

LausanneWorldPulse.com

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PUBLISHER'S MEMO

Reconciliation in World Evangelization

By Doug Birdsall

This month, Lausanne World Pulse focuses on reconciliation in world evangelization. Reconciliation is not only a critical focus for the Lausanne movement, but moreover, we as Christians are saved and called for the essential work and ministry of reconciliation:

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

We are to be agents and ambassadors of God’s message of reconciliation—both in word and in deed.

Our ministry is toward the reconciliation of broken persons to Christ as well as broken people groups to each other. And nowhere is reconciliation more needed than within the very body of Christ for the effective witness of the power of God to the whole world. For Christ himself said that it is by our love for one another that the world would know we are his disciples and true bearers of his message of truth and reconciliation (John 13:34). To this end, Lausanne is committed to continuing and deepening its engagement in the hard work of reconciliation.

In this issue of LWP, Chris Rice focuses on the **Lausanne Occasional Paper 51** on reconciliation, which emerged from the **2004 Forum for World Evangelization** in Pattaya, Thailand. Sam Barket goes further to illuminate and highlight the journey and exciting work of Issue Group 22 on reconciliation since the 2004 Forum. Going beyond the difficult work of reconciliation, Paulus Widjaja explores the importance and necessity of developing a culture and ethos of peace and evangelism.

Looking deeper into the active application of reconciliation, Lisa Loden of Israel explores scriptural application of Psalm 133 and John 17 in Christian witness, specifically in the war-torn, pain-filled Middle East context. Celestin Musekura also contributes a story illustrating the power of reconciliation in Christ and what evangelism looks like in Rwanda.

It is my hope that this issue on reconciliation will be especially illuminating as well as galvanizing in your thinking and your work in world evangelization. The task of the whole Church taking the whole world the message of the whole gospel of life, hope, healing and reconciliation is enormous. Let us continue to press on in our call and our work to reconcile: (1) sinners to our compassionate God, (2) warring factions to a community of peace and grace and (3) a broken body to the radiant body of the Church she was called to be. God bless you and your ministry.

Doug Birdsall is executive chair of the [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#). He served as president of [Asian Access](#) from 1991 to 1997 and continues to serve on their board of directors. Birdsall is a graduate of Wheaton College, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Harvard University. He is co-publisher of [Lausanne World Pulse](#).

NEWS BRIEFS

AROUND THE WORLD: Top Ten Places of Persecution

According to a report from [Minority Rights Group International](#), the top ten places where ethnic and religious minorities are persecuted are: Somalia, Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Pakistan, Angola and the Russian Federation. ([Minority Rights Group International](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: Leadership Changes for WEA Theological Commission

At the August meeting of the [World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission](#) (WEA-TC) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, several transitions in leadership took place. Among them: Dr. Rolf Hille (Tuebingen, Germany) stepped down from his dual role of chair and executive director of WEA-TC to become chair. Dr. David Parker was appointed executive director. Dr. Brian Edgar (Asbury Theological Seminary) was appointed vice-chair, replacing Dr. Ken Gnanakan (Bangalore, India). Dr. David Hilborn (UK) was replaced by his successor at the [UK Evangelical Alliance](#), Dr. Justin Thacker. Dr. James Nkansah (Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology) was appointed as an African representative. Dr. Chris Hall (Eastern University, Pennsylvania, USA) was elected as a North American representative. ([World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission](#))

ASIA AND AFRICA: Asia and Africa Dominate Top Twenty Bible Translation Needs List

Asian and African nations account for three-quarters of the world's top twenty countries with the greatest remaining needs for Bible translation. Eight countries in Asia and seven in Africa are on the list. Following are the twenty countries most in need of translation work: Indonesia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, India, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Malaysia, Tanzania, Nepal, Vanuatu, Vietnam, Sudan, Iran, Myanmar, Laos, Chad, Central African Republic, Mexico and Russia. ([Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada](#))

CANADA: IFES Welcomes New General Secretary

At its 2007 World Assembly in Ontario, Canada, Dr. Daniel Bourdagné of Chad became the fourth general secretary of the [International Fellowship of Evangelical Students](#) (IFES), succeeding Lindsay Brown. Bourdagné gave the closing World Assembly address in French. He and his wife Halymah had both knelt on stage earlier for the laying on of hands and had declared their assent to each of the truths of the Fellowship's doctrinal basis, read out by the whole Assembly simultaneously in three languages. IFES' primary calling is to proclaim Christ in the world's universities. Now in its sixtieth anniversary year, IFES has movements in 152 nations. Only seventeen countries have yet to be pioneered. Bourdagné also serves as the Lausanne International Deputy Director for Francophone Africa. ([InterVarsity Christian Fellowship USA](#))

CHINA SAR (Special Administrative Region): Religious Freedom

A year before the opening of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Hong Kong Christian leaders have asked China to grant true religious freedom in the country. "Even though Beijing tried to give the impression it would improve its human rights record, when it was applying to host the 2008 Olympic Games, there was no substantial evidence to show its human rights situation had improved," the Rev. Kwok Nai-Wang, a consultant to the Christian Conference of Asia, told [Ecumenical News International](#). ([Ecumenical News International](#))

ERITREA: One More Martyrdom

Christians in Eritrea confirmed that 33-year-old Migsti Haile died 5 September at the Weaa Military Training

Centre, reportedly as a result of torture for refusing to sign a letter recanting her faith. Haile was among a group of ten single Christian women who had been arrested in 2006 at a church gathering in Keren. She spent eighteen months imprisoned under severe pressure. Haile was an active member of the Rhema church. In May 2002, the Eritrean government criminalized all independent Protestant churches, closing their buildings and banning them from even meeting together in private homes. According to Open Doors, more than two thousand Eritrean Christians remain locked up and subjected to severe torture for their religious beliefs in the nation's jails, police stations and military camps. All have been denied legal counsel or trial, with no written charges filed against them. During the past year, at least four Christians have died from physical mistreatment while under arrest. ([Open Doors USA](#))

FRANCE: Agreed upon Code of Conduct for Christian Conversions

A [World Evangelical Alliance](#) (WEA) theologian says his group, which stresses the importance of the proclamation of the gospel, is ready to support a code of conduct on seeking conversions to Christianity. The code of conduct is being worked on by a group of traditional Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox churches as well as by Roman Catholics. "‘Evangelical’ and ‘ecumenical’ Christians have never been as close in this regard as they are today. Thus, something that would not have been possible thirty years ago has become achievable," said Thomas Schirrmacher, a German theologian who chairs the WEA's [International Institute for Religious Freedom](#). ([Ecumenical News International](#))

HONG KONG: New President for Asian Outreach

After serving as international president for [Asian Outreach](#) for twenty-five years, the Rev. Dr. David Wang has transferred the duties to Dr. Francis Tsui. Wang has been involved with Asian Outreach for forty years; he will continue to serve as president emeritus, as a minister-at-large and in a mentoring role. Most recently, Tsui served as vice president, supporter and board member of Asian Outreach. As international president, Tsui will lead Asian Outreach supporters and workers to reach Asia for Christ. For over forty years, Asian Outreach has been committed to winning Asians for Christ, and seeing Asians win others for Christ. This is done through strategic partnerships with local churches, indigenous community initiatives and evangelistic groups. Asian Outreach has more than fifty projects and ministries in over twenty-six countries. ([Asian Outreach](#))

ROMANIA: The Role of Christianity in Promoting European Unification

[European Commission](#) (EU) president José Manuel Barroso has praised the role of Christianity in promoting European unification, and has appealed to religions to strengthen the values on which the unity of the continent is based. "A union that is reduced to its economic and geographic dimensions alone would lack unity," Barroso, who heads the executive arm of the 27-nation EU, spoke at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly meeting in Sibiu, Romania, on 6 September 2007. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

SRI LANKA: Churches Ethnically Divided

A senior leader in Sri Lanka's National Christian Council says that even the churches in his conflict-ridden country are ethnically divided, and need "to break down the walls of separation." So, he has outlined one way in which this might begin to happen. "If the churches are encouraged to break down the walls of separation in their local communities, they can become the life in their neighborhoods," asserted Peiris, a priest in the (Anglican) Church of Ceylon. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

UNITED KINGDOM: New Executive Director of Churches in Mission for EA

[Dr. Krish Kandiah](#) has been named the new executive director of churches in mission for the [Evangelical Alliance](#). Previously, he served as director of the [Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics](#) and tutor in evangelism at [Wycliffe Hall](#). Kandiah will be working to inspire and support EA member churches and organizations through networking, engaging with contemporary issues and exploring ways to enable congregations to discover a fresh love for the Bible. "I believe there are great opportunities for the Church in

contemporary Britain to faithfully and relevantly witness to Christ in word and deed, and I am looking forward to finding ways to do this together,” he said. ([Evangelical Alliance](#))

UNITED STATES: Wesleyan Coalition Strategic Planning Consultation

Approximately forty leaders from three holiness denominations met in August 2007 at the Wesleyan Church World Headquarters, for what is being called the “Wesleyan Coalition Strategic Planning Consultation.” General superintendents, general officials and district superintendents from the Wesleyan Church, the Evangelical Church of North America and the Evangelical Methodist Church met in the all-day sessions. According to Dr. Jerry G. Pence, Wesleyan Church Board of General Superintendents chair, the purpose of the meeting was “strategic planning for intentional collaboration of programs and ministries for our churches in North America, as well as our interested mission units.” ([Wesleyan Information Network](#))

THEMED ARTICLES: RECONCILIATION AND EVANGELISM

What Does Faithful Christian Witness Look Like in a World of Destructive Conflicts?

By Chris Rice

From Nigeria and India to the Balkans and Iraq, from Sudan and Sri Lanka to Northern Ireland and the Middle East, the mission of the Church takes place on a landscape of conflict, and increasingly so. In today’s world, there cannot be faithful Christian witness without an intimate relationship between mission, reconciliation and peace.

A question posed by a church leader in Rwanda helps to focus the challenge. During the 1994 Rwandan genocide, he commented, “Many of my parishioners participated in killing. How do we form Christians who say no to killing?”

Here we must say that our task to simply evangelism is not enough. Evangelism *into what?* Into what kind of Christianity? What are the implications for us when mission not only takes place on a landscape of destructive conflicts, but when the Christian community itself is often caught up in these conflicts?

These were the challenges we wrestled with three years ago at the [Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization](#) in Thailand. There, forty-seven Christian leaders from twenty-one countries met for the Issue Group on Reconciliation. Over several days of telling stories of pain and hope, worshipping together, eating together and a dramatic foot washing between representatives of divided groups, we shaped our Lausanne Occasional Paper, “[Reconciliation as the Mission of God: Christian Witness in a World of Destructive Conflicts.](#)”

The convictions articulated in the paper, highlighted below, point to a troubling situation and the need for a critical re-examination of mission and discipleship.

Reconciliation at the Core of God’s Mission

For Christians, reconciliation is not optional. The mission of God *is* reconciliation and is God’s initiative (2 Corinthians 5:16-21).

Yet a serious impediment to God’s mission is the Church being caught up in conflicts—places where the blood of ethnicity, tribe, racialism, sexual domination, caste, social class or nationalism flows stronger than the waters of baptism and Christian discipleship. At the same time, even in the worst conflicts, signs of hope can be detected in the Church. Christians have shaped many of the world’s most hopeful breakthroughs for reconciliation. The Church must celebrate, study and follow their Christ-like witness.

The Church and Ideologies of Escape

It is crucial to understand that the transmission of the gospel and the ministry of the Church do not run in pure, separate historical streams, but are carried on inside of and tainted by the world's poisoned, muddy histories.

Numerous ideologies of escape steer Christians away from faithful witness. These ideologies of escape include:

- **adopting numbers of conversions or church plants as a primary measure of Christianity's growth**, allowing churches or ministries to grow with superficial discipleship or in ways that perpetuate social division;
- **dualistic theologies which are silent about social problems**, reach individual salvation without social transformation or social involvement without personal conversion in Christ;
- **the fallacy of any ethnic, cultural, gender or national group's self-sufficiency**;
- **a false belief in God's creation of essentially different people groups**, justifying permanent boundaries between them (such as was the case with South African apartheid);
- **a spirit of individualism** seen in Christian disunity; and
- **an underlying message of cheap grace** which encourages superficial discipleship and reconciliation without repentance.

It is urgent that the Christian community learn to name and unlearn these ideologies.

The Critical Need for a Theological Framework for Peace

While it is a problem when Christians do not see how peace and reconciliation fit into Jesus, it is also a problem when we do not see how the presence of Jesus Christ profoundly reshapes a vision of justice and reconciliation.

Indeed, the fullness of reconciliation is friendship with God in Jesus Christ. The wholeness that God seeks to bring to all areas of brokenness is summed up in the rich scriptural notion of *shalom*. Shalom as God's peace envisions the wholeness, well-being and flourishing of all people and all creation in their interrelatedness with God and with each other.

Shalom embraces mercy, truth, justice and peace through both personal conversion in Christ and social transformation. One crucial implication is that Christians must stand against any destructive or dehumanizing barrier, whether those who suffer are Christian or not.

Reconciliation as an Essential, Long and Costly Journey

This work of becoming peacemakers between divided people is not secondary or optional, but is central to Christian mission along with planting churches and making disciples. This witness begins at home. For the Church to make peace, she herself must embody God's peace as a living sign of God's reconciled community.

This vocation of reconciliation is not a one-time event or a linear journey of progress. It is a long and costly journey. In a Christian understanding, no one has the greater burden to take the first step in this journey—whether majority or minority, powerful or powerless, aggressor or afflicted. The initiative for reconciliation begins wherever people find the courage to lose themselves and discover the human face of the “other.” Indeed, reconciliation requires a risky journey in which all groups are transformed and called to costly sacrifices. Reconcilers are often seen as traitors by their own people, and often become a bridge painfully walked on by both sides.

When Do We See Reconciliation?

Only God knows what true reconciliation looks like. The challenge is to see where we are in the journey and to point out signs of hope. The Church is called to eagerly pursue hope in three dimensions.

1. The Church should be a key indication of hope, a living alternative, infusing and challenging the social sphere with a more radical vision of God's reconciliation. At the heart of this witness are blended congregations where historically separated peoples share deep, common life and Christian institutions unlearn discrimination and unjust use of resources. It is also critical that Christians cross barriers and pursue a transnational identity which forms them into people whose ultimate loyalty is to Christ alone.

2. The Church should have faithful practices of social engagement, even if they result in no visible change. These are profound indications of hope amidst destructive conflicts. Examples are when Christians forgive persecutors, prophetically challenge unjust situations and offer hospitality across divides.

3. The Church should eagerly work for indications of reconciliation in society. Two examples include (1) enemy leaders entering dialogue, stopping violence, seeking restorative justice and seeing truth around a painful shared history appropriately and communally remembered and (2) communities becoming places of shared, peaceable life.

Placing Reconciliation at the Heart of Christian Mission in the Twenty-first Century

In a world increasingly marked by conflict, there is an urgent need for the Christian community to embrace and embody peace and reconciliation as central to its life and mission.

Toward this end, the final call of the paper is to:

- call the Church to humble examination,
- identify and dismantle the escapist ideologies and practices which steer us from reconciliation,
- cross difficult divisions and barriers to engage those we are separated from,
- preach and teach costly peacemaking as normative of Christian faith,
- refuse neutrality or silence in relationship to destructive social conditions and
- intentionally shape pastors and congregations able to live an alternative life of shalom.

In all this, we joyfully and publicly proclaim God's victory in Christ and God's plan for the future of reconciling "all things" in himself.

The Lausanne Occasional Paper "Reconciliation as the Mission of God," including "Roots & Realities" vignettes and case studies of pain and hope, is available at:

www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP51_IG22.pdf. A shorter booklet is available in English and French (forthcoming in Arabic and Spanish) at: www.reconciliationnetwork.com/.

Chris Rice is co-director of the Center for Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School in North Carolina, USA. He served as convener of the Lausanne 2004 Issue Group on Reconciliation. He is author of *More Than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel* and *Grace Matters*.

Understanding and Witnessing as a Christian in Baghdad

By The Rev'd Cannon Andrew White

As I sit and write this article, I can hear automatic weapons firing. I cannot imagine the tragedy going on outside our compound at this very moment. Constantly, I have people asking me to help them escape to another nation. It is not pleasant to live in one of the most dangerous places on earth. Yet I know this is where my work is; this is where God has sent me and this is where I love to be, here in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq. Today is Sunday, so we had church this morning. As I led worship, I saw my congregation place their body armour, rifles and helmets aside and start to praise the living God.

Yesterday I had my Iraqi congregation. I could not leave the international zone and go to church; evidently, too many people want to kill me at the moment so I cannot leave the secure area. My congregation had to come to me. This took hours as they were all forced to go through an intense security process. Yet these Christians are the most wonderful people I have ever served. They worship our Lord with great intensity and joy! In the midst of their darkness and fear, Jesus is their joy. When you lose everything, you realise that Jesus is all you have.

In our Iraqi church, people no longer have food, water or homes. All they have must be provided by the church. Over two thousand Christians (who have been chased from their homes and threatened with death if they return) are now sleeping on church floors in Baghdad. Yet they continue to love Jesus. My work includes not just pastoring churches, but also dealing with religious sectarianism. In essence, I am a tentmaker. It is complex and difficult work. I do not always deal with very nice people. If you are trying to reduce violence, you can only do it by dealing with the people who cause it. Increasingly, these people are religious. In our context, they are Muslims—Shi'ia and Sunni—creating violence in God's name. When religion is at the heart of the cause of terror, you must use religion to deal with it.

I am accepted because I am seen as being a religious figure and one who has been around for nearly a decade—years before the Iraq War began. In my work, I deal with people who are suffering a degree of loss. Although they all want to be given something back, we must first discern what has been lost—property, money, influence? Sadly, governments spend billions of dollars on weapons and military tactics and very little on the process of reconciliation.

Proclaiming the Gospel in Baghdad?

In the midst of this war and trauma, we have a gospel to proclaim, the good news of Jesus. The whole notion of evangelism must be treated totally and utterly different in this context. There is no preaching on the streets or encouraging your congregation to convert the masses. Such activity would result in certain death.

Despite these restrictions, there is ample opportunity to show and share the good news of Jesus. The prime way is through love and prayer. I have seen people come to faith in Jesus. I have baptised people and then sought to find protection for them as the death threats grew. One little girl whose mother became a Christian started telling friends that every night her mother talked to Jesus. It was not long before they also were forced to flee. I have wept when people I have loved had come to faith and then been killed. Here it is a matter of life and death.

Here, it really is a matter of taking up your cross and following Jesus. Shortly after the war began, a large number of missionaries came here. Fortunately, they have all left. It became far too dangerous for them. Very few of those who arrived understood the first thing about the context they were trying to minister in. When foreigners come to Iraq, they often have no understanding of this culture. Often they do not even know of the amazing history of Christianity and continually do things that endanger local Christians.

Added to this, most of the foreigners and missionaries who came to Baghdad did not speak any Arabic. Their Christian translators were seriously put at risk; most have had to flee the country.

It is important to remember that even what people say and do in their own countries and contexts can have serious consequences for Christians in Iraq. With mass media, what is said in the West can seriously effect what happens here. Radical liberalism may be safe in the West; however, here it simply kills people. Because of this, I have recently become more conservative in my speech. I love my people and they are suffering enough already. I want no further harm to come to them.

Coming Alongside the Church in Baghdad

Despite the difficulties of serving Jesus in Baghdad, there are several things we, as God's Church, must and can do.

1. Love

Jesus taught us to love our enemies. Although it is not easy to love bad people, God can give us the grace to do it. Throughout my life I have listened to countless sermons, telling us we do not have to like our enemies—we just have to love them. Love is reduced to not pursuing the negative of hate.

To this attitude I say nonsense! Love is real. It is difficult, it is costly and it changes lives because it enables people to see Jesus. In our context, it is not some liberal concept of evangelism without risks—even loving these people is taking great risks. Love does and has completely changed people. However, those doing the work of the gospel in the most traumatic of places cannot even talk about the true nature of their work for fear of their lives. Our Embassy here in Baghdad has had to send me home. In the past, I have said too much and the death threats have come in abundance. The truth around here is that we really need to deal with fear; however, perfect love does cast out all fear.

2. Pray

We also need to seriously pray. I have a small group of intercessors who pray and intercede for us in our work. Although I cannot always tell them what is really happening, they often know because God tells them. There have been countless times when our intercessors have told me they have been praying about actual things that happened which I have not told them about. We should expect our Lord to work in supernatural ways when we are dealing with supernatural things.

3. Study Islam and Arabic

Working in an Islamic culture means the need to study both Islam and Arabic. It is essential we know the context we are ministering in. It is necessary we understand how our faith is perceived in the Islamic faith and context. Among Muslims, I have often seen Jesus even more revered than in Christianity. In Islam, there is even the belief in the second coming of Jesus, so even before one starts talking about faith, there is a need to understand how our faith is seen by the other.

4. Seriously Support Local Christians

It is very often the case that those who come to minister in this context have no idea about the local Christians. Here in Iraq, people have followed the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for a very long time since a really miserable and reluctant evangelist named Jonah turned up by submarine transportation 2,700 years ago. He was followed seven hundred years later by another miserable person, doubting Thomas, who was on his way to India. He also stopped off in Nineveh and told the people that their Messiah had come one thousand miles down the road in Israel. They believed him, and to this day Nineveh is full of Christians. Many in my church in Baghdad believe in Jesus because of these two miserable people. They were the best evangelists ever.

The Christians here in Iraq are wonderful and have an amazing history. At Christmas their evangelistic activity is to have a party for the locals where they show them love and give them food. Before the event, the Christians seriously pray for the event. If we really support and love the people here, we will provide them with food, water and money so they can continue to show love so that the gospel will be made known.

5. Expect Miracles

In such trauma, we must rely on the miraculous more and more. When people are sick, ill and dying, we often have no doctors to take them to. They have either left or been killed. Jesus often comes and heals our sick people. Because of this, people of other faiths see we have a God of miracles and it is not long before they want to come to the Great Physician as well. They want something back in their loss and Jesus alone can give it to them. Even in the midst of this crisis, God is still real and full of love. When people see him, they are drawn to him. And as we continue to serve him, we love, pray, seek to understand our context and the local church and expect miracles.

The Rev'd Cannon Andrew White is president and CEO of the [Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East](#), chaplain of St. Georges Church Baghdad, Anglican/Episcopal chaplain of the International Zone Baghdad and senior advisor in Inter Religious Affairs to the Prime Minister of Iraq. Over the past few years he has acted as a negotiator in many conflict situations, including the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the riots between Muslims and Christians in Northern Nigeria. In recent years, he has been awarded several significant prizes for his peace work, including the US Cross of Valor, the Tanenbaum Peace Maker in Action Prize, the International Sternberg Prize and The ICCJ Prize for Sustained Intellectual Contribution to Jewish Christian Relations and in 2003 the Three Faith's Forum Prize for Inter-Faith Relations.

The Reconciliation Journey to and since the 2004 Lausanne Forum

By Dr. Samuel Barkat

At times, international gatherings and conferences may seem to amount to no more than an opportunity for participants to see old friends and listen to speeches. However, for me the journey of preparing for, participating in and continuing the work of the [Reconciliation Issue Group](#) of the [Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization](#) in Pattaya, Thailand, has been one of the most exciting and meaningful experiences of my life.

Preparation for Pattaya

I was asked to be on the leadership team for the Reconciliation Issue Group at the 2004 Forum. This team, composed of members from several countries, different denominations and diverse organizations, met several times in preparation for the Forum. Together, among other things, we drafted a paper titled, "Reconciliation as the Mission of God."

One of our meetings was held in Rwanda in 2004, the tenth anniversary of the Rwanda genocide. The very painful and sobering experience of learning about the genocide joined us together in a powerful way as a team to deal with the issues of reconciliation in a broken world. This experience prepared us for working with a much larger group of participants at Lausanne who came from conflict-ridden and broken places in the world.

Participation in Pattaya

It was very exciting to be with hundreds of followers of Christ in Pattaya. Clearly, the Pattaya participants took their faith, the mission of God and their own responsibilities in kingdom work quite seriously. Although I enjoyed participating in the larger plenary sessions, I found my most meaningful interactions and learning took place in the Reconciliation Issue Group.

Our Issue Group included Palestinians and Israelis, Hutus and Tutsis, blacks and whites from North America and South Africa, men and women, Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox, South and North Koreans, and representatives of other groups. We listened to each others' stories, laughed together, cried together, worked together and, above all, prayed together.

The most thrilling experience at Pattaya occurred on the evening when we were scheduled to present a summary

report of our work to the entire Lausanne assembly. We were faced with the dilemma of deciding how to present the results of several years of intense work in a five-minute report. Jeannette Yep and I shared our report as briefly as possible and, as much as possible, without using words. In three or four sentences we shared our vision.

Immediately following this, about thirteen of our colleagues from the Reconciliation Issue Group joined us on the stage, forming clusters of two or three, each with a basin, a towel and a jug of water. The clusters included a Palestinian and an Israeli; a Hutu and a Tutsi; a man and a woman; a black, an Asian and a white; and a Protestant, a Catholic and an Orthodox. Very solemnly and gently, the members of each cluster poured water into the basins and washed each others' feet. Each of us made eye contact, giving a loving, tender look to the person whose feet we were washing. It was indeed a holy moment.

The audience responded by leaping to their feet. There was thunderous applause and tears were running down many faces. Audience members embraced and many tried to run to the front of the assembly hall to take pictures of what was happening on the stage. This emotional outpouring from the audience expressed their yearning for reconciliation among people whose relationships are torn and broken because of vandalized *shalom*. My mind quickly turned to how much God yearns for reconciliation among his creation and how he longs for people to be reconciled with him. How great must be the yearning of the God whose mission is reconciliation, and who made provision for this reconciliation through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ!

The Journey since Pattaya

The paper written by the Pattaya Reconciliation Issue Group, "[Reconciliation as the Mission of God](#)," has been translated from English into French and Arabic, and will soon be available in Spanish. It has been distributed widely at conferences and gatherings and has been well received both by students of theology and practitioners.

The participants in our Issue Group left Pattaya committed to accompanying each other on the journey of reconciliation. In April 2005, fifteen members of our Issue Group met at Coventry Cathedral in England. We developed and adopted a membership commitment for the [Global Network for Reconciliation](#) (GNR). The mission of the GNR is:

"As followers of Jesus Christ, we pursue God's mission of reconciliation as we embody its vision in our network and inspire the global Christian community to engage a world of brokenness and destructive conflicts."

We agreed on the following shared commitments:

1. Pray for one another, the Church and the world.
2. Maintain our biblical vision for reconciliation.
3. Practice confession and forgiveness in our personal lives, and seek healing.
4. Build relationships and partnerships, inviting Christians around the world to join us.
5. Stay in touch and gather to share stories, discern the realities of brokenness, celebrate signs of hope and work together toward reconciliation.
6. Develop and achieve shared goals.
7. Contribute and share resources.

8. Seek the Church's renewal and help mobilize the Christian community to be partners in God's reconciling mission.
9. Advocate and speak prophetically for reconciliation, including engaging church, religious, civic and political leaders.

The group at Coventry appointed a leadership team of seven individuals from different parts of the world to carry on the work of the GNR. In our May 2007 conference call, the GNR leadership team adopted a plan to focus on the following four activities:

1. Annual gatherings
2. Quarterly conference calls open to any member of GNR
3. A newsletter
4. Inviting new people to the annual gatherings

Our 2007 gathering, scheduled for 15-17 November, will be hosted by the Center for Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School (directed by Chris Rice and Emmanuel Katongole) in Durham, North Carolina, USA. The Center for Contemporary Christianity (directed by David Porter) in Belfast, Northern Ireland, will host our 2008 gathering. A 2009 gathering is planned for a location outside of the United States and Europe. In 2010, our gathering will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, in conjunction with the meetings of the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization.

I am thankful that the reconciliation work begun in Pattaya is continuing. I am excited to partner with other followers of Christ as together we partner with our God, whose mission is reconciliation. We are grateful to the Lausanne movement for their encouragement and support on this journey.

Dr. Samuel Barkat is the executive director of the [Institute for Collaborative Engagement](#), which works on issues of organizational and social change and conflict resolutions. He is an international consultant to many colleges and universities, and for-profit and not-for-profit organizations in the US and overseas.

The Culture of Peace and Evangelism

By Paulus Widjaja

When the General Council of the Mennonite World Conference met in Guatemala in 2000, I noticed something striking during the discussion of global mission. When less affluent Christians spoke, it was clear they were not hampered by a split between peace and mission. They could discuss the Church's mission in the same breath as the problems of racism, street children, hunger, prostitution and war.

It was clear that in the hearts and minds of these people, there was no division between mission and peace, or between the soul and the body. For them, the gospel of Jesus Christ addresses both body and soul, and it calls Christians equally to both the ministry of proclaiming the good news and to living out the new reality of God's kingdom of peace.

One Integrated Mission

Unfortunately, for much of the Church in recent history, evangelism and peacemaking have been seen as separate tasks. The Church's witness to Christ has been clouded by the myth that we have to choose either/or;

either evangelism or peacemaking. The two are not seen as one integrated witness that the Church must undertake simultaneously and holistically.

In the face of such a mythic dualism, we need to recall that the good news of peace that Jesus has brought includes, indeed starts with, reconciliation with God, but also encompasses reconciliation and wholeness in our relationships with other people, both interpersonally and collectively. Jesus' messianic peace has to do not only with the forgiveness of sin and guilt, but also has a vital social dimension.

The Bible's understanding of peace is much broader than an absence of violence or conflict. *Shalom*—the Old Testament word for peace—and its New Testament counterpart, *eirene*, encompass material well-being, just relationships, moral integrity and spiritual wholeness of humans and all creation.

The peace-giving power of God's salvation becomes clearly visible when individuals and people groups who are enemies, like the Jews and Greeks at the Church's birth, become reconciled, and when our communal relationships are marked by justice and integrity where there was once oppression, exploitation and broken relationships. Jesus' messianic peace is indeed both deconstructive and constructive. It is deconstructive in that it breaks down human barriers that have divided people. Yet it is also constructive because it establishes a new community consisting of former enemies with a new way of life.

Thus our ability to proclaim God's good news of salvation is measured by how well we, as the Church, embody the new reality of God's kingdom of peace in our communal life. When churches reflect the same divisions, injustices, unresolved conflicts and violence of our world, the integrity and credibility of our witness to God's transforming salvation is severely damaged. A good litmus test involves asking ourselves two questions:

1. Where in the world do the churches grow the most?
2. Where in the world do brutal and bloody civil wars take place the most?

If the answer to both questions is the same, that indicates a serious problem for our ability to faithfully proclaim the gospel. On the contrary, when churches understand embodying peace as an integral part of their mission, they become compelling, living signs of God's reconciling love that attract people to love Jesus Christ and follow him.

Church History and Peacemaking

Church history and the New Testament both demonstrate that many of the earliest Christians understood embodying a culture of peace in their churches as an integral part of their calling. Justin, a teacher who was martyred for his faith in Rome in the second century, stated an early Christian understanding; namely, that Isaiah 2:2-4, in which the prophet anticipates the transformation of swords into ploughshares, has been fulfilled in the Church. Justin reported about their experience:

We...delighted in war, in the slaughter of one another, and in every other kind of iniquity; [but we] have in every part of the world converted our weapons of war into implements of peace—our swords into ploughshares, our spears into farmer's tools—and we cultivate piety, justice, brotherly charity, faith and hope, which we derive from the Father through the crucified Savior.¹

Justin knew that God had done something new for the human race through sending the crucified Savior Jesus and causing people from many nations to gravitate to Jesus, the new Zion. The result was a people of peace made up of former enemies. People of different tribes and nations, who used to hate each other, now shared life together and dismantled the ways of living that had divided them. Together, they created a culture of justice, faith and hope. For Justin, as for Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen and other early Christian fathers, God's peace,

which Isaiah anticipated, has been realized through Christ. The Church, in which former enemies have become reconciled as brothers and sisters, is evidence of this new reality.

Justin's belief that the Church is called to embody a culture of peace comes from the Church's earliest beginnings. In Acts, the founding of the Church was the product of God's peacemaking activity. Pentecost brought together Jews from many parts of the ancient world (Acts 2:9-11) who spoke many languages. The linguistic chaos of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) was transformed at Pentecost as God united people who had previously been separated into one body.

In an even more dramatic act of reconciliation, Acts 10 tells us that God, through divine visions, brought together Peter, a devout Jew, with the Roman officer Cornelius for a shared meal. God called Peter to cross the boundary between Jews and Greeks, both by daring to enter the soldier-filled Roman-garrison city of Caesarea and through eating the non-kosher food offered by his host. The Holy Spirit came upon all those at the gathering, both Jew and Greek, confirming that God's work in Christ had broken down the dividing walls and reconciled these historic enemies into one new people.

As they recognized this reality, the Church responded by baptizing the new Gentile believers and welcoming them as brothers and sisters. Receiving the good news of Jesus Christ meant, for these early believers, receiving the good news that those who had been their enemies were now their family. Their changed social relationships with each other were a visible sign of God's reconciling presence in their midst.

Peacemaking in Today's Conflict-ridden World

Brian McLaren has correctly warned that contemporary Christians need a radical rethinking of our understanding and practice of evangelism. He argues that we need to recognize that we may not fully understand the good news of the gospel, and therefore, we need to rediscover it. We need to understand that the gospel is not first of all "information on how one goes to heaven after death...but rather a vision of what life can be in *all* its dimensions"² and a way of life to bring that vision into reality.

McLaren also urges Christians to redefine our understanding of discipleship, bearing in mind that evangelism is not about recruiting refugees from earth to heaven, but recruiting revolutionaries who are willing to compassionately "bring the good and healing will of heaven to earth in all its crises."³ In addition, McLaren emphasizes that our faith must involve actively doing good, including pursuing reconciliation with other Christians. If we fail to live out the Great Commandment, our pursuit of the Great Commission will be fruitless.

Justin, writing to the Roman emperor in 165 AD, reported, "Many who were once on your side have turned from the ways of violence and tyranny, overcome by observing the consistent life of their neighbors."⁴ Communities today that seek to embody cultures of peace will experience similar conversions by those who are watching their communal life.

For many skeptical observers of the Church, the most convincing apologetic for Christianity is seeing the power of God's reconciling love at work in a living community of faith. For those whose people groups have historically suffered wrongs at the hands of Christians, only genuine repentance and an honest desire for reconciliation will open the way for them to receive Christ as truly good news. As we embrace the work of the Holy Spirit in making a new family out of enemies, our communal life will bear witness to the good news of Christ's peace.

Endnotes

1. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 110.2-3.
2. Brian McLaren. 2004. "A Radical Rethinking of Our Evangelistic Strategy." *Theology, News & Notes*. Fall: 4-6, 22.

3. Ibid.

4. Justin Martyr, 1 *Apology* 16.

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Remembering Genocide with Hope: Rwanda Heals Through Forgiveness and Reconciliation **By Celestin Musekura**

As a member of the Global Reconciliation Network and a co-convenor of Issue Group on Racial and Tribal Reconciliation at the Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization in Thailand, I and the staff of African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries, Inc. (ALARM) continue to make reconciliation a vital and integral part in the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Through a ministry of leadership development and biblical reconciliation in eight countries in East and Central Africa, we believe that without the work of reconciliation in countries like Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Northern Uganda and Sudan, it is impossible to reach out to scattered people governed by violence, hatred, retaliation and tribal wars. This is why the organization sees reconciliation as an element that cannot be divorced from evangelism and discipleship. In countries that have experienced genocide and where the Church is widely blamed for its participation in genocide by commission and omission, the organization brought together church leaders from both Hutus and Tutsi tribes for a public confession and a commitment to remember genocide with hope (not with hate). There was also a renewed commitment to fight genocide ideology through biblical teaching and practical actions.

Combating Genocide Through Forgiveness and Healing

On 24-25 April 2007, ALARM Rwanda—in conjunction with the Rwandan government Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports—conducted a retreat for sixty-two church legal representatives at the Kigali Serena Hotel. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the role of the Church in remembering the genocide and fighting its ideology.

The 1994 genocide resulted in the death of close to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Many church and community leaders were killed. ALARM was born to fill the leadership gap. Over the past ten years, ALARM and other organizations have been working to raise up leaders and encourage reconciliation in Rwanda and other nations that were affected. This event was especially significant because it was the first occasion in which church leaders together acknowledged the failure of the Church in preventing genocide through its teachings.

Many churches are disrespected today because they failed to intervene and in many cases even to condemn the genocide. Although more than a decade has passed since the tragedy, the Church as a whole has not come together to agree on a unified approach to reconcile and resolve the problems that resulted from it. In this sense, the groups responsible for the genocide were much more strategic than the Church has been in the aftermath.

During his address, ALARM Rwandan country director, Rev. André Mfitumukiza, said, "The Church has not been responsible enough in building and healing this nation. As church leaders, we are ashamed and guilty when many critics come to us through various speeches. However, we want to take up full responsibility for our failure and change our image as we work toward a better society."¹

As a step toward further reconciliation, Rev. Mfitumukiza identified himself as a Hutu and challenged all Hutus in the audience to come forward, kneel and apologize for the role their tribe had in the genocide. In return, Tutsi church leaders forgave the Hutus present and likewise asked forgiveness for the way they had generalized and criminalized all Hutus. This event was applauded nationally as an important event in bringing hope, healing and

reconciliation to the country.

ALARM Rwanda would like to acknowledge the financial contribution from World Relief Rwanda, which allowed many more leaders to attend. The church leaders promised to meet together again to continue discussing these problems. ALARM will coordinate a follow-up conference in partnership with **CARSA** (Christian Action for Reconciliation and Social Assistance) and EVM (Esther's Vision Ministries), who played major roles in the success of this historical event.

Reconciliation and Genocide Prisoners

Not only has ALARM been leading the Church of Rwanda in the process of healing and reconciliation, the organization has also trained genocide prisoners who were released by presidential pardon. From 25-27 September 2007, ALARM Rwanda conducted a workshop for fifty-three recently released genocide prisoners from all the provinces of Rwanda.

The workshop took place at the ALARM's Centre for Leadership and Forgiveness in Kigali. While these prisoners were released because they acknowledged their involvement in the genocide, they had not confessed their sins and did not know what it meant to be forgiven, the cost of forgiveness and how to receive it. Most prisoners expressed their sorrow for what they did. They also committed to seeking forgiveness from the relatives of those they murdered.

Five prisoners gave their lives to Christ as they understood that the ultimate reconciliation is between humanity and God. Through brokenness and hopelessness of genocide in Rwanda, God is bringing hope and restoration through the message of forgiveness and reconciliation. Christ must remain the foundation of any form of reconciliation. The Church has no other gospel message apart from that of pleading and imploring people to be reconciled to God and to each other (2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

Endnote

1. Taken from http://files.alarm-inc.org/briefings_issue9.html#articleReference

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Like Dew in a Dry Land: Reconciliation in the Middle East

By Lisa Loden

The story of humanity's redemption, restoration and reconciliation after sin and brokenness is the meta-narrative of scripture. It is in this context that both testaments speak of the importance God places on the unity of his redeemed people. Unity is neither an abstract doctrine nor an unattainable dream; it is the standard to which God's diverse people are both called and empowered to live.

Like a scarlet cord, the theme of unity weaves through the Bible, culminating in Paul's revelation of the "one new man" in the letter to the Ephesians and embodied in the multi-cultural throng from every family, tribe and tongue gathered together to worship the Lamb in Revelation 7. The brokenness caused by sin is finally healed and humanity is fully reconciled to God and to one another. One of the fruits of this reconciliation is unity.

Part of sin's pervasive legacy is humanity's seemingly inherent tendency to separate into warring factions. The gospel message is intended to overcome the enmity of sectarianism and division while maintaining the integrity and uniqueness of multiculturalism. As individuality is retained in the redeemed individual's relationship with

God, so is the uniqueness of diverse cultures preserved (Revelation 7:9). Jesus' prayer for the unity of his disciples in John 17:20-23 is not a cry for uniformity, but is rather a prayer that through the harmonious relationships among the disciples, paralleling the relationships within the Godhead, God's love would become visible to the world.

Unity among God's People

Psalm 133 is particularly instructive regarding the connection between unity, ministry and blessing in the framework of relationship within the people of God. Unity in this psalm is described as both ultimately good and experientially pleasant. This unity is compared to abundant moisture—dew from Mount Hermon, appearing in a normally dry place, the mountains of Zion in the Judean desert (133:3a).

In scriptural terms, dew is symbolic of refreshing and blessing. The heart of this psalm contains an additional metaphor for the blessing of unity. Aaron, the high priest, is pictured as being anointed to such a degree that he is completely drenched with oil (133:2). Anointing the priest was to empower him for ministry before God and to the people. The blessing of unity, God's people in harmonious relationship, is refreshment and empowerment for service bringing everlasting life and it is commanded by God himself (133:3b).

The world in the twenty-first century is deeply divided across ethnic, racial, national and political lines. Humanity's penchant to divide into warring factions is everywhere in evidence. Conflicts are both ancient and modern and they are ubiquitous across the globe. Tragically, the message of the gospel has not always resulted in unity among God's people living in places of conflict, especially when they are on opposite sides of ethnic, national, racial or political divides. Unity among God's people is particularly important in times and places where ethnic conflict exists.

Unity in the Middle East

The conflict in the Middle East is perhaps the oldest conflict in today's world. Israel and the Arab world are ancient enemies. From biblical times, the conflict continually recycles. The gospel has reached both Israel and the Arab world and today there are vibrant communities of believers in Jesus living among both peoples. In Israel and Palestine, these believers are increasingly aware of the need to be in relationship with one another. According to the world, they are enemies, but by the power of the gospel, they are brothers. Can these brothers dwell together in the unity prayed for by Jesus in John 17 and described in Psalm 133? In theory, the answer is yes, and happily, in practice this is a growing reality.

Congregations of Jewish believers meet with Arab Christian congregations in Israel. Pastors speak in one another's churches. Over Christmas holiday 2006, collections of money and clothing were sent by Messianic congregations and individual believers to the needy Christians of the Bethlehem area. This is unity characterized by mercy and compassion, across the divides.

Reconciliation in Israel

In the context of conflict and wide cultural diversity that is Israel/Palestine, [Musalaha Ministries](#) is the only faith-based reconciliation ministry in Israel that intentionally involves Arab Christians from the Palestinian territories and Gaza together with Arab Israeli Christians and Messianic Jews. Working from an unambiguous basis of common faith in Messiah, Musalaha brings together people from these different communities in order to deepen understanding and relationship.

In the framework of Musalaha, the participants often find themselves facing new challenges that require them to move from their comfort zones. Doing this helps them to grow in faith, understanding that "we cannot reconcile if we do not grow together in our faith and let it unite us. The more one interacts with different communities in our country, the more one realizes just how necessary this faith is to our reconciliation."¹

Conferences, seminars, outings, trips, prayer meetings and camps are available for many different population subgroups. There are specialized activities for children, women, leaders, families and youth. Working with a core group, who are involved long term, new people are brought into each of the activities. Over time, as people become more comfortable with each other, there is an engagement with some of the hard issues that are a part of the context of relationships. While it is fundamental that spiritual unity is the basis of relationship, there is recognition that this unity does not either erase or render individual and corporate identities unimportant.

Although often difficult and sometimes painful, seeing our own situation from the perspective of another helps us get beneath the surface of relationships, understand ourselves and others and then begin to relate to one another more profoundly. Our historical narratives, both as Palestinians and Israelis, have been used to justify our positions in the conflict and to deny one another's truth.² By listening to one another and hearing history from another point of view, it becomes possible to legitimize the differing perspectives, to accept and embrace one another's views.

In a region of extreme conflict and difference, God's people—both Jews and Arabs—are more and more embodying the answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17. This unity of brothers and sisters dwelling together, like dew in a dry land, is bringing refreshment and blessing to both peoples.

Endnotes

1. Musalaha Ministry of Reconciliation newsletter, May 2007.
2. Musalaha Ministry of Reconciliation newsletter, March 2007.

Lisa Loden is a co-founder of the Messianic congregation Beit Asaph in Israel. From 2002-2007 she served as director of the [Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies](#) in Jerusalem. She is also chair of the local board of Christian Witness to Israel, serves on the [Musalaha Reconciliation Ministries](#) advisory board and is a member of the international board of the [Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism](#). Loden has lived in Israel since 1974.

Actions for Peace in Colombia: Hope in the Face of Roaring Conflict

By Grace Morillo

“You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry.”—Psalm 10:17

Colombia is known for its long history of violence and drug trafficking, and as one of the most turbulent countries in the world. Its recent commotion and instability started in 1948 when it was shaken by “La Violencia,” a time of country-wide violence between the two opposing political parties—the liberals and the conservatives. This period left deep wounds in society and stimulated the appearance of leftist guerrilla groups. Throughout the succeeding years, other guerrilla groups arose. During the 1980s, extreme right-wing, para-military groups emerged in response to guerrilla actions. They were funded by vast landowners and used terror as their weapon. Also in the 1980s, powerful drug cartels were formed that have financed both sides of the conflict up to this day. To obtain additional funding, guerrillas resorted to kidnapping for ransom; to date over three thousand people have been kidnapped.

The government military is also getting stronger with growing tax budgets and United States funding to fight drug production and traffic. All this has escalated the internal war. As a result, in the past ten years there have been 250,000 fatalities¹, 4,309 forced disappearances² and over three million people internally displaced³. All this has led the United Nations to classify Colombia as a country in humanitarian crisis⁴. The war, coupled with neoliberal policies, has led to deteriorating social conditions, with sixty-two percent of the population living under the poverty line⁵, and growing unemployment unofficially reaching over twenty percent.

The Church has not been immune to the war. In the past four years, 152 pastors have been killed and four hundred churches have been shut down or displaced by guerrilla, paramilitary or government forces.⁶ These have occurred mainly in rural areas.

The challenge to lead the Colombian society into peace and reconciliation is huge, especially because the conflict is ongoing, and the government, reinforced by the media, presents its own slanted view, making other views invisible. As an example of this, the government prefers to speak of guerrilla groups as “narco-terrorists.” Victims and victimizers are still evident at all levels of society; corruption and deceit are widespread. There is great polarization of opinion and distrust on all sides. Sadly, the majority of the evangelical churches have embraced the dominating view of society, verbally proclaiming victory and peace, thus quieting their prophetic voice.

Different Responses to the Colombian Social Crisis

The Uribe administration (2002-2010) has signed a peace agreement with the strongest paramilitary factions, leading to the demobilization of thirty-one thousand combatants. Even so, there is growing proof that the paramilitary structures have not been dismantled, and guerrilla activity persists.

Civil society has also responded to this terrible state in several ways:

1. Since 1997, **ethnic minority and displaced groups, former victims of the conflict, have re-established themselves as “peace communities.”** This is the case in San José de Apartadó, where the goal is to survive and live in peace. These communities have made the brave decision to not allow any of the armed groups, including the army, to enter their lands. Despite their determination, these powerful symbols of peace are being inculcated by the government as infiltrated by leftist groups.⁷
2. **Gustavo Moncayo**, a high school teacher and father of a kidnapped policeman, recently **became an icon of peace when he walked 620 miles to plead for a humanitarian exchange** with the FARC⁸ guerrillas to bring an end to kidnappings, some of which have lasted for as many as ten years. His trek began at his home in the southern part of Colombia and ended at the central Plaza of Bogotá.
3. In 2002, Bojayá, a small town in Chocó, was caught in the crossfire between guerrilla and paramilitary forces, killing 119 people, and hurting another one hundred. However, these **surviving communities have returned bravely to the lands from which they were displaced.** The Life, Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Chocó, has accompanied them and is committed to defending life in all of its expressions as a necessary condition for building peace.⁹
4. In the face of paramilitary threats, an entire evangelical rural community in the upper Sinú river basin decided to leave their lands in an exodus to Tierralta, the nearest town. **The Cristo El Rey Church**, a member of the “peace sanctuaries” program, **housed them** initially in the sanctuary and adjunct school building. The church **then helped them relocate in a new settlement where they set up a new community, providing work, food, education and health for its members.** These peace sanctuary churches are all over Colombia and seek to be Christian alternatives to violence and conflict. The congregations seek peace bravely: they feed the hungry, house the homeless, establish new sources of livelihood and offer a space open to reconciliation and dialogue. The peace sanctuaries program is an initiative of the Christian Center for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action, Justapaz, a ministry of the Mennonite Church of Colombia. Justapaz promotes structures and lifestyles leading to a just and sustainable peace.¹⁰

With actions such as these, the Church and the Body of Christ in Colombia can help restore hope to the death-ridden reality Colombia is facing.

Endnotes

1. Banco de Datos de Derechos Humanos y Violencia Política (5 May 2006), [Casos Noche y Niebla](#) No. 32, Bogotá.
2. [New Colombia News Agency](#).
3. Hacia una Política Proactiva para la Población Desplazada, Bogotá, [Conferencia Episcopal Colombiana](#).
4. [UN News Service](#).
5. [Luis Carlos Narváez Tulcán](#).
6. Michael Joseph. [Patterns of Violence and Displacement](#).
7. <http://cdpsanjose.org/node/10>
8. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the largest leftist guerrilla group.
9. <http://www.cocoo.org>
10. Serie Experiencias Locales en la Construcción de la Paz, Justapaz, Lutheran World Relief, 2006.

Grace Morillo serves as a missionary with the Latin America Mission, seconded to Unidad Cristiana Universitaria, where she works as general secretary. She lives in Bogotá, Colombia, and attends Aposento Alto Church, a Free Brethren Assembly, and serves on the board of the Colombian Federation of Evangelical Churches (CEDECOL). Morillo was born in Pasto, Colombia.

PERSPECTIVES

[The Internet Missionary Society of 2020](#)

By **John Edmiston**

The Internet began to affect our lives in 1994 with the creation of the World Wide Web and the Mosaic web browser. Shortly after that, Christians began to share their faith with others in cyberspace; Internet evangelism and cybermissions was born. In this article, I would like to jump ahead to 2020 and consider what Internet evangelism and cybermissions might look like in thirteen years.

The Internet is rapidly moving from the personal computer to the cell phone and it is predicted that the number of Internet users will go from the current 1.14 billion to over three billion by 2010, mainly due to this growth of Internet-capable hand-held devices (e.g. cell phones, PDAs and the Blackberry). Indeed, Microsoft has just announced Phone+, an initiative to bring television (as well as everything else) to your cell phone.

Hand-held devices will soon have really useful screen sizes. The May 2007 *Popular Science* magazine showcases a five-inch Polymer Vision flexible screen that “rolls-up” inside the unit. By 2010, this flexible screen will be larger, in color and capable of handling web browsing and video. Of course your hand-held device will also dock with your wide-screen digital television, your laptop or any other viewing platform. The included video camera will be augmented by higher processing power and bandwidth to enable quality video conferencing from your lounge room.

So we see that highly sophisticated content will be downloadable to three billion personal handheld devices by 2010. The personal communication device will be how people interact with friends, family and colleagues and likely the first place they turn to find information about the gospel. It will likely be the main way people accept information into their lives and therefore the main way we will have to communicate the gospel. The hand-held device will allow streaming video (or text or audio) of gospel presentations. Enquirers will be able to contact the mission agency via the Internet, or by SMS (text), email, fax, VOIP (voice over internet protocol, e.g. Vonage or Skype) or by normal mobile or landline voice call.

Progress in information technology is exponential. The famous formulation of this, known as Moore’s Law, is

named after Gordon Moore of Intel who observed in 1965 that the number of transistors on an integrated circuit for minimum component cost was doubling every two years. This has largely held true since then and processing power per \$1000USD is now doubling every twelve to eighteen months. If this continues to 2020, the first glimpses of artificial intelligence will be taking hold in our lives.

Tech guru Ray Kurzweil (inventor and author of books such as *The Age of Spiritual Machines* and *The Singularity Is Near*) uses this exponential curve to predict that a super-computer will emulate human intelligence sometime around the year 2013 and that a \$1000USD computer will emulate human intelligence in 2029.

Previously difficult problems such as image recognition, speech recognition, handwriting analysis and language translation are rapidly being solved. A prototype of a translating telephone that automatically translates between English, French and German was unveiled in San Francisco (California, USA) in April 2007; also unveiled was a DARPA software project translated between English and Arabic at the level of professional translators. Some have predicted that before 2015 cell phones will contain automatic translation software (probably at first in a dozen or so major languages) and that soon after we will be able to use our personal communication device to talk to practically anyone in the world. This, of course, will revolutionize the task of missions!

Highly specialized artificial intelligence programs (called “narrow AI”) will be able to do common customer service functions; sophisticated, computer-generated personalities known as “avatars” will interact with users and act as a type of virtual salesperson. These avatars are capable of being programmed with the one hundred (or more) most common questions that enquirers ask. They will be endowed with a patient and understanding artificial personality and be able to lead enquirers through the plan of salvation and even through some basic pre-baptismal follow-up lessons.

Missions via the Internet Has Already Begun

We are on the verge of it in communities like [Second Life](#), where believers are already witnessing to Christ—as their computer-generated avatars. [Sitepal.com](#) provides customizable avatars for websites, and the Genesys IP Contact Center is already using avatars to handle customer service queries for CartaSi—the Italian credit card company.

By using avatars and information technology, an Internet mission agency could reach tens of millions of enquirers annually with the plan of salvation and then connect them with local churches in their area. So the evangelism department of our missionary society in 2020 may well consist of six geeks, a server farm and four hundred of these computer generated avatars! Each avatar may well share the gospel with a different cluster of unreached people groups. Of course there will still be plenty of room for face-to-face missionary activity such as worship, baptism, communion, counseling, exorcism, small group Bible study and the use of spiritual gifts.

The rise in technology will also mean that average users can become sophisticated content creators who can make their own video, audio and text presentations of the gospel. Thus, proclamation will become many-to-many as new believers excitedly share their testimonies and experiences of Christ. As video-conferencing becomes commonplace, these believers will naturally bring each other together into small groups and virtual churches online.

Distance education and TEE (Theological Education by Extension) will be revolutionized and technology will allow a missionary to inexpensively conduct large-scale training by video while being simultaneously translated into dozens of different languages. Pastors and community leaders will be able to be trained without being removed from their ministry context. Touch interfaces with symbols, voice recognition and improved interface usability will make it easy for non-literates to use technology and to benefit from it.

The power of technology to proclaim and inform needs to be matched with the power of the local church to disciple and mature individual believers. Hopefully, technology will augment the process of discipleship and free many Christian workers to focus on being one-to-one mentors. The gospel will of course remain the same, but how it is delivered, who is communicating it and the means of responding to it will be profoundly changed.

John Edmiston is chairman and CEO of the Asian Internet Bible Institute and www.Cybermissions.org.

Learning from Ants: The Possibility of Missionary Swarms

By Justin Long

In the last several issues, we asked **how many pioneer missionary teams were needed to serve the unreached of the world, to help find and raise up the local evangelists who can complete the task (forty-three thousand)**. We asked what kinds of models could recruit, train, send and support that many teams. We looked at **skyscrapers** (one central monolithic agency), **pyramids** (niche agencies) and **swarms** (decentralized groups). This month, we are going to look at whether a missionary swarm could be created.

Can missions be a swarm? Let us put this in missionary terminology. Consider the current “buzz” about the concept of a church planting movement.

Elements of a Church Planting Movement

Every Church Planting Movement (CPM), we are told, has ten universal elements.¹ So stretch your imagination with me, and consider CPMs in the context of an ant colony:

1. Prayer. Ants don’t pray—at least as far as we know. There is perhaps one parallel. Through prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit, evangelists are led to their “person of peace”—someone who is open to the gospel.² Ants, likewise, wander seeking their “man of peace”—a food source. (The analogy is a little loose, but the idea is that both wander randomly, instinctively, until they find the thing they are seeking, and then both summon other workers to help.)

2. Abundant gospel sowing. Ants don’t abundantly sow the gospel to make converts. However, if we are striving to make “disciple-makers,” we can think of these queens as “ant-makers.” They make hundreds of thousands of new ants each year.

3. Intentional church planting. These queens don’t just make new ants for their own hive—they make queens who can create new nests. Most ant nests will send out over four thousand females every year to start a new hive.

4. Scriptural authority. Ants don’t have a Bible. However, why is a Bible important? It is God’s word to us, and it gives us a basic standard of discipleship. It ensures that every disciple has the same basic values as every other disciple. Ants already share common values. In a sense, the instinct built into ants serves as the ant-Bible.

5. Local leadership. Ants don’t have leaders. It is one hundred percent lay leadership. They take “local leadership” to an extreme: every ant a leader, every leader an ant.

6. Lay leadership. Most CPMs are driven by lay leaders who are bi-vocational. As the movement grows, paid clergy can emerge, but it is probable that lay leadership will continue to be the main driver. Ants are similar in some ways: ant nests have a small number of queens in proportion to the larger number of workers.

7. House churches. Ants build contextualized houses. Some can be small; some can be big. They are always

built from local materials—ants forage, dig, bury, drag and move dirt, leaves and wood to create the ant hill. Ant hills in a desert are not the same as ant hills in a jungle or in a city. Church planting movements emphasize house churches, but I would argue the form of the church should be contextualized to the place. In some places, buildings are more appropriate. In others, it might be better to be in a restaurant, a theater, a business or some other unusual place.

8. Churches planting churches. In CPMs, the initial church is planted by a missionary. As the movement begins to multiply, the churches themselves plant additional churches. We can see this in ant colonies: nests plant nests. Rapidly. It is instinctively what ants do.

9. Rapid reproduction. One queen ant can lay on average 1,500 eggs per day. Some colonies have one hundred or more queens, for a total of some fifteen thousand eggs per day. A mature colony can produce over four thousand queens in one year. When these queens are sent out to start a colony over ninety percent of them fail! Yet, despite this, an area the size of half a football (soccer) field can be home to over 100,000 queen ants. Ants dominate by the sheer rate of colony planting.

10. Healthy churches. There are not any ant-doctors and ant-psychologists; however, ants still practice member care. The queen ants and female ants are kept deep inside the mount and cared for. Worker ants labor to expand the hive, to store up food and to generally provide for the colony's health.

Theories about Church Planting Movements

In addition to these ten universal elements, theories about CPMs also list ten common factors.³ These factors are often, but not always, found. These are less applicable to ants; however, there are some parallels. They are:

1. Worship in the heart language. Obviously, not really applicable for ants. (Perhaps ants sing hymns by St. Anthony?)

2. Evangelism has communal implications. Virtually everything an ant does has communal implications. Ants just are not individualistic creatures.

3. Rapid incorporation of new converts into life and ministry. Once ants are out of their infancy they begin working. They start work in the nursery, graduate to food maintenance and eventually become foragers or colony-defenders.

4. Passion and fearlessness. Since (as far as we know) ants don't really have emotions, it is hard to attribute passion and fearlessness to them. Still, we can kind of see the results of seeming fearlessness. Ants are single-minded creatures. If you see an ant on the pavement, try putting your finger down next to it. Likely, the ant will move away from you but keep on walking. Ants just do not understand the concept of quitting.

5. A price to pay to become a Christian. This isn't really applicable to ants, since ants do not have a choice about being ants. They are born ants and, viewed as pests, pay a price—but they do not personally choose to pay the price.

6. A perceived leadership crisis or spiritual vacuum. Ants do best in empty biospheres—areas without any natural ant predators. They can rapidly expand into these.

7. On the job training for leadership. This pretty much defines the life of an ant. We do not know how ants “learn”; however, there are no four-year degrees in Queen Care or Lizard Stripping.

8. Decentralized leadership authority. Repeat after me: every ant a leader, every leader an ant.

9. Outsiders keep a low profile. Once the queen ant lays the first few eggs in a new territory and cares for them until they hatch, she buries herself deep in the colony. She continues to lay eggs, but never comes out again. That is pretty low.

10. Suffering persecution. Ants successfully endure nearly any level of “persecution.” As one writer said, “Any attempt to eradicate an ant colony is at best only a temporary solution, because ants simply cannot be destroyed.”

Relationship to Mission Swarms

So is it possible to build a “mission swarm” that can recruit and send out forty-three thousand teams? That can tackle any problem it is faced with—be it lack of the gospel or poverty, disease, corruption or war? Where multiple “colonies” can become a “super-colony,” while not losing their distinctives? Where shared values and purposes enable the accomplishment of the overall goals?

I would be very interested in articles published here or elsewhere which examine this concept. Puff it up or rip it apart, but I think it deserves time to put words on a page. In that vein, I offer the following points. A swarming mission structure would, I think, share these values:

- 1. Its members would daily live by common purposes and principles.** A swarming mission structure would be built on people who agree to pursue a singular, multifaceted vision whole-heartedly. They would spend time at the beginning getting everyone “on board” with the purpose and values, so that later they can decentralize leadership and authority as much as possible by trusting people to make the right decisions.
- 2. Its members would prize cooperation over command or coordination.** Without leaders, collective action must be cooperative rather than coordinated. Mission swarms must empower people with tools—like the ant pheromones—to cooperate and partner with each other.
- 3. Its members would focus on rapid reproduction.** Right now, according to David Barrett and Todd Johnson, births are the primary cause of growth of the Church.⁴ (Barrett 2001:59, Global Diagram 41). This is not enough to make a difference in the unreached world. We must increase the number of converts (disciples) we make. We must strive to increase the reproductive rate of our churches through conversion, conscientiously removing every barrier in the way.
- 4. Its members would be rapidly incorporated into work.** We must increase our own ability to rapidly train disciples and get them started making disciples as well. This may mean, as much as possible, getting away from four-year schools and seminaries. Apprenticeships, mentoring and coaching will be key tools. However, we should not get rid of four-year schools altogether. Established higher-education schools provide centers of advanced learning and research which can be invaluable.
- 5. It must join together to form super-colonies.** A swarming mission must be able to connect small mission “colonies” in specific cities, tribes, provinces, countries, regions and globally into super-colonies focused on expansion. It must become diverse, incorporating the cultural giftings and resources, in order to meet the challenges we face. It must have a significant amount of grace for each other’s cultural and professional differences and methods.
- 6. Its members will refine their macro-planning while dramatically improving their micro-planning abilities.** There are many “big-thinkers” and “visionaries” in the Christian world. I have sometimes been labeled as one of these. What is interesting to me is that ants do not have big thinkers and visionaries. There are no strategists, no researchers, no surveyors, no planners—or are there? Isn’t every ant a researcher—of their area? Each ant uncovers its environment and communicates its discoveries to its near neighbors. Ant research is less like a scientist mapping the human genome and more like a radar set for a plane. They very quickly “strobe”

their environment and react to the immediate vicinity. A swarming mission can and should utilize macro-research; however, we need to vastly improve our micro-research and communication ability. We need to take advantage of both the big picture trends and the immediate field realities.

7. Its members must increase their ability to measure. Everything having to do with our daily ministry work should be measured and reviewed: recruitment, training, deployment, support, strategies, execution and so on. For example, if we are seeking mission applicants, then we need to know answers to questions such as: What is the ideal application for each position? Where are we recruiting these applicants? How many applicants did we get? How many were accepted? Of those that were not accepted, why did they “fall through the cracks”? How might we improve this in the future? Measuring and analyzing every single step will help us increase the quantity and quality of our work.

8. We must increase our accountability. This is one area where we are better than ants. Bugs generally do not have accountability partners. If an ant wanders too far from the nest, it dies. The nest as a whole does not seem to weep much or miss him. Humans are different, and we need to put strong systems in place to help each other be accountable for the plans we implement and the way we work.

9. We can use technology, but we should not dependent on it. Technology can empower people. It enables individual people to do more with less effort. However, we must not become dependent on technology—incapable of doing any work without it. The more our ministry requires technology, the less our ministries can be passed on to others who lack sufficient technology. This limits the speed at which swarms can expand.

10. We must be committed. We need to increase our commitment to reach the unreached and labor against our desire to build our own empire. I am not saying we should not plant new colonies—we must. These may be vast structures, every bit as complicated as a skyscraper or a pyramid. They may have vast storehouses full of resources. They may contain media centers, printing presses, Bible schools, bookstores, medical research centers, micro-enterprise banks and every other thing we can think of. But at the end of the day, our goal is not to build state-of-the-art nests, but to make ant-makers. We would do well to keep this in mind.

C.S. Lewis once said, “Writing is like herding sheep: if you leave a gate open, some of the sheep will wander through it.” So, let me close some of the gates by clarifying what I am not saying regarding comparisons.

1. Parachurch versus Church

I am not making a statement about which—the agency or the church—is better. Humans are not ants, and we use multiple forms of organization. I believe both churches and agencies can make a significant impact among the unreached. Agencies generally have more experience at doing this than modern churches because they have been doing it longer. Both can do it better than they have in the past. Both, I think, can benefit from swarming concepts. But most important, both should spend more time concentrating on improving what they do rather than concentrating on how they are the “best” or theologically “correct” option.

2. Nationals versus Expatriates

Swarms recruit from where there are workers, and send workers to where there are none. Locals obviously find it easier to bridge the cultural divide; however, they are not always the best choice. Expatriates may have certain advantages, but they are not always the best choice either. Swarms use what they can find—whether it is a local or an expatriate.

3. Professional versus Lay Workers

Workers should be trained, and trained well. It is better to give workers adequate salary and resources than insisting each work to raise his or her own support from distant sources; however, I know there are powerful arguments for self-support. An ant colony finds all its own support from the land where it is placed. Every ant within the colony works to provide for every ant—the ant-makers, the ant-foragers, the ant-defenders and the

ant-workers. The old saying “One for all and all for one” fits them well. Perhaps it would be best to look at a continuum. Ants progress from infant to supported nursemaid to bi-vocational colony-builder to self-supported and supporting forager. Could this be done in missions as well?

4. *Big Structures versus Little Structures*

This is not about complexity of structure. Ant colonies can be every bit as complex as pyramids or skyscrapers—they are just less noticeable and more mobile. Some ant colonies, as we read, are massive. Some ant colonies are in small little cracks on the sidewalk, but no less integral.

5. *Mission versus Non-mission*

Swarming does not exclude things like business as mission, medicine, development, crisis response, humanitarian relief, etc. These are important parts of being a blessing. There is clearly a place for this within the concepts of a colony and a swarm.

Moving Forward

I would like to propose an ongoing discussion—through chats, articles, comments, blogs, whatever—about these concepts and how they might be better implemented.

When ministries are being launched, how might we make them more like ants from the start? How can we define our mission and principles in such a way that everyone clearly understands them and signs on? How do we decentralize power? How do we give individuals authority, yet with safeguards to prevent its misuse?

How do we better enable basic communication? We need to have some simple ways to say “food here” or “danger there.” Maybe this can be done via cell phone SMS, maybe by email or maybe at a morning meeting. The more complicated the system, the less likely it is to be used: ants just “use their noses.”

How do we better interact with others so that we form super-colonies? How do we get away from partnerships that must be formalized, and into simple cooperation? How do we identify the best places for planting new swarm colonies? How do we logistically get people there?

In that vein, next month I am going to begin with some research I have done on swarms. I will identify seven specific features of swarms, and the properties that can help make your group more swarm-like.

Endnotes

1. Garrison, David. *Church Planting Movements*. Richmond, Virginia, USA: International Mission Board. Found online at: <http://www.imb.org/CPM/Chapter3.htm>.
2. Ibid. <http://www.imb.org/CPM/Chapter2-Bholdari.htm>
3. Ibid.
4. Barrett, David and Todd Johnson. 2001. *World Christian Trends*. Pasadena, California, USA: William Carey, 59, Global Diagram 41.

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URBAN COMMUNITIES

The Roma (Gypsy) Community in Bucharest, Romania

By Simona Grigore

An Overview of Bucharest

“The Paris of the East,” as it was known for generations, is the ancient city of Bucharest, Romania. It is one of the three “B” capitals (Budapest, Hungary and Belgrade, Serbia being the other two) situated on the Danube River as it flows from the mountain ranges of Germany and Switzerland eastward to the Black Sea. Of the three national capitals, Bucharest is by far the largest, with an ever-swelling population of 2.1 million inhabitants. During the Communist era (1947-1989), the city’s population was constrained as the movement of Romanian people was restricted by the government.

With the fall of Communism, however, the floodgate to the city was thrown wide open and the city’s demographics swelled by nearly 750,000 people in less than a decade. The massive influx was a combination of unemployed rural nationals seeking job opportunities and ethnic minorities looking for asylum from prejudicial segregation; education and job discrimination; and racial and ethnic hatred. It was into this milieu that some fifty to seventy-five thousand Roma (Gypsies) migrated.

The Roma Population

No one knows for sure the exact number of Roma people in Romania. Biased government statistics place the figure as low as 500,000, whereas European Union demographics estimate the Roma population at 1.5 million. The problem of accuracy is further exacerbated as Roma activists agree on a figure of two million to 2.5 million.

The Roma people emigrated from India to east-central Europe in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries for reasons yet unknown. There has been a great deal of hypothesis proposed; however, no facts have been established. What is known is that their migration took them across the ancient Silk Road of south-central Russia and the Caucasus Mountains eastward toward the Balkans. The Roma are a people without a national heritage, common national language, religion, flag or representative voice to speak on their behalf. The world population of Roma is placed today at twenty million; Romania has by far the largest single element, followed by Hungary and Albania.

It is conservatively estimated that more than 180,000 Roma people reside in an already congested metropolitan environment, where affordable housing is at a premium. It must be noted that the Roma people have been marginalized for generations. It was not until the mid to late nineteenth century that Romania removed the stigma of the Roma population from being “slaves” of the state. Suspicion and distrust of the Roma population and their cultural differences persist to this day. Philosophically, there is still a sense that as citizens, they are powerless and non-complaint to civic rule or authority.

Coming to Bucharest to compete for housing, job opportunities, better education and a new beginning has placed the Roma people in an even more precarious situation. They are barred from acquiring proper housing and restrained from finding job opportunities; their children are degraded and held back in school. Tragically, across Romania less than eight percent of Roma children attend elementary school and of these, only two percent attain a high school or college education. In general, the Roma working class, if gainfully employed, are engaged in civic sanitary services, garbage pick-up, street cleaning, restaurant dish washing and other menial services that continue to hold them enslaved in economic bondage.

The State of the Church in Roma Communities

The churches that minister to the Roma people are predominately associated with the Assemblies of God. In Bucharest, there are two relatively large Roma churches, which have three hundred to five hundred congregants. There are perhaps another four to six churches with less than 150 adherents. In the 2001 *Operation World Handbook*, Patrick Johnstone places the Roma Evangelical (Church) Movement (REM) at thirty thousand adherents in 115 congregations. The majority of REM churches are located outside the metropolitan area. The number Johnstone cites, however, does not include believers actively involved in other evangelical churches where racial profiling is not considered.

In a city teeming with social disorder, street kids, prostitution, poverty, disability, disease and homeless children and adults, it is rare to find a church with either social or evangelistic outreach. This reserved mentality is more cultural than by design or choice. Throughout the Communist era, and carried forward to this day, the government has recognized and financed only fifteen religious entities.

These officially recognized groups and the scope of their activity are governed by the Department of Cults and are subject to strict regulations. For years, the restriction prohibited open-air services, pilgrimages, evangelism and community work. Although less restricted today than a decade ago, the Church is not unlike a person scarred by the effects of an abusive childhood: the Romanian Church collectively shares in the trauma of a past that cannot be easily removed. The majority of today's church leadership, brought up under the Communist-dictum, still feel compelled to adhere to yesterday's repressive directives.

Orphans and Homeless Children

One of the biggest problems social workers within the metropolitan area face is the large number of abandoned orphans and pre-teen homeless children who wander the streets and reside in sewers and canal systems. The Council of Europe estimates there are approximately one thousand street children in Bucharest; however, estimates from social agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working the streets state the figure at ten thousand or more in the city. Roma or Gypsy children account for about eighty percent of all children abandoned in Romania.¹

Gypsies often leave their infant and toddler children at orphanages for a "provisional" length of time, which often becomes permanent. The practice was actually encouraged during the rule of Nicolae Ceausescu (the leader of Romania from 1965-1989), who promised that children would have a place in an orphanage if families could not afford to support them. Since the collapse of Communism, poverty has only worsened for the Roma people. Eventually, many orphaned and neglected children find their ways to the alleys and sewers of Bucharest.

Because of the elimination of social work programs under Ceausescu, post-Communist Romania had no trained social workers or adoption or family advocate services. It was not until 1997, under the Constantinescu government, that policies were enacted to establish a universal social welfare program, a domestic adoption and foster care service program. It was into this void that foreign agencies entered to stem the tide of human right abuses widely circulated by Western media in the early 1990s.

Today, there are a significant number of social programs being carried on by these foreign-sponsored, faith-based NGOs. Although evangelism is at the heart of these programs and the workers are spiritually motivated, the ministries primarily have the appearance of social and behavioural interest as opposed to overt evangelism. Because the Church is neither ready nor prepared to receive wounded souls to nurture and restore, organizations all-too-often absorb them within the agency or place them in group homes established by the organizations. These are often in areas of the country distant from Bucharest, which discourages the residents from returning to the streets.

The significant role carried out by the NGO has the potential, even greater than the Church, to promote justice and economic equality for marginalized groups within a country which has long been marginalized by the rest of the world community.

Evangelism and the Roma People

In the late 1990s, **HCJB Global** founded seven radio stations, the *Vocea Evangheliei* (Voice of the Gospel), in principle cities of Romania. Although primarily directed to the Romanian and Hungarian-speaking populous, both the Bucharest and nearby Ploiesti station carry several hours of programming each week for the Roma people. The content is primarily Romanian text, translated and delivered by Roma-speaking broadcasters. The station does not receive, nor does it expect, a large mail response from its Roma listeners. It must be

remembered the vast majority of Roma are illiterate. The stations do, however, point to the favourable response to the broadcast by comments echoed by members of the local Roma church.

The task of evangelism of the Roma community is not an easy one. It can only be accomplished from within and not through the “here’s how” textbook method of missions. The needs of the Roma people are legend. Scars need to be removed, discrimination needs to be resolved and poverty, human rights and justice need to be remedied. It will not be done overnight and will require the prayers and teamwork of many. We can only look to the biblical example of the woman at Sychar’s well in John 4.

Christ is able to change lives, one at a time: one person, one family, one village. When approached and ministered to effectively, the Roma too shall exclaim, “We know this man is really the Saviour the world!” (John 4:42).

Endnote

1. Pierre Poupard, UNICEF’s top representative in Romania (United Nations Foundation, 2003).

Simona Grigore ministers to Roma children in cities in the central region of Romania. She works with congregations seeking to do integral mission in these communities. She is also completing a degree in religious education.

God's Church in Stefanesti

By Simona Grigore

The work of evangelism, church planting and humanitarian relief among the Roma people is most evident in the hundreds of ghettos and villages scattered throughout Romania. Without exception, it is in such areas of the country where the hundreds of thousands of Roma people live.

Stefanesti, like most slum communities around the world, lies on the edge of the city. It is northeast of Pitesti, one of Romania’s major petroleum producing areas and the center of its automobile industry. *Stefanesti* is only one of the dozens of villages surrounding the city where thousands of Roma live.

In 1999, **Child Evangelism Fellowship** (CEF) came to *Stefanesti* to minister to the hundreds of Roma children who, with their parents and siblings, were living in one-room apartments in over-crowded, run-down, block houses where Nicolae Ceausescu (the leader of Romania from 1965-1989), in his attempt to control the Roma population, relocated tens of thousands of them. The tenants on each floor of these buildings shared a common kitchen and toilet area. In the years between construction and CEF’s coming to the area, nothing had been done to improve the living conditions of the residents or to bring the redemptive message of God’s love.

There were no vacant apartments or facilities within the complex where the weekly children’s clubs could be held. Year round, the workers would gather dozens of children in the open air. Despite some opposition, the classes continued to grow. In fact, the opposition proved to be a blessing in disguise. The more opposition there was, the more fruit was brought to God’s glory. Voluntarily, and without request, a resident couple offered their small one-room apartment where the classes could continue to be held uninterrupted. Each week, nearly forty children and their parents attended.

Four years later, in 2003, a unit measuring approximately nine square meters miraculously became available. CEF immediately leased it on a long-term basis. In addition to the regular weekly children’s classes, an adult Bible study began on Sundays. This has subsequently been formed into a church which continues to grow and bear witness to the Lord throughout the housing area.

Now with its own meeting room, the church is able to hold several different classes and Bible studies each week. This is but one of many Roma churches which have sprung up across the country in the past decade. God continues to build his Church among the less fortunate, disenfranchised Roma people.

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RESEARCH

What Happened to People Group Thinking?

By S. Kent Parks

A strange thing happened on the way to bringing the gospel to every “people group.” A growing number of Christian voices around the world began to suggest that the focus on people groups was overemphasized. These questions seemed to arise as the “AD2000 and Beyond” movement phased out. Further, the concept of “people group” began to be applied to other “groupings” which do not fit the category.

Admittedly, no universally accepted definition exists. Yet while the main terms *Unreached People Group* (UPG) and *Least Evangelized People Group* have some technical differences, they essentially define the same twenty-five to twenty-eight percent of the world which has little access to the gospel. A more popularized phrase—*Least Reached Peoples*—is sometimes used.¹

One UPG-focused country network in an Asian country uses a term which places the responsibility squarely on the Church—the “Ignored” People Groups.

So what happened to the momentum to reach those who have little or no access to the gospel? Some key misconceptions have emerged and seem to impede movement forward. These include:

1. Great publicity is confused with real progress. The great emphasis in many parts of the world, especially during the last twenty years, on reaching the unreached has led church leaders to believe that great progress has been made. Yes, some progress has been made. Yet, one-quarter of the world still has little access to the gospel.

Christians still give only about one percent of their money to Christian causes. Of this one percent, ninety-five percent is spent on the church. Less than one percent is used to reach twenty-eight percent of the world. And, only two to four percent of Christian cross-cultural witnesses serve this twenty-eight percent.

Projections show that the percentage of the Least Evangelized Peoples will not diminish significantly in the next several decades. The world percentage of Christians is also not projected to grow if ministry and mission continue to follow current patterns.

2. “Balance” is sought. Key unreached peoples advocates and mission strategists from several continents have discovered they share a common experience. Each has been challenged by key national and/or international Christian leaders to have a more “balanced” view in their advocacy by not emphasizing the “unreached” too much.

Again, emphasis on UPGs seems to have resulted in boredom among some church leaders. They seem to want to find the next idea. One Asian mission leader shared that just about the time Western Christians have succeeded in raising awareness for UPGs around the world, some seem to have developed “attention deficit disorder” and want to move on to something new.

To answer simply, “Yes, we want balance” so that at least one-quarter of workers, money and other resources are spent on this one-quarter of the world. When the Body of Christ stops spending over ninety percent of its resources on itself, balance might be achieved.

3. Everyone is a people group. The power of “people group” imagery to focus strategic thinking began to be used to redefine all kinds of strata of society as a people group. Young people, the disabled, prostitutes or taxi drivers in certain cities began to be defined as people groups.

Factually, a "people group" is a collection of inextricably linked strata. For instance, a large ethno-linguistic/ethno-cultural people group will have youth, urban, rural, rich, poor, disabled, etc. At the end of the day, however, a young person, taxi driver or disabled person is in familial and societal relationships with other kinds of people from other strata of the society. Admittedly, a variety of strategies are needed to reach the variety of strata in a people group.

Different ministries are needed for the young, the disabled, the urban, the poor, the rich. Yet, when a movement begins among such a people group, it will spread more easily across “strata” lines within a people group than across ethnic lines. For example, a real movement might occur among the youth of a certain people group but may have a more difficult time “jumping” the ethnic barrier to the youth of a neighboring but hated ethnic group.

So, a people group may have a variety of defining factors which might include ethno-linguistic or ethno-cultural/religious elements, and may legitimately have unique elements (such as caste factors in India); however, it will consist of various strata.

4. Unreached people are “remote,” only “tribal” or only “illiterate” peoples. A globally recognized Christian leader recently said that while emphasis on the unreached was still needed, the major challenge for finishing the task of world missions was the major religious blocks. He inadvertently exposed a common misconception about what “unreached” or “least evangelized” means.

In fact, the majority of UPGs are in the three major religious blocks—and make up vast sections of major urban centers. Sometimes, they are the majority peoples of the country. In one Asian country, half of the Christians live in one-quarter of the country—and they are mainly tribal. At the same time, majority people of this Buddhist country is still less than one percent Christian. In another Asian country known for very dynamic and mission-minded churches, the majority people, which is well over fifty percent of the population, remains largely unserved.

5. The goal to engage each UPG is misunderstood as an end goal rather than a first step. Some have caricatured plans to make sure every people group is engaged as a simplistic plan to start a few churches so that people group can be “checked off” the list. This simplistic goal is certainly not the intent of most UPG strategists. Most would emphasize that “engagement” is merely the first step toward the end goal of true gospel transformation (and not just a few congregations which meet on Sunday) to the people group. Yet, how can they be transformed when few or no workers have taken those first steps?

One aspect of the debate revolves around the interpretation of Matthew 24:14. Some stress this verse is merely a promise and prediction, not an imperative verse from which specific and detailed strategies must be developed. A clue to the intent of this verse can be found in Abram’s covenant (Genesis 12:1-3). The phrase “You will be a blessing” is not merely a prediction. It is also a command. Matthew 24:14 seems to have the same thrust. This idea does not even include the several “Great Commissions” Jesus gave which are even more specific. Christ followers are commanded to speak and act out the gospel in the whole world, to all ethne. Specific strategies and specific goals are required.

6. An over-balanced “returning mission to the Church” concept. A great deal has been said in recent years that the local institutional church is the supreme engine of mission. Much of this emphasis apparently emerges from large churches in both Eastern and Western countries. Some crucial problems, however, have emerged from this mindset.

- *This prioritizing of only the local church organization sometimes ignores or diminishes biblical teaching on the universal Church.* True, each person should be a member of a local church; however, God often calls key leaders to have roles across local and organizational lines. In Acts 13, the Holy Spirit asked the Antioch church to set apart Paul and Barnabas and to send them off. Little if any indication is found that they “maintained” local membership in Antioch after that point.
- *Is the “local church” the one in the missionary’s sending country—or is it the local congregation which he or she helped create in his or her host culture?* Many expatriate missionaries never become members of local congregations in their host cultures. Instead, they claim a need to maintain their membership in an organization (club?) in their sending culture. Consistency is lacking in such a call for local church membership.
- *Many churches do not seem to believe the concept of “dying to self” applies not only to the individual but also to the congregation.* An often quoted idea is that local churches are “tired of losing their best people” to mission organizations. In fact, sometimes churches do not allow some of their best leaders to go into full-time mission, arguing that the local congregation needs them more. Are local congregations not also called by our Lord to great sacrifice? What needs to be asked is not “What is best for our local church?” but “What needs to be done to reach this UPG?”
- *Some local churches find “missions” a way to help their members be disciplined and be fulfilled.* As a result, the main mission strategy seems to be mainly short-term workers. Yet these same churches would not try to run their church with rotating short-term teams. How then can Christ followers think that whole societies can be transformed from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light through quick, easy, surface efforts?
- *Many churches will only send short or long-term people to “safe” places.* The least evangelized of the world will not be reached in such a manner.

7. It is time for the Majority World or the Global South to finish the job. This heresy continues to gain ground. Since when did God remove the Great Commission from any believer—North, South, East or West? When did God say, “Now you can just pay for others to go since it is more cost-effective?”

Have we lost the sense of amazement that humanity’s unity, which was shattered at Babel due to pride and arrogance, is now in the process of being reunited into Christ? The greatest proof of our belief in this theology will be that Christians from various races, countries and continents intentionally collaborate as a visible witness that the Kingdom of God truly and visibly unites humanity—not in theory, but in actual work among the remaining peoples.

This last twenty-eight percent of the world will only be truly reached as representatives from all “reached” peoples join together to speak and act out the gospel among these least served peoples. The new believers will then join us in reaching the others who have little or no access to gospel.

Endnote

1. The terms "Least Evangelized" and "UPGs" will be used interchangeable in this article.

S. Kent Parks is facilitator for Lausanne's Least Reached Peoples Special Interest Group. He also serves as co-facilitator for [Ethnê06](#). Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 35, released by the 2004 Forum Issue Group on Hidden and Forgotten People (Least-Reached) is [available online](#). (Document opens as a PDF file.)

LAUSANNE REPORTS

Women Who Can Change the World

By Elke Werner

“These women can change the world!” The East German tour guide in the Wartburg, the castle where Dr. Martin Luther translated the Bible into German, was impressed with the international group of women who had come together 9-16 June 2007. “I have never ever seen a group like this,” she commented. “I can feel the energy in this group. These women have so much power! What is different about you?” The words of a non-Christian woman from the former GDR expressed what all of us also felt: God was present in our midst.

What Kind of Group Was It?

During the sixteen years Robyn Claydon, vice chair of the [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#), travelled around the world to build the women's network of Lausanne, she had met most of us in our home countries. She soon became our mentor, encourager, promoter and friend. She helped most of us see the potential God had given us, potential which we ourselves could not yet see. In 2000, she invited most of us for our first Lausanne Women's Network meeting in Berlin, Germany. We got to know each other and kept in touch. Some of us met again at the [2004 Forum for World Evangelization](#) in Thailand and at the [2006 Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering](#) in Malaysia. Claydon has kept in touch and has seen us grow in our ministries and personally.

Now that I have been given the position as Lausanne Senior Associate for Women, Claydon and I decided to invite the same group of women to meet up in Germany. A few new contacts were added, as was a small team of German supporters of the [Women's International Network in God's Service](#). It was a wonderful reunion and the new members of the group soon felt right at home.

The Program

Each morning started with a short Bible study led by Claydon (Australia), Noor van Haften (Netherlands), Juliet Thomas (India), Kathy Oppenhuizen (USA), Gerda Schaller (Germany), Olga Zaprometova (Russia) or myself (Germany). Most of the day was spent listening and sharing about our families, ministries and plans for the future. After each report, we prayed. Although we serve in very different fields, we all share the same passion for reaching this world with the gospel, be it by working as a Bible-school teacher, building schools in slums, planting churches among lepers, helping refugees in Sudan, pastoring a church, building a network of women or leading an international prayer network.

During our week together we also went on a tour to the Wartburg, Eisenach. At a bus stop on the former East-West border in Germany we prayed together. We saw the room where Martin Luther translated the Bible into German. We also went to ERF, the German center of [Trans World Radio](#), to be interviewed; these interviews will be on air later this year.

In addition, we visited Christus-Treff church in Marburg, where we contributed to the service. We were introduced to the congregation and sang an African song together. Some of us were also interviewed. The women interviewed included:

- **Jolly**, an Indian lawyer who rescues young women from Indian brothels. She works with the Indian police and takes care of the young women after they are liberated.
- **Leslie**, who works with her husband in India.
- **Cecilia**, who taught us the Sudanese Christian song.
- **Evangeline**, who at the age of twenty-three used the first money she had earned to buy a plot of land in India and started a school for children in the slums. Today, she leads a large school with about six hundred students. She has founded four churches and is about to start a school and a church for lepers.

On the last evening, we prayed for each other again. We also thanked Claydon and celebrated her many years of faithful service. Although she officially handed the work over to me, she will continue her ministry and mentor me in my new role. I am thankful and blessed to work with her. I am also thankful these women will continue to stay in contact and support each other and the Women's Network of Lausanne.

During our days together, we looked at the **Lausanne Covenant** with the anticipation of the 2010 **Lausanne III** in Cape Town, South Africa. We want to contribute to and be involved in the Lausanne movement. And we want to encourage women, especially younger ones who have not yet seen their potential. Hopefully we can meet again in two years and share what God has done. I am sure there will be many miracles and stories.

Elke Werner is the senior associate for women in evangelism for the **Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization**. She is the co-leader of a vital interdenominational church fellowship (Christus-Treff) with centers in Marburg, Berlin and Jerusalem. Elke resides with her husband Dr. Roland Werner in Marburg, Germany.

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