imagination**

If we are to reach Europe's youth, it is precisely this sort of missional imagination that we need to cultivate and encourage in leaders. Insights (both good and bad) from cross-cultural mission hold the clues as to how we go about mission in our own cultures, and not just overseas. To state the obvious, Europe is a mission context (or, in fact, many contexts).

What might the gospel look like in the postmodern soils of Europe? And what sort of indigenous Christian communities might grow that are birthed out of a missional imagination rather than a colonized one? I am hopeful about the returning emphasis in the churches in Europe toward mission and the recovery of a missional imagination. This is why those of us involved with the CMS are investing in the training and development of mission leaders and in birthing mission communities shaped by mission spirituality at their heart.

Returning to the research among "secular" youth that I began with, both research pieces make some good suggestions in terms of response. Graham Cray,<sup>8</sup> in his response to the findings of Generation Y, says that church must re-connect with culture, get involved with incarnational church planting, and engage patiently in prior mission, building relationships, and patiently sowing seeds of the gospel where people are at, rather than expecting them to "come to us." This will require a shift from viewing church as a refuge from the wider culture to a focus on mission discipleship being core to what the church is about. Rankin suggests that the Church (in spite of perceptions) is well placed if she can create spaces for young people to explore spiritual questions and uncover that which is "buried" and if we can be people who will walk alongside them on their journeys.

In these ways, perhaps young people, as Newbigin suggests, will be afforded the opportunity to say that the gospel has come alive, makes sense, and yes, they see.

### **Endnotes**

1. Savage, Sara, Bob Mayo, Sylvia Collins-Mayo, and Graham Cray. 2006. *Making Sense of Generation Y*. London: Church House Publishing; Rankin, Phil. 2005. *Buried Spirituality*. Salisbury, UK: Sarum College Press.
2. Savage, et al. 136.
3. Ibid. 13-16.
4. Rankin. 56-57.
5. Newbigin, Lesslie. 1989. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. London: SPCK, 141.
6. The reflections on mission and the journey with the skaters is documented at: [www.sundaypapers.org.uk/?cat=22](http://www.sundaypapers.org.uk/?cat=22).
7. Mark blogs at: [http://markjberry.blogs.com/way\\_out\\_west/](http://markjberry.blogs.com/way_out_west/).
8. The last two chapters of *Making Sense of Generation Y* are Graham Cray's response.

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## **Encouragement: Our Gift to the Next Generation**

**By Grant McClung**

**I grew up in the western United States, a region of wide, open spaces, massive ranches, and extensive farms.** It was, at least in my childhood imagination (helped along by Hollywood images), a place captured in the idyllic words of a cowboy tune commonly regarded as the anthem of the American West:

Home, home on the range  
Where the deer and the antelope play  
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word  
And the skies are not cloudy all day.<sup>1</sup>

Since those childhood days, life's realities have taught me that not all words are encouraging, not all days are cloudless, and most endeavors are met with obstacles and those "special" individuals who seem especially able to locate the negative in every situation!

### **Are You a Discourager?**

In retrospect, we smile when we recount that:

- After Fred Astaire's first screen test, a 1933 memo from the MGM testing director said: "Can't act. Slightly bald. Can dance a little." Astaire kept that memo over the fireplace in his Beverly Hills mansion.
- An "expert" said of legendary football coach Vince Lombardi: "He possesses minimal football knowledge. Lacks motivation."
- Louisa May Alcott, the author of the famous Little Women, was advised by her family to forsake writing and find work as a servant or seamstress.
- Beethoven handled the violin awkwardly and preferred playing his own compositions instead of improving his technique. His teacher called him hopeless as a composer.
- The teacher of famous opera singer Enrico Caruso said Caruso had no voice and could not sing.
- Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper for "lacking ideas." He went bankrupt several times before building Disneyland.<sup>2</sup>

Although there have been well-known individuals such as these, who persevered in the face of resistance, doubt, and insurmountable odds, there are multiplied millions who have accomplished much in life because they were encouraged by others.

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872 – 1904), considered the virtual father of black American poetry, captured it like this:

## “Encouraged”

Because you love me I have much achieved,  
Had you despised me then I must have failed;  
But since I knew you trusted and believed,  
I could not disappoint you and so prevailed.<sup>3</sup>

### **Are You an Encourager?**

Encouragement is a natural part of human existence—certainly a central focus of parenting. Every year, an estimated 200 million Mother’s Day cards are sold in the United States—a recognition of the encouragement of mothers. The Apostle Paul used the imagery of a father when he told his friends in Thessalonica: “For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

Most definitions of “encourage” and “encouragement” stress that to encourage is to inspire with courage, hope, or resolution. Some older versions use the definition “to hearten,” which literally means “to put heart back into someone.” This is particularly relevant in light of soul-searching times, described by Jesus as times when “men’s courage will fail completely” (Luke 21:26).

In scripture, encouragement carries the emphasis of “urging forward, persuading, counseling with, and stimulating” others in the discharge of their duties and obligations as believers—especially in the face of harsh opposition, resistance, and violence. Scripture directs us to, “...*encourage* one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you will be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” (Hebrews 3:13, emphasis mine). Early Christians facing stress, persecution, and obstacles were counseled, “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us *encourage* one another—and all the more as you see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25, emphasis mine).

The Bible reveals our heavenly Father as an encourager: “You hear, oh Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you *encourage* them, and you listen to their cry” (Psalm 10:17, emphasis mine). God has designated encouragement as one of the spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ. Alongside the more (supposedly) “prominent” gifts such as prophesying, teaching, and governing, there appears the spiritual gift of encouragement (see Romans 12:8).

### **Stand-Speak-Show-Supplicate-See**

How then do I extend encouragement to my peers, to those I influence, and especially to the next generation of leaders? I recommend at least five practical ways to encourage others: stand with them, speak a word to (or for) them, show them a concrete act of encouragement, pray (supplication) for them, and see the future with them.

**1. Stand with them.** Into the face of a hostile crowd, the Apostle Peter stood up to preach. When he did, there was the movement of eleven other men who stood up with him. I like how the Phillips Translation of this Day of Pentecost event describes it: “Then Peter, with the eleven standing by him” (Acts 2:14). One man may have done the verbal preaching, but eleven others were standing in unity and solidarity with him. The eleven “encouragers” beside Peter were basically saying to the crowd, “We believe and affirm this man and what he is preaching. Take up stones to stone him and you will have to stone us all!” By standing with others, we express our commonality in calling, commitment, and collaboration.

**2. Speak a word to them/for them.** As children in America, we sometimes repeat the schoolyard chant, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.” Words, however, *do* hurt. Thank



God, however, that *encouraging* words also heal, help, and give heart. That is why scripture admonishes us:

- “Therefore, encourage each other with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18).
- “Preach the word, be prepared in season and out of season, correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2).
- “He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:9).

How often has my perspective been changed or my spirit lifted by someone taking even a brief moment to speak something significant into my life. Novelist Charles Dickens reminds us (through one of his literary characters) that, “no one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of it to anyone else.”<sup>4</sup>

**3. Show encouragement with a concrete sign or action.** Recently, my wife and I attended the dedication ceremony of the second child of one of our missionary couples. Typically, in visiting congregations we are there to say something, i.e., to speak. This time, however, our ministry was that of *presence*. Being there said to this young couple, “We value you and your friendship; your family is important to us.” St. Francis of Assisi gave his colleagues the now-famous instruction: “Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words.” We often encourage as much, or even more, by what we *show* than by what we *say*. Encouragement must often be seen before it is heard. A card, a special gift, our presence to help on a work project, sitting with someone through grief, a financial offering—the list goes on and on.

**4. Supplication: Pray for them (and let them know it).** Almost everyone has a file or a special place full of meaningful letters, mementos, and memorabilia. Mine has a handwritten note from a former professor, one of the evangelical world’s best known missiologists. Not long after leaving seminary to start my own missionary service, I received a note from him, written on behalf of the wider group of colleagues that had impacted my missiological journey. “Today,” he wrote, “in our faculty meeting, we remembered you in prayer.” Paul’s letters are full of reminders to his ministry partners how he remembers them and prays for them. Among my favorites is Philippians 1:3-5: “I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.”

**5. See the future together.** The completion of Paul’s reminder to his Philippian partners tells them that they have a future and he sees it together with them: “...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). Other leaders, especially younger colleagues, need to have someone get up on the mountaintop with them and look toward the horizon together, appreciating and affirming the vision God is giving the next generation. They need to have someone show them how it looks to finish well and express confidence that it can be done again tomorrow as well as yesterday.

#### **By Way of Example...**

“Tomorrow” was on the minds of the high school basketball team known as the “Hickory Huskers” as they filed anxiously into the Butler Field House in South Bend, Indiana, USA. The year was 1952. The true story of the Huskers (who in rags-to-riches style won the Indiana state basketball championship that year) is told in *Hoosiers*, one of my favorite family films. The Huskers were from a small country high school of sixty-four students in the rural heartland of Indiana. The film records victory after successive Husker victory in the crowded, cracker-box gymnasiums of small-town high schools. The scene etched in

my memory is when they step off of their rattletrap school bus on practice day before the tournament and walk for the first time into Butler Field House, a massive arena with row upon intimidating row of seats.

“Tomorrow,” in this new and imposing environment they would face off with the “Mighty Bears” basketball team from South Bend Central High School, a modern, urban high school which had 2,800 students. One by one, the camera captures the expressions of these farm boys—wide-eyed with mouths open—who had never seen a place like this before. In their faces, you can see fear, anxiety, and intimidation. Their coach was ready for this moment.

Pulling a tape measure from his overcoat, he said, “Charlie, come over here.” Handing Charlie one end of the line and holding the other under the basket, he told his player to walk to the foul line. He deliberately measured and called out the distance. Then, the coach called his shortest player to be hoisted up with the tape measure to the rim of the basket. They carefully measured from the rim to the floor. “Ten feet, coach,” came the surprised response from his player.

To their relief and reassurance, the coach gathered his team around him, looked them in the eyes and said, “I think you’ll find it’s the exact same court as ours back in Hickory.” He was saying to them that regardless of the overwhelming size of the arena and the massive, sometimes hostile crowd, the dimensions of the court were exactly the same as the one at home. That day, and tomorrow, the court belonged to them.

Encouraging affirmation to the next generation of leaders lets them know that the arena and the crowds may have changed, but the dimensions and directions for spiritual leadership remain the same. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).<sup>5</sup>

## Endnotes

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3. Braxton, Joanne M., ed. 1993. *The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar*. Charlottesville, Virginia, USA: University of Virginia Press.
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5. As told in Grant McClung’s 2004 book, *Globalbeliever.com: Connecting To God’s Work in Your World*. Cleveland, Tennessee, USA: Pathway Press.

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## **The Generations Project: Equipping Young Women to Serve and Lead** **By Evangeline Weiner**

**The Apostle James states that “for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”** The model he offers, to feed faith with works, should compel every Christian to consistently live his or her life with unwavering acts of compassion. Works coming from the heart are the essential life-givers in our walk of faith.

**Aglow International**'s Generations Project is all about mobilizing and releasing young people to move into such vibrant expressions of faith. The goal of the Generations Project is to help young women ages eighteen to thirty-five to develop their leadership skills as they plan to enter the workplace or the mission field, empowering them to become influential leaders in their community. The vision is that they become God's kingdom on earth in the darkest parts of the world.

As a pioneer in equipping women to serve and lead, Aglow has ministered to women and guided them into leadership for forty years. One key to our model for restoring and releasing women is mobilizing indigenous women to mentor younger women in their nation. Aglow's worldwide network in more than 170 nations now includes more than 200,000 women involved in over 4,600 local fellowship groups.

In 2006, Aglow began to act on the need to encourage and empower young women in their spiritual life. They took on the challenge that wherever a woman's career or life endeavors took her, it was imperative that younger Christian women today understood the outworking of their faith in society. We sought to connect young women with Aglow's already extensive humanitarian outreaches, such as care for HIV/AIDS orphans and families, prison ministry, and disaster relief work—the kinds of hands-on “faith feeding” of which James speaks.

Aglow had the spiritual maturity and the practical resources, but the question was how to connect. We needed to mobilize the younger generation to take worldwide opportunities to grow and serve. That connection began the Generations Project.

Young people want to be a part of change in the world. It is no longer enough for them to grow spiritually without seeing the works Jesus proclaimed would follow those who believe. Signs and wonders are a huge part, but in addition, Jesus said, “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). We need to take this authority Christ has given us and use it to change our society.

The Generations Project is calling young people to not only establish righteousness in their nations by serving in places of influence, but to take on problems in their communities: homelessness, foster care, littering, visiting the elderly.

### **Generations around the World**

Today, Generations groups are being established in rural villages, college campuses, and workplaces in nine nations, including Argentina, Armenia, American Samoa, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, the United States, and Uruguay. The groups, designed by women in their own cities and towns, are meant to reach the specific and intricate needs of their communities. We want to release each group to do things that work best in their nation and walk out the vision that God has given them.

In **Brazil**, for example, young Aglow women from the Conquerors' Generations group visit a women's prison every two months, reaching out to the ninety-five inmates with the love of God. The young Aglow women have been a tremendous blessing to these women who suffer from very crowded conditions and are emotionally, physically, and spiritually hungry.

The Generations young people in Brazil have already held two conferences and are continually starting groups which are doubling in size each year. One of their goals is to show young people the difference between religiosity and true spirituality.

In **Zimbabwe**, a nation plagued by both political and humanitarian struggles, one 12-member Generations group is carrying the vision of the Generations Project by visiting all of the Aglow groups in the nation to energize, connect, and inspire both older and younger women.

Some 1,400 people attended the Zimbabwe National Conference in May 2007; more than 360 gave their lives to Christ there. The chiefs who attended the conference were so moved that they granted Aglow Zimbabwe free access into Hwedza, a rural constituency of Zimbabwe whose people are under extreme economic hardship, most lacking even basic electricity. Even so, in August 2007, thirty-nine women from Aglow Hwedza travelled to Maun, Botswana, to support their Aglow sisters there.

**American Samoa** recently affiliated a Generations group in Pago Pago. Their evangelistic fervor is palpable as they seek to win souls for the Lord. Their expressed desire is for the young people who are saved to gain a passion for the lost, causing them to act upon their newfound faith.

In **Armenia**, Aglow received affiliation papers for a Kids Aglow group in February 2008, which is now affiliated under the Generations Project. Their leader, 10-year-old Christiana, is mentored by her mother and the Aglow women around her. She and her friends started the group because they needed a place for Bible study and prayer. In addition to praying for the ministry of Aglow, the children also collect offerings to directly impact the work in their country.

In the **United States**, Generations women are being trained as hope coaches through speaker Dawson McAllister's "DMLive" nationally-syndicated call-in radio show. During the show, teenagers and young adults call to discuss life's deepest issues, such as broken families, abuse and depression. Hope coaches follow up with teen callers one-on-one to lend a compassionate ear to their area of need, as well as to provide support and guidance.

The Generations Project sees international students as one of the greatest opportunities for Christians to minister to the world around them. Over 500,000 international students come to the US alone every year. Unfortunately, many of them leave with an unsavory taste toward the country and toward Christianity. Could history have been different if someone like you or me had reached out to a young international student in the US named Khalid Sheikh Mohammed? He is known as the chief architect of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York.

### **Walking Together Generation to Generation**

We must begin to think in a new way and start walking together generation to generation, whatever our denomination, nationality, or culture, to bring God's kingdom to earth. We are here for the sole purpose of seeing God advance in the earth. To do that successfully, we must play a pivotal role in our communities. We must be the teachers, the friends, the co-workers, and the mediators; for if we don't, how will the world know the love of Christ? Each generation must answer the call of James 2:26 and activate their faith with practical acts of compassion. When we do this, we will indelibly impact our families, communities, and nations.

*Then the king will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me." (Matthew 25:34-36)*

**Evangeline Weiner** is director of **Aglow International's** Generations Project.

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# PERSPECTIVES

## Are Rites of Passage Out of Step? A Kenyan Christian Perspective

By Muhia Karianjahi

“A South Africa teenager dies of malnutrition during initiation rituals in the Eastern Cape province.”

“Kenyan villagers shocked by the death of a girl who bled to death after trying to perform female genital mutilation on herself.”

**These were headlines to stories posted on BBC’s online news in August 2006.** One story was followed by an opportunity for readers to post comments in response to the question, “Do you think being initiated is worth the risk if the rituals are dangerous?” Another headline read, “Are rites of passage out of step?”

### “Rites of Passage” at a Glance

Circumcision is still widely practiced in Africa, usually as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. In Western Kenya, circumcision season takes place in August every even-numbered year (i.e., 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008). “Rites of passage,” a term first used by French ethnographer Arnold Van Gennep,<sup>1</sup> are rituals or events marking the stages of a person’s advance through life. They are vehicles of transition that act as reference points for the person and the community.

Transitions always take place as a person journeys from one life stage to another. Some transitions are more significant to one’s identity than others, especially that of initiation from childhood into adulthood. Circumcision is seen in many communities as the physical or tangible sign of this transition, and thus is highly valued. Theologian John Githiga says of his Kikuyu people in Kenya: “Circumcision, being a community rite *par excellence*, is the focal point of the Gikuyu rituals, myths, and symbols. It ritualizes, symbolizes, and externalizes both the inner world and the outer worlds of this people.”<sup>2</sup>

Often, one is considered a child until he or she goes through the “cut” (as it is often referred to); if this condition continues beyond a certain age, it is the cause of much shame to the individual and his or her family. Circumcision is not a private affair. As communal beings, the instruction, enculturation, and affirmation that one gets from his or her community is highly life impacting. “What happened to a single youth,” continues Githiga, “happened corporately to the parents, relatives, neighbors, the living dead, and those yet to be born.”<sup>3</sup>

The girl who died in Kenya after attempting to circumcise herself is reported to have done so due to teasing by her peers. I too can remember having to hide while going to the bathroom as I did not want my classmates in boarding school to know I was still uncut at the age of thirteen. After I had the operation, I felt I belonged and had nothing to hide.

Although circumcision is not the whole of the transitional rite, it is a ritual element. Rites of passage, according to Van Gennep, always involve a separation from the old stage of life, an in-between or liminal stage where instruction and rituals take place, and a reincorporation back into community.<sup>4</sup> All the stages are laced with rituals, symbols, and processes that contribute to the psychological and social elements of the transition.

### The Changing Face of Rites of Passage

In traditional times, the community took charge of all the elements of the transition and affirmed the initiate’s place and role in society. There was no confusion as to whether one was a child or an adult.

However, times have changed. In most societies, these powerful community-building traditions have slowly been consumed by the forces of modernity. School-based education and cash economies disrupt traditional life. Global religions such as Christianity and Islam have discouraged ritual practices, including circumcision. Urban centers have gathered people from different cultures whose traditions are sometimes incompatible. Institutions of community have been eroded, leaving glaring vacuums in people's lives.

Circumcision as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood has lost most of its rightful context and cultural support structures, becoming a physical process that can be empty and even harmful. Today, it is often an uncelebrated nuclear family affair that hardly involves any meaningful mentoring or instruction by the wider community.

The result of this gap is evident among African youth. Many seek significance, identity, and community by rebelliously experimenting with pre-marital sex, substance abuse, and other negative influences, resulting in a myriad of contemporary challenges. The 9 February 2007 issue of the Kenyan newspaper *Daily Nation* reported that fifty-six percent of Kenyan youth have their first sexual encounter by the age of sixteen. The same poll indicated that fifty-one percent of the women under twenty-five years of age tested positive to unwanted pregnancies. The first few weeks of 2008 were filled with disturbing images of young people on the streets of Kenyan cities and countryside, involved in wanton violence and destruction of property as they protested a Kenyan political crisis. Young people, when they lack structures such as those provided by rites of passage to guide, mentor, affirm, and celebrate them, easily fall prey to the traps of the evil one.

The question, then, should not be if circumcision is outdated, but how to recapture rites of passage to help children successfully transition into adulthood. Whether the cut is done or not, the need for a guided transition exists, preferably in the context of relevant community.

### **Recapturing Rites of Passage from a Christian Perspective**

In Kenya, the need for a context for such transitions has given rise to a ministry called **Tanari**. This ministry, locally overseen by five non-denominational churches in Nairobi, has developed the **Rites of Passage Experiences** (ROPES) program, which is rapidly being adopted by churches in the region. The ROPES ministry proposes that the Body of Christ is today's new and relevant community in which young people can grow up. God's intention is that the Church would transcend tribe and ethnicity; and her values would be perfect, trustworthy, redeeming, enduring, and everlasting (Psalm 19:7-11). In the absence of traditional cultural systems to deal with transition crises, the local church fills the vacuum by constructing Christ-centered rites of passage. The rites provide meaningful discipleship opportunities that equip the youths with godly tools to face their roles in society.

Youths age thirteen or fourteen retreat to an adventure camp with their church-appointed counselors who prepare them for the teenage years. Instruction includes reflections on the characteristics of childhood and guided contemplations on how to live the next stage of life. After various symbolic rituals, usually involving adventure elements and guided spiritual disciplines, their families and church communities hold celebrations to reincorporate them into society to fulfill their new roles.

ROPES is more than the camp event. It takes one full year to prepare for it, and involves multiple members of the local church community. Parents are required to own the rites, in accordance with the scriptural mandate of Deuteronomy 6:7. Early in the year, they begin to meet regularly, and, guided by a church leader, prepare themselves for the task of raising teenagers. They share from their own collective experiences, do guided studies together, or learn from featured teachers. Some parents have given their lives to Christ after realizing how much they needed the Lord to help them in child-rearing.

Candidates are also separated from the children's ministry in the church and attend a special transition class for the year. Topical instruction takes place during these weekly meetings and parents can revisit the foundations of the gospel, learn about their church histories and cultures, and cover specific topics such as sexuality and drugs. Counselors also meet throughout the year. This role is open to any member of the church body. A counselor must be in a growing walk with Christ, and must make a commitment to become the initiate's lifelong mentor.

Some churches have seen in this an opportunity to mobilize pew-warming members of their congregations to take up this challenge. Each year, new counselors are needed. Some churches have adopted the ROPES programs and experienced transformation in their entire communities. The pastor of one such church, a Presbyterian congregation on the northern outskirts of Nairobi, saw the potential in ROPES to nurture unity in his church, a challenge he was encountering at the time. He mobilized his church from the pulpit, recruiting parents and counselors, preaching related sermon series, and lending the program credibility. His congregation, being fairly homogeneous in cultural composition, opted to include male circumcision as part of the ROPES they designed. At the end of the year, the pastor gave testimony of how the dynamics of the church had been changed:

The junior youth and senior youth, groupings that previously clashed as they sought control of church resources (such as music equipment), found a common task to partner in: acting as big brothers and sisters to initiates throughout the year. The Women's Guild and the Presbyterian Church Men's Fellowship groups partnered in mentoring the young men and women coming through ROPES. The church is excited and all groups are working together in this task.

It is not the rites of passage that are out of step with today's world. Rather, it is a lack of appropriate models that leaves individuals disconnected from healthy community. Rites of passage, designed to suit the times and context, present opportunity for the local church to capture vibrant Christian community.

#### **Endnotes**

1. Van Gennep, Arnold Van. 1966. *The Rites of Passage*. 4th ed. trans. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle Caffee. Chicago, Illinois, USA: The University of Chicago Press, 10.
2. Githiga, John Gatungu. 1996. *Initiation and Pastoral Psychology: Towards African Personality Theory*. Canyon, Texas, USA: Githiga International Ministries, 21.
3. Ibid, 24.
4. Van Gennep, 11.

**Muhia Karianjahi** is a founder of **Tanari**, which assists local churches and institutions to become strong and relevant communities by providing creative programs, materials, training, and consultations. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in education. He and his wife live in Nairobi with their two sons.

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## **Retiring into Uncertainty**

**By Dick Jacquin**

**Innovations are allowing people to live longer than ever, and as potential retirees look into the future, they dream of exciting possibilities to explore.** But the kind of retirement that enticed millions of Americans years ago is rapidly evaporating. In addition to the new opportunities they face, these

pioneers of the new retirement look into uncertainty and a challenge to tackle, knowing that retirement will bring with it significant cost.

In the past, missionaries expected their supporting churches or their mission organizations to continue assisting them in a major way in retirement or after their days as active missionaries were finished. The missionary call of the past century included an unspoken vow of poverty—or at least frugality. As missionaries went out, there was an unwritten agreement that supporters and the mission agency would reward that life of sacrifice with ongoing support.

### **Coming to Grips with Today's Realities**

Those days of lifelong support are becoming less and less frequent, and long-term commitments of the past are quickly evaporating. Although age-discrimination laws prevent forced retirements, Christian organizations, local churches, and even individual donors are poised to reallocate their mission funds from older missionaries (sometimes not even retired yet) to younger missionaries who wait in the wings, passionately seeking support so that they can embark on their ministry. Others use the retirement of a missionary to switch their support to a project or program instead of an individual.

The transition for our missionaries approaching retirement and returning from years of service on the field is a major dilemma. As both our own mission culture and our society changes, finding a suitable role for “older” missionaries (both pre- and post-retirement) becomes more and more difficult. It is now more challenging to match their skills after years of international hands-on ministry to our current high-tech/low-touch opportunities. Many missionaries in the past assumed that when they returned from the field they could count on continued support from their churches and individuals and easily move into support positions in the areas where they relocated. This assumption is being tested, and we must find ways to compassionately address this challenge.

That's the dilemma—and the challenge—facing each missionary. Because of changes in the US Church and the US mission organization (and increasingly in other countries as well), the burden of effectively preparing for the transition from active service to retirement is now on each missionary's shoulders. Preparation for those days is a burden; however, without preparation, facing retirement will be an overwhelming prospect.

### **Understanding the Dynamics in the Western Church**

A drastic change in the mindset of the American Church has occurred in the last fifteen or twenty years. It no longer views a missionary as someone to support *in perpetuity*. As churches today begin to see missionaries they have had “on their rolls” approaching (or passing) the normal retirement age, many churches become anxious to be able to withdraw their support from retiring missionaries and reallocate the funds to those young people eager to begin their ministries. The younger missionaries are usually more aligned with the locations and types of ministries the churches have chosen in their individual missions strategies for the future.

Perhaps that picture is a generalization, but the phenomenon is growing more and more common. I recently visited two very strong mission-centered churches, and in both cases their top agenda was to discuss what HCJB Global is doing about the aging and retiring missionaries they are currently supporting. They were anxious to be able to use the funds they were presently giving to our aging missionaries so that they could commit them to other missionaries focusing on ministries in which they were now interested.

The churches' dilemma is understandable. They have only a certain amount of money to contribute to missions, and they desire to use it in a way that is most effective in reaching around the world and also in



engaging their congregations in relationships with these missionaries. This is resulting in a sad predicament for the missionary who was banking on a long-lasting relationship of being supported by their churches and individual donors even after retirement.

### **The Role of Western Missions Agencies**

Most parachurch organizations are aware of the challenge facing retiring missionaries and are investigating ways to address the issue. One step many are taking is to upgrade old-style pension plans to give participants the ability to invest in a number of options to gain flexibility in the marketplace. Unfortunately, the process has been slow, underfunded, and often “too late.”

Financial support for missionaries is becoming more difficult to raise and maintain, even for those still serving on the field and not yet ready for retirement. We have seen many missionaries choose to receive less than their salary in order to keep from going into deficit so that they can remain on the field. Some missionaries have been forced to give up mission work because of serious issues with raising and maintaining support, and a growing number are confronting this possibility unless God intervenes soon.

Mission organizations are asking if the traditional method of support-raising is in need of a major paradigm shift. It seems the US Church is increasingly more focused on short-term teams or on their own choice of locations and mission vision. Many churches are also becoming more limited in their flexibility to grant missionary support. While we do not pretend to have a clear vision concerning the future of missionary support-raising, we are certain that the situation is changing and that it will affect the recruitment of new missionaries and the future funding of existing missionaries.

### **The Changing Economy and Demographics of Retirement**

Because people are living longer today, they need even more resources to maintain the same lifestyle throughout their retirement years. As inflation continues, maintaining the same kind of lifestyle will cost more and more. Missionaries who permanently return to the US after years of living abroad will face serious difficulties in dealing with housing and living costs if they have not prepared themselves for the increased financial need. Even those who have saved for retirement may find US living costs a greater problem than expected.

These problems are compounded when the missionary’s income is substantially dependent on donations which could easily evaporate by changes in supporting church policies or on the inability of individuals to continue their support indefinitely. Unfortunately, the days of lifelong support from churches and individuals is quickly vanishing, and missionaries need to prepare—quickly!

### **Today’s Missionary Reality**

We have seen many churches and donors suddenly decide to no longer support missionaries after retirement age (some with little thought as to how this will affect those reaching that age). Conversely, we have seen missionaries ignore some of these realities, assuming they will always be able to count on faithful donors. They usually face disappointment and struggle mightily when donors cannot or no longer wish to continue their support.

The “totally dependent” missionary model (especially in regard to retirement) must change. Undoubtedly, the issue of God’s provision belongs in this conversation. “Doesn’t God promise to supply all your needs?” many ask. Yes! However, to use Philippians 4 as a reason to avoid any planning or forethought is a dangerous interpretation of the passage. We do not mean to imply that God is not the source of all resources—he is! However, scripture does not tell us to ignore the future or fail to prepare for it.

### **What Can Churches, Mission Agencies, and Missionaries Do?**

This is the key question every missionary, mission agency, church, and donor should ask themselves. Now is the time to become proactive and intentional in preparing and taking responsibility for the future of our missionaries and ourselves.

#### **Question: What should churches and mission agencies consider?**

- Make your long-term missionary support policies clear.
- If you do not currently have a policy about retirement-age missionaries, make one and communicate with them so that they clearly understand your position.

#### **Question: What should missionaries consider?**

- Start an intentional retirement savings strategy today, not tomorrow.
- Communicate! Communicate! Communicate! Keep your donors informed about your continuing ministry—at least four times a year (six is even better). Be open and honest about changes in your ministry and be sure to show donors how God is continuing to use your work for him. Donors want to feel they are good stewards in their giving. Help them see that investing in your ministry is producing results.
- Tell your churches and individual donors what your retirement plans are and ask them to participate. Keep talking about it as the years go by. Keep asking for their involvement.
- Do not fall into an “entitlement mentality.” Neither your mission agency nor your donors are obligated to support you forever. With God’s leading, manage your own future.

Today is the day when churches, organizations, and missionaries need to begin working together, focusing on communicating, and defining a course that will help those who have invested their lives in the Lord’s work to finish well.

All those involved must start to dialog so that all parties understand each other’s expectations about the future. New missionaries and supporting churches must be clear about church policies regarding long-term support and ramifications of reaching a certain age or even relocation to the US in pre-retirement years.

It is vital that missionaries create a plan for achieving their retirement requirements and then act on it. Varieties of financial calculators on the Internet give direction about what it takes to retire with a set amount of income. (Type in “retirement calculator” in any search engine such as Google and experiment with them.) They will help determine what information is needed by each individual to start the process preparing for the future.

Fortunately, the US government has generated a host of options for saving for the future, and missionaries should start taking advantage of them immediately. Programs such as an IRA, a 401(k), a 403(b), and contributory pension plans have tax advantages and are options that can be initiated with just a small amount of money to start building a nest egg for the future.

The future will always be full of uncertainties. Retirement seems to be taking on a new face and with it new financial challenges—but it need not be a cause for fear or dread. If you are a missionary in your

twenties or thirties, take this opportunity to start saving for your future now. If you are in your forties, fifties, or sixties, and fear you are not prepared, do not let despair overwhelm you. Let God's promise of wisdom guide you and begin a strategy for your retirement needs.

**Dick Jacquin** is vice-president of support ministries for **HCJB Global**. Formerly, he was in sales management, organizational management, and senior administration.

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## **“Sent to Preach the Gospel”: Christians for Biblical Equality 2008 Conference**

**By Dr. Mimi Haddad and Rachel Finsaas**

**How many of us remember the person who led us to Christ?** Perhaps for some of us, it was a series of encounters that culminated in a decision of faith. If you are like me, you may remember that first Bible and that moment of decision when you prayed and asked Christ to be Lord of your life. My decision to follow Jesus came through the invitation of one of the first women to enroll in seminary in the 1970s. Her godly influence impacted me and those in my circle of high school friends. Women like her are and have been leaders on mission fields throughout history.

According to missiologists like Dana Robert, women were the leading force in one of the largest missionary movements in all of history—the Golden Era of Missions. Women outnumbered men two-to-one on mission fields, and they occupied many levels of leadership and service. They funded mission organizations and founded institutes and schools, so that by:

the final years of the twentieth century, more than half of all Christians were to be found outside the region that had been the historical heartland of Christianity for nearly 1,500 years. New centers of Christian strength and vitality were now to be found where missionary initiatives were focused in widely scattered places in the Americas, Africa, and Asia.<sup>1</sup>

The sacrifice of women missionaries led to the largest expanse of Christian faith in all of history.

### **Gender and Missions**

From Lottie Moon in northern China to Mary Slessor in Africa, from Pandita Ramabai and Amy Carmichael in India to Emma Dyer in Chicago and Catherine Booth in London, women have been a tireless voice advancing the gospel in places of despair and spiritual depravation. To honor this legacy and to consider how men and women might serve together on mission fields today, **Christians for Biblical Equality** (CBE) will hold a conference in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 18-20 July 2008 on the topic of gender and missions.

CBE conference speakers will explore the biblical, historical, and cultural challenges Christian men and women face as they work together on mission fields around the world and further examine the lives of women who have impacted missionary history so that, as the writer of Hebrews suggests, we might “consider the outcome of their lives and imitate their faith.”

Through four general sessions, a panel discussion, and twenty-one workshops, CBE's conference will offer a range of practical and academic content for those just beginning their study of gender and scripture, as well as for those eager to study the topic in greater depth.

Conference speakers involved in the **Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization** include: Esme Bowers, Robyn Claydon, and David Claydon. Bowers will examine the growth of the African Church and

the importance of team leadership; the Claydons will analyze how kingdom ministry is diminished when gifting is denied due to status, age, or gender. Other speakers include:

- Bible expositor **John Kohlenberger** will lead a workshop entitled “When Fellows Are Female,” a study of the gender and partnership terminology Paul uses in his letters.
- Marriage and family therapist **Arbutus Sider** will lead “The Essence of Marriage: Relationship and Mission,” exploring current answers and biblical examples to questions, such as: How do we nurture “we” without losing “me”? and How do we move beyond the focus of our marriages to participate in world missions?
- Retired Evangelical Free Church pastor **Austin Stouffer** will use humor to equip attendees to introduce a biblical basis for gender equality to churches.
- Pastor of global and regional outreach **Jeanette Yep** will host a workshop entitled: “Preparing for Cross-Cultural Mission,” providing opportunities for attendees to share experiences and answer questions about cultural expectations and gender.
- Author and speaker **Lorry Lutz** will review the basic, biblically-supported arguments that affirm women, and men, as called by God to fill leadership positions.

Conference participants will also have access to a prayer room.

CBE’s annual conferences include the awards ceremony that acknowledges Christian leaders accomplished in three categories: Priscilla and Aquila, Life Time Achievement, and Micah.

- **The Priscilla and Aquila Award** honors those who have taken many risks for the sake of biblical equality. The award is named after Priscilla and Aquila mentioned in Romans 16:3-4, whom Paul said, “Risky their lives for me. Not only I, but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.”
- **The Lifetime Achievement Award** recognizes a lifetime of courage, sacrifice, and vision in advancing the biblical basis for gift-based ministry.
- **The Micah Award** is presented to Christians who exhibit extraordinary courage, vision, and tenacity in opposing abuse and advance justice, equality, and equitable access to human essentials—such as food, education, legal services, and medicine—to women and children.

To register for the conference, or for more information, visit CBE’s website: [www.cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org), or call 1.612.872.6898. **Mention this article, and receive 15% off conference registration.**

It is CBE’s desire that, as stated by Ron Sider (president of Evangelicals for Social Action), both men and women are empowered to use their gifts equally for the Great Commission.

In 2007, CBE hosted its conference in Denver, Colorado, USA; the year before that the conference was held in Bangalore, India.

#### **Endnote**

1. Robert, Dana L. 2005. *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice*. Macon: Georgia, USA: Mercer University Press, ix.

**Dr. Mimi Haddad** is president of **Christians for Biblical Equality** and a founding member of the Evangelicals and Gender Study Group at the **Evangelical Theological Society**. She also serves on the board of directors for **Global Women** and is an adjunct professor at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois, USA. She served as the convener of Issue Group 24 for the **2004 Lausanne Forum** in Pattaya. **Rachel Finsaas** is a graduate of Bethel University, and is currently serving as Christians for Biblical Equality's events coordinator.

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## **Staying Connected: Worldwide Missionary Evangelism Uses Online Community Tools to Communicate Effectively**

**By Vince Farrell**

**One of the greatest needs and challenges with all worldwide missions is the ability to communicate quickly, clearly, safely, and more recently, in real-time.** While social networks dominate the internet landscape and provide ways to contact people online, private online networks are smaller, secure, intimate communities of people who already know one another and want to extend their relationships. Providing a tool to allow people to communicate with one another any time they want and to share photos and calendars and participate in group chat can be an extremely powerful tool in building relationships within an organization or mission.

Web 2.0 technology is allowing for more community to be experienced where people can login and extend their physical communities that already exist to the online world through personalized profile pages, individual blogs, photo sharing, conversation forums (similar to chat rooms), and online prayer. Small groups can easily set up their own forums and have a safe place to stay connected in real time without the dangers of MySpace and other open social community sites.

### **Developing Connectedness with an Organization**

**Worldwide Missionary Evangelism** (WME) began investigating emerging technology to see if there was any solution to the growing desire for connectedness within our organization. Through my role as student ministries' pastor at Faith Church in Florence, Alabama, USA, I came across a solution and began using it to connect our youth groups at church.

After several months of using this technology, it occurred to me that the same application might be able to meet our needs within WME. I recommended it to WME chair Dale Yerton and we soon implemented our own private, online, social network (or intranet) called *Oikos* to enable deep connections all over the world via the internet. There were at least six factors we needed to consider when creating Oikos.

**1. Ease of use.** For WME, one of the biggest impediments to utilizing available technology was the fact that most of WME's members are over the age of forty. We were looking for a communication tool that would serve a dual purpose—attract the younger generation, but also be simple enough for missionaries who may not be quite as technically savvy.

Oikos made it possible for WME to communicate in new ways and has allowed missionaries to break down walls of time and space to share struggles, praises, joys, and prayer requests. Oikos now connects many of WME's more than 460 members. To see what the WME intranet looks like, go to our site and login as a guest: <http://wme.oikosconsole.com>.

**2. Updates on current happenings.** WME was looking for a tool that could link its people together and enable them to read and participate in current happenings within the organization.

“We desired to communicate everything from completed projects on the mission field to prayer needs from other members—we were looking for a community that would allow our ministers to share what is happening in their life right now, no matter where they are in the world,” says Yerton. “Having our own private online network has offered this feature in a secure, Christian community.”

**3. Sharing information.** WME also struggled with how to share information. According to WME administrator Serina Tustin, “Often, we received requests from our members to obtain speaking information from Dr. Yerton. In the past, we would have emailed huge files and hoped that they made it to their destination. Now, we can put the PowerPoint file on the file sharing page and members can download it at their convenience. Additionally, instead of having missionaries send pictures and email updates for WME’s email newsletter, Oikos provides a way to stay in better communication with one another without doing mass emails with tons of picture attachments.”

**4. Regional groups.** Oikos is currently working to set up groups by region and location. By joining, for example, the “Mexico Group,” one can communicate and get up-to-date information about what missionaries in Mexico are accomplishing.

“We’re assigning people who live and function in those areas to be the administrator of their small group so that they can stay current on seminars and conferences, stay in general contact with one another, and network with others in their area,” explains Tustin. “This gives them a sense of an established home base that is centrally located to where they are. They can also post event notifications for their particular regions.”

**5. Communicating in real time.** WME also wanted to be able to communicate in “real time” with members. “As administrator, I can see everyone who is online; this makes it easier to keep everyone together,” notes Tustin. “Additionally, international phone calls can be very costly—the chat feature has provided a way to communicate more efficiently.”

**6. Security.** Oikos has both solid communication tools and tight security. Because Oikos is like a personal intranet that only members can access, there are no pop-ups, advertisements, or threats that exist in using other social networking platforms. The online chat also has significant benefits for missionaries in government-controlled email locations because only members of the group can see what is happening in Oikos.

For more about how your organization can benefit from Oikos, visit [www.tryoikos.com](http://www.tryoikos.com) or email: [info@oikoshq.com](mailto:info@oikoshq.com).

### **Using Technology to Connect Christians around the World**

More and more Christian organizations are looking for technology solutions that will allow them to have a private intranet online and have the ability to set up small groups of people in online “rooms” so that they can converse and share struggles in effective ways.

“God has given us the call to serve the Church with technology tools that truly bring people together and enhance face-to-face ministry, not replace it,” remarks Isaac Simon, developer on the Oikos R&D team.

May you more clearly understand how technology can empower ministry in new and exciting ways. And may God use the internet for his purposes.

Vince Farrell has been in ministry for more than twelve years, is a member of [Worldwide Missionary Evangelism](#), and is student ministries' pastor at Faith Church in Florence, Alabama, USA.

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## URBAN COMMUNITIES

### Introduction to Short-term Student Ministries with Slum Communities

By Glenn Smith

**This month, thousands of university students from the Global North will move into urban slum communities in the Global South to live alongside the poor.** In February, Rebecca Atallah recounted the ministry she pursues in the garbage villages in Cairo. During a recent visit with her, she shared the marvellous contribution that [InterVarsity Christian Fellowship](#) students make each summer in her city. Teams serve with the children in the Mokattam community and with Sudanese refugees living in Cairo. In this issue, we hear from Scott Bessenecker on ministering to slum communities and how that can impact us for years afterward.

Bessenecker is director of global projects with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA. For more information on IVCF's ministry in slum communities, visit [www.urbana.org/feat.trek.home.cfm](http://www.urbana.org/feat.trek.home.cfm). He also [blogs](#) on ministry with the urban poor.

As we have seen while we have walked with practitioners over the past nine months into Cap-Haïtien, Phnom Penh, Luanda, Bhopal, Calcutta, Cairo, Freetown, Romania, and with the poor in Nordic cultures, poverty is a broad concept. It touches economic, social, physical, and spiritual realities. It affects peoples' identity and includes social exclusion, absence of harmony in life and well-being, deprivation at every level of life, and one's ability to participate in the welfare of the community.

However, as Jayakumar Christian points out, the causes of poverty can be traced to "inadequacies in the worldview." A worldview can be a powerful instrument in perpetuating chronic poverty. All cultures and societies have within their worldview construct aspects of fallenness. And as we have seen, true Christian spirituality cannot be divorced from the struggle for justice and care for the poor and the oppressed. Spiritual formation is about empowering Christians to live their faith in the world. As students work alongside the poor, they learn about inadequacies in their own worldviews and experience incredible personal transformation.

#### Working Definitions and Facts

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

**Number of urban poor:** est. 2 billion

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

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

#### Worthwhile Books to Consult on Slum Communities

- For an introduction to urban missiology, I would recommend *The Gospel and the Urban World*. This "book" travels as a CD-ROM and contains seven hundred pages of some of the very best articles on urban ministry that have been printed in the past three decades, including good articles on slum communities. You can consult the reader and order it online at: [www.direction.ca/boutique/cederom.htm](http://www.direction.ca/boutique/cederom.htm).
- The 2003 United Nations global report on human settlements, *The Challenge of Slums* (London:

Earthscan), is a must-read for everyone interested in knowing more about the subject. It is a thorough study with plenty of charts and details.

- Scott Bessenecker has written the very readable 2006 text, *The New Friars* (Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press). This book underscores principles and tells wonderful stories of men and women doing ministry with slum communities around the world. He has also edited the 2005 book *Quest for Hope in the Slum Community* (Waynesborough, Pennsylvania, USA: Authentic), a very good collection of articles on the numerous challenges of ministry in these communities.
- The 2006 book *Planet of Slums* by Mike Davis (London: Verso) is an excellent exploratory book on the subject of slums. It is quite thorough and very readable.
- The 2006 book *Shadow Cities—A Billion Squatters, A New Urban World* by Robert Neuwirth (Milton Park, UK: Routledge) is the newest book on the subject that I have read. This investigative reporter spent months living in squatter communities in places like Mumbai and Istanbul. He paints an upbeat picture of life in these unique places.

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

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## **University Student Mission with Slum Communities: Reflections After-the-Fact**

**By Scott Bessenecker**

**I was confused.** Exploring the depths of poverty can do that to a person. We were coming to the end of our time in the Egyptian garbage community in Cairo. Living in this community for over a month had given us new eyes. What at first was repulsive, was now quite normal. The hot, passionate desperation we felt regarding the conditions in the garbage village during the first few days had cooled to a settled comfortableness.

### **A Paradigm Shift?**

Was that okay? Maybe the life of a garbage collector wasn’t all that bad. The people seem pretty content with life. The conditions are likely not much different from life in medieval Europe—probably better. Should I really be encouraging foreigners to come into such places as agents of change, especially rich, North American college students?

To be perfectly honest, despite the sights and smells of the garbage village, there are actually multiple classes of people there. There are the rich poor, the middle-class poor, and the poorer poor: people who live on a dollar or two a day. Some Egyptians even believe that there are fabulously wealthy individuals who hide in the garbage village, pretending to be poor and hoarding their wealth.

While this is probably a lie perpetrated to help salve the conscience of the rich, it is true that some of the living quarters are somewhat nice inside. You might walk into a garbage-strewn, rough-brick entryway and ascend a rat-infested, narrow stairway, passing farm animals on your way up. But when you walk through the doorway of the landlord’s apartment, you enter a nicely tiled room with a television and new furniture. Granted, these conditions are in the minority; most of the dwellings are quite deplorable. But that such places exist in slum communities can throw your understanding of poverty into a tailspin.



## **Wrestling with God**

I began to wrestle with God. This whole thing seemed like a huge mistake. Calling students with notions of transformation to long-term residency in slum communities might only amount to bringing Western standards of housing and cleanliness to people who are just fine with how things are, and who have their own culturally-defined norms for quality of life.

“Oh God,” I prayed, “if you want to me to call students to lives of sacrifice and catalyzing change, then you’ll have to convince me. By the way,” I added, “could you answer me in the next forty-eight hours, before we leave this place?”

Several hours later I had a dream. I dreamt about the dung truck. I could always smell the dung truck before I saw it. It was the kind of smell that was more like a taste at the back of my throat: pasty and bitter. The dung truck would pull alongside a building and haul out the animal waste that had accumulated on the ground level of the houses in the community, as well as from the makeshift pens inside and outside people’s homes. The community was known for raising pigs, but goats, chickens, donkeys, and dogs were the most abundant creatures in the garbage village.

The men who served in this capacity would shovel dung into large wicker baskets, and then, carrying the baskets on their shoulders or their heads, they would walk up a plank ramp to dump the contents into the back of a flat-bed truck. In the process, these men would become caked in dung from head to foot. Temperatures of over one hundred degrees released the dung’s pungent odor with a vengeance, making this task seem even more intense than can be appreciated by someone reading this article in comfort.

## **Hearing from God**

In my dream, I was walking past the dung truck. To my horror, I saw my children (Hannah, Philip, and Laura) sitting on top of the mountain of dung heaped on the bed of the truck. What struck me most was that although every inch of their bodies was covered by animal waste, they appeared perfectly content while sitting on the dung. Then I felt the Lord speaking to me: “As their father, are you satisfied? Even if *they* are satisfied, are *you* satisfied?” I am still sifting the impact and meaning of that experience, but the immediate implication was that a child’s contentment with a situation does not always reflect a father’s heart, which yearns for so much more.

The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 6:6–8 that “*godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*” Surely, many of the poor Coptic Christians<sup>1</sup> in the garbage village combined godliness with contentment. They had found satisfaction in Christ and we, as rich people, had much to learn from them. But the fullness of the kingdom and the deepest form of shalom had not yet arrived.

While many garbage village residents were rich in love, they were also a people with limited opportunities, precarious health, and inadequate housing; the poorest of them battled despair. It was a community doing the best it could while being clobbered by sickness. Out of necessity, they employed children who often worked long hours under hazardous conditions. This is not how life is supposed to be. But there is hope that things can change.

Indeed, things are already changing. Patience and prayer have begun to bear fruit. The garbage village is not what it was twenty years ago. Residents are benefiting from outsiders who care: people who don’t think themselves better just because of where they were born, people who are open to learning something from the poor, men and women willing to bring their skills and their access to resources into the community, and people willing to bind their own destinies to the destiny of the garbage village. The Kingdom of God is drawing near to the poor in the form of the king’s servants.

### **Being Changed by Those in Poverty**

A month after we returned from Cairo, my family was going to church. On the way, we passed a man sitting by the side of the road with a sign that read, “Out of work. Please help.” My daughter Hannah moved forward in her seat as we drove past, imploring me with her eyes. “Dad,” she said, “we’ve got to stop.” I said nothing as my conscience began to affirm her appeal. After dropping the family off at church, I turned around and went back. He was still on the corner. “Hey, do you want to come to church with me?” I asked. “Why not?” he said and jumped into the van. After church, I took him to lunch. His name was Darren.

“You know,” Darren confided as we headed off to lunch, “I have a pretty good life. My friends all complain about their wives or their work. But I’ve got it good. I answer to no one. I can go anywhere I want, anytime I want. I may hold up my pitiful sign, but actually, I’m pretty content with life.”

Darren is one of the few remaining hobos. He hops freight trains and begs his way all over the country. I asked Darren about the hold alcohol has on him. “Yeah,” Darren said, “when I’m dry I like to help people out. I often work for the Salvation Army in whatever town I happen to be in, if I’m sober. I’d like to do more, but I also like to party.” Something about the way he said it seemed to indicate that his love of partying outweighed his love of working for the Salvation Army.

Darren was no stranger to faith issues. He certainly knew how to talk the talk. So I asked him, “Darren, what if God wants more for you than you even want for yourself? What if you’re too easily satisfied?” Darren looked at me as if the thought was new to him. “I don’t know,” he said tentatively. “Can I pray for you?” I asked. “And then would you ask God yourself if he’s got more for you than you are currently experiencing, and invite him to show you how to live an even more satisfying life than the one you now live?”

I haven’t seen Darren since that day, but I think about him from time to time. I also think about my own life and the lives of those I knew in the garbage village in Cairo. Have I grown content with the fallow places in my life—places of scarcity, garbage, and unwholesome dependence? Does the Father yearn for something greater for me than even I do for myself?

Whenever I encounter the poor, the lost, or the broken, I seem to encounter Christ afresh. It’s like the hot-cold game I used to play as a child: one person walks around blindfolded while the other person says, “You’re getting hotter,” as the blindfolded person approaches the object of desire.

When I’m around the marginalized, I feel as if I’m getting hotter, as if Jesus is really nearby. The cocoon of wealth is so often cold when it’s not broken open and shared with others. There’s not only more of the kingdom to be experienced by the materially poor, the spiritually lost, and the emotionally broken, but there’s more of the kingdom yet to be experienced by those of us who live in spiritual ghettos with material abundance.

Serving the poor may be a holy quest for change among those who suffer various forms of deprivation. But there is also an intimacy with our creator and a discovery of self that is unique to standing alongside the poor. The true hope in the slum community is not only a hope for kingdom fullness inside the slum, but a hope for a greater fullness of the king inside those who choose to minister on the margins.

### **Endnote**

1. The word *Coptic* simply means “Egyptian.” The Coptic Church is as old as the Catholic Church and is one of the ancient Christian traditions that exist in the Middle East.

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## RESEARCH

### [For the Race Set Before Us: Training and the Church](#)

By Rick Allen Dunn

**In John 17:21, Jesus prays for his followers all over the world: “May they be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be one in us, so the world may believe that you sent me.”** One of the things that excites me most about the [Lausanne Movement](#) is that it is a reflection of God’s desire for unity among his followers around the world, the Church of Jesus Christ coming together to bring the whole gospel to the whole world. Here we will discuss the importance of training Christians to be authentic followers of Jesus as a pathway for the Church to accomplish its mission in the world.

#### **Finding the Endurance and Training Analogy in Life**

Over the past several years I have been training and competing in adventure races in and around southern California (USA). I have competed in a 250-mile relay in the Mohave Desert, obstacle course runs, half marathons, a 30k run, and the Los Angeles Marathon.

Most recently, I rode in my first road bike race, a 26-miler. This is a distance I have ridden many times, so I thought this was a good place to begin a new category of adventure. As the starting buzzer rang out, we began to follow a pace vehicle that led us out of the starting area and onto the course. For the first time in my life, I found myself riding in the famed “peloton” (the main field or group of cyclists in a race) that I had seen so many times watching the Tour de France.

The race was surreal. The peloton took on a life of its own, like an organism, moving in unison, communicating directions and warnings from the front for those laced into the middle. I remember thinking that I really could not see where we were going through the mass of bikes; I could only trust those intertwined with me. I remember thinking to myself: “If I make a mistake or someone else does, it could mean disaster for all of us.” I continued on, being pulled by the momentum and draft of the peloton.

About eight miles into the race we encountered our first hill. I began to fall to the back of the peloton. However, without much effort I caught up to my previous position. At the second hill, which was much steeper than the first, and I had the feeling of being unplugged, as I fell behind and lost the peloton for good. It was as if there was nothing I could do to regain my position.

My preparation was not enough to meet the task of riding with the peloton. My training was inadequate, a wrong move was made, and I finished the race in the middle of the heap, riding most of the remainder of the race alone.

We have heard and probably used the metaphor of a race to describe the experience of following Christ. Living the Christian life is like running a race, a marathon, an endurance contest to the very end. In my bike race, I started out strong, experiencing the exhilaration of the peloton; however, in the end I did not have the skill or endurance to keep up with the demands required of me, and I was left behind.

Like seeds falling on rocky or thorny soil, many who have responded to the call to follow Christ either fall away or live ineffective lives for God. The issue is in part training. Training is important in athletic

competition, and it is important in our spiritual lives so that we will be able to not only finish the race, but win the prize.

### **Why Do We Train?**

As a leader and shepherd in a Christian community, I realize the responsibility that lies with me to train and equip followers of Jesus to “run the race.” In the words of the Apostle Paul:

*Remember that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize. You also must run in such a way that you will win. All athletes practice strict self-control. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I am not like a boxer who misses his punches. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)*

For the Christian, “the race” is the role or calling God has given to us, a purpose and plan for each of his followers to fulfill in his redemptive story. We train to win the prize. I like the words of the chorus of one song: “I come tonight to yield my right. I give my life as an offering, like the one you gave me. It may not make a difference, it may not change a single life, it may not move a single stone, but it pleases you, it pleases you, it pleases you. Because it pleases you, I come, I come, I come.” It pleases God when we follow him in obedience and steward the life he has given us. In doing so, we win “the prize.” As we all know, obedience does not come easily but requires training and discipline.

We also train so that when we finish our race, we won’t be disqualified. Some of the most sobering words in scripture are Jesus’ words on eternal judgment in the story of the sheep and goats:

*Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, “Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his demons! For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn’t give me anything to drink I was a stranger, and you didn’t invite me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me no clothing. I was sick and in prison and you didn’t visit me.” Then they reply, “Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?” And he will answer, “I assure you, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.” And they will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous will go into eternal life. (Matthew 25:31-44)*

The people Jesus is condemning to hell called him “Lord, Lord.” They thought they were following him. Easy beliefism is a growing cancer in the Western Church and leads to a false security. One can give intellectual assent to belief in Christ, but in reality there is no change of heart. And without a change of heart, there can be no spiritual transformation.

### **Whom Do We Train?**

*“And he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the Body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness” (Ephesians 4:11-13).*

We are to use the gifts God has given us to train and equip “the saints.” According to Jon Courson, “Contrary to what many think, the Church does not exist primarily to evangelize. It exists to build the saints so that they, in turn, will do the work of the ministry.”<sup>1</sup> What we are talking about here is the living out of 1 Peter 2:5: “*You yourselves are being built into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer*

*spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*” It seems we may need another reformation of the Church, a transformation of the clergy. Clergy need to move from being the ministers in the church, to being those who train, empower, and shepherd the laity as ministers.

### **How Do We Train?**

When it comes to methodology for equipping, we have no better example than Jesus himself. Jesus used the school of life to train his disciples; he was all about relationships. In the words of Bill Hybels, he had the “be with” factor. Jesus spent time with his disciples: they ate, slept, and traveled together. Where Jesus went, they all went. Through this small, focused band of disciples, Jesus created the spark that would light the world on fire and ensure the spread of Christianity throughout the world.

Jesus understood how to be with people, to spend time with them, and to impart important lessons in that context. Jesus modeled for his disciples what we wanted them to do, and then told them to go do the same. Paul in also modeled for us Jesus’ style of training: *“You have heard me teach many things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass these on to others”* (2 Timothy 2:2).

Jesus passed on his love and compassion for children, women, and the discarded. He fed five thousand, calmed the storm, and raised the dead. Through each of these “experiences” they had together, Jesus’ disciples developed a heart for people and a confidence in their own calling and giftedness.

### **What Do We Train?**

We have no record in the Bible of Jesus teaching his disciples skills like “how to lead a small group discussion.” He always worked on character transformation and modeled care of people. He taught his disciples to trust him and to live by faith, believing in that which they could not see. He shattered their conceptions about society and people and reformed them in his own image. We must do the same. We must train people to be followers of Jesus, to live life as he did. We must help them know him and obey him.

I believe at least three things lead a person to spiritual transformation: (1) relationships with more mature followers of Christ where life is shared, (2) engaging in faith-stretching experiences with God that cause us to have to put our trust in him, and (3) exposure to and training in the spiritual disciplines. These things lead to life transformation and fulfilling our part in God’s redemptive plan.

### **Conclusion**

With the [2010 Lausanne World Congress](#) approaching, we have a unique and perhaps unprecedented opportunity to impact the world with the forward progress of the gospel. In fact, it may be one of the most significant opportunities in this decade to envision, train, and equip the Church to fulfill its mission in the world. Let’s make the most of it.

### **Endnote**

1. Courson, Jon. 2003. *Application Commentary on the New Testament*. Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

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# LAUSANNE REPORTS

## An Overview of Issues Affecting Evangelization in the United States

By Jim Tebbe

**When I am not working with the Lausanne Movement, part of my “day” job is to direct InterVarsity Christian Fellowship’s twenty thousand strong Urbana missions conferences.** Although I have lived most of my life outside the United States, for the last six years I have been immersed in North American student culture through Urbana.

Values, morality, means of communication, church attendance, spiritual interest, passions, etc., point to a major change taking place in North America today. This affects how Christians engage with those who do not believe and how they perceive the mandate to make disciples of all nations. Some of these changes are negative; others are not. My observations in this brief article are drawn largely from my experience with Urbana and what I read to equip me for my job. My perspective is from working with students.

### The Bad News

How Americans think about and participate in church is changing. Mainline denominations and the Catholic Church have been in decline for years, and with that, denominational loyalty is dying. We will be dropping the question of denominational affiliation for Urbana '09 because it no longer produces meaningful data. Most students do not identify with or perhaps even know the denomination of the church they attend.

Attrition is not just an issue for mainline denominations. There is concern among American evangelicals from a broader spectrum that we are losing our young people. High school students actively involved in their church youth groups are dropping out of Christian activity (e.g., church attendance or participation in a college Christian fellowship) at an alarming rate. The **Youth Transition Network**, a group of agencies which have come together to help students transition from high school into adult faith while in college, believes the attrition rate to be somewhere between sixty and eighty-five percent. In some communities, such as Korean American churches, it may even be higher. This phenomenon is relatively new and, unless changed, will have an impact on the established Church in the next twenty years.

On the other hand, the number of mega churches, both charismatic and non-charismatic, and the percentage of overall churchgoers who attend them is increasing. While many of these are “seeker friendly” churches, reaching out to those who don’t believe or who have lapsed in their faith, the data still shows that the vast majority of influx into these large churches comes as transfers from other churches. These mega churches have resources and programs that meet a wide spectrum of needs. Community can be found in small groups within the churches. Smaller churches suffer and big churches grow; however, the overall percentage of the population who attend church is declining.

One other piece of bad news—evangelicalism has a bad name in America today. We are known primarily for what we do *not* believe rather than what we *do* believe. We are known to be against abortion and homosexuality and are seen by those outside the church to be narrow-minded, hateful people. We are racially divided. Grocery stores, schools, etc., are much more multi-cultural than our churches. We are branded as hypocrites professing a morality we do not live up to.

For instance, statistically there is no difference in the divorce rate among those who claim to be evangelicals and the population at large. Outsiders have heard what we are against but are unable to articulate what we are for. The wonderful gospel message is not getting through. The 2007 book *Unchristian* by David Kinnaman of the Barna Group points this out with fairly stark research data.

## **The Good News**

Now for some good news: the Church in America is moving toward becoming a people in exile rather than the majority faith that is often little more than cultural Christianity. Most things about a church in exile are good. It is a time for purification. A church in exile has more in common with a pilgrim church, a phenomenon we see in much of the Majority World, than being part of the powerful majority culture. The American Church, as a church in exile, can be better connected in the world without being a power source. Finally, the Bible assumes God's people will be in the minority, as light in the world of darkness. The Church is best when it is a counter-culture in society—either as an exilic church or as a pilgrim church.

We are starting to see signs of how this change is playing out. At Urbana '06, Rev. Oscar Muriu of Nairobi Chapel spoke on [how American Christians can contribute to world mission](#) today. He talked about a history of dominance and organizational control. Older people who evaluated it welcomed it as a profound and useful message. The student evaluation, however, was one of puzzlement. They did not understand the issue. They could never dream of relating the way many American missionaries have in the past. Their Christian worldview is much more egalitarian. They do not see themselves in a position of power. Why? Because they now belong to a church in exile where most people around them do not believe or behave as they do.

Despite the bad name evangelicals have, there is an openness to the gospel among this post-modern generation. But the expression of that openness is different. While young people are ever more attracted to Jesus, they are simultaneously leaving the church. In InterVarsity chapters across the US, almost thirty percent of the members are self-professed non-Christians.

They have joined the Fellowships because they are attracted to the community and to Christians. For three successive years now, conversions in InterVarsity have been all-time annual highs. At Urbana '06, I was astonished to see more than four hundred students stand to indicate a first-time decision for Christ when an invitation was given by a speaker teaching about evangelism. Urbana is a conference for Christians about missions. However, next time we will be better prepared for those who are not yet believers.

Although the exclusive claims of the gospel are hard for the younger generation to accept, they are being drawn to the Christian faith and the person of Jesus in large numbers. With this attraction comes a social activism that is part and parcel of what they believe.

There is a new breed of evangelicals growing up among young people today. They do not call themselves evangelicals. In fact, they often do not want to be categorized at all. They are highly committed to justice issues.

There is a movement that calls its adherents to sacrificial, incarnational living among the poor in order to communicate and live the gospel. This movement is strong and growing. This kind of commitment is attractive to people who are not believers. For years, InterVarsity has run campus missions whose purpose is to proclaim the gospel and invite students to put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, however, these missions are often set up in such a way as to involve non-Christians in activities that illustrate current human problems such as slavery or AIDS. From that platform, the gospel is presented. The response has been significant. I participated in a “Jesus, Justice, and Poverty” conference in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco (USA), where many of the homeless stay. Of the more than three hundred students participating, twenty percent were self-professed non-believers. They objected to some of the “Christianese” language, but responded strongly in their desire to know more about the Jesus who cared for the poor.

### **Young Catholics in North America**

In closing, I want to say something about young people in the Catholic Church. Relatively recently there has been a resurgence of spirituality among young Catholics in North America. For instance, the [Fellowship of Catholic University Students](#) (FOCUS), which is mostly active on Catholic university campuses, was founded by Curtis Martin. When I met Martin, he told me about his conversion experience through [Campus Crusade for Christ](#) and his call to minister within the Catholic Church. Their mission is “to know Christ Jesus, and to fulfill his Great Commission, by first living and then communicating the fullness of life within the family of God, the Church.”

God is raising up a generation of Christians whose ministry gifts and organizational perspective will be what is needed in our ever-changing world. For those of us who are older, it is our job to be attuned to God’s work, step into his agenda, and facilitate the ministry of a new generation of Christians in whom God is at work.

**Jim Tebbe** is vice president for missions and director of [InterVarsity Christian Fellowship](#)'s 20,000-student Urbana Missions Convention. He worked in Asia and the Middle East for twenty-five years with [Interserve](#). Tebbe is North American International Deputy Director for the [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#).

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