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2020: The Decade of Collaboration

Marvin J. Newell

In a recent visit to Hong Kong to attend mission meetings, the value of collaboration was evident even before I left the airport. The directions supplied by the host organization said that I could grab a taxi to the hotel, located in downtown Kowloon, at a cost of \$40. Alternatively, I could board a shuttle bus the hotel shared with four other hotels, at a cost of \$14. The advantage of this collaborative bus arrangement to both the hotels and the guests was plainly evident. I paid my \$14, took a seat on the “China Kong” and was at my hotel within an hour.

The value of collaborating, networking, and partnering in missions is evident as well. Michael Oh, director of the Lausanne Movement, recently stated that, “The greatest need in the Great Commission community is globally coordinated collaboration.” Oh is right, and most everyone in Great Commission ministries would agree. The world we live in is too complex, the opportunities too vast, and the spiritual needs too great for any one organization to try to tackle alone.

We have just entered into a new decade. Missions in the 2020s will need to be done differently than in the just completed decade. At the core will be the need for mission cooperation. Thus, EMQ is declaring the 2020s as the “Decade of Collaboration.” To facilitate this reality, this edition is devoted entirely to the topic of collaboration and networking.

The first article introduces networks, explains their significance, and why and how you or your ministry might engage with networks. This is followed by several articles from different networks that are representative of the more than six hundred mission-related networks active around the world. These include evangelical alliances, mission movement and mission focus networks, and a variety of networks focused on specific issues.

The final article is written by staff from visionSynergy and focuses on the practical implications of engaging in networks and partnerships. Understanding how best to

facilitate a partnership and participate in others is key to being effective in ministry in the network society. They also share some of the services they and others provide.

This edition took collaborative effort to pull off. We enlisted the help of Heather Pubols as the Guest Editor. Heather is a global communications consultant advising organizations on how to tell their collective story more effectively. Learn more about her ministry at www.LeMotif.org.

Eldon Porter gave his assistance as the content manager. Eldon is considered a network specialist; researching the strategic role of networks. He manages Linking Global Voices, a database of over six hundred networks globally. The two of them have co-written the first article that presents an introduction to the world of networks.

Networks are not organizations but a coming together of autonomous entities because of something in common. They are becoming the nodes that connect the Global Church, not as a top-down organized plan, but rather individuals and ministries seeking to work together to follow Christ’s directive to “Go into the whole world and make disciples.” 



Marvin J. Newell, D. Miss
Editorial Director

Better Together: Finding Your Place in Today's Interconnected Reality

Eldon Porter and Heather Pubols

Perhaps the greatest challenge for the global church today is to know how to best work in unity. Though imperfect, networks seem to be the tool God is using to increase effective Church ministry worldwide. Networks are nodes that connect the global church and encourage the development of diverse perspectives on critical issues. Understanding where you fit in this highly interconnected reality is essential.

Theologically, if we look at Genesis 11, we see a post-Tower of Babel world where confused communication splinters a once unified human civilization, driving it into isolated pockets. Then in Acts 2 we see the first signs of the undoing of Babel, when a diverse, multilingual community all hear the mighty works of God in their own languages. Looking ahead to Revelation 7 we know that people from every community and language on earth will stand before the throne of God as one united, holy, chosen people.

We currently live in the space between Acts 2 and Revelation 7. Global shifts in current collective culture evidence God's continued work to achieve his purposes. Manuel Castell, in his book, *The Rise of the Network Society*, describes the end of the industrialized society in favor of a networked one as the greatest transformation in our era.¹ In the business world this means self-contained companies can no longer compete with those that work together with partners. The Church and the global mission movement confront a similar dynamic.

Three main factors contribute to this shift for the Church. First, the expansion of the Church to every corner of the globe. No country exists without a gospel presence. Second, technological advancements in communications offer previously unmatched methods of worldwide, real-time connection. Third, the movement of hundreds of millions of people away from their places of origin creates an unparalleled global diaspora of peoples. These unprecedented factors both demand and allow the different parts of the global Church to work together in unity as we accompany Christ in building his Church.

In John 17 we see that coming together in unity is essential for participating in God's mission. Today, this is happening on a global

scale. Globalization and the resulting network society appear to be a part of God's plan for this period in history. If mission is finding out what God is doing and joining it,² then every mission agency, church, and believer needs to consider how they can be connected in this globalized context.

What is a Network?

People use the terms *network* and *partnership* in a variety of ways. For example, individuals or organizations can network, but that doesn't mean they are a network. For our purposes, we will define a network as the coming together of autonomous entities because of something shared in common. On the other hand, we will define partnership as an intentional collaboration between known parties to achieve specific, measurable goals. The difference between the two lies in how they are led. Both facilitate cooperation and acknowledge that we achieve different and better things when we work together.

Networks take various forms but generally fit into two categories: geographic and issue-focused. Geographic networks include alliances of evangelical churches in a specific country or region. There are approximately 140 of these around the world and most are connected to the World Evangelical Alliance. One example of a geographic network is the **Evangelical Fellowship of India** (efionline.org) which has more than 50 Protestant denominations in its network.

There are also mission-related networks that are geographically defined. Some of these represent mission movements originating from countries with established churches. **COMIBAM** (comibam.org), the **Ibero-American Mission Alliance**, is an example of one such network. Others represent a collective effort focused on bringing

the gospel to a particular unreached or unengaged area.

Issue-focused networks have greater variety. They are defined by adhering to an overarching cause, making space for global engagement, and providing leadership on global challenges. Some like the **Global Ethnodoxology Network** (worldofworship.org) concentrate on a ministry tool. In its case, global artistic expression. These networks help practitioners understand and use these tools. Another type of issue-focused network emphasizes outreach to a category of people. For example, **Vision 5:9** devotes attention to the global Muslim population; **Care of Earth** (lwccn.com) focuses on creation care.

Still other issue-focused networks give attention to a particular concept, a methodology, or another grouping of individual ministries. The variations are endless. Such networks are constantly birthed in areas where collaboration is needed. As ministry practitioners who share the same passion begin to process critical issues together, they become an authentic leadership voice on their focus area.

A few large global networks tackle both geography and issues. Those include the **World Evangelical Alliance** (worldea.org), the **Lausanne Movement** (lausanne.org), and **Transform World** (transform-world.net). These organizations develop regional networks and often form issue-focused networks of their own in an effort to foster greater collaboration within their community.

Healthy Networks

Bringing people together to learn and connect is the primary focus of a healthy network. By curating information and relationships, networks help participants grow in knowledge and share resources. They



Photo by Markus Spiske

gather practitioners together through online forums or at events so they can build relationships and share reflections. Networks that do this well serve as the front door for partnerships. By fostering collaborative cultures, networks give birth to an ever-growing number of partnerships among their participants.

Healthy network leadership further creates an attraction that draws those focused on their geography or issue together for the purpose of empowering them for greater effectiveness. The leaders do not direct or manage but rather facilitate, empower, and equip. They listen to their participants to gain an understanding of their needs. They encourage constant reflection on their context and its challenges. They highlight good examples. They invite contributions from those in semi-related areas or issues. And they encourage connections for cooperation and collaboration that facilitates everyone's success.

You could think of a network like a vegetable garden and the leader(s) as the gardener(s). The gardener puts the garden in the best location for the plants she wants to grow. Before planting, she prepares the soil, tilling it and adding nutrients. She plans out where each plant will go, positioning each plant for its optimal water and sunlight. This process is like facilitating the network

culture. The gardener then pairs together plants that offer companion benefits to one another, putting carrots next to onions that chase away the carrot fly.³ She even adds complementary plants like flowers that repel pests or attract bees and butterflies. The addition of earthworms keeps the soil aerated and releases ladybugs to eat harmful insects. This is like inviting participants, including those with both primary and secondary interests, into the network. Getting the garden launched is the beginning.

Now the gardener does not control the sprouting of the seeds nor the plant's ultimate growth. However, she can foster an environment that facilitates growth. In the same way, the network leader guides participation in their network, but does not control it. Back in the garden, once the plants begin to grow, the gardener continues to nurture the plants with nutrients and water. Bees, butterflies and ladybugs come and go helping when they are around. Earthworms travel in, out, and around, sustaining the garden in ways no one sees. The gardener removes weeds and may reposition plants for optimum growth. With careful tending each plant yields a harvest it could not have had without the support of the other plants, beneficial insects, worms, and the gardener.

However, networks are also fluid environments. Unlike a garden where certain parts

are more stationary, in a network everyone is free to come and go and engage in their own ways. Networks and their leaders do not try to organize everyone under them or to get them all to do the same things. Networks are not organizations themselves so the organizations and individuals participating in them remain autonomous. Networks don't manage the partnerships that come out of them; the participants do that. Instead they foster a culture that encourages partnerships. In fact, that is the endgame for these networks. A well-run network is constantly birthing partnerships.

Connecting with Networks

Engaging well with networks begins with understanding your purpose and identity as a mission agency, ministry, church, or individual. It's developing an understanding of the part you play. How has God equipped you? What do you bring that others can use or learn from? How can you grow or improve with what others could provide you? What kind of information and connections will help you do more than you can accomplish alone? This understanding creates the foundation for a network engagement strategy.

Four deepening degrees describe most types of network engagement. Those degrees begin with observation, then move to general participation. Later degrees focus

on deepening engagement and moving into leadership.

The first degree is prayer and research. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the networks that fit you best. Then read network websites or subscribe to their newsletter or other communication. This will help you evaluate the network's relevance for your particular reality.

The second degree is attending a network event. However, participation must be intentional to get the most out of this engagement. Just going, sitting there and hearing information wastes your time investment. Determine ahead of time why you are going, who you can meet, and what help you can give and receive. This degree of engagement may be sufficient for some networks. However, the next two degrees offer more value for causes and regions where you want deeper involvement.

The third degree is engaging in serious dialogue and reflection with other network participants. It's cooperating on research and evaluating issues that are essential to the core identity of the network.

Finally, the fourth degree of network engagement is becoming part of its leadership. When a network strategically aligns with an organization's identity and purpose, supporting and becoming part of the leadership can multiply the impact of both the organization and the network. Leaders all remain part of their own organizations, but in network leadership roles they can have tremendous influence on an issue or geographic region that is important to their mission.

Technology

Technology is best utilized when it matches network participant's access and enhances network platforms. Some networks have robust websites with articles to read, documents to download, webinars, discussion forums, participant profiles, and more. Others find that Facebook groups or WhatsApp chat groups provide enough structure for connecting and sharing information.



The new multi-network **GENMobile app** (genmobileapp.com) is designed to help

anyone explore the world of networks. It also provides strategic support to network leaders. The app allows users to explore networks by name, geographic region, or issue. Network profiles show ways to connect to networks, such as email or website addresses or Facebook pages or groups. The app also has an extensive calendar of network events of global significance. It utilizes the database of over 600 geographically defined and issue-focused networks managed by **Linking Global Voices** (linkingglobalvoices.com). Network leaders may request to create their own leader profile in a secure area of the app in order to communicate with other network leaders. This facilitates greater network-to-network collaboration around critical challenges.

Networks can also use the app to create their own workspaces where their constituents can build both ministry and ministry leader profiles. These profiles facilitate greater awareness of who is doing what and how constituents can assist one another. Chat rooms can be created to facilitate discussion around critical issues with the added benefit of inviting a leader from another network to participate. Networks that create a workspace can also activate a section to serve as their Event App, better communicating about their events as part of their ongoing effort to empower their constituents.

Preparing for Network Participation

The newest "C-level" leadership position in the corporate world is a chief collaboration officer (CCO). This role can play a part in the mission and ministry world, too. In fact, churches, mission agencies, and networks could all benefit from a CCO.

A person in this position has no authority over a department or domain. Instead they look horizontally across all organizational areas to ascertain what geographic areas and issues are important to the organization holistically. They look at what their organization can offer as well as its needs. Then they research networks and build relationships. Most organizations are involved in several networks, so the CCO not only helps determine which networks to join but also the strategic degrees of engagement to have with each. However, it is worth noting that network engagement degrees may differ between organizational leadership and individual practitioners within the same organization.

Fostering an organizational culture that

supports involvement in networks and engagement in resulting partnerships is another part of the CCO role. The first step is developing a value for working with others. Many older organizations still operate as self-contained entities. Moving away from this identity is critical to becoming ready for collaboration. A CCO can develop crucial buy-in for collaboration at all organizational levels.

A CCO can also facilitate an honest evaluation of policies, systems, and structures that hinder collaboration. Greater flexibility in areas like insurance requirements and official language can help organizations become more globally friendly. If "we've always done it this way" trumps "this is who we are and where we are going," engagement in networks will be limited and partnerships may not be possible.

In networks a CCO's role functions slightly differently. The role is important in this context because networks benefit from on-going connections and cross-pollination with each other. An example might be how **Refugee Highway Partnership-Europe** collaborates with **Evangelical Alliances** across the continent as well as with networks representing media and human trafficking in order to empower those serving refugees. While a network CCO can be involved in many of the same ways they would be within an organization - researching networks, building relationship, and evaluating degrees of engagement - in the network setting, they also reach out to other networks to build network-to-network collaboration.

The CCO role is relatively new, so few people will enter it with previous experience. The best candidates are big-picture and holistic thinkers often coming from public relations, communications, or marketing domains. To ensure success, a CCO may need special support. Eldon Porter (article co-author) offers coaching to agency and network CCOs to help them serve effectively.

Why Bother?

We recognize that some organizations are reluctant to make the shift to networking and partnerships. They are satisfied in their self-sufficiency. Network engagement seems tertiary to their main goals and partnership seems fraught with challenging pitfalls and time-consuming changes. A failed past attempt at engagement could also be the root of hesitation.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the time the Church and ministry organizations

operate this way. They develop expertise and believe they have the best answers. But we must recognize that we are each only one part of what God is doing. We are not the center—he is. This leads to questions: What is your organization here for? Are you more tied to your structures, policies and procedures than your ethos, beliefs, values, and objectives?

We are part of a huge global Christian movement, and we each have something to learn from others. Consider how you can grow. If you have great material, why not share it to see God's Kingdom work advance further? Christ equipped members of his body with different gifts to offer and receive. When we participate together in this form of biblical generosity, we accomplish much more than we can alone.

On a very practical level, we also need to be honest with ourselves about the impact of duplication and disunity. When we show up uninvited in another country where there is already an active church, with our pre-packaged solutions and without listening and engaging with them, we harm our fellow believers. When we attempt to run the same kinds of programs in the same areas in competition with other ministries, we do the same.

But what if a network includes organizations or individuals with whom you disagree? The beauty of networks is that you maintain your autonomy and engage only in the ways you desire. You connect with whom you want. Yet building understanding relationships with those you differ from may open new opportunities for learning. In fact, greater diversity in a

network leads to greater authenticity among its participants.

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul describes the body as many parts that all fit together in one body. He goes on to describe the absurdity of body parts negating their role within the whole or one part telling another it's not needed. Every part regardless of size, strength or purpose is needed for the greater purpose of being a body. Each has particular needs and gifts. This passage is often applied to local churches, but we need to consider its implications in the global Church and mission movement. We need to discover what our part is and learn how we fit with others. Then when we work in agreement with others, we can truly function as the Body of Christ.

If we believe God is the architect of history, we can trust that he is behind this shift in global culture. If we believe his Word describes his design for us and creation, we can trust that our efforts and the efforts of others to work in his ways will be directed by him even when we do not fully understand or see the bigger picture. What matters is our faithfulness to do our part in harmony with others as members of Christ's one body.

Networks are not a fail-safe or a solution for everything. Some networks are not well run, and not every network is a good fit for every individual or organization. But the benefits outweigh the potential challenges. Networks follow what God is doing today and offer opportunities for global engagement on a scale never seen before. They open doors

to accomplish things not possible on our own. They demonstrate how we are better together. 

Eldon Porter (eporter@LinkingGlobalVoices.com) is a network specialist and researches the unique role networks play in today's reality of a Global Church that seeks, in unity, to follow the heart of God. He manages **Linking Global Voices** (linkingglobalvoices.com), a database of over 600 networks globally, and serves network leaders in addition to training those serving in a chief collaboration officer (CCO) role.

Heather Pubols (heather@lemotif.org) is a global communications consultant and founder of **LeMotif** (lemotif.org), a ministry focused on helping organizations and networks tell their collective stories effectively. She previously served nearly twenty years in various communications leadership roles with a large global mission. A passionate advocate for collaboration, she recently joined International Partnering Associates.

Notes

1. Manuel Castro, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Blackwell Publishing, 2010).
2. Rowan Williams, "Archbishop's Presidential Address – General Synod," (York, 2003), <http://aoc2013.brix.fatbeehive.com/articles.php/1826/archbishops-presidential-address-general-synod-york-july-2003>.
3. Amber Kanuckel, "10 Veggies That Should Grow Together," *Farmers' Almanac*, <https://www.farmersalmanac.com/companion-planting-guide-31301>.

Bringing Unity and a Collective Voice to Believers: Evangelical Alliances

Vijayesh Lal and Roberto Costa

There are approximately one hundred forty country-level alliances of evangelicals around the world. Most of these are connected to the **World Evangelical Alliance (WEA)**. These alliances maintain knowledge of their geographic context as well as information about how God is working within it. Successful alliances serve their constituents by being a unified representative voice and by helping connect their constituents with other alliances and networks. Two examples of Evangelical alliances are the **Evangelical Fellowship of India** and **Aliança Evangelica Brasileira (Christian Evangelical Alliance of Brazil)**.

Evangelical Fellowship of India

Founded in 1951, the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) is a national alliance of evangelical Christians. As a central network of evangelicals and a service organization, EFI is the custodian of the evangelical movement in India. It represents the Evangelical voice nationally and internationally, builds capacity, and promotes participation in nation building. EFI is a charter member of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), and its membership includes fifty-five Protestant denominations and related congregations (over 65,000 Churches), more than one hundred fifty church related mission agencies and organizations, and thousands of individual members. It is the most inclusive Protestant fellowship with membership from most denominations and organizations in India.

The primary calling of EFI is to serve churches, institutions, and individuals by strategic initiatives, capacity building, and forging solidarity, thus facilitates sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed. Through its various initiatives, EFI promotes and strengthens unity and unified action, renews the Church for mission and evangelism, and safeguards, shapes, and promotes the evangelical faith.

In order to build the capacity of churches, organizations, and individuals, EFI conducts training programs, workshops, consultations, and social development projects. We facilitate research so that our constituency is supported by strategic information and statistics. EFI also forges solidarity by passionately uniting people towards a common purpose.

EFI has been instrumental in laying the foundation for some key organizations in India. In 1953, we started the Union Biblical Seminary at Yavatmal. The Christian Education Department (CEEFI), which started with the Sunday school study materials, formed in 1962. That same year the Evangelical Theological Commission launched. Then in 1965 the Indian Evangelical Mission came into being. The Evangelical Trust Association of North India formed in 1968 to take care of church and mission properties.

Also in 1968, EFI decided to concentrate on one city to address the issues faced. We started *Festival of Peace* now known as *Together initiative*. Reaching out to pastors and the Christian community became necessary, so in 1970, we launched the monthly magazine *AIM*. In the same year we started the EFI Committee on Relief (EFICOR) to reach out to communities, especially in times of need. In 1977 the EFI Committee on Relief (EFICOR) and the mission wing of EFI, India Missions Association, began.

With the rise of religious persecution, a greater need to form a commission to focus on religious liberty issues emerged, so in 1998 we launched the Religious Liberty Commission. A legal support system needed to support churches trained and equipped to stand strong amidst persecution, so in 2003 the Christian Legal Association started. The Evangelical Financial Accountability Council (EFAC), an accreditation body began in 2006.

From its inception, EFI has been at the forefront of launching strategic and timely initiatives. We start and strengthen campaigns, movements, networks, commissions,

and organizations to address specific issues facing the community and the nation. One such initiative is EFI Children at Risk (EFIC@R).

When Krishna (*pseudonym*) was 12 years old, his father died. A man named Pandey went to Krishna claiming that he knew of a place in Nepal where Krishna could perform rituals to revive his father. Krishna believed Pandey and went with him. When information about Krishna's abduction reached EFIC@R, they immediately notified government officials who tightened security at the country border. It wasn't long before the officials captured Pandey and rescued Krishna. EFIC@R's work saved Krishna from being trafficked into prostitution.

A drug abuse awareness campaign launched under EFI's media and advocacy initiative. Drug addiction affects many young people in the northern city of Punjab. Relapse after rehabilitation and death from overdose are both common. EFI's campaign informed families and community leaders about the dangers of drugs and drug addiction. At village meetings and in schools, children and youth learned about ways to safeguard themselves. Community leaders and teachers noted the positive impact of the program.

Other EFI initiatives include urban transformation, leadership development, revival and prayer, microenterprise development, women, and youth. Learn more about EFI and all of its programs and initiatives online: efionline.org.

Aliança Cristã Evangelica Brasileira (Christian Evangelical Alliance of Brazil)

On November 30, 2010, a group of Evangelical leaders created the Christian Evangelical Alliance of Brazil. As of 2019 the Alliance included twenty denominations with about 21,000 churches, representing 3.5 million members. The Alliance has three main purposes: developing unity among Evangelical Christians, facilitating cooperation among churches, and serving as a prophetic voice in the Brazilian society at large.

These three purposes reflect our biblical foundations. Unity is the first and foremost reason that the Alliance exists. This is grounded in Jesus's Gethsemane prayer in John 17. In verses 20 and 21 he prays that believers would live in unity like the Trinity and says that this is the true witness of Christian faith.

The Brazilian Protestant church is diverse and has been divided since its beginnings. Historically, it was established by the European and US denominations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They included Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostals. Many divisions sprung off from there; most notably the Independent Presbyterian Church. And, the divisions continue.

Today's Evangelical church in Brazil is big and fractured. A 2010 census revealed that approximately 42.3 million people or 22.2% of Brazil's total population are evangelical. By 2020 evangelicals are projected to surpass Roman Catholics as the largest Christian community in Brazil. Evangelicals encompass ninety-five Protestant denominations: sixty historic Protestant and thirty-five Pentecostal/neo-Pentecostal denominations. There are also many large and small independent

local churches. Bringing unity to this group is difficult.

Flowing from a spirit of unity is the Alliance's second purpose: cooperation. The Alliance seeks to help churches and para-church organizations work together in both preaching the gospel and serving people. Few currently collaborate and several ministries have developed their own strategies in different parts of the country. The Alliance seeks to provide a space where information is shared, best practices implemented, and duplication avoided. In March 2019 they held a gathering in São Paulo to foster discussion between church leaders hoping to build unity and opportunities for cooperation.

The final purpose of the Alliance is to influence society as a whole: providing a Christian perspective on moral, social, economic, and political issues. Brazilians are increasingly impacted by secularization, confusion about truth, and political polarization. This makes the Alliance's prophetic role particularly difficult. Politically, entire denominations and organizations aligned themselves with either the left or the right. To help Christians to navigate this polarized reality, we published a booklet outlining biblical voting criteria.

The greater percentage of evangelicals in Brazil overall has enabled evangelicals to enter positions of influence. For example, in the Brazilian congress evangelicals hold ninety seats. They are regarded as one of the strongest political forces. However, these evangelical politicians struggle to position themselves as Christians in the midst of societal pressures. Another place where Christians are increasingly influential is in the corporate world. Believers in this sphere also need to be firmly grounded in scriptural principles. The Alliance strives to shine

light into this darkness by bringing a fresh perspective on issues based on scriptural values for the individual, organization, government, and society. Recently, we published a booklet on the Kingdom of God with the desire to catalyze discussion of this topic.

The Alliance is small and young. Carrying out our purposes are difficult. However, we receive encouragement when we remember that a small seed yields a large tree. Learn more about the Christian Evangelical Alliance of Brazil on our website: aliancaevangelica.org.br. 

Rev. Vijayesh Lal serves as the general secretary of the **Evangelical Fellowship of India** (EFI) and the executive director for EFI's Religious Liberty Commission. He has more than twenty years of experience advocating for church and religious freedom and started Open Doors organizations in India and Bhutan. He, his wife, Surinder Kaur, and their three children reside in Delhi, India.

Roberto Costa is a businessman, stock market investor, mechanical and agricultural engineer (MS), former World Vision International Board member and chair, former Visão Mundial do Brasil board member and president, former International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (ABU do Brasil) staff-worker. He is married to Vânia Prather, father of three (Sarah Breuel, Chantel Dauster, Cinthia Simas), and grandfather of six. Currently Roberto is an Aliança Cristã Evangélica do Brasil board member (treasurer) and Presbyterian Church of Curitiba elder.

Collaboration in the Ibero-American Missions Movement: COMIBAM

Decio de Carvalho

COMIBAM is the Ibero-American Mission Alliance. Ibero-America is the geographic region which comprises Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries of North and South America, the Caribbean, and Europe's Iberian Peninsula. COMIBAM serves national mission networks or associations in twenty-three of the region's countries. Because of the significant presence of Latino churches in the United States and Canada, and the cultural and linguistic affinity with Spain and Portugal, mission communities from those countries also are represented in COMIBAM.

The vision of our mission community is that the church in our region will participate in bringing the Gospel to every ethnic group in the world. We are committed to that vision. We believe God has raised COMIBAM to provide churches and mission agencies in the region with space to relate, learn, share information, and collaborate in fulfilling His mission.

A Brief History of the Ibero-American Mission Movement

Protestant missionary work to Latin America started as early as 1528, not long after the Reformation renewed the church and transformed the life of Christian believers throughout Europe. Some were so fervent that they dared to cross the Atlantic Ocean to present this new community of Christ-followers to the New World. Many would give their lives, either because of disease or persecution.

During the 1800s, the fruit of these missionaries' work took root and began to grow. National leaders were equipped and appointed, and in the early 1900s new churches were planted at a rapid pace. They, in turn, began to consider their role in God's mission. A mission movement was emerging.

Brazilian mission leader Bertil Ekström, who has written and taught theology and mission extensively, summarized the development of the Ibero-American mission movement in five periods:

1. Early post-colonial period (1840–1900): Mission movement focuses in-country – “Jerusalem and Samaria.” Mission work is done entirely by denominations.
2. Initial international mission efforts

(1900–1950): The movement becomes international, but mostly to neighboring or culturally related countries. The first non-denominational mission agencies are founded.

3. First response to the challenge and opportunities (1950–1980): Significant mobilization, recruiting, and training takes place. Ibero-American missionaries are sent to the most needy and unreached people groups but still in very small numbers. National networks of mission agencies are formed.
4. Growth and expansion (1980–2000): Ibero-American missionaries begin entering so-called “creative access” countries. They are better equipped due to the establishment of mission-focused training programs. The number of sending structures and missionaries quickly increases. An international Ibero-American cooperation is formed.
5. Partnership to the ends of the earth (2000 and onward): A maturing mission movement focuses on the field and the missionary. Alliances form with other international networks.

While the impetus to evangelize was planted by early missionaries, overseas mission was not a priority in Latin American churches, with few exceptions, until the 1960s and '70s. Student movements, the participation of Ibero-American church leaders in international conferences, and the teaching of young foreign missionaries on mission all catalyzed further reflection on global participation in mission. Considering the Ibero-American church's potential for global mission engagement, a mission

leader in the early 1980s referred to it as the “sleeping giant.”

In 1987, Christian and mission leaders from Ibero-America planned an event to bring together those who were passionate or interested in this emerging mission movement. Over 3,200 participants gathered in Sao Paulo, Brazil, for the First Ibero-American Mission Congress. A statement adopted at the congress' conclusion said, “Ibero-America is no longer just a mission field, but also a mission force.”

During the next ten years, the movement expanded. COMIBAM (**Cooperación Misionera Iberoamericana** or the Ibero-American Mission Co-operation) was established to encourage and support the national mission networks in each country and to help them connect and collaborate. Also during that period, a second congress was organized to study what had resulted from those first efforts. Focused consultations, conferences, and gatherings were organized to dig deeper into mission issues such as mobilization, training, and member care. Relationships with other national, regional, and global mission networks strengthened, providing opportunities to partner in various ways to increase capacity and effectiveness.

A Simple Mission Strategy

We have defined a simple strategy focusing on four areas of mission: mobilization, training, sending, and missionary field work. All initiatives and activities are related to these four areas. Rather than seeking to “do” the work from the COMIBAM sphere, our goal is to encourage, facilitate, equip, and promote the work of national mission networks and the hundreds of mission agencies and

organizations as they focus on the specific tasks of those four areas.

In mobilization, there is still a huge amount of work to be done. So far, only a small percentage of churches in the region are actively involved in mission. National mission networks, churches, and mission agencies are actively involved in mobilizing. But hundreds of new mission candidates are looking for ways to be trained and prepared for mission each year. After researching training schools and their content, COMIBAM has published a best practices guide for missionary training in Ibero-America. Our next effort in this area is to help expand training programs in the region.

Most mission agencies are still small, young, and need help. We estimate that over 20,000 missionaries from our region serve around the world today. This requires significant practical support, resources, and prayer. Strong and effective mission networks and organizations all over the region help organize those efforts.

All of these, as we know, need to be covered in constant prayer. This mission is a supernatural, spiritual task. Korean Christians hugely influenced our desire to develop mission prayer initiatives in Ibero-America. A COMIBAM prayer facilitator provides national mission networks and intercessors around the region with information and invites them to pray every week.

Research and Collaboration

COMIBAM dedicates people and resources to each of the four strategic areas, plus two other key elements that serve and enhance all four: research and global collaboration. Our research area has completed a statistical report of missionaries from the region, and three more qualitative studies. These have

provided mission leaders with essential information so they can make needed corrections in order to see increased fruit. The studies have also provided many organizations in other regions with valuable information about the Ibero-American mission movement.

In 2006 COMIBAM's statistical research on the state of the mission movement in the region revealed significant growth in the number of mission agencies and missionaries. Between 1996 and 2006 mission agencies had grown from 286 to 462. Missionaries increased from about 3,900 to more than 9,000.

COMIBAM conducted another study in 2016, in collaboration with many mission leaders and local Christian leaders, seeking to hear from them how they perceive missionaries from our region who serve alongside or among them. This was our second qualitative study and was designed to identify strengths and weakness of the missionaries being sent by our churches and mission organizations.

In this study we found strengths in Ibero-American missionaries' church connections and theological training. Sending structures—whether directly linked to a church, denomination or interdenominational mission agency—are based on close collaboration with local churches. They are the primary agents of mission. In the area of training, but not in the area of career education, seventy-six percent of Ibero-American missionaries have theological training and seventy-nine percent have attended mission courses lasting six months or more.

We also discovered some weaknesses that we want to remedy. For example, Ibero-American workers are known for their ease in establishing personal relationships wherever they go; however, devoting time to language learning is often seen as a waste of

time. Senders as well as cross-cultural workers frequently share this misconception. We identified this as a key issue that mission agencies and missionaries need to address.

The global collaboration area has focused on establishing or further developing relationships with other networks, but also with specific ministries and mission agencies, seeking to connect opportunities from around the world with missionaries and mission resources from Ibero-America.

Bringing together such a variety of national entities and their members or constituency has its challenges. Collaboration requires getting to know each other, then figuring out how we communicate and what God is calling us to do together. It is something that, over time, needs to be built together and not just written on organizational documents. We work to build such trust relationships.

Connecting with Us

To connect with COMIBAM, please visit our website, comibam.org. The site contains links to our other media channels as well as resources in Spanish and Portuguese. If you can read one of those two languages, consider signing up to receive our monthly emails that contain news, articles, and information about available materials and events. 

Decio de Carvalho was born and raised in Brazil. He joined the OM ship, *Doulos*, in 1979, and then served as the director of OM Brazil for ten years. Later with his wife, Elba, and their three children, he worked in Central Asia. In 2001 Decio and his family moved to Puerto Rico where he served as director of the Puerto Rico Missions Network. In 2009 he was appointed Executive Director of COMIBAM, the Ibero-American Mission Alliance.

Going Together Where We Can't Go Alone: Mission Focused Networks

Heather Pubols

As many as 3,000 communities representing more than 200 million people¹ remain with little or no knowledge of Jesus and little to no visible and indigenous church presence. The majority of these Unreached and Unengaged People Groups (UUPGs) live in parts of the world where Christian faith is prohibited, restricted, or suppressed. This usually occurs because of government restrictions or the predominance of another major faith. Sharing the gospel in these environments is challenging at best.

However, persistent, quiet, and creative strategies continue to spread the good news of Jesus in seemingly impossible places. Mission focused networks play a critical role in these challenging contexts, facilitating collaboration among local and global organizations and believers, helping them overcome barriers that no individual or single organization could surmount on their own. They provide understanding of difficult areas to the global mission movement. They also encourage local believers and ensure their voice is heard and respected.

The Beginnings

The first mission focused network began in the late 1980s. Interdev, the predecessor organization of visionSynergy and International Partnering Associates, organized meetings bringing together representatives from several ministries working in North Africa.² Each person was experienced, but all worked independently of one another. Even though they came from evangelical denominations, some had organizational policies that prevented engagement with others who had certain doctrinal differences.³

Over more than a century, hundreds gave their lives to share the gospel in the region with little fruit. Even though a small and committed Church existed, growth eluded it. The meetings gave space for the group to consider growth hindrances and to pray together. Over several months of discussions and prayer, they discovered not only ways working together would eliminate obstacles, but also core protocols which would build a foundation for continued collaboration.

As duplication reduced and coordination expanded, opportunities opened for more ministries. Then, improved support to local churches helped multiply local believers.

This breakthrough continues to give energy to ongoing area cooperation. The slowly, steadily growing Church increasingly takes the lead in regional initiatives. And while the region remains one of the world's least reached, collaboration fosters a ministry culture that equips both local and foreign believers to serve side-by-side more effectively.

Building on successes like this, additional mission focus networks started in the 1990s and 2000s. By 2005 more than twenty of these networks brought together organizations in challenging settings. Today, there are more than one hundred mission focus networks that have launched thousands of partnerships.

Staying Secure

In many hard-to-reach places, isolation characterized evangelism efforts. Deeply embedded foreign workers often engage in "tent-making" jobs that provide them a presence in a country to cultivate gospel-sharing relationships with local people. Any organized connections with other workers or local churches could expel foreign workers from the country. They could expose underground churches. They could restrict visible churches or trigger the destruction of their properties. They could also land local believers in prison or cause their torture or death.

In one place, decades of collaboration attempts repeatedly failed. Staying separate provided protection and attaining enough trust to do otherwise seemed unattainable. In 2011 a partnership facilitator made one more effort to bring workers together. He says the group fell prey to a common false dichotomy. They believed sharing everything or nothing were their only choices.

Through a series of meetings, he worked with the group to move beyond this false

assumption. Building trust required agreed-to protocols. Together they created more than ten practices for information sharing – ways to protect data like names, organizations, locations, etc. – that everyone could agree on. Since then, the group has met every ninety days.

Security protocols like this are an operational standard for mission focused networks. Information-sharing practices allow content exchange with reduced risk. These networks universally require anyone attending their meetings to be recommended and vetted. Another network uses an app at its meetings to help participants to connect anonymously, if they desire.

Shifting Focus

For many years people prayed fervently for God to open the Soviet Union to the gospel. In the 1980s, one prayer movement focused on Soviet countries within Asia. As the empire crumbled in 1989, this prayer movement became a network. As more workers started to enter the region, the network provided a platform for working together.

Church planting was the highest priority, and as people worked together the number of local congregations increased. Collaborative efforts also brought notable progress to Scripture translation, medical ministry, and theological education. However, as the community of local believers in the region grew, so did their participation in the network. Today, believers from the region lead the network and make up more than half of this group which was once almost entirely foreigners. Network meetings are also now conducted in Russian along with English.

The change of network constituents shifted priorities. While church planting is still important, local concerns such as developing

youth ministries, organizing Christian business leaders, and supporting pastors have become leading issues for the network.

In another network, a partnership facilitator explains that increased local involvement unexpectedly shifted a meeting agenda. As local church leaders presented reports on the state of Christianity in their nations, they began to weep. The leaders spontaneously came together to confess, pray, hug, and restore their relationships with one another. Reconciliation wasn't slotted into the program, but it was clearly a plan deviation led by the Holy Spirit.

Amplifying the Local Voice

In 2004, an American businessman, John, went to a war-torn area in East Africa on a short-term medical mission trip. He witnessed first-hand the impact of the conflict's destruction. He described the area as bereft of infrastructure and observed people surviving on insects and bark. He came home motivated to give more help.

Over the next ten years, John continued researching, connecting with others in or from the region, and returning to bring humanitarian aid including food and medicine. His desire to do more gospel work in the region strengthened, and God connected him with local and international partners who wanted to join him. In 2014 they launched **GNAC** (gnac4nuba.com). The network brings together missionaries, church leaders, and humanitarian workers, including foreigners and local people as well as diaspora.

Nearly seventy percent of the network's participants are pastors and evangelists from the region, and a local pastor leads the network on the ground. Regular conferences enable these scattered and persecuted believers the chance to encourage each other, meet, and plan. Foreign participants learn from the local community, listen to their needs, and can then engage in ways the community feels are most beneficial.

In other networks, leaders confirm that high levels of local involvement in networks

amplify the voice of local communities to the global Church. When foreigners attending network events come with a teachable and humble attitude, they gain contextual understanding and develop local relationships that enable them to participate helpfully in the region.

Some churches enter foreign countries with the goal of spreading their own ecclesial-DNA. They use money to manipulate local pastors into using foreign strategies, curriculum, or church models. Bruce Huseby, a pastor from the US with long-term network involvement, notes that from his observation, this method consistently fails and fractures the local Christian body.

Beram Kumar, a network leader in Asia, describes an approach like this as a "moon-landing" because churches and agencies come into a foreign place with a strategy that has no input from local believers – as if they don't exist. Their good intentions disrupt the work of local congregations and cause pain to fellow believers who know the culture better than outsiders.

Through networks, foreign individuals, agencies, and churches can gain exposure to the context and develop local connections. When they come to network events to learn and not to push their own agendas, opportunities for ministry arise through relationships and are locally infused. In fact, the best networks cultivate "sharing economies" where all parties can give and receive from one another.

Getting Involved

Most mission focused networks do not advertise. Engagement begins with research and prayer. For those looking to enter a new region, the websites peoplegroups.org and joshuaproject.net provide information about unreached and unengaged people groups around the world. Prayercast.com has videos to facilitate prayer for nations. Ask God where he wants your organization or church to serve and see where he leads.

Connecting with mission focused

networks comes through personal relationships. Ask God to direct you to the right people. An entry could come through a missionary who serves where you want to connect or an agency already at work there. Many network leaders also present their networks at large mission conferences. For a more direct connection, the **GENMobileApp** (genmobileapp.com) and **LinkingGlobalVoices.com** include directories of hundreds of networks including their contact details. They list some, but not all, mission focused networks.

Attend a meeting to learn, explore, and form relationships. Develop plans slowly in collaboration with local believers and discover together how you can give and receive from one another. Keep in mind that persecution is real and honoring security protocols may mean limiting what can be reported publicly. And, finally, remember that work in sensitive places usually produces few immediate results. Focus on how God is growing you with others as you labor together to sow seeds for a future harvest. ☒

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Notes

1. "Unengaged and Unreached People Groups of the World," ArcGIS, last modified April 12, 2019, <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=80792807196042291fd231a2dda7e4e>.
2. "Interdev: Pioneering Partnership," History & Impact, VisionSynergy, accessed November 18, 2018, <https://visionsynergy.net/history-and-impact/>.
3. Phill Butler, "Phill Butler: The North Africa Story," VisionSynergy, October 5, 2011, YouTube video, <https://youtu.be/j7Cmpx0nvvk>.

Calling the Church to Compassion for Refugees: Refugee Highway Partnership

Jude Simion and David Rihani

The **Refugee Highway Partnership** (RHP) is a global network of organizations and churches who share a vision to see the church minister among those who've been forcibly displaced, including refugees and asylum seekers. The RHP seeks to connect and mobilize leaders, churches and organizations to effectively engage with forcibly displaced people. It seeks to create a community that facilitates more effective ministry, stimulates strategic initiatives, and envisions and equips the church.

The global crisis of forcibly displaced people is one of the most urgent issues facing today's Church. According to the United Nations, over 71 million people worldwide had been forcibly displaced from their homes, about half of them children. Statistics also show that less than one percent of those will be resettled, and less than that will ever return to their original homes.

As believers, we're called to care for the strangers among us. But this ancient theological imperative poses a challenge for the modern global Church, with controversy and political debate often clouding our efforts to make a meaningful impact. How do we show compassion to refugees in this complex environment? What role should each of us play in this mission field?

These questions drive our work at the Refugee Highway Partnership. We are a global platform of churches and faith-based ministries taking collective action to serve refugees in crisis. Our mission flows from a God-inspired love for refugees, the biblical mandate to care for aliens, and our conviction that we can do this best in collaboration.

When we think about refugees fleeing their homelands, we envision them on a highway—a long, lonely journey in search of a home. As believers in “transit” or in “settlement” countries, our diverse coalition of members comes alongside these weary travelers. We offer a beacon of light and a warm meal on the table, in both the literal and figurative senses.

The Hands and Feet of Jesus

Historically, local churches have often served as “first responders” in refugee crises. In many areas of the world, they have welcomed and provided immediate aid to refugees, often

closing the gap between refugees' needs and government-provided services.

I (David Rihani) grew up in Jordan, a country with a long history of accepting refugees from conflict-torn areas across the Middle East and Caucasus. As a child, I listened to my grandfather's stories about an Armenian family of refugees who lived with them.

My childhood church, in the Jordanian city of As-Salt, housed and cared for an influx of Palestinian refugees in the late 1960s. At that time, Jordan had no designated governmental agency handling the refugee crisis, and the church embraced the refugees with open arms.

I (Jude Simion) grew up in war-torn Sri Lanka and have experienced internal displacement. I have seen local churches be a primary responder offering food and shelter. Now I live in Australia, a country where the church has a legacy of caring for refugees and helping them integrate.

We believe that churches are tailor-made for practical, effective response to refugees. They bypass red tape and work directly with families, integrating them within the church and the community at large. And importantly, churches minister to refugees' spiritual needs in a way that few other organizations can.

But with the rise of institutional humanitarian response, local churches often defer their response to aid agencies or government service. While their response is essential, they cannot replace the role of the local church. Too often, we've delegated the compassionate work of the Church to other organizations. As the church we must remember our calling to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

When we talk with church leaders about serving refugees, they often defer to agencies

like World Vision, World Relief, or Compassion International. These organizations do essential work. But they don't replace the role of the Church.

God commands the Church, not organizations, to love the strangers among us (Leviticus 19:34). That's why Refugee Highway Partnership's calling is to call back the global Church as the first responder. We invite every local church, in its own way, to answer the invitation to be part of God's work.

Building Community

So, how do we envision and equip the Church for compassionate response to refugees? We start with creating community. The Refugee Highway Partnership builds this community by connecting organizations. This is the key to breaking down silos and other barriers to partnership, streamlining our efforts, and operating in our areas of strength. When we collaborate, we can go farther and make a greater impact.

Joining our efforts helps to broaden our influence in the international community. Refugee Highway Partnership serves on the Refugee Task Force of the **World Evangelical Alliance** (WEA), working together to amplify our voices for people who are displaced. The WEA serves on the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Within this unique partnership, we work hand in hand to advocate for refugees around the world.

We engage the refugee church (refugees who are believers themselves), international mission organizations, aid organizations, and churches in host and settlement countries. Host countries are places where refugees stay temporarily, while settlement countries are their ultimate destination, often in the “global north” of Western Europe

and the United States.

The Refugee Highway Partnership has brought a new level of collaboration to this work. In the past, partnerships have been limited in scope, usually operating within one country or region. We intentionally embrace everyone who's involved in this work, including the refugee believers themselves and their churches.

Creating an equal, inclusive network of all these stakeholders is critical. We must not only minister to refugees but also respect their agency and self-determination, hold space for their struggles, and listen to their input. Lord willing, refugees will carry the work forward in the future, with us in a supporting role.

Refugee Highway Partnership operates in eight regions around the world holding round-table events in each region and as a global network. It's an incredible opportunity to meet face-to-face and hear from our brothers and sisters in places like Africa, Asia, Brazil, and the Middle East. Each of us has our own stories and challenges, and we all learn so much from one another. Working as part of a diverse team to advance God's kingdom is an extraordinary blessing.

Serving on the frontlines of the refugee crisis, we experience intense highs and lows. So, in addition to coordinating organizational efforts, we foster relationships to encourage one another. We're in this work for the long haul, and we can't go it alone. For this work to be sustainable, we must bear one another's burdens and renew our spirits with God's Word.

Global Challenge, Local Context

Understanding and effectively responding to the refugee crisis in a global context can

be incredibly challenging. The reality for North America and Europe is different from the realities of the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and, to a certain extent, Latin America and the Caribbean.

For instance, Uganda is one of the poorest countries in the world, and it hosts over one million refugees. How does the Ugandan church cope with this tremendous need? How can we come alongside them in practical, appropriate ways? In many areas of the world, Christians are a minority in numbers, yet they want to make an outsized impact in refugee ministry. How can we equip them for this work?

These are the challenges we face in global ministry. We're constantly sharing knowledge, resources, and connections, as well as advocating for refugees' rights and needs in the international community. But in the end, effective refugee response must align with the unique local context. There's no blanket solution, because what works in one community or country may fail elsewhere. We must have the humility to listen and learn from those who are closest to the crisis.

We have a unique role to play in helping local churches to prepare for embracing refugees over the long-term, beyond just providing food and shelter. Many churches have a heart to help, but they need support and training in how to deal with the often complex, difficult issues that accompany refugee ministry. This is a tremendous responsibility for us as we look toward the future of strategic partnership.

As we acknowledge the challenges in refugee ministry, we know that the global Church has a huge opportunity to engage. We need them to believe the scriptures that speak about refugees. When He speaks to

the Israelites in exile, God reminds them, "Remember how you lived in Egypt." The scriptures always bring the people back to that feeling of being in exile or being a refugee. Most of all, we need the global Church to try to feel what refugees are going through. With that empathy, they can pray for refugee communities, refugee churches, and refugee responders, particularly on World Refugee Sunday each June.

And finally, we can extend hospitality to refugees in our own communities, seeing this as a missional opportunity. In the modern-day diaspora, refugees bring a new life to the Church. Church is an intercultural community that brings together people of all tongues, colors, and nationalities to create a beautifully diverse portrait of God's work.

To learn more about Refugee Highway Partnership or connect with a regional network, visit refugeehighway.net. 

Jude Simion is the chair of the WEA Refugee Task Force, a facilitator of the Oceania RHP region, as well as serving as a key leader in the global Refugee Highway Partnership. Having pioneered many innovative refugee support programs, including humanitarian response initiatives, he passionately promotes church response in addressing issues of global displacements.

David Rihani is the vice president of the Jordanian Evangelical Council and the founding board member and president of the Assemblies of God Church in Jordan. He is a key leader in the WEA Middle East and North Africa region, as well as serving with the global Refugee Highway Partnership.

Birthing a Network and a Movement: The Lausanne/WEA Creation Care Network

Ed Brown

The network now known as the **Lausanne/WEA Creation Care Network** (LWCCN) was born the evening of November 1, 2012 in St. Ann, Jamaica at the Lausanne Global Consultation on Creation Care and the Gospel. Today we have 1,500 members in one hundred fifty countries around the world. We have held ten regional conferences and have engaged with all of the major players in the world in the area of creation care.

It's a remarkable story. There are few organizations that make creation care their primary ministry activity, and only a handful of missions or relief and development organizations consider this a strategic goal. In spite of all of this, God has brought a viable, global network into existence in a surprisingly short time.

How did this happen?

Cape Town

The spark was a single sentence in this key paragraph in Lausanne's *Cape Town Commitment*:

If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says "Jesus is Lord" is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth, since Christ's Lordship is over all creation. Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ.¹

This paragraph is historic. For the first time, the global church is saying "we believe creation care is central to our faith and our identity as God's people." This phrase fanned the flames of what would become a vital, energetic movement.

Though, let's be clear: Creation care was not invented at the Cape Town 2010 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization. The idea goes back to St. Francis, and in recent years, increasing numbers of evangelicals have been working in this area. This has included those specializing in creation care, such as **Au Sable Institute** (ausable.org) in the United States and **A Rocha International** (arocha.org). Missions and development

organizations such as **Tearfund UK** (tearfund.org) and the **Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief** (EFICOR, eficor.org) had already been adding environmental concerns to their project portfolios as well.

What happened after Cape Town was providential; it certainly was not planned. We stumbled on what turned out to be an ideal recipe for building a movement by combining passionate people, an organizing document, and a creative and effective strategy.

Passionate People

You can't have a movement without people who care. In our case, finding people turned out to be easy. Even though creation care remains controversial, God was ahead of us. Among the participants at Cape Town were a number of people already working on creation care. Cape Town allowed us to find each other. People in senior leadership roles in Lausanne, such as Las Newman (Regional Director for the Caribbean) and Chris Wright (author of the *Cape Town Commitment*) for whom creation care was a priority. We continue to find people everywhere to whom God has spoken. They often feel isolated and are surprised that they aren't alone – that there are people all over the world moving in the same direction.

It helped to gather those people together. Two years after Cape Town, Lausanne leadership planned for a series of consultations on topics from the *Cape Town Commitment*. The first of these consultations would be on Creation Care and the Gospel.

About sixty leaders gathered for this purpose in St. Ann, Jamaica, November 2012, the very day Superstorm Sandy was coming ashore in New York. This five-day gathering launched most of what followed.

A Guiding Document

It was clear from the first day that the participants wanted a conference statement to be shared with the larger church community. However, there was no conference statement draft for delegates to approve. We had to start from scratch.

A designated writing team shared a draft with the group – all sixty of us discussing together in one large room. After suggestions were put on a white board, the writing team went to work in the evening. The next day we repeated the exercise. Thus was born the *Jamaica Call to Action*.²

This is a unique document. In structure, it is both simple and detailed, beginning with two fundamental and easily communicated convictions:

- Creation Care is indeed a "gospel issue within the lordship of Christ."
- We are faced with a[n environmental] crisis that is pressing, urgent, and that must be resolved in our generation.

These two convictions summarize everything that needs to be said about the environmental crisis: caring for God's creation is central to our faith and to our identity as followers of Jesus (consistent with the *Cape Town Commitment*), and the crisis in the world today is in fact an emergency.

There follows a comprehensive list of ten specific "calls," from a call to a simple lifestyle (itself echoing a position paper from Lausanne from the 1980s), to a call for environmental missions, to a call for a complete revamp of the global economy. The group did not shy away from controversy; climate change is discussed prominently (Call No. 6). It is worth noting that even though climate

change continues to be a contentious issue in many parts of the Christian community, the *Jamaica Call to Action* has never been publicly challenged; rather, it has “given cover” to other institutions and organizations wanting to take a stand on this vital issue.

Finally, and critically, the *Jamaica Call to Action* ends with a beautifully written call to prayer:

Each of our calls to action rests on an even more urgent call to prayer, intentional and fervent, soberly aware that this is a spiritual struggle. Many of us must begin our praying with lamentation and repentance for our failure to care for creation, and for our failure to lead in transformation at a personal and corporate level. And then, having tasted of the grace and mercies of God in Christ Jesus and through the Holy Spirit, and with hope in the fullness of our redemption, we pray with confidence that the Triune God can and will heal our land and all who dwell in it, for the glory of his matchless name.

The *Jamaica Call to Action* is still a living document. It has become the manifesto for the movement and the foundation for a plan to bring the creation care message to the church.

An Effective Strategy

Those who attended the Jamaica consultation were not professional conference-goers. They were activists, and they agreed that the consultation would have failed if it did not produce a strategic action plan to bring creation care to the global Christian community.

But how do you reach a global church with a topic that is controversial yet urgent? Our answer was “The Global Campaign for Creation Care and the Gospel.”³ We wanted a global movement, and we believe that the church is God’s ordained instrument. But we recognize that the global church only exists through its manifestation in the nations of the world. To build a global movement, we would have to focus on national church communities. Thus, our goal became jump-starting national creation care movements where there were none and strengthening movements where they already existed.

Through the “Global Campaign” we planned to hold a series of regional conferences modeled on the one held in Jamaica. Each conference would serve nine to fifteen

countries, would last five days, and would have identical themes: God’s Word (theology), God’s world (science), and God’s work (our response). We would seek theologians, scientists, creation care practitioners, and church influencers. And we would do all this in three years (!).

We didn’t meet our deadline, but the strategy has proved to be remarkably successful. To date our ten regional conferences have covered one hundred thirty countries. Everyone we know in the evangelical community working in creation care has been part of the campaign. This sense of unity alone makes the entire exercise worthwhile.

And we’ve seen results! One of our guiding principles was that the Global Campaign would support but not own the results. This empowered people and organizations alike. Creation care Sunday School curriculum has been developed in the Philippines; a spontaneous country-to-country outreach (Kenya to Madagascar) was initiated in Africa with no outside support or direction; and national conferences have been held in Pakistan, the United States, Singapore, and most recently in Hong Kong.

We published a book, *Creation Care and the Gospel: Reconsidering the Mission of the Church* (Hendrickson, 2016) and a module in Lausanne’s Global Classroom video series was released in October 2019.

Keeping the Network Alive

An important decision was to merge the creation care efforts of Lausanne and the World Evangelical Alliance, giving us the Lausanne/WEA Creation Care network. As the Global Campaign winds down, the network is nurtured through a monthly newsletter, *The Pollinator*, and with personal email contact among network members and Lausanne Catalysts, Dave Bookless and me.

We have challenges: Few Christian organizations specialize in this work, so most network members are individuals; thus, long-term sustainability is a challenge. Few institutions are willing to support the administration a network requires. Also, the topic remains controversial, affecting fundraising and future growth.

In the end, though, we believe that God brought this movement into being, and he will continue to bless it and all those working to heal his beautiful creation.

To learn more about LWCCN visit lwccn.com. 

Rev. Edward R. Brown, MDiv, DD (hon) is the Director and CEO of Care of Creation (careofcreation.net) and serves as Catalyst for Creation Care for the Lausanne Movement. He directs the work of Care of Creation in the US and as Creation Care Catalyst he has led the development of a global creation care network under the Lausanne Movement in partnership with the World Evangelical Alliance.

Notes

1. *Cape Town Commitment*, (1)(7)(A): <http://www.weacreationcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/WEA-Cape-Town-Commitment-Creation-Care.pdf>, accessed 10/14/2019.
2. *Jamaica Call to Action*: <https://www.lausanne.org/content/statement/creation-care-call-to-action>.
3. *The Global Campaign for Creation Care and the Gospel*: <https://www.lausanne.org/gatherings/related/global-campaign>.

Pursuing Fruit in the Muslim World: Vision 5:9

Jeff Neely

In 2002, a global gathering of mission practitioners took place which focused on church planting among unreached people groups. At this gathering, a break-out group for participants working in the Muslim world met to discuss their unique task. We determined not to ask ourselves, “What can we do to reach the Muslim world for Christ?” but instead to ask, “What must be done to reach the Muslim world for Christ?”

That question then led to another fundamental question: “What can we do better together than we can do alone?” While answering it, these practitioners realised two needs: to better understand the state of the Gospel among Muslims, and to identify the best practices for church planting among Muslims.

A Comprehensive Network for Muslim World Church Planting

This dialogue launched the network that became Vision 5:9. Two different task forces which focused on these two distinct needs came under Vision 5:9. The Global Trends task force has put much of its energy into identifying Muslim people groups where there is no known intentional effort to plant churches. The Fruitful Practices task force researches and identifies field practices that are producing fruit in the form of discipleship movements and multiplying churches. Both of these initiatives are successful because of the commitment to share between different member organizations, which provides broader insight than can be gained within any single organization.

Since then, Vision 5:9 has become a comprehensive network for those called to church planting in the Muslim world. It now includes over two hundred member organizations with a healthy cross-section of global, national, denominational, and local ministries. Vision 5:9 is a place for practitioners to meet, learn, and partner together to see churches planted among Muslims in their local context.

Vision 5:9 has three primary mandates. Mobilising the church to engage every Muslim people group effectively. Discerning fruitful practices for church planting among Muslim peoples and to share these practices

with others. And lastly, measuring and assessing our efforts, to understand trends impacting these efforts and hold one another accountable to our commitment to reach all Muslim peoples.

As a network, we purposefully partner with national movements focused on church planting among Muslims in their nations. We also realize the importance of working with other like-minded networks – those focused on church planting among unreached peoples. To do this well, we intentionally partner with global networks such as [Ethne \(ethne.net\)](http://ethne.net), [GCPN \(gcpn.info\)](http://gcpn.info), [24:14 \(2414now.net\)](http://2414now.net), and [GACX \(gacx.io\)](http://gacx.io).

Network members express that the most challenging part of participating in our network is prioritizing time spent on network development with the expectations of their individual organizations. Finding the right balance for each member is difficult when organizational priorities may be more immediately demanding.

Increasing Diversity

Vision 5:9 derives its name from Revelation 5:9, which is a beautiful picture of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation gathered before the Lamb of God, singing a new song. We believe our network must reflect that same picture, and we have been very intentional about pursuing the involvement of a diverse representation of ministries in all levels of network participation. In 2007 when we hosted the Global Trends – Fruitful Practices event, we had 500 participants who were mostly practitioners from the Western world.

However, at the similarly purposed *Abide Bear Fruit* event in 2017, we had 1,000 participants, of which 25% were Muslim

background believers (MBBs), 25% were women, and 50% were from the global south. All who attended felt the benefits of such a diverse gathering, but our Muslim background brothers and sisters were the most deeply moved. It gave them the opportunity to fellowship and collaborate with so many others who shared their experience. As one MBB brother observed, “I had no idea there were so many of us!”

Towards that end, Vision 5:9 intentionally directs resources towards the inclusion of groups that would otherwise be unable to participate in our network. In addition to funding the leaders from less-resourced areas to participate in our network meetings, we have continued to resource and facilitate regional gatherings for MBB practitioners.

Regional expressions of our network allow more grassroots collaboration and partnership to take place. They also enable participants to share experiences and strategies that enhance their own effective ministry as well as informing the wider Body of Christ.

Our current regions include the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Europe, North America, and Latin America. We are developing regions in East and West Africa. Together with our regional expressions, we are also exploring how to most effectively address the global trends of the Muslim diaspora, refugees, and immigrant populations. We don’t want to leave any Muslim people behind.

Developing and Sharing Resources

Since our aim is not research for its own sake but to enable more effective ministry efforts, Vision 5:9 has developed the outcomes of



Photo by Hasan Almasi

the Global Trends and Fruitful Practices task forces into resources, which can be used by all practitioners. These resources help them to see more fruit in church planting efforts among Muslim people. Some of these resources include:

- A regularly updated list of Muslim people groups that identify those who are unengaged.
- “From Seed to Fruit” published in 2008 following our first global consultation.
- “Where There Was No Church” and “Where There is Now a Church” narrative stories of fruitful practices.
- “Fruit to Harvest” published in 2019 following our second global consultation.
- “A Practitioner’s Guide to Fruitful Practices” (currently in production).

The success of Vision 5:9 in using the task force model to collaborate for effective ministry in the Muslim world has led to several other initiatives aimed at achieving our vision. These initiatives include a number of task forces. They create platforms to facilitate the sharing of relevant resources and create a

learning environment to help us do our part in reaching the Muslim world.

A Prayer Task Force encourages strategic prayer as the foundation of our efforts. The **10/10 prayer initiative** (1010prayerandfasting.wordpress.com) has successfully drawn our members together for focused prayer on the Muslim world. A Family Task Force emphasizes the need to reach the family with the gospel and provide resources specific to this strategy. A Mobilisation and Training Task Force uses the resources of the network to mobilize the whole church to reach the Muslim world. And a Multi-media Resources Task Force uses communications technology to facilitate evangelism and discipleship for the purpose of planting churches.

Relationships are Key to Success

The key to the success of Vision 5:9 is relationships – deep, intentional, trusting relationships among members of individual organizations who understand that we can do far more together. Relationships inspired the creation of Vision 5:9. Relationships caused the network to grow and become

diverse. Relationships gave the network a unique understanding of the needs in the Muslim world and what bears fruit for the Kingdom.

Sharing ministry insights and strategies happens because of our relationships. Because of our relationships, trust is established with one another to share failures that help us learn. Accountability and the pursuit of long-lasting fruit occurs because of relationships. And we celebrate the harvest with our brothers and sisters because we know that in pursuing what must be done to see more fruit in the Muslim world, we must do it together.

For more information on Vision 5:9 please email: info@vision59.com. 

Jeff Neely is one of the founding members and the current director of operations for the Vision 5:9 network. He has been with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) for thirty years, working with a focus on Muslim ministry for most of that time.

Connecting and Resourcing Member Care Practitioners Worldwide: The Global Member Care Network

Harry Hoffmann

The **Global Member Care Network** (GMCN) is a network under the auspices of the World Evangelical Alliance – Mission Commission that exists to resource, equip and connect Christian member care/missionary care practitioners worldwide. Specialized professional missionary care networks exist around the world in different languages under specializations such as “Pastors to Missionaries,” “Crisis Response” and “Third Culture Kids.” In addition, geographic networks have been an important part of member care development over the last twenty years. Examples are “Member Care Europe,” “Member Care South Pacific” and “Member Care Africa.”

GMCN seeks to synergize all of these on a global level by actively connecting regional and national member care movements as well as specialized individuals and organizational practitioners and networks. GMCN is a professional community in which mutual learning, training and sharing take place. It also facilitates the connection of local missionary care needs with global resources.

Diversity of National Mission Movements

Twenty-five years ago, the missions workforce consisted mainly of North Americans, Europeans, Australians, and a few Koreans. Today I interact with countless nationalities on the mission field including highly energized workers from emerging national mission movements.

Member care questions and needs from newer mission movements – for example, those in places like Fiji, Ethiopia, Bolivia, China, and Latvia – that are just preparing to send out missionaries are different from national mission movements that have already sent 100 missionaries, and from those that have sent 10,000 missionaries. Each national mission movement has different resources and approaches to mission work and missionary care, which makes cross-fertilization and networking a necessity. All have something to contribute, and all have something to learn.

What is Member Care?

Member care addresses all aspects of a missionary’s life including personal, spiritual, emotional, and relational needs. It encompasses physical, economic, and familial

well-being. It develops and educates. It seeks to empower missionaries to make healthy choices by offering ongoing training, resourcing, and equipping in all these areas. It is integral to all aspects of mission and begins with candidate selection all the way through the missionary life cycle to re-entry or retirement. The responsibility for this care rests collectively with agencies, churches, supporters, member care providers, and the missionaries themselves. This is a big field. When you add cultural needs and special requirements for each nationality it can start to feel impossible to manage.

History of the Network

In 1999, I heard Larrie Gardner (Wycliffe Bible Translators) speak at a mental health and mission conference about the importance of a “Member Care Facilitator.” This encouraged me to start physical member care centers in Thailand and China. Then in 2006, I launched the first GMCN website and a monthly member care email to get member care information out further. In 2014, I started a private group on Facebook for sharing member care information. This has effectively connected people all around the world.

Today the GMCN Facebook group has over 3,150 members and is growing weekly. I facilitate the group and hundreds of member care practitioners, as well as missionaries from around the world, communicate, share resources, ask questions and receive knowledgeable and up-to-date help, sometimes within seconds.

To give you a brief snapshot, posts to the group include:

- an upcoming member care training taking place in Brazil in Portuguese
- a new book written by Asian third culture kids
- an urgent call for help with a crisis from a mission team in Central Asia
- a request for a conflict mediator in Asia
- a three-month interim member care provider for a mission agency
- specific psychological counseling requests
- spiritual formation retreats
- fundraising ideas for missionaries
- references and best practice guidelines for member care policies
- schooling options for Chinese missionary kids
- free PowerPoints on member care topics
- resource requests from sending churches in different countries
- weblinks to resources in different languages

The power of networks comes to life every day in this group, and I am in awe.

What is even more amazing is that GMCN operates on the service of volunteers. Even my coordination role is part-time without a salary, which means I need to manage my time wisely for other ministries and personal fundraising.

A Different Leadership Role

Several years ago I read the book, *The Starfish and the Spider*, by Braffman and Beckstrom (Portfolio, 2006). It is about the hidden power of leaderless organizations. The idea that leadership is about one person who “knows it all” and has all the “information power”

always irritated me. The concept is not true, fair or healthy. The authors share that if you cut off a spider's head it dies, but if you cut off a starfish's leg, it can grow into a new starfish. That's what I wanted for GMCN – a facilitated member care network not dependent on one person, but able to carry on independently, or rather interdependently.

Twenty-five years ago, leadership was often defined as a singular person, like Moses or Nehemiah, who leads as CEO, president, or general manager. A network leadership functions quite contrary to that, as it works with facilitators, administrators, and coordinators.

I sometimes compare network leadership to the role of a conductor of an orchestra – sometimes they have to ask the trumpets to play quieter in order for the harp to be heard. The diversity of GMCN's constituency requires its leadership to have strong intercultural competencies and knowledge. Sensitivity is needed to multilingual communication in writing, audio, or video calls and in-person presentations and conversations. Furthermore, it requires an interdisciplinary understanding of the broad spectrum of member care. However, GMCN's main spotlight is on member care specialists within the network who respond to urgent needs while the administrators of the network *conduct* quietly in the background who often remaining hidden and exchangeable.

Obviously, a globally facilitated and “headless starfish” kind of network affects a leader's persona. It involves a certain level of death: death of pride and death of being recognized as the person who “knows it all” or as the first contact person. My email inbox was quite full in the past. Now it is rather empty, and I am not important for the survival of the GMCN.

Many Christian leaders struggle with egocentric self-branding, the need for support-worthy ministry results, or collecting career development points for future job

opportunities. Networks often don't serve these leaders well. From a ministry sustainability and building the kingdom of God point of view – where God is the head and is given the glory – there is nothing better than networks. It utilizes and facilitates the knowledge, experience, and wisdom of all members. This is something a singular leader will never be able to accomplish.

Newsletters, Conferences, and Online Learning

Besides the successful Facebook network, GMCN sends a monthly email newsletter, organizes conferences, and soon will facilitate online learning. The newsletter focuses on newly established member care centers and ministries around the world, latest resources, and member care event announcements. We organize a Global Member Care Conference every three years focusing on global member care gaps or responding to specific requests by national or regional mission movements. Because we purposefully do not want to compete with national member care networks, but rather support them, we seek to use our conferences to help ignite and further stimulate member care development within a region.

In 2012, we went to Thailand to help inspire Asia's emerging member care movements in places like Pakistan, Korea, and Indonesia. Nearly 200 people came to the event. We focused our conference in 2015 on member care in the Arab world and the Middle East. More than 350 participants came to Turkey representing not just traditional mission agencies but also Christian Aid organizations and local churches. In addition, we facilitated a pre-conference seminar on hostage crises and critical incidents.

For 2018, we chose the topic of Latin American member care and organized the GMCN conference in collaboration with COMIBAM in Quito, Ecuador. Two-hundred and fifty people came for mutual learning and sharing.

About half came from Latin America. The conference was conducted in three languages – English, Spanish and Portuguese – and it brought together expert speakers from all over the world.

A new emphasis of GMCN will be online learning and video podcasts. We are currently discussing the best use of Vimeo and YouTube platforms for short, introductory, free-of-charge, member care related teaching videos in support of the development of member care around the world.

Conclusion

GMCN is a network of and for agencies, churches, supporters, and missionaries around the world. We prepare, equip, and empower missionaries from all nations and cultures for effective and sustainable life, ministry, and work. We know GMCN's service has been effective when missionaries are spiritually and relationally resourced and healthy. And we know we have served faithfully when the global mission community serves God with the character of Christ and in unity with both sending and receiving churches. We are here to serve you.

Connect with Global Member Care online: Facebook Group (facebook.com/groups/globalmembercare/), Newsletter (app.mailerlite.com/webforms/landing/k8h5i8), Website (globalmembercare.com). 

Harry Hoffmann (harry@globalmembercare.com) is the founder of several counseling and member care centers in Asia and is the current coordinator of the Global Member Care Network (WEA-MC). He has a master's degree in Chinese studies, B.A. in theology and leadership, and is a licensed mediator (Germany). His life's passion is to invest in start-up ministries and to help revive dysfunctional intercultural teams.

Redeeming Technology for God's Kingdom: The Mobile Ministry Forum

Brian James, Clyde Taber, and Keith Williams

Amira and Donna were unlikely friends. They met in India. Donna was a home-schooling mom from a western country whose husband was a foreign worker. Amira was a widow and mother of two making ends meet in a low paying job. Even among her neighbors, Amira was considered poor. Yet life was about to change. A new upgraded phone brought her endless hours of Bollywood entertainment. Her friend Donna saw an opportunity to share the gospel.

Donna gave Amira a memory card filled with audio and video stories of Jesus in Amira's language – Urdu. Amira took the card and loaded it to her phone. Through those materials, Amira met Jesus. Donna and Amira still meet regularly. They encourage one another to obey what they are learning in the Bible. Amira now prays for her neighbors and looks for ways to share the media on her phone so they, too, can meet the one who changed her life forever.

Virtually everywhere you travel today you will find mobile phones in people's pockets and hands. In a rainforest clearing in Papua New Guinea a group gathers around a glimmering mobile screen watching newly downloaded videos. Farmers in Uganda¹ use their smartphones to decide when they should harvest and determine which town markets are currently offering top prices for their produce. Protesters in Hong Kong use their phones to share updates using encrypted messaging apps.

Among almost every people group, whether reached or unengaged, mobile technology disrupts and reconstructs age-old patterns of life. We believe that God is neither surprised nor taken aback by this. Rather, he is committed to redeeming these billions of new mobile phone connections for his kingdom and glory.

Mobile Technology as Missions Tool

The **Mobile Ministry Forum** (MMF) is a movement that seeks to expand mobile ministry to the ends of the earth. We are a network of missional innovators fostering a mobile ministry movement so that every unreached person will have an opportunity to encounter, experience, and grow in Christ

through their personal mobile device. MMF's five core functions are to:

- Advocate: Challenge the global Church toward use of mobile ministry.
- Catalyze: Resource the body of Christ to get started in mobile ministry.
- Equip: Equip the Church to harness the full potential of the mobile revolution.
- Collaborate: Foster multi-organizational collaboration in mobile ministry initiatives.
- Anticipate: Identify and promote current and potential aspects of mobile media ministry.

We define *mobile ministry* as the use of mobile technology for the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37–9). An important focus for MMF is promoting wider recognition of the missional value of mobile technology. Seeking to advance mobile ministry practice, MMF conducts online and in-person training, researches, and shares findings about new tools and techniques that empower ministry strategies.

The network grew out of a series of multi-agency online group calls that began in 2009 and resulted in a gathering of sixteen mission agency leaders in 2010. Today, MMF counts over two thousand participants from more than two hundred ministries around the world. Participation is voluntary and ranges anywhere from receiving regular MMF updates to taking part in network leadership. The leadership team consists of eight individuals from seven organizations. The primary qualifications for leadership are a demonstrated commitment to mobile ministry, previous participation in the

forum, and the willingness and ability to sacrificially serve the MMF community without compensation.

A growing number of events and learning communities interested in using new technology and media for the Great Commission started during the past two decades. Other networks with a similar focus include **Indigitous** (indigitous.org), the **International Conference on Computing and Mission** (iccm.org), **Visual Story Network** (visualstory.org), **FaithTech** (faithtech.com) and the **Augmented and Virtual Reality Network** (facebook.com/groups/1014626692006554).

Collaboration and Resource Sharing

MMF is a trusted resource for mission practitioners seeking to investigate or strengthen their use of mobile and new media for ministry. We regularly post new articles on our website (mobileministryforum.org). We have produced a number of guides and tutorials as well as conducted an online class. We have presented numerous webinars and held six consultations that typically gathering together more than one hundred field workers, technologists, and mission agency leaders for two to three days of networking, teaching, and collaboration. MMF leaders also present at other conferences and consultations. Through the MMF's efforts, thousands of mission practitioners and leaders have been trained and equipped for more fruitful digital outreach.

One area in which MMF-led collaboration has been instrumental is through online education and training (mobileministryforum.org/training/). Resources developed through collaborative, inter-agency partnerships include the *Your Phone – God's Glory*

guide, *Social Media for Missions* guide, *Mobiles Media & Missions* curriculum, *Mission Media Coach* YouTube channel and *Mission Media U* eLearning platform. Each of these efforts sprang from conversations at MMF gatherings, were developed by multi-agency teams of volunteers, and have been promoted and distributed by MMF.

The development of off-line local area media distribution is another area where we can look back and see foundational MMF-generated collaboration. Staff from a ministry that develops and distributes audiovisual media players – including MP3 audio players and JESUS Film projection kits – attended one of the initial MMF conferences. Inspired by what they heard about the possibilities of mobile media distribution, they connected with two visionaries in the field as well as a software engineer. They collaboratively created a WiFi/Bluetooth/microSD card media distribution unit. MMF then partnered with this organization and funded a pilot release of twelve units. They helped gather pilot teams from around the world and funded the units and training. As a result, this ministry shifted to largely focus on mobile ministry technologies. They became one of the primary producers of WiFi outreach hubs and distributors of ministry microSD cards. Later, another ministry developed a lower cost WiFi-only media distribution hub, and an MMF webinar was one of the initial ways through which that ministry shared about the device and helped it gain recognition.

A Far-Reaching Influence Despite Challenges

We continue to work towards our vision but recognize several key challenges that can hinder progress. As mentioned previously, membership and leadership are voluntary. The primary responsibility for MMF members and leaders remains with their mission

agency. They can only give as much time to MMF as allowed by that agency (or personal time). Mobile technology remains a rapidly evolving and expanding field. Maintaining a leadership edge requires a tremendous time investment! Funding is also a challenge. While God has provided for particular projects through grants, most costs for leadership meetings, conferences, etc. are absorbed by the participants, speakers, and leaders themselves. Therefore, some ideas for projects, activities, and promotions have remained dormant due to insufficient funding.

Another challenge MMF faces is developing community among participants. Staying relevant to the needs of our core audience is difficult when many have security constraints that limit their engagement with MMF. After trying Facebook, Slack, and other channels, we still do not have a suitable platform for ongoing forum conversation that meets our financial and security constraints.

However, despite these challenges, MMF has enabled the global church to gain a two-to-three-year head start on leveraging mobile and new media technology. MMF has done this by identifying and highlighting media outreach technologies, techniques, and strategies; providing a platform for diverse experts and philosophies of ministry; and connecting on-the-ground practitioners with technologists, media producers, and funders.

Seminaries and Bible colleges in South America and Europe now use MMF training materials to prepare their students for ministry in the digital world. Secular expert and Forbes' number one rated mobile influencer Tomi Ahonen² presented at multiple MMF gatherings. His ideas inspired several technologists to join MMF. Others caught the vision after hearing a worker serving among nomads share how mobile technology revolutionized her outreach work. Through

MMF's efforts, individuals and ministries share experiences and resources. And as a result, multiple collaborative efforts occur affecting outreach among dozens of unreached people groups.

Connect with Us

Working together in community, members and leaders in the Mobile Ministry Forum made a significant contribution to global missions. However, much is still required to give every unreached person the chance to encounter Jesus and connect with his Church via their personal mobile device. To learn more and join this effort, connect with MMF via the following channels: Newsletter ([mobmin.org/signup](mailto:mobmin@mobileministryforum.org)), Internet (MobileMinistryForum.org), Twitter (twitter.com/mobmin), Facebook (facebook.com/mobileministryforum).

Brian James (pseudonym) directs Frontiers' Mobiles & Media department, having previously served in Central Asia.

Clyde Taber is the Director of the Visual Story Network and founder of Mission Media U after formerly heading new media development for The JESUS Film Project.

Keith Williams (pseudonym) serves as the director of WEC International's Mobile Advance initiative, having previously served in the Arab world.

Notes

1. Ugandan farmers use mobile apps to sell and buy produce," *AfricaNews*, March 2, 2016, <https://www.africanews.com/2016/02/03/ugandan-farmers-use-mobile-apps-to-sell-and-buy-produce/>.
2. Haydn Shaughnessy, "Who Are the Top 10 Power Influencers in Mobile?" *Forbes*, January 3, 2012, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/haydnshaughnessy/2012/01/03/who-are-the-top-10-power-influencers-in-mobile/#7374de10d2e0>.

Networking for Influence and Impact: International Orality Network

Jerry Wiles

Approximately eighty percent of the world's population are oral learners by necessity or preference. In 2000 a group of mission leaders came together to discuss the need to more effectively reach these communities of oral learners. The result was forming the Oral Bible Task Force, in collaboration with the Lausanne Movement. By 2004 this led to thirty organizations coming together to form the International Orality Network (ION). Today organizations affiliated with ION work together to make God's Word accessible to oral communicators.

Since its launch, more than two thousand organizations have participated in the network. ION has provided a voice to the issue of *orality* in its collaborative relationships with other networks. As this influence has spread, a broader Orality Movement has formed among many more organizations and individuals who have begun to see orality as a critical issue they need to understand and incorporate into their ministries. This article will focus primarily on the role of the network, lessons learned, and how it is benefiting organizations and individuals involved in a wide variety of Kingdom advancing efforts.

Lessons from the Early Church and the Global South

One of the things the network is doing well is raising awareness of the need to use oral art forms and the multiple concepts, principle, and practices of orality. The Orality Movement is also helping church and mission leaders in the global north to think more like the global south and early church mental models. One of the greatest challenges has been overcoming some modern, western, post-Reformation traditions of the Church.

There has been an amazing amount of collaborative learning and partnering generated primarily through the network's conferences, consultations, and training events. The website (orality.net) has been a tool for sharing a wide variety of resources including articles, journals, case studies, information on training events, methods and strategies. The Lord is using all these efforts and activities to assist, serve, and support its member organizations and individuals, as well as the global church.

The Power of Multiplication

An observation we've made over the years is that member organizations are often affiliated with several other associations, alliances or networks. One example is Living Water International (LWI). In addition to ION, LWI is a member of a number of other groups, including the **Accord Network** and the **Millennium Water Alliance**. LWI is a thought leader in the Orality Movement. Through its various network affiliations, LWI has been able to help several other organizations launch orality training programs. Other organizations within ION have had similar reproducing and multiplying impact.

Many other ION organizations are successfully injecting orality into the veins of other networks, associations, alliances, and even denominations. Some of those include the **Global CHE Network**, the **Global Alliance for Church Multiplication**, the **Christian Leadership Alliance**, **Artists in Christian Testimony International**, the **Business as Mission Movements**, **National Religious Broadcasters**, as well as the **Lausanne Movement** and **World Evangelical Alliance**.

Strategic Resource Leveraging

God's Kingdom work is being done differently in many ways as a result of the awareness, collaborative relationships, and partnering taking place through ION. The concepts of strategic influence or resource leveraging, and force multiplying (we like the term *Trimtab effect*) are some of the features that's making orality spread. There are other ways of thinking about the Kingdom principles Jesus talked about using the mustard seed and yeast, of how little things can have big impact.

Some of the unique features that are

making ION and the Orality Movement so impactful is helping church and mission leaders think differently about what it will take to complete the Great Commission. Simply considering the ways most unreached people normally communicate, learn, and process information is often an eye-opening experience for many. ION is helping pastors, missionaries, and mission leaders to think about how oral learner methods and strategies help the development of rapidly reproducing church planting and disciple making movements.

Cross-Cutting Themes of Orality

As leaders begin to think more in terms of small, simple, and reproducible, they begin to discover the cross-cutting themes of orality. The ever-increasing community of learning and practice opens up orality applications in areas such as addressing ethnic conflict, racial reconciliation, trauma therapy, community development, public health, hygiene educations, leadership development and many others. Of course, the more obvious applications are evangelism, disciple making, and church planting.

ION continues to grow primarily because orality is universally applicable. Anyone involved with communicating, training, or behavior change can benefit from receiving some orality training. In fact, there is now a growing recognition that oral methods and strategies are not just for those who cannot read or write. Many literate and well-educated people are *oral preference learners*.

Orality training and oral strategies are also beneficial in other areas. Churches use them to build better relationships within local congregations and to promote unity among church leaders within a region. In the

corporate world, business leaders are finding oral methods useful in improving relationships and creating a healthier corporate culture. Workplace ministries are using story groups or discussion groups around the life, teaching, and Spirit of Jesus to catalyze disciple making cell groups.

Collective Wisdom and Experience

One of the factors that's helped ION become what it is today is collective learning and wisdom. Today we harness that wisdom through sub-categories or special interest groups. We call them *gateways*. They are the seven affinity areas or gateways around which we associate together to learn and collaborate, defined generally by discipline or sphere of influence. These seven are storying, focused outreach, development, arts and culture, media, education, and research and innovation. They may be active at a local, national, regional, and international level to allow anyone, anywhere, to engage with making disciples of oral learners.

Foundation of Prayer

Recognizing the spiritual nature of what we are about, the role of prayer and trusting God cannot be minimized. Many of the developments over the years can be attributed to God's divine intervention. When like-minded followers of Jesus come together, pray and exchange ideas and strategies, trusting relationships are developed and lasting partnerships result.

Connecting with prayer movements and networks have been a part of ION's DNA. Not only is the ION prayer team actively engaged with all events, conferences, and gatherings,

but they also have weekly conference call prayer times. Reaching out to other prayer ministries and networks is also a vital part of prayer and awareness efforts.

When I think about the mobilization of prayer within ION and for orality, I'm reminded of what Peter Wagner said at a conference in 1995, "I'm happy to report that the prayer movement is out of control!"

The Value of Mentoring Networks

Networks are important. The birth of many spontaneous mentoring and partnering relationships that have happened through our network has caused us to recognize the hand of God over our work. When I think of the spontaneous expansion of the Orality Movement, I'm reminded of a comment a friend made to me years ago. He said, "What we seek to control and maintain will shrink and diminish, but what we share and give away will grow, reproduce and multiply."

Networks of networks and ever-increasing partnerships and strategic alliances seem to be what God is up to these days. Some of my mentors in the 1970s and 1980s were Ian Thomas, Norman Grubb, Bertha Smith, and Manley Beasley. Manley Beasley used to say our main challenge is to "find out what God is up to and get in on it." Henry Blackaby shared with me several years ago how Bertha Smith and Manley Beasley had influenced him. He put it another way and said we should "Identify the activity of God and join Him."

Getting Involved

Many people discover ION and the Orality Movement through articles published by

Mission Network News, Assist News Service (assistnews.net), and other media outlets, ministries, and mission groups. Individuals and organization often begin their involvement with ION by attending a conference, consultation, orality training workshop/seminar, or some other event. Others get connected through relationships with those in various ION *gateways* or other orality interest groups. Information about our events or other ways to be involved with ION can be found on our websites orality.net and oralitycanada.com, or on the website of organizations within the network (i.e. water.cc/orality).

In our hearts, I think we all would like to be part of a movement of God that can't be explained in terms of human ingenuity or manmade plans and strategies. Plans, strategies, systems, and structures are important, but it is the Spirit of God that makes them all effective and fruitful for the Kingdom's sake. The story of the growth and development of the International Orality Network is one example of this. It is a wonderful testimony of how God works by bringing many different individuals and organizations together to advance His Kingdom work around the world. 

Jerry Wiles (jerrywiles@water.cc) is the North America Regional Director of International Orality Network and President Emeritus of Living Water International. He is an author and radio program producer and has been a frequent guest on radio and television talk shows and traveled extensively as a public speaker. Jerry is an Air Force veteran, a former pastor and university administrator.

Kingdom-Minded Collaboration: Global Alliance for Church Multiplication

William J. Sundstrom

The vision of planting one healthy, multiplying church for every 1,000 people in the world drives GACX, a global alliance for church multiplication.

Candy Marballi of The Prayer Covenant could hardly wait to attend her first GACX Global Forum in 2018, where she would participate in the children's ministry intensive. During the workshop she came across people who shared her vision, such as DJ Bosler of GameLife123 and Gary Strudler of Kids Around the World. "My heart soared as I met others who had a focus on kingdom-minded collaboration," says Candy.

Such collaboration lies at the heart of GACX, a global alliance for church multiplication. GACX members partner around a very specific goal: plant one missional, multiplying and sustainable church for every 1,000 people in the world, such that every person everywhere would have the chance to follow Jesus. And not only do member organizations collaborate – network leaders themselves connect with similar networks, such as Vision 5:9, the 24:14 Coalition, and GCPN.

"Our role is to find out who is doing what work, where, and with whom," says Nate Vander Stelt, executive vice president of GACX, "and to discover where the gospel is not present. Then we seek to advance the gospel through mutual collaboration, resulting in new churches and missional communities."

"For anyone trying to reach unreached people groups," adds David Nelms of The Timothy Initiative (TTI), "GACX is a gold mine. These are our people, with the same heart, the same passion. It's a bigger pool to fish from for partnerships."

The roots of GACX go back to 2010, when Campus Crusade for Christ International appointed Bekele Shanko of Ethiopia as a global vice president and asked him to help establish a new division for church planting (which would become Global Church Movements, or GCM).

A few months later, God impressed on Bekele and his team a goal: plant an additional five million churches. With nearly five billion non-Christians in the world at the time, that meant one church for every 1,000 people.

As Bekele began thinking and praying about the vastness of the world, he felt the

Holy Spirit whispering, "You are not the only one serving my purpose. Your organization is not the only one involved in the Great Commission. Go and work with others."

Soon Bekele and his team began meeting others with similar goals: Dynamic Church Planting International wanted to plant five million churches, TTI two million, Northland Church one million, and Christ's Commission Fellowship (CCF) of the Philippines 200,000.

Bekele had seen the power of partnership during his years leading the ministry in Africa. "Partnerships are all about, 'What can we do together?'" he says, "Not, 'How can you help me?'" And he knew Jesus wanted unity among His followers.

So in September 2011 he asked these four organizations, plus GCM, if they could collaborate. That Holy Spirit inspired moment led to GACX, which today has grown to eighty-six member organizations and generated numerous vibrant partnerships.

Bride Before Brand

Such collaboration avoids duplication of effort. For example, John Becker, GACX vice president of global networking and partnership, tells a story from his time serving in the Sahel of Africa. Different mission organizations would come and train local believers. Yet every new group trained the same people. Local Christians barely had time to apply one church-planting strategy when someone would launch a training with a different strategy.

After GACX began, John and others cast vision for a war-torn region in the Sahel and two groups responded: CCF and TTI. AIM provided relationships on the ground

and helped with funding, while CCF and TTI offered church-planting training and coaching. In order to avoid training the same people, they coordinated efforts via monthly meetings, and even shared databases on who they were training.

"What is driving this," says John, "is that we want to be good stewards of the resources God has given us. Our goal is to see churches multiply, not our brand expanded. It doesn't really matter what label is on it – the Bride of Christ is more important than our brand."

Nevertheless, partnerships are not easy, and trust is critical. Just as in a marriage, partners must trust each other and join with someone moving in the same direction. The strong relationships built at the GACX Global Forum lead to this kind of trust.

However, communication is still a challenge. "We have healthy pathways to collaboration," says Nate Vander Stelt, "but we need to help people find those pathways, so we have more effective indigenous organic leadership." Nate also sees the need for better internal and external communication.

Accelerators and Implementers

Two types of groups become members of GACX: *accelerators* who provide resources, tools or funds, and *implementers* with workers in the field planting churches. Both groups must be active in multiple nations, and all must have a willingness to share the tools, strategies, and methods God has given.

This unity and spirit of sharing leads to more effective ministry. As Bekele puts it, "One organization's critical needs are another organization's available resources. Through strategic partnerships, these two elements are brought together and matched

toward addressing common challenges.”

Candy Marballi discovered this at her first Global Forum. That meeting led to GameLife123 developing ten unique, biblically based games for The Prayer Covenant’s ten themes, while Kids Around the World provided oral versions of the stories that The Prayer Covenant used in each of its themes. The result? Greater multiplication of work with children.

This spirit of generosity and serving one another captures the ethos of GACX. In fact, most GACX activities can be summed up in three words: Share, Collaborate, and Multiply. “We share critical information like where our teams and churches are located and what resources we have available,” says John Becker. “And we build relationships as we travel and minister together, which in turn grow our shared vision.”

The shared vision leads to collaboration, which spreads best practices and demonstrates that one plus one is greater than two. Then sharing and collaboration done well lead to multiplication.

“In the past we had to be a jack-of-all-trades,” says Nathan Shank, a church planter in Asia with the International Mission Board. “But these days, through partnership, an organization doesn’t have to become an expert in every component of ministry. Instead of each group having to innovate and come to their own solutions, there are already a myriad of solutions out there.”

Much of this collaboration takes place at the annual GACX Global Forum, which this year drew more than three hundred leaders from some one hundred fifty organizations. “I see two things going on at the GACX Forum,” says missions leader Steve Addison. “First, people walk through the door and discover they are not alone. The plenary sessions reinforce that with vision and stories of breakthroughs. But around that are hundreds of interactions between participants. And you can maintain an online partnership for a long time if you had some quality encounters face to face.”

Case Study: Chad

As people have visited the Forum, several have gone home and started regional or national alliances. For example, in 2017 Tamadji Moyalbaye of Chad attended the Forum. He wanted to establish a similar alliance in Chad, but several denominations were not on speaking terms.

Nevertheless, Tamadji called together leaders of key churches and denominations. Some

four hundred fifty leaders came together, and Bekele Shanko spoke to them on unity. Though he knew nothing of the history of the church in Chad, Bekele asked participants to stand up, find at least one person from another denomination, greet that person, then declare, “We are one in Christ!”

At that very moment, God started a process of healing. “I like what you are saying,” one leader said to Bekele, “But we cannot work together because we are deeply divided and wounded. How can you help us?”

At that moment another leader began walking toward the brother who had asked the question. Kneeling before the man, he grabbed his feet and said, “My brother, I am the problem in our country. Please, would you forgive me?” Bekele knelt, took the hands of the two brothers, and prayed, asking God for forgiveness and mercy.

As he finished, another man stood, walked across the room to someone and also asked for forgiveness. The next day twenty-two denominational presidents stood with Bekele on the stage, holding hands and declaring, “We are one in Christ. We reject division and commit ourselves to working together for the glory of God.”

The Holy Spirit had begun a process of healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation that continues to this day.

Today these leaders are sending multi-denominational teams to unreached areas proclaiming the gospel. People who until recently could not be in the same room together now work side by side planting churches.

This is the dream of GACX. Nine years ago, a fledging alliance set a goal of planting an additional five million churches. As of December 31, 2018, GACX members had planted 1,629,564 churches globally, most of which hope to multiply themselves. Through partnership and multiplication, the goal of five million is well within reach.

For more information, please visit gacx.io. 

Bill Sundstrom has served as director of communications with his organization in both Latin America and Western Europe. Currently editorial director of Global Church Movements, he is a past editor of *Worldwide Challenge* magazine and holds a master’s degree in strategic communication from the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

A Grassroots Movement: The Global Great Commission Network

David Hupp

At the close of the Tokyo 2010 Global Mission Consultation in May of 2010, the one thousand international delegates took a decisive step to adopt the *Tokyo Declaration* as a commitment and guiding document for Great Commission obedience and collaboration. That declaration ended with these words:

To facilitate cooperation and on-going coordination between mission structures worldwide, we agree to the necessity of a global network of mission structures.

For years missiologist Ralph Winter expressed the need for a global-level association of mission agencies. Accordingly, he closely engaged with the planning of Tokyo 2010 with the hopes that the consultation would launch such a global network. Holding the conference was the easy part. Fulfilling of the vision for a functioning, effective, and lasting global network was the harder work. As a response to this challenge, The Global Great Commission Network – Carrying Tokyo 2010 Forward launched in August 2011. Since then, the **Global Great Commission Network** (GGCN) has been working to put the promises and expectations of Tokyo 2010 into practice with the *Tokyo Declaration* as its foundation for global cooperation.

The reality of global connectivity has changed the missions world greatly since Dr. Winter spoke of a “global-level association.” In response, the Tokyo 2010 planning committee opened up the Tokyo 2010 Consultation to include churches and individuals. GGCN continues that emphasis.

The *Tokyo Declaration* ended with a pledge that reads in part:

We confess that we have not always valued each other or each other’s work. We repent of those wrongs and will endeavor to bring an end to competition where it exists, and reconcile where there is hurt, misunderstanding and mistrust... We will respect all mission-engaging individuals and groups as special vessels for God’s glory, each endowed with abilities that extend His Kingdom in multiple ways... we recognize that finishing the task will demand effective cooperative efforts of the entire global body of believers.

GGCN exists upon this foundation of confession, repentance, and vision.

GGCN Values

Tokyo 2010 was intended to be the beginning of a movement to see all peoples disciplined in our generation. GGCN seeks to serve mission associations, agencies, churches, individuals, networks, and other ministries globally who share this vision.

We exist to champion the redemptive cause of Christ and the means by which his followers participate—making disciples among all peoples of the world. Providing a place for like-minded Great Commission individuals and endeavors to connect, communicate, and collaborate summarizes our core purpose. As stated in the *Tokyo Declaration*, finishing the task demands the effective cooperation of the entire global body of believers.

We believe in the necessity of collaboration. Its synergistic power moves us towards the completion of the Great Commission. We seek to serve and support other networks and ministries. We endeavor to end to existing competition, and to reconcile hurts, misunderstandings, and the root causes of mistrust.

GGCN acknowledges both the breadth (all peoples) and depth (making disciples) of the unfinished task and pledges to champion and obey the Great Commission, seeking to find unreached, overlooked, ignored, or forgotten people. Understanding that today’s Church and mission force are global, never in the history of man has it been more imperative to recognize the different but important parts of that global Body and humbly submit our best ideas to be improved by others.

Our Passion

The diversity of the global Church necessitates that GGCN be grassroots and inclusive. Our desire is to see connection, communication, and collaboration occurring on a local level. We are neither a top-down nor Western-driven. We develop local expressions of GGCN around the globe to catch and implement our collaborative vision. This means we encourage local GGCN representatives and local Christians to form strategic relationships, even with those who represent diverse missions.

GGCN Services

While most GGCN activity is initiated at the local, grassroots level, there are a growing number of tools that GGCN provides free of charge to Great Commission workers and ministries.

We currently offer the following:

Tokyo 2010 Follow-up

GGCN maintains the archives of the Tokyo 2010 Global Mission Consultation on its website (ggcn.org). This includes Tokyo 2010 videos and pictures, papers, presentations, and reviews. The *Tokyo Declaration*, which GGCN has continued to promote, is also on the site in several translations. Individuals and organizations are encouraged to “sign” the *Tokyo Declaration* online. Over the years hundreds have pledged themselves and/or their organizations to the commitments of the *Tokyo Declaration*.

Connect

Connect is a secure platform designed to facilitate ongoing conversations between various entities which can lead to collaboration. It includes group discussions, information

sharing, and much more. All registrations are screened carefully to verify that authentic interest in Great Commission activities.

It is also a place that introduces individuals to the mission world's various components. Through *Connect*, users find resources, information, relations, and tools to help them fulfill their vision.

Lastly, it is also a platform for ministries to promote their calling and work, learn and glean from others, and share their resources.

Discipleship Survey

In alignment with the vision of discipling all peoples, GGCN's website has an online discipleship survey for individuals or groups that provides instant feedback on one's understanding and practice of evangelism and discipleship.

Other Tools and Plans

Great potential for sharing and learning from each other exists in GCCN. We desire to give access to the emerging global voices that we all need to learn from. We seek to expand the

cooperative efforts built around unreached people groups, bringing missionaries, pastors, churches, agencies, networks, businessmen and more together to proactively cooperate to see unreached people groups reached. With that end in mind, regional representatives hold local training events that draw pastors and mission workers, many of whom don't have access to or ability to connect and hear from others online or otherwise.

Closing

The *Tokyo Declaration* ends with a pledge:

Therefore, as representatives of this generation's global mission community, we pledge to obey the Great Commission. We covenant together to use all that God has entrusted to us in this obedience. We will seek to know where people are unreached, overlooked, ignored, or forgotten.

God requires this generation to match the reality of the unfinished task before us with

a willingness to humbly collaborate, even sacrificially, as together we rely on the Holy Spirit to lead, guide and bless our efforts in his redemptive mission.

To be part of the growing GGCN family around the world: visit our website (ggcn.org), Register on *Connect* (connect.ggcn.org), Sign up to receive our periodic newsletters (lp.constantcontact.com/su/w57Vies), or email info@ggcn.org. 

David M. Hupp serves as coordinator of the GGCN Global Steering Team. A background in business (MBA) and as a CPA, led to a career in mission administration and leadership. He served ten years with *Helps Ministries* and has been a part of *Beyond* for over thirty years. He served as the Tokyo 2010 Global Mission Consultation registrar and administrator and has been part of the Global Great Commission Network since its founding in 2011.



Tokyo 2010 Global Mission Consultation (May 11, 2010)

Linking Arms to Fight for Religious Freedom: The Religious Liberty Partnership

Brian F. O’Connell

The **Religious Liberty Partnership** (RLP) is a collaborative effort of Christian organizations from over twenty countries focused on religious liberty for all. The RLP seeks to more intentionally work together in addressing advocacy, research, assistance, and in raising the awareness of religious restrictions worldwide. Founded in 2006, the organization has nearly one hundred full or associate members from all continents, and its current leadership team comes from the WEA Religious Liberty Commission; CSW, UK; Advocates International; Voice of the Martyrs, Canada; Jubilee Campaign; HMK Switzerland; Middle East Concern, and Alliance Defending Freedom.

Global religious liberty is at an all-time low, with current estimates showing that about eighty percent of the world’s population lives under some form of religious-liberty restrictions (harassment, discrimination, imprisonment, torture, death). The primary challenge is the freedom for people to change their faith without threat of severe punishment, such as prison, torture, or even death. Even though the vast majority of those impacted are Christian, virtually every faith has a place in the world where it’s being restricted.

We do have more insight into religious-liberty violations than in the past, thanks to new research and expanded access to information in our interconnected world. And it’s clearer than ever that we must partner with our colleagues to support and advocate for our sisters and brothers in crisis. Partnership is essential if we hope to shift cultures toward religious freedom, giving every person an unfettered opportunity to know God and make Him known.

Stronger Together

Many groups (both faith-based and others) have networks that promote human rights and freedom of religion and belief. The Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) is the only global network that brings Christian agencies together under a unified banner.

The RLP is home to organizations from every continent working to advance religious liberty. We represent a wide spectrum of Christians who may differ doctrinally, but all subscribe to the Apostle’s Creed. Our members come from not only the evangelical and Protestant communities, but also can come from Catholic and Orthodox faith traditions.

All Christians have a seat at the table.

Our members work in multiple contexts, whether focusing on a national setting such as China, or on issues like advocacy, assistance to believers in difficult situations, or research.

Like others, religious liberty organizations often grapple with a perceived sense of competition for resources, even though we’re working toward the same overarching goals. The RLP offers a platform for leaders to develop relationships and build a foundation of trust that often leads to organic collaboration and partnering initiatives.

By facilitating these conversations, the RLP gets a front-row seat to God’s work in bringing leaders together around these critical issues. Working in partnership allows us to achieve things that we can’t do on our own. We’re stronger together.

That’s not to say we haven’t faced challenges. Advancing religious liberty is a massive undertaking, and our member organizations are busy with their individual missions. Coming together in a meaningful way requires an investment of time, finances, and staff resources.

While it may sound counterintuitive, crafting a structure that includes membership contributions has likely increased the sense that each member has ownership of the partnership with “skin in the game.” Our membership continues to grow every year, which is a testament to the value of linking arms together.

Building Collective Impact

All our members have important initiatives specific to their unique spheres, and the RLP doesn’t seek to duplicate or replace those

efforts. Instead, we build collective impact in key areas that impact believers on a global level. To that end, we currently operate four task forces:

Apostasy Laws

Apostasy laws mandate punishment for people who leave their religion (primarily among Islam). We’re working in several nations to get these laws off the books. Like in many situations, there is power in showing that our whole partnership is behind this cause. Though much more work needs to be done, we are beginning to see a better response from the United Nations and other governments in response to our unified efforts.

Research

The research task force of the RLP is helping the community to better define common terms. People too often use the word “persecution” as a catch-all term for discrimination, harassment, imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom. We recommend referring to the first two as “religious liberty violations,” which clearly conveys the problem without diluting the meaning of “persecution.” We should be sparing in our use of the word “persecution,” so that people know when we are talking about severe violence.

Gender and Religious Persecution

The goal of this RLP Task Group is to inform, inspire, and bring evidence on the subject of gendered religious persecution in order to effect change. Women often face more severe persecution, from being shunned or beaten, to even being killed if they change their faith and their husbands don’t. We’ve

co-sponsored several events on this topic over the past few years, including a significant consultation in Nigeria. This task group has also elevated research conducted by some of our members to help our wider membership understand these realities in more detail and tackle them together.

Christians from a Muslim Background

Christian believers who come from a Muslim background often face unique challenges, both in their faith journey and in the response to their faith change. We have a task force focusing on helping our members understand these issues.

Standing Alongside the Church

Religious liberty is a global issue, but some areas of the world are worse than others. That is one reason why the location of the annual RLP Consultation rotates. Two years ago, we held it in Brasilia because statistics had shown that Brazil was the country with the least religious restrictions, and we wanted to celebrate with them and honor them. In contrast, our most recent annual consultation was held in Nigeria because it is one of the places where Christians are actively facing persecution. We heard testimonies from Nigerian leaders and several other African countries, including Sudan, Eritrea, and Kenya. The speakers shared what is happening in their locations, and they also demonstrated an inspiring vibrancy of faith.

Standing alongside the Nigerian church and showing publicly that we support them was important. We had forty to fifty pastors and denominational executives from Nigeria present. I believe they came away knowing that Christians around the world care about them and that they are not forgotten.

Engaging the Church

People always ask how they can support their sisters and brothers who lack religious freedom or are in danger. The number one thing is prayer. That is what virtually every believer in those situations asks. Each November, we mark the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted, mobilizing specific and designated prayer among the global church which dedicates themselves to lift up the persecuted church in their churches, small groups, classrooms, and families.

Prayer is a simple, yet powerful

opportunity for the church to engage in this issue and understand it better. And then, prayer supporters can see other opportunities like giving financially, or providing resources like Bibles, or assisting persecuted church leaders with training on advocacy and their legal rights.

The thing is, it is also reciprocal. Those who are in the midst of persecution are often praying for those of us who are not facing such difficulty. We can learn so much from them.

Signs of Progress

In countries like Colombia, Eritrea, and Uzbekistan, we have seen some progress thanks to many different organizations working with governments or behind the scenes.

In addition, over the last few years, global awareness of religious liberty violations and persecution has grown substantially, partly because our community is more able to communicate together. The past two years, the United States has held an annual State Department ministerial on religious liberty. The UK foreign office asked for a report on the persecution of Christians specifically. Of course, this increased awareness is also likely due to the increase in religious liberty violations over the past several years.

And that means there's so much work left to do. We continue actively working to provide information to government officials all over the world. For instance, our Gender and Religious Freedom Task Group has visited several embassies to discuss the problems in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. In these situations, we're giving them details on the suffering happening in their community or country, while showing up in a very concrete way to advocate for real solutions.

When we advocate for religious freedom, we mean for everyone. In all our efforts, we advocate for a level playing field for religious liberty. As humans created in God's image, we all deserve freedom, whether we're Christian, follow another faith, or have no faith. We think this is the right thing to do, but religious freedom also impacts our individual ability to flourish by creating space for the cultural institutions, norms, and values that support free societies. Studies show that religious freedom has an impact on the average income level of each person. It basically translates into less poverty and more overall

prosperity.

The Jesus Strategy

We often ask, how do we determine success when it comes to collaboration? In our view, the way we measure collaborative work is somewhat different than how we measure our work as organizations. The metrics that might apply to other efforts don't reflect what success in an upside-down kingdom looks like. For example, how do we measure the depth of relationships and trust? How do we measure faithfulness? In the end, we know God has called us to do this work, and we may not see the full harvest for many years. And, of course, it is He who causes increase.

We believe that the Jesus strategy is for the body of Christ to work together, and that things change dramatically when that happens. How that happens is in God's hands. Exploring that important question of what we can do together that we can't do by ourselves – and building those kinds of partnering opportunities – demonstrates something to those people who are in persecution: that the body of Christ is behind them, that their voices are heard, that they're part of a global environment, part of a global church that takes their issues seriously.

The Religious Liberty Partnership offers membership for organizations that are primarily focused on religious liberty, as well as associate membership for other organizations seeking to come alongside and support the movement. To apply for membership or to learn more about RLP, visit rlpartnership.org. 

Brian F. O'Connell (Brian@REACTServices.com) is the president of REACT Services and the facilitator of the Religious Liberty Partnership. He has been involved in partnership development and international missions for over twenty-five years, ministering in over ninety countries, holding senior leadership positions with the National Association of Evangelicals, World Evangelical Alliance, and Interdev. Brian has helped catalyze partnering initiatives addressing global issues such as refugees, sports ministry, HIV/AIDS, orphans, persecuted believers, and vulnerable children.

A Growing Global Movement: Business as Mission

Jo Plummer and Mats Tunehag

Business as Mission (BAM) is a growing global movement of people embracing and practicing business for God's glory and the common good. The phrase "business as mission" encompasses three things: a concept, a practice, and a global movement.

BAM Global (bamglobal.org) is a network of networks operating among the business as mission community that exists to invigorate, strengthen, and equip the global BAM movement. It has done so since 2002 by focusing on developing *intellectual capital* (understanding, knowledge, and shared learning) and *social capital* (relationships and collaboration) in the movement. This in turn has been instrumental in establishing the BAM concept, multiplying BAM practice, and fostering a cohesive global community.

This article will unpack the concept, the practice, and the movement. It will also show how the proactive development of intellectual and social capital has contributed to developing various BAM networks and nurturing a worldwide movement.

The Concept

In short, *business as mission* is shaping and reshaping your business for God and for people. Business can be God-glorifying and has enormous potential to do good. As a movement, business as mission gathers together business professionals who use the gifts of entrepreneurship and good management to bring creative, for-profit, sustainable solutions to global challenges, including bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth.

BAM is pursuing a positive impact for multiple stakeholders, "aiming at the quadruple bottom line: spiritual, economic, social, and environmental transformation."¹ In other words, businessmen and women are using their skills in alignment with God's purposes to serve people, make a profit, and be good stewards of the planet – among all peoples.

It is founded on three biblical mandates. The *cultural mandate* to "tend the garden" (Genesis 1, 2), stewarding creation and engaging in resource-multiplying activities that aid human flourishing. The *great commandment* to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 25:35-40), caring for the poor and vulnerable

and fighting injustice. The *great commission* mandate to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:16-20), sharing Jesus' good news of the Kingdom and his commandments as we are going out into the world.

Thus, to enable a meaningful conversation and constructive collaboration, BAM Global has developed the following four-part working definition.

BAM is:

- Profitable and sustainable businesses
- Intentional about Kingdom of God purpose and impact on people and nations
- Focused on holistic transformation and the multiple bottom lines of economic, social, environmental and spiritual outcomes
- Concerned about the world's poorest and least evangelized peoples

This definition has been, and continues to be, absolutely essential to developing and growing a cohesive and global movement. Without a common language, you cannot communicate. If you don't communicate, you cannot collaborate. Without collaboration, you cannot create synergistic impact.

The first global white paper towards that end was the Lausanne Occasional Paper, "Business as Mission,"² which included The Business as Mission Manifesto.³ Since then, BAM Global worked towards developing a consensus-based and globally accepted understanding of the BAM concept creating several global conversations to develop it from biblical, historical, global, regional, economic, strategic, missiological, and ecclesiological perspectives.⁴

During 2016 and 2017, in partnership with the *Lausanne Movement*, BAM Global co-convened another such global conversation around the role of wealth creation for holistic transformation of people and

societies. The findings are in seven papers, one manifesto (in fourteen languages so far) and an educational video.⁵ This further strengthened the common language, which is necessary to grow the movement.

The Practice

Business is a good, God-given institution that can benefit human society. It creates jobs, multiplies wealth and resources, and drives creativity and innovation. And it sustainably provides for families, communities, and nations. Businessmen and women can intentionally harness this power to address some of the world's most pressing problems: environmental crises, joblessness, poverty, slavery, sanitation problems, food security, and so on. Businesses that provide excellent products and services as well as jobs with real dignity bring economic stability to families and communities.

Business people have an influential role in a community meeting real needs and building a strong network of relationships. They can share the gospel in word and deed in the context of everyday life. Business people and business skills are some of the most needed resources in global mission today.

However, the rapid expansion of the business as mission concept and strategy in the past twenty years also presents challenges. Some misunderstand the BAM concept. Mission agencies and churches grapple with how to effectively integrate the BAM strategy. The pervasive sacred-secular divide creates a severe barrier to mobilization and engagement. Essential services like investment and mentoring were lacking as were established best practices.

Thus, there has been an ongoing need to patiently unpack the concept of BAM, identify fruitful practices, and mobilize and engage new partners and players in order to nurture a strong, healthy "BAM ecosystem."

BAM Global identified five functions (our



Photo by Kaur Kristian

“5Cs”) that could enhance this work:

- **Connecting:** Fostering relationships with related networks and organizations as ambassadors for business as mission.
- **Convening:** Gathering together in virtual and face-to-face forums, including various consultations and think tank groups, and a BAM Global Congress in April 2013 and one planned for April 2020.
- **Content:** Building a comprehensive library of BAM-related materials and resources on businessasmission.com (general resources and a blog) and at bamglobal.org (white papers and reports).
- **Community:** Enhancing networking and partnerships in the BAM global movement by connecting people-to-people and people-to-resources.
- **Communication:** Informing, using tools including a twice-monthly BAM-focused newsletter,⁶ *The BAM Review*, sent out to 6,500 plus recipients.

An obvious focus and target audience for BAM Global is business and business people - our core constituency. However, we recognize that business is not a “silver bullet” and to achieve holistic transformation on a

macro scale with intergenerational perspectives, we need to build an ecosystem. Thus, BAM Global is working with four constituencies: leaders from business, missions, church, and academia.

Since 2002 BAM Global has facilitated global “think tank” and consultation processes. We have engaged more than five hundred people from around fifty countries in various global conversations on BAM primarily business people but also key leaders from the other three groups. Together we have produced close to thirty reports⁷ with more in the pipeline. Each report has been both peer-produced and peer-reviewed.

These complex consultation processes involve listening, learning and sharing fruitful practices among BAM practitioners and leaders from around the globe. This collaborative approach creates ownership of content and also generated action.

Endorsing the concept of BAM is relatively easy but applying it in various aspects of business and in a complex marketplace is a learning process. BAM practice looks different in different industries, times, locations, cultures, and nations. Our reports show examples of this which not only deal with conceptual and theological issues but also with BAM related to particular issues like

human trafficking and unreached people, as well as BAM practices in particular countries and regions.

BAM Global is thus both a *think tank* and a *do-tank* aiming to catalyze both reflection and action. This contributes significantly to the exponential growth of BAM practice, and we believe helps the movement mature as we pass on a knowledge base to the next generation.

The Movement

BAM Global is a very small organization which serves the much larger global movement. A movement, by definition, is to some extent beyond control. What holds it together is a common vision and mission, shared values, relationships, and a small but dedicated team of facilitators. A movement has leaders but not a brick and mortar headquarters as demonstrated by such movements such as the abolitionist movement,⁸ the civil rights movement, or the charismatic movement.

Today, the global BAM movement is diverse and speaks many languages. It has many moving and growing parts. A plethora of initiatives in all four major constituencies reflect it. There are a growing number of larger and more long-lasting BAM businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs) and large-scale companies. BAM incubators and accelerators, investment, consulting, and training organizations also continue to grow numerically.

There are industry-related BAM groups such as the Coffee as Mission network which has more than four hundred members representing over one hundred BAM business dealing with coffee, from plant to cup. Similarly, the Freedom Business Alliance (freedombusinessalliance.com) has over one hundred freedom businesses in its global trade association networking companies of all types that fight human trafficking.

Within the movement there are also well established national or regional networks that operate in languages like Korean, Portuguese, and Chinese.⁹ These convene conferences and publish language-specific materials on BAM.

Almost all of the oldest and largest evangelical mission agencies in the world embrace BAM and are pursuing ways to put it into practice. More and more local churches and major denominations around the globe are involved in BAM. The same applies to various academic institutions, and the number of academic theses on BAM continues to grow. Every year major BAM conferences occur on every continent.

These are just a few examples of BAM-related initiatives in the global BAM movement that help build the ecosystem around BAM companies. BAM Global serves these by providing connecting points for various organizations and networks at an international level.

Looking Forward

As we look forward BAM Global has identified some keystone initiatives, including:

Putting the Global into BAM Global

We coach national and regional groups as they develop geographically based networks and conferences. We facilitate the translation of key documents into large widely used languages.

BAM Global Congress

While other entities in the movement focus on hosting in regional conferences (in which we often have a collaborative role), BAM Global is in a unique position to convene global gatherings. In 2020 key BAM leaders from all continents will gather at the second BAM Global Congress.¹⁰ We will celebrate what God is doing through BAM around the world, connect leaders and initiatives, and create momentum to scale the movement for greater impact.

Building Organizational and Leadership Capacity

BAM Global is currently developing a growth plan that will enhance the operational capacity of our core team. We are also identifying “BAM Global Ambassadors” from a diverse range of regions and networks to strengthen global connections, and “Associate Ambassadors” to raise up a new generation of leaders.

Framing Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAGs)

We have identified some key needs and objectives for the movement. These are expressed as our Three BAM BHAGs.¹¹ First, solve global issues with innovative BAM solutions. Second, reach a tipping point for macro impact through BAM businesses. Third, transform views of business in the church worldwide.

We continue to communicate this vision and do our *loaves and fishes* work of building intellectual and social capital in the BAM

movement. Our prayer is that God will continue to do his work of multiplication so that his Kingdom will continue to come on earth as it is in heaven. 

Jo Plummer is a Lausanne catalyst for Business as Mission, co-chair of BAM Global, and an editor of the Lausanne Occasional Paper on Business as Mission. She has been developing resources for BAM since 2001 and currently serves as editor of the Business as Mission website and The BAM Review blog.

Mats Tunehag is the co-chair of BAM Global and the chairman of the Freedom Business Alliance, a global trade association developing business solutions to human trafficking. He also serves with a BAM investment fund which helps SMEs to grow in size and holistic impact in the Arab world and Asia.

Notes

1. “Lausanne Business as Mission Manifesto,” Special Reports, BAM Global, October 2004, <https://bamglobal.org/lop-manifesto/>.
2. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, “Business as Mission,” *Lausanne Occasional Paper 59* (2004), <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/business-mission-lop-59>.
3. “Business as Mission Manifesto,” BAM Global.
4. See related BAM reports at <https://bamglobal.org/reports/>.
5. Mats Tunehag, “Wealth Creation,” July 22, 2017, <http://matstunehag.com/wealth-creation/>.
6. Subscribe to the BAM Review at <https://businessasmission.com/newsletter/>.
7. Find the BAM Global reports at <https://bamglobal.org/reports/>.
8. Recommended reading: Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire’s Slaves* (Mariner Books: 2005).
9. One example, see Chinese BAM at <http://www.chinesebam.com/>.
10. Learn more about the upcoming BAM Global Congress at <http://bamglobal.org/congress-2020/>.
11. The term BHAGs or Big Hairy Audacious Goals was coined by Jim Collins in his book *Built to Last*, <https://www.bamglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BAM-Global-BHAGs.pdf>.

Bringing Shalom to the World's Cities: The Urban Shalom Society

Andre Van Eymeren

Picture 45,000 global city leaders gathered in Quito, Ecuador in an area where the old city meets the new. Cultures from around the world gathered under the South American sun for the 2016 UN Habitat 3 gathering. Participants explored together how to create sustainable cities where everyone belongs and can work with others towards meeting their own needs, as well as the common good. The feeling of connectedness was palpable as leaders from every sector of global cities sought to talk together and learn from one another. The small delegation of Christian leaders attending the gathering quickly recognised that despite communities of faith being present in every city in the world there was no outward representation of faith in the larger gathering. As a result, the Urban Shalom Society was born.

Cities Characterised by Shalom

Our cohort brought together by **Lausanne / World Evangelical Alliance** Creation Care Task Force, the **International Society for Urban Mission** (ISUM), the **Christian Community Development Association** (CCDA), and **Micah Global**, decided there was a need for a network that specifically focused on issues created by rapid urbanisation. By 2017, ISUM evolved into the **Urban Shalom Society** (USS), broadening its focus from almost solely informal settlements and urban slums to the greater urban environment. Since that time members of the society have been active in Christian, multi-faith and broader global conversations around different aspects of urban life.

As a society we are motivated by a question: *As urban environments expand and develop, what quality of life will people occupying them experience?* The answer includes the complexities of the city environment, God's desire for our world now, and the role we play in partnership with him.

Our vision is to see cities characterised by *shalom*. Many have truncated the meaning of this biblical concept arising from a Hebraic worldview simply to peace, meaning the absence of war. However, the term refers to a holistic experience of life and is concerned with the individual in the context of community. It's a greeting which asks about a person's health, wellbeing, good fortune, the cohesiveness of the community, relationships, and the health of those with whom the person is in relationship. Its intention is not so much information but the demonstration of the connection between the two people in the exchange. The motivation of

the greeting is the wellbeing of society based on a common humanity. In essence it points to the reality of the Kingdom of God in our world now.

Establishing City Networks

The desire to see cities reflect this reality has moved us in a number of directions. We have held close to twenty gatherings around the world (Urban Shalom Forums/summits/trainings) which invite urban practitioners, leaders, and academics to come together to seriously reflect on their work in the city and to become more strategic in their engagement with other city leaders, practitioners, and academics. As well as being informative these events have catalysed the start of networks in cities. These are all embryonic yet; representing a seed of collaborative thinking and action in global cities. The goal of these networks is to bring people of like mind and heart together to explore where the Kingdom of God is present and lacking in their city and then discern strategies to partner with God in the journey towards shalom.

The establishment of these networks takes time, effort, and resources. After three visits to Lusaka, the capital city of the southern African country of Zambia, a network of leaders and practitioners is emerging. Our focus has been to help leaders recognise the strengths present in their communities and look for ways these assets can be utilised in the development of the community and the city. Actions can be as simple as a neighbourhood clean-up or as complex as engaging with city council on a poverty alleviation project. The key goal for each network is to see the community and city move towards

shalom. To reach this, it's important for the network to focus on each person contributing in the community, recognizing that everyone has something to offer to the community improvement process. Other networks are emerging in other major cities in Zambia, Kenya, Cameroon, Australia, and additional countries across the world.

Global Conversation Hubs

In addition to city networks, the Urban Shalom Society is establishing global conversation hubs that go deep into a particular area of focus or sector of city life. Sectors include theology of the city, education, healthy cities, community development, environment, good governance, young people, urban design and resilience, urban poverty, smart cities, arts and culture, and economic justice. The hubs bring together practitioners and thinkers from diverse backgrounds in a particular area to reflect on the role the church can play in that area. The conversations help participants reflect on practice and thinking, share perspective, and potentially author articles on the sector to inform broader conversations.

These broader conversations include United Nations' gatherings such as the World Urban Forum, various conferences on aspects of the city, involvement in environmental and economic development conferences as well as involvement in other networks such as the Congress for New Urbanism. Because of our association with the World Evangelical Alliance, we are also a partner in the United Nations' World Urban Campaign. Through this connection we received an invitation to run Faith Based Urban Thinkers' Campuses

around the world.

An urban thinkers campus (UTC) is an opportunity for a sector or group of sectors to come together for a couple of days to think deeply on issues related to the United Nations' New Urban Agenda (NUA). The NUA is a document outlining a vision for sustainable cities that was ratified by world leaders at the 2016 gathering in Quito. The UTCs we have run are multi-faith which has given us the wonderful opportunity to connect with urban focused "people of peace" from other faiths exploring what we can do together to create cities that we can all call home. We have held events in Kenya, Costa Rica, Australia, the UK, and the Philippines. After each UTC, a report is written and disseminated to the participants for comment and feedback. These reports will then form a larger body of work that will be presented at the World Urban Forum 10 happening in Abu Dhabi in February 2020.

Shifting Perceptions

The Urban Shalom Society is a relatively new and innovative network. With a focus on global cities, our desire is to equip and empower the church to take an active role in city shaping conversations. As with most

networks no one is fulltime, we have very limited resources, and all raise our own funds to travel and equip others. The message we bring, while vital, is one that is on the periphery for most local churches. Much work has yet to be done to help churches see the importance and pathway to active engagement. We also work with many Christian aid and development organisations and have noticed a reticence to engage in urban issues. Some seem to feel it is too difficult to reorientate their offering from a rural setting to the city. However, this shift is vital.

Despite these challenges, as a network we have achieved much in our short life. As well as the various gatherings, trainings, and involvement in global conferences, we have delivered at least an annual edition of the *New Urban World Journal* (NUWJ), a journal inherited from ISUM. We have also published a book, *Urban Shalom and the Cities We Need*.

As with most networks, all our members are active in their own ministries, and we seek to add value to them through all our work including our website (urbanshalom-society.org), the publications, and making our training as available as possible. We also promote our global conversations and active participation in conferences, inviting others

to join us whenever possible. Within the network we also encourage members to be active in contributing, believing that each of our members has something to offer to the whole network. This is particularly true for those in the majority world, who are most affected by rapid urbanisation and whose voice we seek to amplify.

Individuals or organisations interested in joining the Urban Shalom Society should email urbanshalomsociety@gmail.com. In your email tell us about who you are and what you are involved in. Then we'll invite you to connect. 

Andre Van Eymeren is a co-director of the Urban Shalom Society and Managing Director of the Centre for Building Better Community. This is an extension of two decades of community development work ranging from caring for at risk young people, working closely with community leaders, to running community wide celebrations. He's the author of the book *Building Communities of the Kingdom* and the editor of the *New Urban World Journal*.

Supporting Ethnodoxologists Around the World: The Global Ethnodoxology Network

Robin Harris

The **Global Ethnodoxology Network** (GEN), formerly known as the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE)¹, offers networking, training, and resources for the flourishing of biblical and culturally appropriate arts. With roots in disciplines such as missiology, anthropology, ethnomusicology, ethnoarts, and worship studies, our associates are comprised largely of cross-cultural workers, students, and professors of those disciplines, as well as creatives from more than eighty-five countries on six continents around the world. The vision that draws us together is one for a future in which communities of Jesus followers in every culture engage with God and the world through their own artistic expressions

Filling a Unique Need

Other large networks like Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA), the Progressive Christian Artists Network (PCAN), International Association of Christian Artists and their constituent networks, serve an important need, focusing on providing encouragement for artists as they create for their churches and their communities. But they don't specifically address the cross-cultural focus of *ethnodoxology*, an "interdisciplinary study of how Christians in every culture engage with God and the world through their own artistic expressions."² And since ethnodoxology encompasses "all the arts, from all the world, for all of God's Kingdom"³ (Schrag 2013, xv), it isn't limited to any one art, but embraces the vast array of artistic expression available to us and encourages local creativity in our lives of worship, witness, and loving service of others. Founded in 2003, GEN fills this unique need – facilitating the creation of culturally appropriate arts in Christian cross-cultural service. As a virtual network, it is also globally accessible.

Networking, Training, Resourcing

GEN focuses primarily on three activities as it supports ethnodoxologists around the world: networking, training, and resourcing. In the area of *networking*, associates interact with one another on a members-only web-based email forum, and they enjoy special arts tracks and networking meals at several global conferences,⁴ gatherings that also serve to provide training and resources.

The network's focus on *training* has fostered collaboration between various GEN associates to develop and popularize two

courses: Introduction to Ethnodoxology and Arts for a Better Future.⁵ These courses have been adopted by schools and organizations around the world. While courses on ethnodoxology are expanding slowly in number each year, the one-week Arts for a Better Future (ABF) course has enjoyed strong growth world-wide since the launch of the course in 2011.

Over eight hundred people from more than sixty countries on five continents have taken ABF since then, either as a workshop or for credit through GEN's educational partners.⁶ Testifying to the global membership of the network, about thirty-eight percent of ABF participants are from the global south (including Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands, Latin America, and the Caribbean) Since many of the certified facilitators of ABF are speakers of other languages, the Global Ethnodoxology Network has developed materials for the course to be taught in Portuguese, Spanish, Indonesian, Russian, and French, with plans for Mandarin and Swahili in the next few years, all published through William Carey Press.

With regard to the third aspect of GEN's mission – *resourcing*, collaboration within the Global Ethnodoxology Network has produced two books, both of which are used in the network's training courses—*Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* and *Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach Their Kingdom Goals*. The first book (commonly known as the "Ethnodoxology Handbook") features over one hundred authors from twenty countries around the world, and the DVD materials, now available online, include the full text of four ethnodoxology-related

journals and six books in three languages as well as media clips and other resources. This would not have been possible without the broad collaboration that a global network facilitates. This 580-page Ethnodoxology Handbook serves as the foundational text for the Introduction to Ethnodoxology course, and the second book—commonly referred to by ethnodoxologists as the "CLAT Manual"—serves as the text for Arts for a Better Future.⁷

Other resources made available through collaboration within the Global Ethnodoxology Network include a free access, peer-review journal – *Global Forum for Arts and Christian Faith*.⁸ In addition, multi-year members enjoy free online access to the Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, including photos, maps, and audio files.

Successes and Challenges

We are seeing success in popularizing the term *ethnodoxology*, something that people thought impossible when the network was founded in 2003, as the new term (based on the Greek roots *ethnos*, peoples; and *doxos*, praise or worship) was quite obscure at the time.⁹ Now, an Internet search on the word reveals a wealth of possibilities for networking, training, and resources on the topic.

Our greatest strides have been made in expanding the network to be truly global. Fully one third of our associates have joined through an application for free membership for people from under-resourced countries. These international associates have greatly enriched the network's understanding of the practice of ethnodoxology around the world. There are about a dozen regional networks that are in the process of becoming affiliate organizations. These affiliates are

increasingly serving their regions by providing networking, training, and resources in languages other than English, or other contextualized services that meet the needs of those regions.

All of the organizational partners, affiliates, and educational institutions that are a part of the network are engaged and play key roles in achieving the goals of the organization. GEN members know they can go to these organizations to find places to serve and learn. The network, in turn, serves these schools and organizations by promoting their distinct ethnodoxology-related contributions in our newsletters, forums, and on the website.

The challenges for the network have largely resulted from its *virtual* and *volunteer* aspects: utilizing up-to-date technology and software for networking and keeping fresh content on the website and our social networking platforms.¹⁰ Although historically the only paid position in the network was the webmaster, we eventually hired a Facebook content curator and a Resource Coordinator to keep the Virtual Library content (much of which is behind a members-only firewall) up-to-date.

Connecting with GEN

There are several ways to connect with GEN. There is a free email newsletter for those who wish to receive updates every four to

six weeks on what's happening in the world of ethnodoxology (worldofworship.org/newsletter). To enjoy the full benefits of GEN membership, sign up to be a one-year, five-year, or lifetime member (worldofworship.org/signup). If you're interested in attending the Global Consultation on Music and Missions (in Dallas, July 20–23, 2020), you'll have an opportunity to learn about ethnodoxology in a conference setting (gcommhome.org). If you need training in ethnodoxology to make your ministry more effective, check out the training options at worldofworship.org for workshops, intensive courses, and options for BA, MA, DMiss, or PhD degrees in ethnodoxology-related subjects.

Conclusion

The driving motivations behind the founding of the Global Ethnodoxology Network in 2003 were:

- to help counter the isolation that many ethnodoxologists felt, since there were so few of them and there were no easily accessible ways of interacting;
- to popularize among missionaries the idea that music is *not* a universal language¹¹ and to turn mission methodologies in the arts from a “bring it – teach it” approach to a “find it – encourage it” approach;
- and to provide ongoing training and

resources for those involved in this new discipline, preparing them to facilitate a flourishing of local creativity and a life of worship for every people on earth.

We are delighted to see that by networking and collaboration, we are beginning to achieve those aims. Furthermore, the outpouring of local creativity for Kingdom purposes around the world, and the visible changes in mission approaches in the arts toward a “find it – encourage it” model (ethnodoxology) is tremendously encouraging. Our blog (worldofworship.org/blog) is full of stories about the difference that ethnodoxology makes in people's lives.

Learn more about World of Worship by visiting us online at worldofworship.org. 

Dr. Robin Harris served for decades in cross-cultural contexts, including ten years in northern Russia. In addition to serving as director of Dallas Int'l University's Center for Excellence in World Arts, she serves as president of the Global Ethnodoxology Network (GEN), an organization she helped to launch in 2003. Her publications include co-editing *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (William Carey Library).

Notes

1. The network has just recently changed its name after operating for sixteen years as the *International Council of Ethnodoxologists* (ICE).
2. For this, and other commonly used definitions of the term ethnodoxology, see <http://www.worldofworship.org/what-is-ethnodoxology/>.
3. Brian Schrag, *Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach their Kingdom Goals* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013).
4. Regular “GEN and friends” gatherings are attached to the Calvin Worship Symposium (<https://worship.calvin.edu/symposium/>) and the Global Consultation on Music and Missions (<https://gcommhome.org/>). Arts tracks are coordinated by GEN associates at the Evangelical Missiological Society (<https://www.emsweb.org/>), meetings of the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission (<https://weamc.global/>), and the Int'l Orality Network (<https://orality.net/>).
5. Descriptions of the two courses can be found at the website: Introduction to Ethnodoxology (<https://www.worldofworship.org/introduction-to-ethnodoxology/>) and Arts for a Better Future (www.artsforabetterfuture.org).
6. The two schools hosting Arts for a Better Future on an annual basis are All Nations Christian College (<https://www.allnations.ac.uk/courses/short-courses>) and the Center for Excellence in World Arts at Dallas International University (<https://www.diu.edu/cewa/intensives/>).
7. See <https://www.worldofworship.org/ethnodoxology-handbook-manual/> for details, including author information, table of contents, DVD materials access, and e-book or hardcopy ordering information (also available at the publisher's site, William Carey Library, <https://missionbooks.org>).
8. See www.ArtsandChristianFaith.org.
9. See <http://www.worldofworship.org/what-is-ethnodoxology/>.
10. Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ethnodoxology/>), Twitter (@ethnodox), and YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/user/ethnodoxology/videos>).
11. See my article from the *Ethnodoxology Handbook*, “The Great Misconception: Why Music is Not a Universal Language” (William Carey Library, 2013), available by permission at the GEN site here: <https://www.worldofworship.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Robin-Handbook-Article.pdf>.

Next Steps Toward Network Engagement

Kärin Butler Primuth

One of the most significant changes in the mission world in the last decade is the growth of mission networks. They have become important connecting points where ministries from around the world are meeting, sharing information and resources, and collectively working together. Today, there are hundreds of mission networks rallying thousands of ministries together around shared goals in dozens of mission fields.

Until recently, the scope and influence of these networks has been largely invisible even to many mission agency leaders who remain focused on their own organizational priorities. But any church, mission agency, or ministry organization that wants to be part of God's plan to reach the nations can no longer ignore the influence of networks which are shaping the future of world mission.

Five Steps to Intentional Network Involvement

If you are a ministry leader and your organization is not yet involved in a mission network, here are five steps you can take toward intentional network involvement.

1. Cultivate a value for collaboration

As a ministry leader, the first and most important thing you can do to move your ministry into the network future is to develop a collaborative culture within your own organization. A value for partnership will influence your priorities, where you invest your resources, how you align your personnel, and what you measure and celebrate.

One roadblock is a scarcity mentality. When we believe that there are limited people and limited resources, we fear being open-handed. Cultivating a value for partnership begins with having a value for enlarging God's Kingdom even if our own organization diminishes or doesn't get the credit.

2. Connect with existing networks

Conduct an internal assessment. Identify priority areas and issues where you could benefit from information and connections with others. Are you considering expanding into new fields and need to know who is there, what is happening, and what resources are needed? Do you need help to address issues in which you lack expertise? These are the kinds of challenges that can benefit significantly by

engagement in a mission network.

Next, research what networks already exist that are related to those areas or issues so you or your field personnel can connect. If no network in that area exists, then find others who might be interested in launching a network to share information and to explore connections.

One of the best ways to initially connect with a network is to attend one of their consultations. These events provide great opportunities to meet network participants, start building relationships, learn about best practices, and hear stories of how God's Spirit is at work in challenging places.

3. Identify network leaders in your organization and empower them

Mission networks are intentional efforts. They don't form spontaneously or operate by themselves. Leaders with a vision for their particular area of ministry and for collaboration form the heart of effective networks.

Unfortunately, few agencies release and support their staff to effectively participate in collaborative work. Those whose vision extends beyond their agency's goals can be seen as renegades. However, agencies could view these staff as assets to invest in important Kingdom connections which could enable their agency to achieve its goals more quickly or effectively.

Identifying, empowering, and releasing network leaders in your organization enables your ministry to maximize the benefits of network participation. This could mean creating a new C-level role like a Chief Collaboration Officer, appointing partnership champions, or releasing field missionaries to serve in full-time roles as network leaders.

4. Actively invest in networks and move to the center of engagement

Moving to the center of network engagement

begins with asking two questions. The first is what do we bring to the network? The second is what do we need from others? Networks need the active investment of individuals and organizations willing to commit valuable information and resources toward shared goals. They are only as valuable as the contributions of their members.

Too many people stay on the sidelines unwilling to make the shift from spectator to active engagement. If you're already involved in a network, consider what steps you can take to move closer to the center where you will find greater value and also make a greater contribution toward helping the network achieve its shared vision.

5. Incorporate partnership training into your own programs

Even people who are natural networkers struggle to facilitate large-scale collaboration that moves from talk to action. Since most mission leaders come out of hierarchical organizations, understanding how to enable collaborative work in a network's consensus-based, flat structure is a major shift.

Large-scale, high-impact collaboration requires a different set of skills than organizational leadership. It's important to incorporate partnership training into your programs especially for field personnel. This helps your staff understand the Biblical basis of ministry partnership, the current network landscape, and the essential parts of effective network development.

Networks are Shaping the Future of World Mission

As you explore and engage more deeply in mission networks, I am sure you will become convinced that collaboration is the single best strategy to address today's most pressing global needs. God designed his Body to work together. Collaboration reduces duplication,

maximizes impact, and strengthens our witness for Christ.

Whatever your current commitment is to networks, I pray that God would open your hands, enlarge your vision, and give you courage and faith to join with others. God is uniting the church to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Don't miss your chance to be a part of what he is doing.

Resources to Take the Next Steps Towards Network Engagement

1. Equipping organizations

International Partnering Associates (IPA) and **visionSynergy** are two mission service organizations that have years of experience training, coaching, advising, and facilitating hundreds of mission networks and partnerships around the world. I encourage you to connect with either one to receive resources and training to grow greater capacity for ministry collaboration.

International Partnering Associates (facebook.com/ipassociates/) is an association of partnering practitioners and advocates drawn from many nations and agencies. They specialize in training, facilitating, mentoring, and promoting partnerships and networks that serve multiple constituencies globally. They are committed to mentoring those they train and offer courses on demand for different levels of engagement and complexity. Their global diversity gives them rich input into Kingdom building tasks. It reflects their ethos of unity in diversity as well as the reality of the developing majority church.

visionSynergy (info@visionsynergy.net) is a mission service organization dedicated to equipping Christian leaders to work together to reach the unreached by developing strategic ministry networks and partnerships.

They provide coaching, training, and advisory services for the leadership teams of multilateral networks and partnerships of Christian mission organizations, ministries, and churches globally. visionSynergy provides a variety of tools and training to equip leaders, and they deliver dozens of online and onsite equipping activities and events throughout the year including a semi-annual international conference, keynotes, webinars, workshops, courses, and more.

2. Learning communities

The **Synergy Commons** (synergycommons.net) is an online learning community dedicated to those who lead, fund, and participate in mission networks. The Commons has over 1,300 members from one hundred twenty countries representing more than seventy networks. Membership is free and provides access to an extensive resource library, interactive webinars, online courses, and facilitated discussion groups with other network leaders.

The **Synergy Summit** (synergysummit.global) is a biennial international conference for mission network leaders. The conference provides several days of inspiration, interaction, and in-depth discussions for two hundred network leaders from more than fifty countries. The next conference is May 2020 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Attendance is by invitation only, but you can request an invitation from the conference website.

The **Synergy Catalyst Program** (catalyst@visionsynergy.net) is a leadership coaching and training process designed for Christian leaders to learn how to catalyze new mission networks in their ministry fields. The program offers personalized coaching and training within a peer learning cohort over the course of two years. Participation is by invitation only.

3. Network directory

The **GENMobile App** (genmobileapp.com) includes a directory of hundreds of networks in more than 90 different areas of ministry focus. It also includes detailed network profiles and a calendar of events accessible to members. The app is available for iPhone and android.

4. Other resources

visionSynergy and International Partnering Associates have compiled a detailed bibliography of resources related to partnership in ministry, including books, articles, websites, and service organizations called *Partnership in Christian Mission – Bibliography*. Download at <https://synr.gy/bibliography>.

Essential Guide to Effective Networks is a three-page summary of the step-by-step process and essential elements for building effective mission networks. Available in multiple languages. Download at <https://synr.gy/eg2en>. 

Kärin Butler Primuth is CEO of visionSynergy, an organization dedicated to developing strategic mission networks that unite the Body of Christ to reach the unreached. Kärin's vision for collaboration has grown out of thirty years of global ministry experience, having lived in China, India, and South Africa and traveled to more than thirty countries. Kärin also serves on the boards of Missio Nexus and Asian Access. She has an MA in Urban Planning from UCLA and a BS in Social Policy from Northwestern University. She is married with three young adult children and lives in California.

Against the Tide: Mission Amidst the Global Currents of Secularization

Edited by W. Jay Moon and Craig Ott

Comprised of ten chapters written by both emerging and established scholars, this edited volume is based on a selection of papers presented at the 2018 national conference of the Evangelical Missiological Society (EMS) wrestling with the question “How does the process of secularization impact the task of Christian Mission in the modern world?” (ix).

The book’s introduction and its first four chapters deal with this question through general frameworks, highlighting issues such as historical, political, and sociological aspects of secularization, the reality of “multiple modernities” (xxvii, 2, 173), religious pluralism, and the impact individualism, technology, and different world-views have on people today.

Chapters five to ten discuss secularization in specific cultures and contexts, addressing missional challenges and opportunities in North America, France, Germany, Russia, Taiwan/China, and Liberia. These reflections on the theme through particular geographical lenses are presented by authors who are deeply familiar with the countries they write about—be it because of their upbringing and ethnicity (as is the case of Tony Huang who, born in Taiwan and raised in Malaysia, wrote the chapter on the Chinese context) or because of their ministry experience (e.g., Steve Thrall, who has served as an urban missionary in Paris, France, since 1988).

Throughout the book, the authors

offer practical suggestions on how Christians and churches can be relevant in today’s world, while also engaging with academic voices describing the phenomenon of secularization. Prominent among these academics is Peter Berger who wrote influential works like *The Sacred Canopy: The Social Construction of Reality* (1976) and *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age* (2014). Like other scholars (such as Harvey Cox), Berger has come to the conclusion that “pluralism, not secularization, is the end result of modernization” (161, cf. 5, 61). Other important conversation partners include the British missiologist Lesslie Newbigin, who was one of the first to highlight the challenges of an increasingly secularized West, and the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, “one of the foremost scholars on secularization today” (99).

Against the Tide is a helpful read for lay Christians who desire to live out their personal faith in the public square in a spirit of “bold humility,” as David Bosch once famously put it. Similarly, pastors can turn to this volume in order to prepare their churches for a more impactful witness in the secularized environment they find themselves in. Additionally, this book is a great resource for scholars of religion and missiology, whether they desire to teach about secularism in general or choose one of the essays in order to present a case study for a specific geographical and cultural context. 

Littleton, CO:
William Carey Publishing, 2019

228 pages

USD \$16.99

Reviewed by **Daniel Topf**, regional mobilizer with World Team and PhD student at the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

For Further Reading

Berger, Peter L. *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*. Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *Honest Religion for Secular Man*. London: SCM, 1966.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

In Search of Christ in Latin America: From Colonial Image to Liberating Savior

By Samuel Escobar

Downers Grove, IL:
IVP Academic, 2019

384 pages

USD \$45.00

Reviewed by **Geoff Hartt**, Executive Director of Hispanics for Christ (resourcing church-planting among Hispanics). His is Affiliate Professor at Sioux Falls Seminary, and has served as a local church pastor for over twenty years.

In his introduction, Samuel Escobar says that this work is a “brief exploration of spiritual life among Latin American people.” (6) In his effort to do this, he pursues the question “Who is Christ today in Latin America?” (8) He more than successfully answers this question by leading the reader in an in-depth historical, theological and missiological walk through the story of how the people in Latin America first heard of Christ, used him for their own ends, and are now seeing him for who he truly is. The book was first published in Spanish in 2012 but is now available in English.

The book follows a chronological timeline beginning with the introduction of the “Iberian Christ” brought by the Spaniards to the New World (chapter two), but it quickly moves through “that other Christ” of the indigenous people of Latin America (chapter three) to the Protestant missionaries (chapter four). At this point, where Christianity had been established in its Catholic and Protestant forms, Escobar begins to chart the unique Latin American forces that have influenced the Latin American understanding of Christ. Catholicism, Protestant ecumenism, and revolutionary thinking have all sought to define “Who is Christ?” Chapters five through nine cover the events that shaped Latin American Christology in the twentieth century. The focus shifts in chapters ten through fifteen

to the contemporary work of René Padilla and others who emphasized the kingdom of God, a *praxis* based on social analysis (219), and the growing Latin American presence on the theological scene.

In Search of Christ is a great addition to the library of anyone interested in the history of Christianity in Latin American, but its value goes beyond that. Escobar has chronicled the “self-theologizing” of the Latin American people. This may not have been his stated purpose but the book itself is an excellent example of self-theologizing. To his stated purpose, the author provides an incredible resource for research by students and missiologists. Escobar recounts all the Latin American conferences from the early Evangelical Conference of Panama in 1916 up until CLADE IV in 2000. In addition to a comprehensive review of the Latin American conferences of the last century, he also weaves a thorough bibliography of all who have written on Latin American Christology over this period (primarily Spanish authors). Here one will find all the authors, titles, and topics one could need to research Latin American Christianity, theology, and missiology.

This book, along with the two listed below, are “must-haves” in one’s library to understand Christianity in a Latin American context. 

For Further Reading:

González, Ondina E. and Justo L. González. *Christianity in Latin America: A History*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Mackay, John A. *The Other Spanish Christ*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001.

Encountering World Religions: A Christian Introduction

By Irving Hexham

The Bible was written in a religiously pluralistic environment. The prophets of the Old Testament encountered the religions of their times. Similarly, the Gospels were written and the early church spread in a religiously pluralistic environment. Irving Hexham suggests that the postmodern Church must follow the biblical example and do the same among the world religions of our time.

Biblical and systematic theologies, as well as seminaries in the West, have for too long ignored the religions of the world. At most, the study of the religions of the world are treated like a “side dish” to the “main courses” of a seminary program. Irving Hexham makes a strong case for changing this.

In the first three chapters, Hexham exposes the reader to a world brimming over with spiritual forces: the religions of Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and Asia where the majority of immigrants to the West come from. In the fourth chapter, he underlines that the Christians who come from African countries bring different forms of Christianity, forms which directly engage with the world of the spirits. This is also true of the Hindus and Jains of India, and the Buddhists from Thailand and Vietnam. It is also true of Christians who come from these regions.

In chapters five through nine, Hexham provides an overview of the religions of the Yogic Traditions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism. Hexham goes beyond what is typically found in world religion textbooks and suggests

how to dialog with members of these religions, He writes, “One can be a Buddhist or a Christian but not both, because they begin from totally different premises that lead to very different conclusions about the nature of life” (94). This kind of clarity of thought is very important in the classroom because world religions classes often do not enable students to see clear distinctions between religions. Most world religion professors teach in the mold of Huston Smith, i.e., all religions are the same.

In chapters ten to fourteen, Hexham covers the three Abrahamic traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He describes some commonalities such as the concepts of revelation, creation, and the present condition of the world. These are good topics for dialogue. He presents the distinctives of Judaism and Islam while stressing that Christians need to acknowledge aspects of history such as the holocaust and the crusades when dialoging with Muslims and Jews. The last chapter addresses Muslim arguments against Christianity such as the trustworthiness of the Bible and Islamophobia.

I would recommend it as a textbook in Christian high schools or colleges, as well as for church small groups and adult Sunday schools. It will help the reader grapple with the key issues associated with world religions, issues which are so important in our religiously pluralistic environment. 

Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan Academic, 2019

222 pages

USD \$16.99

Reviewed by **Boaz Johnson**,
Professor of Hebrew Bible and
Theological Studies at North Park
University in Chicago, Illinois.

The Gospel of our King: Bible, Worldview, and the Mission of Every Christian

By Bruce Riley Ashford and Heath A. Thomas

Grand Rapids, MI:
Baker Academic, 2019

208 pages

USD \$22.99

Reviewed by **Cameron D. Armstrong**, International Mission Board, Bucharest, Romania; PhD candidate, Biola University.

In a secularizing world, Christians are rightly asking what it means to be salt and light. Ashford and Thomas respond by directing readers to the metanarrative of Scripture, claiming that a proper understanding of the biblical story fuels public witness. In short, because everything in the world exists for God the King, we must understand the King's world, ways, and work. Co-written by a biblical theologian (Thomas) and a public theologian (Ashford), *The Gospel of Our King* proves a rare combination of perspectives that does not disappoint.

The book is divided into two major sections. Chapters one through four explore the biblical metanarrative's major plot movements of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. Following the motif of king and kingdom, Ashford and Thomas demonstrate that the world was created good, but humanity has treasonously rebelled against its King. Nevertheless, creation remains structurally good but misdirected by the sinful rebellion of the King's representatives. The King thus must himself come to redeem his people in a glorious redemptive act to which all the Old Testament covenants point. Jesus comes as the mediator of the New Covenant, inaugurating the kingdom that is not yet fully realized.

Chapter five is an "interlude" between the book's two sections. After understanding the major plot movements, Christians develop a worldview informed by the biblical story.

Chapters six through nine compose the second major section. Children of the King are launched on mission in four overlapping areas. First, the theological mission declares the biblical God King and anything else vying for our

worship idols. Next, a social mission embodies Christ's love for the world through unashamed verbal evangelism and unrestrained Christian service. Likewise, the King launches Christians on a cultural mission of representing Jesus in every cultural sphere. Finally, global mission takes seriously the command of Jesus to make disciples of all nations.

One strength of *The Gospel of Our King* is the prominence of the Old Testament. Often Christian mission books tend to major on the New Testament, but Ashford and Thomas convincingly show how the New Testament cannot be understood without the Old. For example, the final chapter on Christian global mission harkens back to Genesis.

One potential weakness is the authors' postponement of the discussion about Christ's work on the cross until the Restoration chapter (chapter 4). The authors state that because Jesus fulfills the New Covenant, which inaugurates and will soon fully realize God's kingdom, a discussion of Jesus' sacrifice is left out of the chapter on redemption (chapter 3). Instead, the chapter abruptly ends with the promise of the Davidic messiah. It is unclear, then, where and why the plot transitions from redemption to restoration.

The Gospel of Our King succeeds in its goal of showing that everything, both seen and unseen, exists for the King. In her endorsement, Karen Swallow Prior summarizes it well: "[Ashford and Thomas'] robust theology makes me want to bow down before this King again and again." 

For Further Reading:

Goheen, Michael W. and Craig G. Bartholomew. *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986.

World Christianity: A Historical and Theological Introduction

By Lalsangkima Pachuau

New student orientation in the fall is an exciting time on campus. Students move into where they will live for the next several years, getting their bearings around campus and meeting some of the more prominent professors, as well as their fellow students.

Lalsangkima Pachuau's *World Christianity* is a little bit like a new student orientation for the topic of "world Christianity." Reading this book is like having a knowledgeable, articulate, and friendly guide to an unexpectedly rich subject. The author's background as a Christian from Mizoram, in northeast India, as well as an academic who has worked fruitfully both in South Asia and in the West, informs his personal narrative integrated into this overview of both the history and reality of World Christianity. Andrew Walls' well-known *indigenizing* and *pilgrim* principles are used as a framework for understanding world Christianity. The author's restating of these principles as the "tendency to identify with the world as it is and . . . the insistence on transforming the world" (xiv) is helpful and lucid. This volume will make an excellent introductory text for both undergraduate and graduate courses.

Pachuau introduces us not only to Walls' principles, but to numerous authors who have been foundational in the conceptualization and study of world Christianity for the past three decades, such as David Bosch, Lamin Sanneh, and Lesslie Newbigin. The author examines these sources critically; he can be unsparing of what he sees as flaws, such as Philip Jenkins' attribution of shifts

toward Christian faith in the global south as being mainly sociological rather than spiritual in origin (14–15). For Pachuau, however, and many Christians from the majority world, world Christianity is ultimately a missiological phenomenon in which sociological, cultural, and theological strands are all ultimately intertwined.

The author then describes the history of the expansion of Christian faith and community, highlighting both Western missionaries and thinkers (especially in chapters 5 and 6) and those from the Majority World, as well as the movements which emerged (and are still emerging) from their work. By emphasizing contextual methodologies and theologies, there is a necessary overlap with some of A. Scott Moreau's recent work, especially his *Contextualization in World Missions* (2012). Pachuau both simplifies the views covered, and, with his own perspective *from* the majority world, adds (especially in 134–141) the often-missed impact of the rapidly growing Charismatic and Pentecostal movements worldwide.

Pachuau closes with a focus on Christian mission *from* the majority world Church, with examples of how this has been organized and has adapted the concept of "witness from everywhere to everywhere" (182). He fittingly wraps it up with a note about how "Christian migrants from the majority world are actively engaging in missions in the West, with the former colonizers becoming the recipients of the new missionary message" (183). 

Nashville, TN:
Abingdon Press, 2018

247 pages

USD \$34.99

Reviewed by **Matthew Friedman**, Ph.D., Professor and Program Director for Intercultural Studies, Kingswood University, Sussex, New Brunswick, Canada, and Adjunct Professor at Asbury Theological Seminary.

For Further Reading:

Kim, Sebastian and Kirsteen Kim. *Christianity as a World Religion: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2016.

Moreau, A. Scott. *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2012.

Sanneh, Lamin. *Whose Religion Is Christianity?: The Gospel Beyond the West*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

A Theology of Interreligious Relations

By Henning Wrogemann

Downers Grove, IL:
IVP Academic, 2019

497 pages

USD \$45.00

Reviewed by **David H. F. Ng** who has served in cross-cultural ministry and training in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. He is currently lecturer in Intercultural Studies and Program Director for the Master of Missional Leadership at Melbourne School of Theology, Australia.

How should Christians respond to the increase in religious pluralization in our societies brought about by global migration? In this book, the third volume of a trilogy, Henning Wrogemann addresses this question, contending that “many contemporary theology-of-religion publications” (xvii) are incapable of addressing religious challenges and questions raised in our current context.

In the first two chapters, Wrogemann offers a broad overview of a theology of religions and outlines how Christians have classified other religions. He introduces six “heuristic questions” (epistemological, hermeneutical, soteriological, theological, ethical, and socio-political) that will act as a guiding “grid” (138) to assess the various approaches to other religions.

The book is then divided into six parts. In parts one and two, Wrogemann examines “theology-of-religions” models from Christian (part one) and from Islamic and Buddhist (part two) perspectives using his heuristic grid (chapters nine and fifteen respectively). The approaches of these non-Christian religions emphasize different topics than a Christian theology of religions and can even help us see the “limitations of Christian perspectives” (136).

Having surveyed the above approaches, Wrogemann provides building blocks (rather than a definitive solution) for a theory of interreligious relations in part three. He invites readers “on a journey of discovery, to open up new perspectives, to overcome outmoded ways of seeing, and to question present-day stereotypes” (211). Key to his theory of interreligious relations is an interdisciplinary approach that examines complex phenomena and religious interactions.

In so doing, he aims to “to break up rigid perceptual patterns” (223) and this includes certain approaches to a theology-of-religions (225).

With this theory of interreligious relations in mind, part four explores various examples of dialogue before proposing a theology of interreligious relations as “an alternative to the theology-of-religions models of the past” (346) in part five. This theology of interrelations flows out (216) of his theory of interreligious relations outlined earlier and argues that respectful behaviour towards other religions does not necessitate the relativization or abandonment of claims to ultimate validity (422). In part six, Wrogemann concludes with his reflections on intercultural theology, mission, and religious studies, underscoring the importance of interdisciplinary engagement and cooperation between faculties in an age of globalization.

Wrogemann’s book is a significant, nuanced and substantial contribution in the area of theology of religions and interreligious relations. While he states that his work is limited to posing new questions and perspectives rather than providing conclusive answers (xxi), he makes clear that “New Testament claims to ultimate validity are precisely what forms the Christian basis for lasting, sustainable, and constructive relations with the followers of other religious traditions” (xvii) and that an interdisciplinary approach is important if we are to understand interreligious relations in our globalized world. This book is best suited as a seminary text for courses helping students understand holistic and integrated Christian approaches to studying and engaging with those from other religions in our complex world. 

For Further Reading:

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *Introduction to the Theology of Religions*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

D’Costa, Gavin, Paul F. Knitter, and Daniel Strange. *Only One Way?: Three Christian Responses to the Uniqueness of Christ in a Religiously Pluralist World*. London: SCM Press, 2011.

Netland, Harold A. *Christianity and Religious Diversity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015.

Christian Reflection in Africa: Review and Engagement

By Paul Bowers

What academic books deal with Christianity in Africa? Who is a credible authority on issues of faith in Africa? What literature is shaping African Christianity in the twenty-first century? These are questions that African scholars and people involved with research in Africa must repeatedly ask. *Christian Reflection in Africa* offers a needed response to these questions. This book is a reference work with twelve hundred reviews of academic books and articles published between 1986 and 2017 on the topic of Christianity in Africa.

Christian Reflection in Africa is based on the entire collection of reviews through the first thirty issues of *BookNotes for Africa*. The goal of this collection is to highlight and provide easy access to works about Africa written by both Africans and non-Africans, “to encourage and to facilitate informed Christian reflection and engagement in Africa, through thoughtful encounter with the published intellectual life of the continent” (xi). The book is successful in this regard. The text includes well-known authors like Bediako and John Azumah while introducing works of more recent scholars.

The book is helpful in three major ways. First, it includes a broad range of reviewed materials, including textbooks, covering about thirty-three years of scholarship and many countries in Africa. The text’s one-paragraph reviews have been taken from about thirty editions of *BookNotes for Africa*, a specialist review journal. Therefore, these reviews are well-vetted. Second, the editor, Paul Bowers, has been involved with theological education in

Africa since 1968 and brings his vast experience to the compilation and selection of seminal texts. There are few with his experience working in Africa and his familiarity with writings on African Christianity, and his expertise comes out strongly through the choice of selected texts.

Third, the book is organized to effectively allow the reader to easily explore a particular topic without having to read the whole work. Readers can search the text by looking for specific authors, a particular subject, or a particular title. While the section titles and author outlines work effectively, the subject index seems limited. For instance, such subjects as missions, women’s involvement in theology, and African theology are major themes found in the work, but the theme of technology and faith in Africa is absent.

Also, the arrangement of the text according to authors fails to help the readers to see the progression of theological thoughts and issues within African Christianity. A chronological arrangement from 1986 to now would have proven more useful in this regard. Although plausible, it is not clear if Bowers made an intentional choice against a chronological arrangement in order to avoid constructing a particular narrative about the history of study of Africa Christianity.

Christian Reflection in Africa is a relevant reference work for helping the scholar, pastor, and missionary become conversant with the numerous resources written about Christianity in Africa. It is a valuable resource for any study about Christianity in Africa. 

Carlisle, Cumbria, UK:
Langham Global Library, 2018

784 pages

USD \$79.99

Reviewed by **Boye-Nelson Kiamu**, Doctoral Student, Fuller School of Intercultural Studies, Pasadena, California.

For Further Reading:

The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends. Edited by Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000.

You Welcomed Me: Loving Refugees and Immigrants Because God First Loved Us

By Kent Annan

IVP Books,
Downers Grove, IL, 2018

144 pages

USD \$15.00

Reviewed by **Michael Hakmin Lee**, PhD, assistant professor of Ministry and Leadership, School of Mission, Ministry, and Leadership at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois.

In *You Welcomed Me*, Kent Annan, cofounder of Haiti Partners and director of the M.A. program in Humanitarian and Disaster Leadership at Wheaton College, advocates for a more welcoming posture towards strangers, especially immigrants and refugees. Not just a book of what we ought to do as Christians and why, this is an eminently practical book, with each chapter concluding with prompts for reflection and concrete suggestions for progressing further along the “Good Samaritan Scale” towards becoming a demonstratively better neighbor to strangers in need.

Chapter two, which I found to be one of the strongest and timely sections in the book, lays out much of the biblical and theological rationale for the rest of the book. Growing in our love for and service to strangers begins with changing how we perceive the stranger – recognizing their personhood and common humanity, and empathetically seeing ourselves in their place. In a time where civility and decency in the public square seems to be in short supply (sadly also among many self-professing Christians), the church must speak clearly and prophetically about the fundamental importance of humanizing others; fear keeps strangers at arm’s length and love embraces the other as fellow human beings.

Chapter three attempts to address and dispel some of the common concerns about welcoming refugees and immigrants (e.g. safety, competition for jobs, strain on social services). Many are driven by fear and self-preservation, and as Annan rightly points out, those who live this way still pay a dear cost: “... we lose part of our own humanity

if we don’t respond to people in need” (33). I appreciated that Annan did not espouse a one-sided or naïve perspective on the immigration debate. For example, Annan argued for opening our borders wider for immigrants and refugees while recognizing that “there should be wise limits” and there are “complex issues that need to be wrestled with and decided” (38). He also did not depict humanitarian work as the rescue of helpless victims of a broken system; we must also affirm human agency and human complicity in our own suffering and that of others. However, I wished he waded much deeper into these complexities. Accordingly, the book might speak more convincingly to those who are already sympathetic to Annan’s position (or further along the “Good Samaritan Scale”).

Annan then invites readers further into the lives of immigrants and refugees by telling their stories (chapter four), by offering practical ways for individuals and groups to practice better neighboring (chapter five), and by outlining four key commitments necessary for us to be part of a strong “human chain.” The book concludes with a vision of how life would be richer and more fulfilling when we commit to loving strangers and neighbors well (chapter seven).

This inspiring book is written accessibly but with enough depth, nuance, and thoughtfulness to be helpful to a wide audience. In fact, I am having my middle school son read it and I will put it on a reading list for my graduate students. I highly recommend it. 

For Further Reading

Bauman, Stephan, Matthew Soerens, and Issam Smeir. *Seeking Refuge: On the Shores of the Global Refugee Crisis*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2016.

Soerens, Matthew, and Jenny Yang. *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate*. Revised edition. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2018.

TEE in Asia

Edited by Hanna-Ruth van Wingerden, Tim Green, and Graham Aylett

Church growth in Asia and elsewhere is an exciting feature of the global Christian movement in the twenty-first century. But this growth comes with challenges: Among the most significant is the transformation of new believers into effective and reflective leaders.

While traditional theological schools can play a role in this process, in many places the most effective training needs to be more local, accessible, and affordable. The Increase Association is one of the most influential agencies in networking those involved in developing and implementing “tools to equip and empower” (TEE).

Originally known as theological education by extension, TEE has been viewed by some as passé – even while the movement has been growing and its influence becoming more profound. *TEE in Asia* is an edited collection that highlights the impact and innovative developments of TEE among growth areas in the global Christian movement. The authors are members of the Increase Association, a network of those involved in developing and implementing “tools to equip and empower” (TEE).

The text sets the scene with some introductory material on the theological foundations for TEE and a summary description of the basic educational philosophy and practice of TEE. This is followed by an overview of the three historic waves of TEE: from the early emphasis on in-situ training of pastors in the 1960s and 1970s, through a second wave of broader discipleship and leadership training in the 1980s and 1990s, into the third wave (twenty-first century) characterized by innovation initiated and led by national leaders with a strong emphasis on contextual significance.

The larger portion of the text provides reports on TEE in different regions of Asia. This section is full of short personal testimonies from church leaders, local tutors, and participants in TEE. There is the expected tone of positive promotion. However, this section also provides firsthand reports of how the church is seeking new and

creative approaches to providing leadership training in complex and challenging situations, most notably in limited access countries. This continues to be the strength of grass roots approaches such as TEE.

The book concludes with a section that looks to the future, introducing the reader to initiatives within TEE that are responding to the changing world of the twenty-first century. These initiatives include the support of church planting movements, reaching out to the diaspora, exploring digital technologies, training and equipping small group leaders with clear goals in mind, introducing new approaches to instructional methodology, developing synergetic relationships with residential institutions, and moving from curricular fragmentation towards greater integration. These themes should be of interest to all who are serious about quality theological education in the contemporary world.

As with any collection such as this, the writing is uneven, but the editors have managed to sustain a laudable continuity throughout. There are many testimonials, mostly running only a paragraph or two, and these certainly give a taste for the ongoing impact of TEE in Asia. I believe some more in-depth case studies would have been valuable, perhaps describing unresolved challenges that could have been the basis for small group discussion. Perhaps a supplemental collection could provide these.

Although specifically focused on leadership training TEE in Asia provides encouragement, hope, and reasons to pray for anyone interested in the growing church in Asia, particularly in limited access contexts. For those interested in alternative models for theological education, TEE in Asia is a must read, as it provides multiple practical examples of what might be done. And for anyone involved in theological education – traditional or non-traditional – TEE in Asia is a good dialogue partner for investigating new pathways into the future. 

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia:
Increase Association, 2018

296 pages

USD \$12.38

Reviewed by **Perry Shaw**, Arab
Baptist Theological Seminary
in Lebanon.

Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World

By Paul M. Gould

Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan, 2019

240 pages

USD \$22.99

Reviewed by **Jerry M. Ireland**
(PhD, Theology and Apologetics,
Liberty University), Department
Chair for Ministry Leadership
and Theology at the University of
Valley Forge (Phoenixville, PA).

The task of apologetics has had a rough go lately. On one side critics decry evidential apologetics as hopelessly aimed at “proving” the claims of Christianity and thereby think apologists should focus on acts of compassion and beauty (see for example *Imaginative Apologetics* edited by Andrew Davidson). Others see apologetics as a relic of modernity, hopelessly “proclaiming truth” to those who no longer believe such a thing exists.

Paul Gould’s *Cultural Apologetics* therefore appears as a welcome voice in this mixed and confusing environment. His approach neither denigrates evidence nor suggests that the evidence always answer the questions people are asking. Rather Gould, thoughtfully integrates into his work the cultural analysis of James K. A. Smith and the apologetic approach of C. S. Lewis in producing a hybridized apologetic method that is both rich and relevant. “I define cultural apologetics as the work of establishing the Christian voice, conscience, and imagination within a culture so that Christianity is seen as true and satisfying” (21). Re-enchantment for Gould amounts to reawakening human desire for goodness, truth, and beauty and “redirecting them to their

proper end” (65).

The real strength in Gould’s work is that it overcomes the often-accurate portrayal of apologetics as grounded in the false assumption that the unconvinced merely need more data. While upholding the value of reasoned defenses, Gould also proposes that apologetics must not just “go” – in a missiological sense, but also “go deep,” thus “penetrating into the social and ideational structures of culture” that cause resistance to the gospel story (167).

Gould provides a valuable resource for both seasoned students of apologetics and for beginners and would make a welcome addition to any college or seminary course on the topic. Its relevance is grounded in its multi-layered approach – an approach that takes as its starting point the multi-dimensional nature of contemporary ambivalence and resistance to the gospel. This book is the sort one will want to read, and then read again. It is not so much an apologetic answer book (and thank God for that!), but rather successfully articulates an apologetic method that is at home in twenty-first century Western culture. 

You Found Me: New Research on How Unchurched Nones, Millennials, and Irreligious are Surprisingly Open to Christian Faith

By Rick Richardson

Many North American churches today have been influenced by a “sky is falling” narrative about the attitudes of unchurched people toward the Christian faith. Richardson is convinced this is not the whole story. In this book, he sets out to provide a “counterbalancing perspective” (12).

Richardson acknowledges that churches are declining and that the number of those who are alienated from the church is growing. However, he insists, our main challenge is not posed by the culture at large. Instead, he says, “The primary problem we face is us” (8).

In making his case, Richardson reports findings from two extensive research studies conducted by the Billy Graham Center Institute, which he directs. These studies enabled Richardson’s team to identify the top ten percent of American churches currently experiencing conversion growth. Researchers interviewed pastors and previously unchurched people from these churches to learn about what they are doing.

This background enables Richardson to identify best practices from congregations with track records of effectiveness at reaching people. These practices, which also have been field tested by pastoral learning cohort participants in 182 churches across the United States, have proven to be powerful keys for helping churches recover a missional imagination.

This book is divided into three parts. In part one, Richardson unpacks several current “mistaken myths” about the receptivity of unchurched individuals and helps us see the negative consequences of these false narratives within the church. He then outlines what he describes as “a better and truer narrative.” Richardson found surprising levels of receptivity among unchurched Millennials, Nones, and the nominally

religious. He concludes this section by introducing a simple “equation” for engaging those who are receptive, which he unpacks in detail in the book’s second and third sections.

In part two, Richardson delves into the cultural changes necessary for churches to become “conversion communities,” which he defines as congregations that are seeing lives changed and growing primarily through reaching new people. He emphasizes that missional-leader development is crucial; according to his research team’s findings, this accounts for one half of what stimulates revitalization within congregations. For true change to occur, leaders must lead by example.

In part three, Richardson explores core practices that can help entire congregations develop a missional culture. While the practices he surveys include belonging to and blessing the larger community, Richardson asserts that two inseparable characteristics “tower above” the others: a “culture of invitation” and a “culture of hospitality” (190).

The fact that this book’s proposals have been informed by research and tested extensively within local churches is among its greatest strengths. Richardson also shares a wealth of stories gleaned from interviewees and pastoral learning cohort members. This grounding in real-world experience enables him to present theoretical concepts in a lively, accessible fashion.

This is a worthwhile and beneficial read. Readers will be stimulated by Richardson’s empirically based challenge of the incarnational/attractional dichotomy, his emphasis on leadership, and his revelation that a “culture of hospitality” is the top factor predicting whether a church will be effective in reaching the unchurched. 

Downers Grove, IL:
InterVarsity Press, 2019

288 pages

USD \$13.99

Reviewed by **Cory Seibel** (PhD, University of Pretoria) a pastor at Central Baptist Church and adjunct professor at Taylor Seminary, both in Edmonton, Alberta.

For Further Reading:

Bibby, Reginald, Joel Thiessen, and Monetta Bailey. *The Millennial Mosaic: How Pluralism and Choice Are Shaping Canadian Youth and the Future of Canada*. Dundern Press, 2019.

Clydesdale, Tim. *The Twentysomething Soul: Understanding the Religious and Secular Lives of American Young Adults*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

Kinneman, David. *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon*. Baker Books, 2019.

Statistical highlights that give us a glimpse of the current Missio Nexus membership data. 

Missio Nexus Membership Data

2019 Highlights



2019 Highlights

MISSIO NEXUS MEMBERSHIP DATA

668

Total Members

+54

New Organization Members

+38

New Church Members

Our members encompass a variety of ministry types:



278

Organizations



90

Churches



14

Libraries/Institutions



286

Individuals



29,790

Total Staff of Member Organizations Served Worldwide

PROGRAM AND SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

Missio Benefits has seen strong growth in the first year.

3,240 Lives Insured with Missio Benefits

1,158 Employees Enrolled in Missio Benefits

Digital Publications Data



Research Reports and Survey Analysis

04 Reports Released

148 Graphics

119 CEOs Participated

133 Churches Contributed

2019 EVENTS

18 Total Events

2,718 Participants





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