

# Trends Affecting Mobilization of the North American Church

by Bill Waldrop

Trends seem to be “a trendy thing” these days. And no wonder. Trends, we think, give us an indication of what the future will be like. (John Naisbitt’s book, *Megatrends*, was actually an effort to picture the future by means of trends analysis.)<sup>1</sup> Certainly the future is of keen interest to those of us concerned for the role of the North American Church in world mission. We believe that if we understand the present trends with some accuracy, we may be able to do a better job of mobilizing the Church during the coming years and into the next century. On the other hand, ignorance of important trends could result in serious mistakes, even failure.

The Church in North America is the best endowed Church for world mission in Christian history—the richest ever in monetary wealth, technology, and mission experience, if not also still the richest in available personnel. For the Church on this continent not to be a major player in bringing world evangelization to completion is unthinkable. However, some present trends indicate that this is a dark prospect.

## The Trends’ Environment

Before describing the main trends as I perceive them, we should consider the environment or context in which the trends have become evident. It is the environment of change in which we are now living that has caused the trends to emerge and in some cases to grow strong.

In the first place, there is still a tendency on the part of many in the Church and mission community to resist change, hoping that the present stormy climate some how will return

to “normal.” This simply isn’t going to happen. Alvin Toffler’s canny prediction in 1970 that the future would come forward like a massive juggernaut to meet us rather than our moving toward it, has proven prophetic.<sup>2</sup> In his 1989 book, *The New Realities*, Peter Drucker wrote, “The ‘next century’ is already here, indeed we are well advanced into it.” In his 1992 book, *Managing The Future*, Drucker titled the first chapter, “The Future Already Around Us.”<sup>3</sup>

The “sea change” from an industrial society to an information society, which began some years ago, continues to accelerate and promises to accelerate well into the 21st century. For those of us who are middle-aged or older, pervasive and rapid change will characterize the rest of our lives; it will likely continue throughout the lives of our children and a good part of the lives of our grandchildren. This massive shift from the industrial age to the age of high technology already has affected everything, including the Church, and will continue to do so. Not to flex and respond to change in the world, in global mission, and in the Church, will result in being marginalized, if not run over by it. We do well to heed the words of Jeff Hallett:

After a decade of trying to force fit an explanation and remedy to the current ‘chaos’ of our world into the old... framework, it is now time to accept unpredictability and constant change as a proper reflection of reality. Whatever the problem being addressed, successful approaches will now evolve to reflect a new perspective on change and chaos as a ‘given’ rather than an aberration that we should fear or try to control.<sup>4</sup>

In the second place the babyboom generation, upon which the future of world mission increasingly rests, is mark-

edly different from all that have preceded it. Although much written about, many in the Church have failed to grasp the fact that this generation actually comprises a different culture. Unless this is understood, those who seek to work with it will experience one frustration after another. One nationally known Christian leader was heard to remark that he was ready to give up on the boomer generation and hope for better things from the one coming behind it. While this may have been said tongue in cheek, it nevertheless revealed a frustration which is shared by many. Too many older people insist that boomers need to conform to traditional ways, ignoring the fact that they represent a culture markedly different from anything America has seen before, and therefore must be dealt with contextually!

In the third place, the rise of the non-Western Church is the most significant development since modern missions began 200 years ago, and probably since the triumph of Christianity over the Roman Empire in the early fourth century. Its impact on world evangelization, already being felt, is just beginning. Unfortunately it has had a negative effect upon the Western Church, causing many believers to see it as a panacea for completing world evangelization with little further need for Western resources. Of course, this is not so. It is true that the Church in Latin America, Asia and Africa is much more vigorously involved in the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement than the Church in North America. The Western Church indeed is declining while the non-Western Church is rising. But this does not mean that North America’s role is no longer important. Rather, what we

## Trends Affecting Mobilization

have now is a new climate for world mission, one which will be characterized increasingly by partnership on equal footing, with neither Western nor non-Western partners having a superior or inferior role.

The three foregoing characteristics of the world scene in which we live today have largely generated the trends we in the North American Church must deal with. As the staff of APMC has worked with local churches from coast to coast, we have come to affirm the analysis of Leith Anderson—that 85 percent of all Protestant churches in America are either stagnating or dying.<sup>5</sup> This leaves 15 percent that are reasonably healthy. In a national church of some 350,000 to 375,000 congregations, this means there are at most about 55,000 in the healthy category. Many of these are growing, younger churches, usually less than 20 years old. Among the healthy ones a substantial number are charismatic type churches. Among the stagnating or dying ones are churches that once were strong in missions but are no longer. Others among the unhealthy ones are still trying to be mission-active even as they decline.

Two-thirds of the healthy category are denominational, one-third are independent. However, usually the denominational churches are as independent in attitude as the nondenominational ones. Not all the 55,000 robust churches are missions-active; many have not even begun to do missions. However, it is these 55,000 upon which our mobilizing efforts should primarily be focused in this decade and beyond. They will comprise most of the mission potential within the North American Church for years to come.

### The Key Trends

Although undoubtedly there are several other trends which will affect our efforts to mobilize the Church, over the years eight major ones have become

obvious to me and our staff.

*Trend #1: A move in the church away from a biblical theology of mission to no theology of mission at all.*

Cross-cultural missions has never tended to be a felt need in most North American churches. The Christian Church, wherever it has existed in every era, has always had a tendency to become institutionalized—to turn inward. That inherent tendency unfortunately is now being strengthened by a subtle erosion of the biblical conviction that Jesus Christ is the only way to God and eternal life.<sup>6</sup> While American believers still consider Christ important for what He means to them individually in their unique American context, there is growing doubt that people in distant cultures will be cut off from God and heaven because they never heard of Him. In this situation mission loses all its urgency.

*Trend #2: Fewer dollars for global outreach.* This is being caused by at least five factors, along with the first trend:

—Local needs are looming larger and larger, pressing in upon all churches, even those that have tended to ignore them in the past.

—Boomers, now a majority in most evangelical churches, are more concerned about local needs because they can see them and be directly involved in doing something about them.

—Church people in a less robust economy are nonetheless intent upon maintaining the lifestyle they've become accustomed to (if older) or the lifestyle they desire (if younger), in spite of shrinking personal resources.

—People generally have a growing isolationist attitude toward the world outside the United States.

—The generations of older people that have constituted the funding base for world mission heretofore are gradually exiting the scene. They are not being replaced in sufficient numbers to sustain the mission effort of the past. Of

course, these generations, the wealthiest in American history, will pass much of their wealth on to their children and grandchildren. However, this will have little effect on the downward trend of mission dollars if there is not a commitment to global outreach among those inheriting this wealth.

*Trend #3: Decline in the number of career missionaries from North America.* It was recently noted that in a brief four year period (1988 to 1992) the number of career missionaries from North America dropped 16 percent, from about 38,600 to 32,600 missionaries.<sup>7</sup> With mission dollars decreasing and boomer concern increasing for both missionary and mission agency effectiveness, we can expect to have fewer career missionaries in the future. In the next 10 years, we should not be surprised if the total number drops well below 30,000 and perhaps to as few as 25,000. Hopefully, these will be highly selected and well qualified for what they will be doing in other cultures, primarily working with the existing national church to enhance its cross-cultural global outreach. This trend obviously will impact the mission industry as a whole.

*Trend #4: A growing loss of confidence in mission agencies, both denominational and independent.* There is increasing skepticism about the real motives and effectiveness of mission agencies even among older people now as well as younger ones. While older people used to place unquestioning trust in mission agencies, this base of confidence seems to be eroding.<sup>8</sup> Among seminary students there is a perception that mission agencies are not keeping up with the times, that they are more intent upon maintaining their structures than on seeking to be effective.<sup>9</sup> People cite being turned off by agency representatives who can't seem to relate to young people, evidence of poor administration, an apparent lack of concern to relate effectively with the local church, and unwillingness to partner with

other agencies to more economically and efficiently accomplish world mission. The mission agency scene is increasingly thought of as “Missionary, Inc.”: Given over to individualistic entrepreneurialism, elaborate and expensive organizational structures, and fierce competition for dollars and people.<sup>10</sup>

*Trend #5: A conviction among healthy churches that the local church has primary biblical responsibility for world evangelization.* The importance of this trend cannot be overemphasized. It is the cause of many younger churches’ strong move into world mission. It is generating unprecedented resources of people, prayer and money not seen before from individual Churches in the American mission experience. Understandably it is causing great concern among mission agencies, especially the more traditional ones. Agencies that can partner with these churches to facilitate fulfilling the churches’ visions and strategies will find great usefulness in the coming years. Key words here for agencies are partnership, facilitate, and enable.

*Trend #6: Disappearance of the dichotomy between local outreach and global mission.* This applies only to those churches that are determined to do cross-cultural missions as well as mission in their own locale. This is a healthy attitude because it applies the principle of Acts 1:8—that of *simultaneous* concentric circle outreach. Unfortunately, most churches focus primarily upon needs within their own congregations, then move into the local community as remaining resources will permit. In most Churches cross-cultural mission outside the local area comes third or not at all. However, among Churches that

generate sufficient energy for all three, the continuum of mission from the Church in its community to distant places will result in greater effectiveness “over there.”

*Trend #7: Networks as a growing influence in world mission.* As John Naisbitt predicted in 1982, substantial net-

*so as time goes on.* This is fast becoming a key indicator of which churches will become effective in world evangelization and which ones will recede into ineffectiveness and oblivion.<sup>12</sup> The information revolution has come to the churches. It has already created two classes of churches, those that contin-

ually acquire and use the latest and best information they can get, and those that do not. Consequently, what we see are churches that are either on the cutting edge in the way they view missions and the way they approach doing it, or churches that are doing missions much as it was done in the 1950s or 1960s. Many older churches and agencies are in the latter category, seemingly content to function in missions as they have for decades, mistakenly believing that they are leading the way.

#### Healthy Churches

It is well to ask: What will characterize most of the North American churches that will be vigorous in global outreach during the next few years,—those that will be intentional about mobilizing their resources for world

mission? I see five main characteristics:

1. Financial wealth—enough money not only to meet the internal needs of the congregation and do significant local ministry, but also enough to engage in cross-cultural ministry beyond the geographical area of the church itself.
2. Energy for mission, both locally and globally. This probably means that a majority of the people in the congregation must have reasonably good emotional health. Some churches must expend practically all their energies taking care of dysfunctional peo-

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works have developed in our society.<sup>11</sup> Some have had a major influence, e.g., the feminist and gay movements. The same is true in the Church. A.C.M.C. for example, is actually a network of mission active Churches concerned not only to do missions well but also to encourage other Churches to become involved. While denominations are becoming less influential as networks, trans-denominational networks are gaining energy (the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement is a cogent example on a global scale).

*Trend #8: Churches that are rich or poor in information becoming more*

ple within their congregations. This is true, for example, in some inner city churches. Such congregations are doing well just to meet the needs of their own people. Thus, in a society that seems to become more dysfunctional day by day, mission active churches may tend to be larger rather than smaller, able to meet directly the needs of hurting people while also reaching well beyond their own walls to the lost world.

3. A higher than average level of education within the congregation. Such people will insist on having current information from the best sources and will be intent on excellence in the way they do missions.
4. Leadership that is visionary and aggressive, leading the congregation to realize the resources latent within itself and marshalling the energy and resources to project itself beyond its own locale.
5. A strong biblical/theological base which motivates the people to know and live God's truth, including obedience to the Great Commission. This is the cornerstone characteristic, the engine that will generate prayer and energize the other four strengths.

It is conceivable that as few as 50,000 churches with these qualities could fully provide the mission thrust needed from North America in this decade and beyond. If each of these healthy churches generated \$60,000 annually on an average for cross-cultural mission, \$3,000,000,000 would be forthcoming, three times the combined current income of all the EFMA mission agencies. Yet this is well within the realm of possibility. Of course, many less healthy churches would contribute as they could. But when all is said and done, given the growing investment of the non-Western Church in world mis-

sion, this core of churches might be enough to provide all that is needed from the North American continent.

### Conclusion

I pray that God will visit the North American Church yet again with authentic spiritual renewal like the great historic revivals of the past. I'm personally optimistic that God will do just that. If this occurs, and the non-Western Church continues toward greater maturity and increased involvement in world mission, we could see the knowledge of the glory of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea even in this century and certainly in the next. May it be by the year 2000!

### References

1. John Naisbitt, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*, Warner Books, 1982, see Introduction.
2. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, Random House/New York, 1970. Although the entire book develops this theme, see Introduction for a succinct expression of it.
3. Peter Drucker, *The New Realities*, Harper & Row, 1989, See Preface, page ix; and *Managing The Future*, Truman Talley Books/Plume, New York, 1992, page 15.
4. Jeff Hallett, *The Present Future Report*, Volume 4, Number 1, article excerpted by Leadership Network, Tyler, Texas, for its publication, "Forum Files", Volume 4, Number 2, April 1994.
5. Leith Anderson, *Dying For Change*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn., 1990, pages 9-10.
6. See James Davison Hunter's book, *Evangelicalism—The Coming Generation*, The University of Chicago press, Chicago and London, 1987, Chapter Two, entitled "Theology: The Shifting Meaning of Faith", pages 19-49.
7. See article by Stan Guthrie in April 23, 1993 issue of *Pulse*, Evangelical Missions Information Service, Wheaton, Illinois entitled "New Handbook Reveals Drop in Missions."
8. See article by Jim Reapsome in *Pulse* issue of May 6, 1994, published by Evangelical Missions Information Service, Wheaton, Illinois.
9. From an informal survey of students preparing for missionary service at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois. The survey was requested by a mission agency, and its results were presented at a meeting of several mission agency executives. The results were considered to be consistent with other reports on how agencies were coming to be viewed.
10. From a paper by Paul McKaughan, presented at a study group at the Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut on April 22, 1994, entitled "Is There a Crisis in Missionary Motivation and Support?" Used by permission.
11. Ibid, Naisbitt, chapter 8, entitled "From Hierarchies to Networking," pages 189-205.
12. Information provided by consultant J. David Schmidt of J. David Schmidt and Associates, Wheaton, Illinois, for a marketing study by ACMC, Inc., in May 1994.

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# Mobilizing Boomers and Busters for World Evangelization

by Paul Borthwick

**B**efore the 1950's, very few people thought of themselves in demographic categories. Then, between 1946 and 1964 over 76 million babies were born, and the "Baby Boom Generation" came into being. With distinctives in music (especially Rock 'n' Roll), history (the Viet Nam War, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., the first man on the moon) and the influence of television, "Baby Boomers" became a uniquely influential segment of American society.

Today, a "Baby Boomer" occupies the White House—illustrating the transition of power occurring in the nation, in the churches in the USA and in mission organizations. This generation, traveling through U.S. history like a "pig in a python," has come of age. The first generation raised on TV is here, and we who are committed to global evangelism must address this reality.

James Engel identifies this generation as crucial to the continuation of the missionary enterprise. He writes: "Unless radical changes are made by mission agencies and local churches, Christian baby boomers will not provide the human and financial resources needed for accelerated evangelism in the 1990s" (James F. Engel, "We Are the World," *Christianity Today* (September 24, 1990), p. 32).

Comedian Dave Barry challenges "boomers" in his *Dave Barry Turns 40*: "The only solution for us is to face up to the fact that we are no longer the hope for the future... We baby boomers are the *hope for right now*, and we're going to have to accept it" (p. 24).

On the heels of the "boomers" comes a smaller segment, the so-called "baby busters,"—those born after

1964. Living their lives in the shadows of the boomers, "busters" have grown into the "disillusioned left-overs" of the boomer generation. The thirty and younger busters tend toward greater sarcasm, cynicism, and even despair than their boomer predecessors. This "Twenty-something" generation represents even a greater challenge to the issues of recruitment and funding for cross-cultural, international ministry and missions from the United States.

When we examine the challenge of the Baby Boomer and Buster generations, the question might be posed, "Why all the fuss?" Engel's quote above alludes to the two major issues, of personnel and funding. If the Great Commission is to be fulfilled, the Church must be mobilized and the endeavor must be funded. Boomers and busters represent the major source of both resources, and yet studies reveal that these two generations are less globally minded and less generous than the prior generation that sent out thousands of missionaries in the decades before. So the question becomes, "How then can these generations be mobilized for missions—for generosity, and for evangelization to the ends of the earth?"

## Know Your Audience

Before identifying ideas on how to stir baby boomers and busters unto action, we should identify observable characteristics about the generation we're trying to mobilize. What are some of the key characteristics of these two generations affecting their involvement and grow in their perspective on world missions?

### *Expectations About Life*

The parents of boomers—

children of the depression—were satisfied with less and demanded less. For instance, in 35 years of low income labor, my father never asked questions about self-actualization and happiness. He never blamed his father for any of his own problems, and he never knew the word "dysfunctional." He was satisfied with a roof over his head and food on his family table. It was a time of low expectations and low disappointments.

In contrast, I (born in 1954) grew up expecting self-fulfillment. My generation had their heads full of ideals and dreams of doing better than the generation before. With no "world wars" to sober our demands, we grew up as the generation with the greatest "sense of entitlement" (i.e., all the happiness that is my due) in American history. We blamed our parents for our neuroses, and everybody suffers from some sort of dysfunctional relationship—for which we expect a cure. We thought that life should be exciting, and in one boomer's words, it should be a "lifetime full of once-in-a-life-time experiences." In my boomer culture, high expectations have yielded high disappointments. However, in time, boomers have come to realize that life is not turning out as expected. The economy, the world, and relationships have let us down. This disillusionment has been passed on to the "busters" who followed after.

### *Idealism gone personal*

The earliest boomers were out to change the world, and the Beatles assured us that "love" was in fact all we needed. But idealism was tainted—heroes were assassinated, an ugly war lingered, and our cities became war zones. Idealism about changing the world began to shift inward. "I can't change

the world,” stated one 38 year old, “but I can change *my* world.”

In the 1960s radical thinking challenged boomers to give up their lives for the vision of peace and world change. The Peace Corps became the most vivid illustration of this idealism. The *cause* was worth it! However, by the 1980s dedication to the “cause” soured. Boomers and busters dedicated themselves to personal fitness and a spiritual inward journey which in large part became the seedbed of the New Age Movement. Advertisements and books exhorted a self-centered, almost nihilistic approach to life: “I’m worth it,” became the new cause.

#### *Redefining commitment*

Breakdown in the family, national disunity about Viet Nam, and the disgrace of deceptive public leaders all led to a redefinition of commitment. A lifetime of marital fidelity became optional. The principle value was to have multiple options—with no sense of compulsion to choose and stick to any.

One pastor of boomers and busters summed up the tension of ministering in this age by observing, “It’s tough to have a significant ministry with people whose top priority is to keep their options open.” *Leadership* magazine illustrated this with a man asking his pastor, “Would it be possible to audit the class on Total Commitment?”

With redefined commitments, nothing is seen as permanent, including jobs, dwelling places, even marriages. Multiple options emerged out of the value: “I’m committed as long as I’m fulfilled.” Increased options results in diminished “brand loyalty”—whether we are talking about American-made versus foreign, denominations, churches, or even mission agencies.

The redefinition of commitment has trickled down to the busters to virtual indecision. Having observed the failures of the boomers, busters now think, “No commitments means no failures.”

David Johnson, young adult pastor at Grace Chapel where I serve, commenting on the buster attraction to bunjy-jumping, observed, “Baby busters are willing to risk their lives, but they are unwilling to risk living.”

Before suggesting any responses to this boomer/buster generation, it is important to note that these segments of society have a much different image of missions than the older generations had. To boomers and busters, missions might be equivalent to cultural imperialism, illustrated by the tremendous hesitation in 1992 to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the landing of Columbus. What Columbus did was misdirected superiority and was definitely *not* politically correct.

Presenting the missions challenge to boomers and busters should be easier because no generation before has had so much access to international knowledge, CNN, and the “global village.” Ironically, this knowledge has not necessarily translated into missions, due in part to the decreased conviction that “Jesus is the only way.” Increased acceptance of pluralism has created a segment in the church who are functional universalists, believing that people without Christ are not really lost but will be saved in some other way in the end. With this underlying belief, there is decreased conviction that we actually need to and “have a story to tell to the nations.”

#### **Our Response**

Simply highlighting these characteristics can be depressing if we do not prayerfully and diligently look for ways to respond correctly. We have an unchanging message and mandate—to make disciples of all the nations—but we believe in adapting and contextualizing the message according to the cultures of the peoples we are trying to reach. In the case of the boomer and buster generation it is no different. We are in fact needing to contextualize

and adapt the mobilization message so that we can produce boomers and busters who will pray, give, and go to the ends of the earth. Ours is the I Chronicles 12:32 challenge—to understand our times and then determine how to respond.

If we believe in contextualizing our message (and methods) we most likely will face some things that make us uncomfortable. For instance, it may very well involve us in changing our style of recruitment, with the need to answer the Boomer question “What’s in it for me?” At the same time we need to wrestle with questions which challenge our traditional ways of doing missions.

If we fail to adapt our message and methods, we may still be able to recruit from the small number of boomers and busters who fall into the more “traditional” category, but over time this group will get smaller and smaller. In addition, that older generation will not provide sufficient funding nor the progressive vision which our mission efforts will need to evangelize our world. So consider seven basic responses:

#### *Accept the Challenge*

At Inter-Varsity’s 1990 Urbana Conference, the emphasis for the first two days was on how God uses hurting, dysfunctional people to do His work. There were times of healing, prayer, and testimonies to healing. By the third day, the “Marine Corps,” more traditional, “buck-up-buster” types were outraged. Where was the missionary challenge? Where was the sacrifice? What’s this stuff about inner healing?

Some mission leaders were ready to stop supporting Urbana. However, the leadership of Inter-Varsity did not flinch, because they knew that they needed to start with brokenness, because that was a theme that their audience could resonate with. They had done their research. They knew that most busters saw themselves as hurting and dysfunctional, and hence addressed the

mission message to this audience. The powerful call to the ends of the earth went forward; but it was adapted and contextualized to the self-perceptions of the target audience.

Accepting the challenge means researching the culture of the people we're trying to reach and mobilize. It means not relying on old methods, outdated ideas, or recruitment approaches designed for the 1960s. If we fail to accept the challenge and "shake the dust off our feet" moving away from this "me-centered" generation, we may lose the opportunity to include the North American Church in the completion of the Great Commission.

#### *Partnership*

Virtually every boomer and buster is attracted to knowing people first-hand. Short-term mission teams allows people to meet "real-life" missionaries and national church leaders, and this relationship often results in giving, prayer support, and an increased willingness to consider involvement. Allowing people a taste of a "slice of the world" is perhaps the best way to enhance a global vision among boomers and busters.

The corollary is also true: Boomers and busters are less inclined to give blindly to people or projects simply out of loyalty or duty. If they don't know the person, or conversely, believe in the project, they are much less likely to give. As a result, emphasizing personal (hands-on) relationships with actual missionaries and leaders overseas is the best way to insure interest and positive responses.

#### *Idealism*

Boomers and busters have been deluged with facts for most of their lives. Most have callousness towards overwhelming statistics and automatically shut off when boring statistics are given which only stir up guilt.

Rather than paralyzing people with guilt, or boring them with statistics that they cannot respond to, we need to rather tap into that latent idealism (especially in the "we're out to change the world" boomers), and show them how to make a real difference. World Relief Commission's "Bethlehem Bazaar" taps into this. "I might not be able to stop poverty, but I can help

can help them specifically focus their efforts and energies, making significant "dents" somewhere, rather than sprinkling their efforts all over the world. Today, boomer and buster churches are allocating 25% to 50% of their budgets to one specific project or "people group," which is a distinct departure from the old model of a "pin in every country of the world map."

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Focusing efforts restores hope in people because it gives them a sense of serving and helping, and making a difference in response to one's need. Focused energies locally might include outreach to international students or to recently-arrived immigrants, or even the homeless. Focusing energies overseas might mean one city, one village, one need, or one ethnic people group. Focused energies

tell the boomer and buster, "It's not a hopeless world; you can make a world of difference, and here's how!"

#### *Excellence*

Like it or not, when we communicate with boomers and busters, we are competing for their attention, even within the church. While this does not give us permission to undersell the dramatic commitment needed to serve cross-culturally, it does remind us that the presentations we make, the publications we present, and the videos we produce need to be *quality*.

Busters raised on MTV are not likely to respond to a boring slide show or a video that bumps along as if it were filmed driving over a railroad track. The Canon Camera commercial stated the spirit of the age: "Image is Everything." While we might abhor this secular spirit, the fact is that image might make the difference of getting a hearing rather than being written off as obscure and out-of-touch.

To boomers and busters, excellence means up to date maps (no more

one family break the cycle of poverty by giving a gift that helps them become financially independent."

#### *Communications*

In an age of CNN and *USA Today*, boomers and busters have a low toleration for old news. If we expect them to be motivated to pray and get involved, we must dedicate ourselves to keeping people informed and up to date. With contemporary technologies, boomers and busters expect e-mail updates and fax replies, not newsletters that are months or weeks out of sync with the daily news.

It will cost us more money at home to keep the global mission of the Church before people, but the forward looking mission agency that is willing to contextualize will allocate money for quality videos, attractive informational brochures, and graphically presented educational tools.

#### *Focus*

Related to the issue of idealism, recruiters for missions will be more effective with boomers and busters if they

USSR!), color overhead slides, and presentations that honor time constraints. Use the news and build on it, including fax reports from Christians serving in the world's "hot spots."

#### Education

Whenever briefing boomers and busters concerning the worldwide commission of the church, the best advice is: "Don't assume!" I asked a worshipper at our church what he thought was the "Great Commission?" Being a salesman, he thought about it for awhile, and responded, "About 15 to 20%?"

We discovered that he had no idea what the term meant. So we need to explain it every time we use it. This also goes for the term "missions" (we prefer to use "cross-cultural ministries," so that people are clear on our focus). We can never assume that boomers and busters know the names of mission agencies, much less the acronyms which we in the missions world throw around so freely.

The essential starting point, however, is educating people regarding the biblical mission mandate of God's purpose and plan for His world. Boomers and busters need to search the Scriptures for themselves to discover 1) That global outreach and redemption is in the heart of God; and not a reflection of

some kind of cultural imperialism, 2) That people are lost without Jesus Christ, and that He is the *only* mediator between God and mankind (I Timothy 2:5)—the *only* source of true salvation (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). Our mission is to declare Jesus to a lost world—to every people, tribe, tongue and nation on the face of the earth, and 3) That God has sovereignly chosen and even limited Himself to change and redeem this lost world through us, His Church—through all those who call Jesus Lord!

#### Conclusion

We face an incredible challenge in mobilizing boomers and busters for world evangelization, but we also have tremendous resources. A contemporary resource which surpasses all others in responding to them and transforming people and getting them involved in world missions is short-term missions.

Engel and Jones documented in their book, *Baby Boomers and the Future of World Missions*, that short-term missions combines all the responses in a one two-week to two-month experience. Short-term missions introduces participants to missionaries and national leaders, giving them a *first-hand* experience. This puts them in contact with

people—including unreached peoples—and shows them how and where they can make a difference. Short-term missions focus on peoples' energies, showing them a need, giving them a vision, and enabling them to be part of the solution themselves. Although not a cure all and certainly not the only key, short-term missions provide an educational intensive experience in the why and how of world missions. Therefore, any church or mission agency interested in tapping the vast resource of the prayer, finances, and personnel of the boomer/buster generation will need to invest in this important mobilization key.

#### Recommended Reading

George Barna, almost anything he wrote after 1990

Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change* (Bethany House)

Hans Finzel, *Help! I'm a Baby Boomer*

James Engel & Jerry Jones, *Baby Boomers and the Future of World Missions* (available ACMC)

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## A Response: The Spiritual Dimension

by Francis J. Patt

**P**aul Borthwick's article is extremely accurate regarding the cultural disposition of the *boomer* and *buster* generations. When he quotes Dr. James Engels, "Unless radical changes are made by mission agencies and local churches, Christian baby boomers will not provide the human resources needed for accelerated evangelism in the 1990's" (James F. Engels, "We Are the

World." in *Christianity Today* (Sept. 24, 1990, p 32), he is directing our attention to the sociological patterns and dispositions of almost 100 million people in the United States. His point of view is, generally speaking, much the same as other articles dealing with the same subject. Borthwick stresses the need to contextualize world evangelization to those two generations.

Borthwick states that *boomers* and *busters* are disinclined to support anything they do not understand or have a shared interest in. He raises the idea of using short-term missions to get people involved and thereby draw them into world evangelization. Let me affirm that this works! We have seen over 50 people recruited for world missions and sent to the field from one church in



the Philadelphia area that began using the short term model of mission mobilization ten years ago.

The idealism raised in the article should refer only to the *boomer* generation. Busters are anything but idealistic, whereas boomers thrive on it. We (I'm a boomer too) have simply become middle-aged and cynical. We wanted to change the world back in the 60s, and we believed we could. Since most of us were not Christians at the time, we never realized that the summation of the world's problems is *sin*. We thought we needed to change basic institutions of society. Now, however, some of us have realized that people need to change and affect a true metamorphosis. In the 60s and 70s, we would follow anyone with a cause. Now we won't follow anyone or anything that cannot be guaranteed to succeed. We want to see proof before we will put our hearts into something ever again—even Jesus!

Borthwick correctly observes that the *boomer* and *buster* generations have grown and developed with communications and marketing as significant forces shaping their values. Current sociological data would suggest that the answers to most of the Church's and mission agency's problems could be found in more and better communication, a greater order of professionalism and excellence similar to the media, and giving hands-on ownership of projects to the *boomer/buster* laity. Hitherto, this advice has not been taken seriously by the churches. However, all of this is to the point, and mission agencies and the church would do well to listen.

### Going a Step Further

Borthwick concludes by discussing the merits of short-term missions in mobilizing these generations and repeats a call to essentially contextualize for them the mission challenge and ministry.

At this point, most of the discussion which follows continues where

Borthwick's article ends. His approach very correctly addresses social conventions, needs, and dispositions. His article provides needed understanding of the culture of these 100 million persons and it guides us as to how to *market* our message to them. Nevertheless, I have come to believe that this is only telling part of the story. Please hear me in this, Paul Borthwick, Dr. Engels, Leith Anderson and many others are all correct. Their encouragements and admonishments should be heeded, but the Church must go one step further.

Paul's article made considerable reference and allusion to the need for "contextualization." In essence, this means that a particular culture's situation and circumstance and/or traditions predisposes it to be more inclined to respond to the Gospel when it is presented in a manner that conforms to these same traditions, circumstances, and situations and affirms values inherent to the culture. While contextualization seems to be an issue that missionaries need to address when planting the church in a foreign, cross-cultural context, the same issues and precautions are operative for the Church in any culture. The basic rule is and always has been, "God judges all cultures." We need to take Paul Borthwick's observations seriously.

### The Basic Point

However, the primary problem we face is that we will be pandering to sociology, anthropology and human sinfulness if we fail to challenge both of these generations to grow beyond their hurts, dysfunctionality, idealism (gone sour), pride, and cultural values. Contextualization is not meant to be a method to help people stumble over the cultural baggage of the person communicating the Gospel.

The basic point is that if there is to be any stumbling block, it must be Jesus, not our culture. Scripture says: "Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him

shall not be disappointed." This precious value, then, is for us who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "*The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*" (1 Peter 2:6-8). This implies that getting a person in the door by using canny marketing, and then leading them to get saved by grace through faith in Christ, the job of the Church does not stop there. It goes on to include, "*teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*" In other words, the Church is responsible for discipling converts.

I hear little or no admonishments urging us (boomers) to deal with our embrace of rebellion, immorality, licentiousness, and idolatry in our youth. Do we still remember that the rebellion was not just against government, but against our parents "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. *Honor your father and mother* which is the first commandment with a promise, *that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth...* fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:1-4) Who will call us to see the wrong that was done, to ask forgiveness from God, our parents and our leaders (if we have not already done this individually) and to repent as a generation. In addition to all the *boomers* and *busters* characteristics that have been mentioned, no one is pointing us to the fact that *boomers* do not like the word SIN, nor moral absolutes.

### Leadership Distrust

*Boomers* also have an aversion to institutional religion, and distrust leadership. What does the Word say about that? It is high time to talk about how sin, unconfessed and undealt with, has long-term ramifications. The apostle Paul

says, “*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.*” (Galatians 6:7-8) The prophet Hosea says, “*For they sow the wind, and they reap the whirlwind.*”

The spiritual principle that operates here is that whatever we sow we get back in greater abundance. The boomer generation cozied up to all the sins I listed above and we are now reaping the fruits thereof. For those of us that were ushered into the Kingdom by the Grace of God, the fact remains that many sins from our past remain unrecognized and unconfessed and undealt with. But we all know that the effects of sin are not negated by ignorance. I believe that much of our cultures disposition is related to our sinfulness and its consequences

In summary, it is time to understand that contextualization is not just for the mission field. It is for the Church in the United States as well. But, we must stop allowing the Church to be conformed to the image of a prostituted and rebellious generation—a *secular world that is on a hell-bound train*. (Acts 2:40) It is time to cease allowing the world to set the moral agenda for the Church. It is high time to say, “Enough is enough,” and take a stand for truth and righteousness! Marketing in the church may be acceptable and profitable as long as the Church—expressed or gathered in local churches—understands that it cannot replace the ministry of the Holy Spirit in drawing people to Christ and empowering them for the coming of His Kingdom into all the earth. Unfortunately, at least in many cases, the Church is doing just the opposite.

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# The Boomer Generation: For Such A Time As This

by Judy Weerstra

I deeply appreciate the current emphasis on the mobilization of baby boomers. I appreciate what I consider to be the positive elements of the baby boomer culture, of which I am a part. As a boomer I have a glorious sense of self. I would not trade my generation's experience with any other's, in any other culture, of any other time in history. Yet at the same time, I am concerned about a generation (including Christian boomers) that seems to be becoming increasingly enamored of itself. Much of what I read and see fails to bring out the weaknesses of my culture, the "shadows" of my boomer lifestyle. Few if any explore the forces which served to shape my character as a boomer, many of which I still struggle against, in order to serve my God and King.

As I read through the Christian literature relating to the boomers, I am well aware that the reading audience may very well be those in current leadership who are befuddled by this "radical" generation who has yet failed to conform to the expectations of what Annette Elder has identified as the "maturity generation," (see *IJFM*, April 1991 Vol 8:2 pages 51-55). If so, these articles serve as "keys" to getting the boomer's attention and involvement. But if the boomer is going to sustain the movement of missions, specifically "frontier missions," without propagating a different form of cultural imperialism, then it is time that we as boomers address the realities that we have tended to overlook in our zeal to lead others into missions.

Without a doubt, the baby boomers are the most written about culture of all times. Their likes and dislikes are published both in the secular and Chris-

tian press. The following article is presented with two purposes in mind 1) to explore the population explosion of the 1940s and 50s from the perspective of redemptive history, 2) and to explore the boomer world view in an effort to understand how it might actually hinder the very purpose we were called forth to accomplish.

## A Destiny to Fulfill

Apart from God, events in history just seem "to happen," making it appear as if history simply evolves to provide a configuration of events to intrigue and confound the social scientists. Such was the case with the baby boom after World War II. In 1945 Germany surrendered and Japan gave up in August of the same year. "In the following months, 16 million men came home, igniting a 19 year boom that gave birth to 76 million Americans."<sup>1</sup>

"Social scientists have been trying to explain why the baby boom happened. They might as well try to explain the hoola hoop. The baby boom was a freak storm of life, a baby fad sparked by the euphoria of victory in World War II"<sup>2</sup> demographer and author Cheryle Russell tells us. She continues by saying that "the baby boom was an accident, a coincidence of events. Seventeen million more people were born between 1946 and 1964 than would not have been born if the young American women of the postwar years had followed the traditions of their mothers. Without the extra births, those born between 1946 and 1964 would have grown up inconspicuously."<sup>3</sup>

Secular social scientists, falling victim to what Leslie Newbigin calls "the

schism of fact and value," would never see God's providence at work in those cataclysmic times and events. Russell, like most people of her day, sees history apart from God. But as Christians we know that something as phenomenal as the birth of 73 million people, born in a 19 year span, does not happen by mere coincidence. It was not a fluke of history, nor as Russell believes, "purely the result of a "domestic fad," sparked by the euphoria of a victorious war and a renewed confidence in national leadership.<sup>4</sup> Do we as Christians believe this? Or should we ask ourselves if there is anything more significant about the birth of this phenomenally large group of people known as the baby boomers?

Understanding the biblical significance of "generations" might help us, perhaps as nothing else can, to see the impact and significance that a single generation could have on the world. The Hebrew word for generations, "toledoth" is not just a period of time, but rather needs to be understood as people in time and space raised up by God dedicated to fulfilling His ordained purpose in their earthly history. Toledoth always refers to a people's history being played out on earth with a new beginning in time. This new beginning is a new day with new opportunities, bringing new promises, new hope, and for God's people, it is a new history specifically created for fulfilling His purpose and plan.<sup>5</sup>

"This is the book of the generations" says the writer of Genesis. The first reference to "generations" is seen in "the generations of the heavens and earth" written so because the heavens and the

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earth were the “*appointed* sphere so far as time and space are concerned, for the kingdom of God. Because God, according to His eternal counsel, *appointed the world to be the scene* both for the revelation of His invisible essence, and also for the *operations of His eternal love* within and among His creatures.”<sup>6</sup>

The listing of generations continue from there to Adam, Noah, Shem, Terah, Ismael, Isaac, Esau and lastly Jacob making a complete list of ten groups each with the uniform heading “these are the generations.” A generation thus is an appointed group of people which shows “a simple and unvarnished description of the development of the world under the guidance and discipline of God,”<sup>7</sup> ... of how God operates “through theophanies, revelations, word and deed” to make the historical development of the human race also the history of the plan of salvation.<sup>8</sup> Each generation (for whom the kingdom of God is a reality) contributes to the will of God. Therefore, “generations” is not just another people group sharing time and space together, without any unique purpose or plan, but biblically, it is God’s “new acts to a new generation of people.”<sup>9</sup> These then take on features which are unique to their place and time.

The significance of this in our generation is that God now has a new people who are fundamentally unique to this place and time, with more revelation, knowledge and resources with which He can effect the world in entirely new ways than ever before. Never before have so many factors converged in a given point in history as we see today, making it actually possible to complete world evangelization in this generation. Never before have we had in place the technology, the mobility, the theology and missiology as we have today.<sup>10</sup> We are the first generation to know who all the peoples are, where they live, what languages they speak.<sup>11</sup> Not only have the sociological dimensions of missiology matured as a science, but the biblical basis for missions is becoming the central focus of the Church.

The significance of the final lap in this era of modern missions is that the runner is equipped as no other. This convergence of factors is not a man made phenomena, nor could a single generation have accomplished this. It is the culminating point of the “generations,” a purpose which began with the creation of the heavens and earth, clearly communicated to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), victorious through Christ, and carried on by His Church. Failing to understand this is tantamount to ignoring the significance of the last runner in a relay race. But will this “toledoth” understand its significance from this godly historical point of view? That is: *If a final thrust of missions from North America is to be accomplished by the end of this decade, a large mature labor force by 1990 would have had to have been born around 1945 following.*

Curiously, Russell records that women who were interviewed in the 1940s reported that they did not want to have extra children, but that it “just happened,” giving credence to the notion that God might have had something to do with it. Russell blames it on “sloppy birth control,” in spite of the fact that couples in the preceding generation had been able to limit their family size before the baby boom years. Why did couples fail to do so during the 1950s? Furthermore what kept it going for nearly two decades still puzzles demographers, sociologists and economists alike.<sup>12</sup> It is God working in history to produce a “toledoth” designed to fulfill His plan and purpose!

If *only* we were a “pig in a python” then we would be justified in becoming just another sociological phenomena that is to be commended as we pass through the predicted rites of passage or perhaps just another economic force which must be catered to as we move through life. However, if we are a labor force destined by God to extend His kingdom into the remotest regions of the world then we need understand what that means for our lives, and the kinds of choices we should make in light of this.

## The Dark Side

But the word “generation” is not only a temporal designation, it also is a qualitative one as well.<sup>13</sup> The Scriptures frequently make reference to entire generations as an “adulterous generation” or “this evil and adulterous generation”, or an “unbelieving and corrupt generation.” (See Mt. 8:38; 17:17; Mk. 12:45; 9:19; Lk. 9:41; Acts 2:40) If any qualitative criticism of the boomer generation can be made, it can be said that we are a “rebellious generation.”

“The twentieth century has witnessed an almost worldwide revolt against all forms of authority that have been generally recognized by the human race for millennia. Major areas of social structure have been affected including the family, the church and the various branches of secular education.”<sup>14</sup> In interviewing and listening to Christian boomers, many have confessed that they have always struggled with rebellion.

“For rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft.” (2 Sam. 15:23)“... and I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations.” (Ex. 20:1-5) Che Ann, regional Christian leader and pastor in the charismatic movement of the Greater Los Angeles area, has recently spoken about what he calls a territorial spirit over this nation called the spirit of Jezebel—a spirit without limit or controls, whose main trust was and is to encourage rebellion.

In the boomer manifesto called the “The Greening of America” written by Charles Reich during the 1970s the boomer agenda was set in print. An articulate and passionately written revolution is mapped out for future generations. He boldly states, “There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual and with culture, and it will change the political structure only as its final act. It will not require violence to succeed and it cannot be successfully resisted by violence. This is the revolution of the new generation.”<sup>14</sup>

He goes on to say, “The logic and necessity of the new generation and what they are *so furiously opposed to* (italics mine) must be seen against a background of what has gone wrong in America. It must be understood in light of the betrayal and loss of the American dream, the rise of the Corporate State of the 1960s and the way in which the State dominates, exploits and ultimately destroys both nature and man.”<sup>16</sup> The boomer agenda offers man a “new head,” “a new way of living,” a “new man,” one which is consistent with new technologies and promises a life that is more liberated and more beautiful than man has ever known. Essential to the boomer world view is a complete reconstruction of society’s values, norms and goals. Reich says “no mere reform can” do it.”

The following represents some of the issues that the boomers are “furiously opposed to” 1) Disorder, corruption, hypocrisy and war; 2) Poverty, distorted priorities, and law-making by private power; 3) Uncontrolled technology and the destruction of the environment; 4) Decline of democracy and liberty, *powerlessness*, (italics mine); 5) Artificiality of work and culture; 6) Absence of community, and finally; 7) Loss of self.<sup>17</sup>

These noble requests bear a striking resemblance to the writings of Karl Marx, calling for the transformation and complete overthrow, not only of the State, but of all major institutions of our culture. Reich states that the primary place that self is stripped of all its identity is in the schooling process. “He (the student) is systematically stripped of his imagination, his creativity, his heritage, his dreams, and his personal uniqueness, in order to style him into a productive unit for a mass, technological society.”<sup>18</sup>

The rest of his book is dedicated to expanding these main points, but his most insightful comment is that the American crisis owes its existence to a universal sense of *powerlessness*. “We seem to be living in a society that no one created and that no one wants.”<sup>19</sup>

*The present American crisis is the fruit of this reasoning.* More liberty has not created the “new man,” it has only made the “old man” stronger. Nowhere else can you see its effect more clearly, than in the feminist movement” which emerged from that decade. It has not given more freedom to American life, but on the contrary has affected American life (and the world) in two very significant and negative ways: 1) “It has spawned a whole generation of Americans who rebelled against all authority”<sup>20</sup> (potentially disabling the “toledoth” from its destiny and task), and 2) Served to obscure gender differences and at the same time solidify boundary lines between the genders which has served as a seedbed for the emergence of the homosexual community, effacing the very character of God as seen and demonstrated in the act of heterosexual marriage and love.

The ultimate sin in our society today is to violate the autonomy of another person. That translates into: “Don’t tell me what to do!” Philip Greenslade in *Leadership, Greatness and Servanthood*, shares a story where the whole issue of rights, and the absolutization of equalitarianism was seen for what it was when a member of his own church bluntly asked him, “What right do you have to introduce change amongst us?”<sup>21</sup>

Joni Mitchell’s latest song, written after almost 20 years of silence, is titled “Boundary Lines”. The song portrays a society that is hot to defend its boundary lines, between lovers, between friends, between neighbors, between anyone who threatens not only the freedom of conscience but the freedom from morality. Her boomer lament is obvious!

“For rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft,” (2 Sam15:23) “Who can argue that the apathy of the” busters” is anything but an obvious consequence of boomers’ rebellion? Rebellion has also shaped the way we have come to see God and His will for our lives. For the boomer God is primarily friend, mentor,

and confidant—God is immanent, but we have lost much of His ownership, His right to rule over us. The “maturity generation” in trying to pass the baton to the boomer generation finds the boomer unwilling to assume a position which does not guarantee high visibility or a sense of personal power (often translated into “personal ownership”) over his environment. Yet Jesus clearly said that “if you lose your life, you find it,” but often the baby boomer wants that guarantee up front. In a real sense there is no “plausibility structure” as Leslie Newbigin calls it, to give us a deep understanding of “lordship.” The fruit of the 1960s is, sadly to say, an inability to appreciate God-given leadership, an inability to correctly perceive one’s role (contribution) in the overall effort to reach the world, and a constant hunger for self-fulfillment.

Ironically, most baby boomers admit to feeling they are called to do something significant in their life and time. Could this be the work of the Spirit convicting them of their destiny with the charge to fulfill God’s redemptive purpose and plan in the world at this time? If this is true, as I believe, then part of the recovery process for Christian baby boomers is to break the curse of rebellion (repent of rebellion against all authority), which has now become part and parcel of the fabric of our dysfunctional society.

### Boomers for Such a Time as This

In frontier missions it has been said that, “There are no easy places left.” This means that we have been dealt a hand in missions that requires the finest missiology ever! No doubt that each missionary endeavor will require greater endurance, broader perspective, more maturity, servanthood and sacrifice than in the past. The challenge is truly profound. Material possessions we might be able to part with, but our freedom of choice, our independence, serving under someone’s else command, acknowledging our dependence on

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each other, of casting away the mantle of middle class virtues might be close to impossible. Peter said as much, wherein Jesus replied “This is impossible for man, but for God everything is possible.” (Mt. 19:25-26)

There is an urgent need to come to terms with several hard points: 1) Many of us have not seriously evaluated the seedbed of our birth as a generation. Have we indiscriminately embraced every boomer value as a godly virtue? Have we failed to acknowledge a generation of people who were faithful to boring and tedious jobs day after day, on our behalf. Have we disdained the missionary movement of the last 200 hundred years who through bloodshed and tears has written of its own mistakes that we might not repeat them? 2) The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God can accomplish “that change from judgment to grace,” who can move us from rebellion to obedience through repentance. There is a radical need to come to conversion in this area of our lives, which ironically holds us from completing the very task we so desire and have been destined for—to change the world! 3) Without God’s grace, we are indeed a perverse and as George Otis warns “a dispensable generation.”

Personally, the thought of long term missions scares me. For instinctively, I know I am not constitutionally made to endure long commitments which require endless sacrifice and patient endurance. I haven’t been bred in that kind of milieu. But I can do it provided I live a life of repentance from my rebellious, self-centered, and wealthy ways. The moment I move away from a life of repentance, I move into a life which is against Christ, and a life incapable of fulfilling the Great Commission. For that reason all of us need to move with understanding into the following prayer:

“Father God, we see that you have ordained great things for us, (a new generation) but we are a rebellious and wicked generation, who need cleans-

ing from our sins which are ever before us. Father we acknowledge that we were born in rebellion, and have passed that on to our children. Please forgive us and blot out all our iniquities (our selfishness and arrogance), and create in us a new clean heart, so that we, as a people, might fulfill the plans you have for our lives Amen.

Repentance and forgiveness should equip us with the necessary transparency and humility to overcome our wealth and our knowledge as instruments for the flesh. We should experience afresh a love for the law of God as well as for the law of the nation, and the authority vested in our parents. We should be able to have a true response of the soul as we have entered into incorporation with the Body of Christ locally and globally, being under authority (godly leadership) in the fullest sense and receive God’s fullest blessings.

We are not advocating that the baby boomer returns to a post-World War II mind-set. That is not possible nor desirable nor even biblical. But the sting, the curse of rebellion, must be broken as we need to be set free to use our gifts and talents in a way that appreciates godly authority and submission as biblical principles, being able to see them without the errors and abuses of the preceding generations.

Missiologist Johannes Verkuyl said it well: “more and more there is a tendency to write off the participation of churches in the Western world in the unfinished task of world mission... I place my hope on a younger generation of women and men in the Western world who are humble enough to assist their Asian, African, and Latin American colleagues...”<sup>21</sup>

This is our hope too. We are a special generation raised up for such a time as this!

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# Major Paradigm Shifts in World Evangelization

by Bruce K. Camp

**M**omentum is building in the Christian community to evangelize the world by the year 2000. Some suggest that every person should have the opportunity to hear the gospel by the end of the century. Others believe, at the very least, that we can have a church planting movement underway in every unreached people within this time frame. Regardless of the perspective, many assume that the American Church will play a significant role in the evangelization of the world during this decade. But will it?

The mission paradigm as it relates to the local church is changing, and until more congregations recognize the new paradigm and act accordingly, we probably will not be able to evangelize the world during this decade. More critically, if the American Church continues with the attitude of "business as usual," it will have lost a window of opportunity to help evangelize every unreached people group prior to the advent of the twenty-first century.

A paradigm is a model, a way that individuals view something, the rules of a game or the way people perceive reality (Barker 1992). Examples of paradigms abound. Some common paradigms in missions circles include the concept that only mission agencies are equipped to send missionaries, or missions leadership is male in gender, or missionary candidates must have 30 hours of formal Bible training.

Paradigms are useful to missions strategists, as they help to explain why something is happening as opposed to what is happening. They do not simply describe the new activity, but provide insight into the reason for the change.

Paradigms do change; they are not static. Local churches are reassessing their role and activities in world missions given the political changes that are occurring around the globe. While the goal of world evangelization has not changed, nor will change, the church's *modus operandi* must change, if it is to play a significant role in starting church planting movements in every unreached people group by the end of this decade.

Generally speaking, local evangelical churches in the United States have experienced a major paradigm shift during the last twenty years with regard to understanding its role in obeying the Great Commission. More specifically, numerous congregations have conducted their global missions activities based upon two paradigms (supporting and sending). Currently, a third, the *synergistic* (owning) paradigm is emerging.

It is important that the American Evangelical Church understand those paradigms. Presented in this article is a descriptive analysis and comments to assist both agencies and congregations in thinking through the implications of these mission paradigm shifts.

A major paradigm shift occurring within churches is that they, increasingly, are wanting to assume more active responsibility in world missions. The local church is seen as needing to become a primary participant in the task of global evangelization (Camp 1992). This paper will outline the major paradigms through which many churches have and are evolving. In reality, these paradigms represent a continuum of missions activities. No congregation fits one paradigm entirely and perfectly. A partic-

ular church may utilize selected ideas found within each of the three paradigms. For the sake of illustration, however, the paradigms will be presented as if each one is all-inclusive of a particular church's activities. Thus, while these paradigms overlap and simplify reality, they do enable us to make certain observations.

## The Supporting Paradigm

The supporting paradigm is still the predominate model for evangelical churches and can be traced back at least to the 1970s. From this perspective, the role of the local church in world missions is understood largely as supporting. The prevailing question is: What is their game plan? In other words, churches look to mission agencies to set the missions agenda. Basically, whatever agencies want to do is accepted as correct because they are perceived to be the experts. A descriptive summary word for this model is "dependence" in regard to how the local church conducts its missions activities through the agencies.

From a local church perspective, a number of ideas are used to describe this paradigm. These include a high loyalty to denominational and non-denominational mission agencies. Financial support is given to individuals who may reside outside of the geographical region of the congregation. Missionaries travel throughout the country to speak and raise support, rarely staying at one church from one week to the next. Mission education is provided by outsiders (generally visiting missionaries) via speakers, slides and mission

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conferences. Financial support for a missionary is assumed for the duration of their career. Agencies make most of the decisions.

Churches operating in this paradigm are mainly dependent upon mission agencies. They implicitly trust the agencies to know best, and follow the agencies' programs. Prayer support for missionaries is usually limited, since the congregation is often only superficially involved in the life of the missionary and his or her ministries. Although some churches still operate in this support model, changes in the supporting paradigm began to occur in the early 1980s as local congregations started to think in terms of a more participatory role and model of missions.

### The Sending Paradigm

Instead of maintaining a *supporting* role, many churches in the 1980s increasingly began to assume a *sending* role in world missions. The key word became "my," and the key question became: "What is my church's plan?" In this model churches have shifted from a more dependent mode to an independent one in their relationship to mission agencies. Congregations utilize the services of mission agencies when they want to, but churches are no longer dependent on any one agency. Some churches send their own missionaries, bypassing the agencies altogether. (I am not suggesting that churches bypass agencies. I view agencies, both historically and currently, as gifts from God to help churches fulfill their mission mandate.) Nonetheless, direct sending of missionaries from local churches is a trend that will not go away. In many cases, this direct sending is a result of congregations wanting to work in areas beyond existing work. Some local

churches believe that agencies have become bogged down into working primarily among reached peoples (AD 2000 Global Monitor 1992:2).

Several factors characterize this second paradigm. The agency to which a church was loyal in the previous decade now becomes one of many. Denominational and/or organizational loyalty is predominantly a notion of the past for churches which have accepted the sending paradigm. Financial support is regionalized. No longer are missionaries sent throughout the country to find support partners. Congregations now insist on both quantity and quality time with its missionaries whom it supports and sends.

aries for their own local church. Congregations still may work with agencies, but only as equal partners. If an agency does not accept this new role of the church as a partner, then a church may opt to find an agency that cooperates with the church's sending task.

Positive factors for missionaries that have resulted from congregations which have become sending churches include: 1). A stronger emotional tie with their home church; 2). Greater prayer and financial support; 3). More accountability to the local church.

Certainly not everyone agrees that a church should take a more active role in world missions. Some interpret this action as churches beginning to act like mission agencies. Negative factors of churches who do this, according to missions executive Sam Metcalf, include: 1. The potential weeding out of the best candidates who are unwilling to go through the church's pre-field training program, 2. More strings attached to church support which causes can-

<b>Supporting Church</b>	<b>Sending Church</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—The focus is on money.</li> <li>—The church chooses from among missionaries who already have established their strategy.</li> <li>—The focus is on quantity thus giving a less money to more missionaries.</li> <li>—Church members have little personal involvement with missionaries.</li> <li>—The church has minimal "ownership" of missions and missionaries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—The focus is on people.</li> <li>—The church has more opportunities to establish its own strategy.</li> <li>—The focus is on quality.</li> <li>—Church members have maximum personal involvement with missionaries.</li> <li>—The church can claim its missionaries to be "her own." (ACMC 1988: 9-10)</li> </ul>

If candidates for support cannot spend significant time with a church, then they are not considered for support.

Churches in this paradigm demand relationships with their missionaries that go beyond financial support.

Mission education also changed significantly in this sending paradigm. For example, church members began to speak about doing missions based on their mission training in a Perspectives class or on a short-term missions trips. If an outsider was brought in, the individual had to be an excellent communicator. Expectations for quality presentation rose dramatically during this time. In the process, the goal of the sending church changed to directly recruiting and training its own people to be mission-

didates to go to individuals for donations thus slowing down the time it takes missionaries to raise support; 3. According to Metcalf's view of history, whenever churches begin to exercise control of the missionary enterprise or seek to become an agency, "the missionary effort is eventually impaired and may even die" (1993:146).

Most churches currently still operate in the supporting paradigm. However, a growing number of influential congregations have transitioned to the sending paradigm. A few congregations are shifting to a third model, the synergistic paradigm which is appearing on the horizon in the 1990s. Larry Walker, a church missions consultant for ACMC, estimates that 90% of the mission-



active churches in North America fit the supporting paradigm, while 8-9% represent the sending paradigm and 1-2% fit the synergistic paradigm (Personal communication July 5, 1993).

### Synergistic (owning) Paradigm

The definition of the synergistic paradigm contains the idea of joint action by agents that when taken together, increases the effectiveness of both. Another term for the synergistic paradigm is "owning" since a foundational element to this paradigm is emotional ownership of the activity. The key word of this model is "we." The question a church asks is: "What is our role in obeying the Great Commission?" Instead of trying to accomplish numerous missions activities by themselves, synergistic churches will focus on a few items which they can do well. Synergistic congregations are fellowships which partner with others and combine their efforts to produce greater effectiveness than either party can accomplish independently. This partnership model assumes an inter-dependent (not independent) perspective. The churches realize that they do not have to respond to every need, and realize that they are not able to, and so instead, concentrate their energies and finances on a few needs. Frequently, such concentration of energies and finances is channelled to reach an unreached people group.

In this model, mission education is accomplished by both "high tech" and "high touch" efforts. Missionaries increasingly stay in communication with their supporters by the use of faxes, telephones, electronic mail, and voice mail. Synergistic type churches encourage Baby Boomers and others in their congregation to visit the mission field in order to gain a sense of ownership, and to understand why their church should strive for a strong missions emphasis, (Engel and Jones 1989). Short-term trips are encouraged, since they greatly facilitate more prayer for world evangeli-

zation and especially focus prayer on the part of the participants (STEM Ministries 1991).

The question of the church's role in world missions is precipitated by several factors. One is the recognition of a global Christian community. The missions-active church, in this paradigm, recognizes that the North American Church does not have sole responsibility for world evangelization. The Great Commission applies to every church throughout the world, and since over two-thirds of the Christian community is now non-Western (Douglas 1990:56), the synergistic church realizes that, at least numerically, the role of the American church is diminishing.

The synergistic church recognizes that the number of non-Western missionaries is increasing dramatically. Whereas in 1991 only 36% of the world's Protestant missionary force was from the Two-Thirds World, by AD 2000, it is projected that this number will rise to 55% (Pate 1991: 58-59). This increase, coupled with the growing concern about the cost of support for North American missionaries, has encouraged the idea that supporting nationals is more cost effective.

Synergistic churches desire to make a significant impact on the non-Christian world. They will adopt various approaches to missions, including an entrepreneurial one. Congregations utilizing the synergistic paradigm likely will reflect many of the Boomers' values such as a desire for multiple options in ministry, appreciation for diversity among individuals (men and women, lay and professional, ethnic and Anglo), desire for change and a hope for significance in their lives (Barna 1990; Collins and Clinton 1992) as well as the Thirteeners' value of pragmatism (Strauss and Howe 1991). For example, synergistic churches, influenced by the Thirteeners value of pragmatism, will scrutinize agencies and plans based upon actual accomplishments, as opposed to rhetoric. They likely will

agree with Andrall Pearson, Professor of Business Administration at Harvard's Business School, who writes: "Successful companies today realize that change is the new order and innovation is the primary driver" (1992:70).

Mission organizations which are likely to flourish during the time frame of this model are those which facilitate a local church's mission plans. Antioch Network is a prime example. Its goal is to network congregations that want to send church planting teams to unreached peoples (Antioch Times 1993:3). The organization called Issachar is another example. This organization partners with local churches to assist them in developing their vision and strategies in reaching their adopted people groups (Moats 1991:5). The Adopt-A-People concept is a strategy which corresponds well with the synergistic paradigm, and should blossom during this decade. The idea of a single people group focus for a given church correlates well with the question of a church's role in owning and obeying the Great Commission. Rather than strategizing to evangelize several thousand unreached people groups, the local church rather focuses on only one people.

Other factors, often influenced by the values of the Boomers and/or Busters, both positively and negatively, which may affect the church are:

1. *The blurring of religious distinction and categories.* Polarizing theological issues such as charismatic/non-charismatic or Protestant vs Roman Catholic will be less of a concern in this decade of the synergistic paradigm.

2. *The changing missionary role in North America.* As national churches mature, the role of the American missionary must change. They will adopt a *facilitating* role to assist the church in specialized areas. Church-related tasks in which missionaries have traditionally worked will fall to national leaders (Pate 1991:61). However, in areas and people groups where the church has not yet

been established, traditional church planters will still be needed.

3. *The recognition that mission is not just overseas.* Numerous language and ethnic groups have come to the United States that must be evangelized and reached. For example, in Los Angeles County alone, people from about 140 different countries are represented. In 1989, only 43% of the population was Anglo. By 2010, it is projected that in Los Angeles, there will be more Hispanics than Anglos. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, it is estimated that close to 100 different languages are spoken by the students (Pearlstone 1990). Synergistic church leaders recognize that demographics are changing in the United States. They realize that their mission fields include ethnic groups who reside within their own communities.

4. *The intertwined growth of evangelism and social programs.* There is a growing perception that the dichotomy between evangelism and social programs is artificial. Ministries like Prison Fellowship which intertwine the two will flourish. Issues like AIDS, refugees, gangs, drugs and starvation will not be dealt with only on the spiritual level.

5. *The recognition to hear God speak through Christians from around the world.* For many years, God used Westerners to set the Christian agenda for the rest of the world. Today, believers want to listen to non-Westerners also.

6. *The perception that changes in the world occur rapidly and require a quick response.* God often grants only brief windows of opportunity for believers to seize. For example, there is no indication of how long some of the new Muslim-dominated countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States will remain open to missionary endeavors. Synergistic churches expect to respond quickly to current opportunities.

### Church and Mission Implications

These paradigms are based on histori-

cal observation. They are not developmental stages. In other words, a church could begin its mission involvement from the synergistic paradigm. While there is no one right approach from which a church should operate, normally churches should strive for interdependence as opposed to dependent or independent paradigms.

Not all churches have changed their mission paradigm, nor should they. Some still fit the paradigm of support, while others have become involved in the sending model. But, some are becoming interdependent-synergistic churches. Agencies need to think through how to work in terms of these paradigms and be able to assist churches operating in the three models.

What are the implications of this synergistic paradigm for mission agencies? How should agencies respond? If the key question for this model is: What is our role in obeying the Great Commission?, then several questions must be considered on the part of agencies. Like: Does our agency offer a pre-packed program, either by attitude or action, of what a church should or should not do in missions? Do we strive to enable churches to fulfill their vision? For example, does our Adopt-A-People program allow for creative and genuine partnership? Do we (the agencies) dictate the game plan for ministry? Do we welcome dialogue with churches in the development of strategies, especially to unreached peoples?

The synergistic paradigm does not mean that the leaders of an agency no longer have the prerogative to set the direction for that agency. However, if an agency agrees with the synergistic paradigm, it will allow others to have input into where and how the agency might minister in the future.

As an example, leaders of the Evangelical Free Church Mission (my mission) recognized that there indeed is a paradigm shift occurring among local churches. Beyond acknowledging this shift, they also considered their

response to local churches which may want to originate their own overseas ministries. As a mission, the Evangelical Free Church has stated that there are at least four types of responses which they could give to churches which launch their own initiatives. First, they could respond at the *encouragement level*. Here, they rejoice in what a church is doing and show genuine interest in their ministry. Second, they could respond at a *consultant level*. At this level, the mission meets with the leadership of a church to help them think through the pros and cons of the project and what would be necessary for it to flourish. The mission's expertise and resources come to bear here and would be made available to the church. Third, they could respond at a *partnership level*. The terms of the partnership would need to be negotiated as to lines of authority, finances, role of the local church and role of the mission, etc. The fourth response would be the *adoption level*. Adoption means that the mission would ultimately take responsibility for the ministry. Any of these four responses could apply to entering a new country, targeting an unreached people, or evangelizing a world class city.

A further question which agencies should consider in regard to the synergistic model is whether or not the mission has adequately defined its role, and in what ways? Are we aggressively practicing what we have defined? Do the traditional measures of success for our agency (more money and more recruits) adequately take into account the synergistic paradigm? How should our role be changed in each of the three paradigms? Specifically, what programs and attitudes should change as a result of our recognizing the different paradigms? Have the different models and changes been communicated with churches and missionaries? Also are these changes acknowledged and supported by our mission leadership?

We need to understand that agencies can still provide a great service to

**SUMMARY OF PARADIGM SHIFTS IN WORLD EVANGELIZATION**

PARADIGMS	SUPPORTING	SENDING	SYNERGISTIC (owning)
Time Period	1970s and before	1980s	1990s
Key Word	“They”	“My”	“We”
Description	Dependent	Independent	Inter-dependent
Key Question	What is <i>their</i> game plan?	What is my church’s plan?	What is our role in obeying the Great Commission?
Mission Agency	High loyalty to a given agency	Awareness that an agency is one of many	Recognition of a global Christian community
Decision Making	Agency makes decisions	Partnership with the agency	Forming a strategic ministry
Geographic Support	Support outside the region	Support within the region	Support of non-Western missionaries
Philosophical Support	Support American missionaries	Recruit/train/support our own	Partnership with others (Americans/others)
Congregational Outreach	Non-directive philosophy	Directive philosophy	Empower church constituency philosophy
Relationships	Superficial contacts with missionaries	Quality/quantity time with our missionaries	Make a significant impact on the non-Christian world
Mission Education	Mission education by outsiders	Mission education done by insiders and by quality teachers	High-tech and high-touch mission training
Church Participation	Emphasis on goers	Emphasis on goers and senders	Emphasis on everyone participating in outreach
Focus	Focus is on money	Focus is on people	Focus in on opportunity
Strategy	No church strategy	A single church strategy	Multi-pronged strategy
Signs of Success	Bigger budgets for missions, better mission conferences	Bigger budgets and more missionaries sent	Souls saved, churches planted, more members empowered for ministry

local churches which are operating in terms of the synergistic paradigm. To be effective, however, agencies will need to think creatively about how to work in *true partnership* with local churches. Just as national churches on the mission fields move through various stages of development with a mission agency (Fuller 1980), so like-wise local churches must be allowed to move through stages of mission development and involvement.

Frequently congregations do not realize that there are various paradigms

from which they can operate. They need to ask themselves what the pros and cons are of each model. They should also discuss what issues need to be addressed for their church in following one or another paradigms. For example, what global realities do they see that will have a bearing on how a given church should conduct missions in the 1990s? What do they believe is the role of the church in obeying the Great Commission? What is the strategy of their church for this decade? As a church transitions from a supporting mode to

a more involvement and partnership model, what changes will need to occur in their church’s missions understanding and practice?

The synergistic (owning) paradigm offers local churches meaningful participation in the Great Commission. Yet, it is not a panacea. It will not cure every ailment found in the world mission enterprise. It does, however, address the changing global realities. It recognizes that the North American Church still has a significant role to play in world evangelization. At the same time, it

## Paradigm Shifts in World Evangelization

also acknowledges that the American Church is not the only player in this endeavor.

### Conclusion

Will there be a church planting movement among every unreached people group by the year 2000? The answer is no, unless changes occur in how churches participate in world evangelization! While all three paradigms allow for involvement by churches in evangelizing unreached peoples (Camp 1993), only the synergistic ownership model allows for an aggressive and full-orbed participation by congregations in bringing closure to the final task in the foreseeable future. If indeed our goal is "a church for every people and the gospel for every person by the year 2000," then a myriad of supporting and sending churches must take a more active role and consider becoming synergistic churches.

The paradigm of passive mission involvement characterized by most local churches in the past is not conducive to the accelerated momentum and emphasis needed for world evangelization. More biblically and missiologically informed, as well as Spirit-led action is needed, especially as it relates to evangelizing the remaining unreached peoples. Our prayer is that both churches and mission agencies accept the challenge and blessing of the synergistic (owning) mission model and in the process form strong partnerships to finish the task that remains.

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# Vision: The Primary Ingredient for Mission Mobilization

by E. David Dougherty & David Mays

Several years ago the story of Preston Tucker exploded across the movie screens. Tucker was a man with a burning desire to put the public in a radically different kind of automobile—different from anything Detroit had ever produced. Thirty years ahead of his contemporaries, he envisioned a rear-engine car with safety belts, disk brakes, padded dashboards, and dozens of other safety and performance features.

Against tremendous odds, he attracted a hearty band of supporters who managed to produce 50 of these amazing vehicles soon after the end of World War II. Amazingly, 46 of the cars are still on the road today.

In the go-go days following the close of World War II, many entrepreneurs had ideas about what to do with the surplus manufacturing capacity the war had produced. What made Tucker able to turn his dream into reality when so many other were unable to do so?

Primarily, it was vision. Preston Tucker had the uncanny ability to see the car he wanted to produce and to describe what he saw in such compelling ways that others caught the vision and wanted to become part of his dream. He was able to focus his entire energies on a single purpose—to put the public in a new kind of car. He was able to define the values of his project: safety, innovation, risk taking, and he was able to communicate vision in a way that made others willing to sacrifice their own careers and savings to bring the dream to reality.

Tucker's vision, his passion and the impact he had on the entire automo-

tive industry for almost half a century, illustrate principles God may want us to know and use as we mobilize God's people for world evangelization. Today, many pastors and church leaders have been stirred with a dream of what their church could accomplish in world evangelization. Their ability to define a single purpose, to identify clearly the values essential for accomplishing the purpose, and most of all, their ability to see and articulate God's vision in a way that will stir others to share in its accomplishment, can change lives, churches, and especially the world they seek to reach with the gospel.

## The Power of Focus

How is a church mobilized for success in world evangelization? I would like to suggest that God uses leaders with the ability to identify a clear and focused purpose, and then to mobilize the church's total resources in pursuit and realization of that purpose.

Hence singleness of purpose, clarity of values, and passionate pursuit of a well-articulated vision will help to insure effectiveness and success in world evangelization in any congregation as nothing else will. In order to do this, a church has to be able to the following

- \* Define its missions purpose clearly and succinctly
- \* Clarify congregational values which contribute to the purpose
- \* Discover and share God's vision and heart for the future which He wants to accomplish through the Church. Like nothing else, such a vision motivates and mobilizes others to join in accomplishing the purpose and task.

## Purpose of the Vision

Purpose answers the "why" question. It declares the main reason congregations exist as organizations. Purpose helps us zero in on the overall direction in which we will move. Purpose statements are mission statements.

Many churches have worked hard to define an overall purpose or mission statement for their ministry. A.C.M.C. has collected a number of them. The purpose of Crystal Evangelical Free Church is to proclaim and live the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that will impact our community and the world to the glory of God. (Minneapolis, Minnesota) The purpose statement of Reinhardt Bible Church is twofold: (1) To provide worship, fellowship and instruction for Christian believers, and (2) To proclaim the Gospel of grace at home and abroad. (Dallas, Texas) The mission of Castlevue Baptist Church is to glorify God, build up its members in love, and reach out to unbelievers to win them to Christ. (Indianapolis, Indiana) The purpose and mission of College Avenue Baptist Church is to win and equip committed followers of Jesus Christ who will share his love and truth from San Diego to the ends of the earth. (San Diego, California)

Purpose statements have a remarkable degree of similarity because each church recognizes as its Head the Lord Jesus Christ, and responds to His purpose and plan for their ministry. As a church starts to formulate its overall purpose statement, the first step in clarifying a mission focus is to work out a clear purpose statement for the church's specific missions involvement.

## Vision: The Primary Ingredient

Though each congregation will probably share some common elements, there will also be a large degree of diversity. Possible areas to consider are:

- \* Clear definition of world missions and its biblical bases.

- \* The church's understanding of its involvement and role in world evangelization are primarily as supporters, senders or strategists in reaching across cultural barriers to the unreached.

- \* The church's resources. Will the church help to fund ministries of others, or only develop and support their own programs and ministries?

- \* The target audience for the church's ministry, which could be assisting churches elsewhere or planting churches among unreached people groups.

Questions that can help develop the mission or purpose statement for world evangelization could be:

- \* What now? What should we be doing right now? What is the task that the Lord expects us to address in our ministry this month, this year, this decade?

- \* What next? When we have established a good focus and pattern for our current ministry, what are the additional concerns or needs to which we must give our attention?

- \* What not? What are the possible avenues for our ministry which we definitely feel we should *not* pursue at this point or later?

### Clarifying Core Values

Values help us prioritize important aspects of our purpose. Where the purpose statement answers the question, "Why are we here?", values help define, "what is really important to us?" Values also deal with "how" something fits into our overall understanding of a ministry or issue. They provide the rationale for our purpose and give boundaries to our vision. Taken together, our values determine our philosophy of ministry. They determine the means

we will use and how we go about pursuing our purpose.

Understanding, defining and clarifying our values can "flesh out" the purpose and mission statement and make them come alive for those with whom we work. Values will give depth and dimension to our mission, while helping us prioritize seemingly conflicting purposes. Some examples of how values of certain congregations influence the focus of its mission:

- \* A congregation that places a high value on *body life* might focus its attention on helping members of their body find their role in world evangelization. This church might focus efforts in sending members into ministry.

- \* A congregation which places a high value on *edification* might focus its efforts on helping as many members as possible get some experience of cross-cultural ministry to benefit their lives and vision.

- \* A congregation which places a high value on *in-depth Bible teaching* might focus its ministry on providing theological education for others, including people of other cultures to equip pastors to provide this kind of ministry for their people.

- \* A congregation which places high value on *witnessing through relationship* might focus on outreach to international students in their own community or a near by urban center.

Few congregations have the resources to do everything in missions that needs to be done or that they would like to do. Understanding congregational values can help provide a focus for ministry which is natural, which fits into a church's philosophy of identity and ministry and therefore seems valuable, believable, realistic and effective to its members. It integrates missions into the overall life and ministry of the congregation as an extension of the church's ministry, instead of something strange, foreign or supplemental.

### Communicating Vision

Once the mission purpose and values have been discovered, developed and recorded, it is essential to take one additional step that will make success very likely. In general, people are much more motivated and can be easier mobilized for involvement when they have been exposed to a clear, passionate vision for ministry. Vision describes what will be true when the purpose has been accomplished. This means helping people actually "see" what can and will be done and what the impact or results of the vision would look like.

Several experts in this area of vision implementation have helped to define this aspect of vision:

- \* Vision is a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization. Joel Barker in *The Power of Vision* (video).

- \* Vision is a clear mental picture of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants, and based upon an accurate understanding of God, His Word, self and circumstances. George Barna in *The Power of Vision*, Regal Books.

- \* Vision is foresight with insight based on hindsight. Burt Nannus in *Visionary Leadership*, Jossey-Baas Publishers.

- \* Vision is seeing where you are going—seeing your destination. Leith Anderson in *A Church for the 21st Century*, Bethany House Publishers.

It is very helpful to describe vision by contrast. Here is what vision is not:

- \* Vision isn't simply projecting the present into the future. Vision does not consist of taking the current situation and extending trends into the future. That sort of analysis might be helpful, but it isn't vision.

- \* Vision isn't a simple mission statement. As noted above "mission statements" tends to be quite similar for churches. But vision will be distinctive, focusing more on unique factors rather than on similarity.



\* Vision isn't merely factual. Vision is spiritual and captures concepts through creating word pictures. It helps to transport the listener or reader into the future and help them see what will be true if the vision becomes a reality.

\* Vision isn't static. An initial vision of the future will probably undergo refinement, adjustment and clarification many times as the path to the future comes into clearer focus.

In biblical terms, vision is closely related to *faith*. The writer of Hebrews tells us that "faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Biblical faith is rooted in the nature and promises of God and pictures a sure and certain future for the people of God involved in His purpose. Scriptural faith functions between the promise and the performance. The person who understands the promise and purpose of God and looks forward to (believes) its fulfillment is practicing *vision*.

The characteristics of a good vision statement for missions in the local fellowships will include the future. Frankly, it doesn't take vision to describe the past. Faith, although anchored in the finished work of Christ in the past, always looks ahead. Faith should also be visual. Use of picturesque words and phrases will help to clarify what God is leading us and a given church to accomplish. Examples would be: 1) To see the Church of Jesus Christ established among the lowland Lao people, so that they would worship Him regularly, and reach out effectively to share the gospel with friends and neighbors. 2) To see God raise up from among our congregation twenty families or singles to be sent as church planters and evangelists to unreached peoples, with sensitive screening, thorough preparation and complete support for the ministry from their own people.

So the vision statement will be clear, well articulated, and easily understood. It will also set standards of excellence. No one ever had a vision for mediocrity or failure. Furthermore, vision must inspire enthusiastic commitment; it must reflect the uniqueness of the church's life and identity, and it must be appropriate for the times.

#### The Process of Focus

There are three areas a congregation should investigate in seeking to estab-

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## The person who understands the promise and purpose of God and looks forward to (believes) its fulfillment is practicing *vision*.

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lish its focus in world evangelization. These areas are particularly helpful in discovering God's vision for the church.

#### Needs

Everywhere we look around the world we see needs. Each month mission agencies and other organizations publish millions of pages of material primarily detailing spiritual, physical, economic, social and personal needs of people around the world. Focus comes through understanding how to evaluate needs. There are several ways we might look at information about needs to establish focus:

1) *Strategic*: Which need appears to be the most strategic? Is starting a Bible training school for church workers in Nigeria more strategic than establish a training program for house church pastors in China?

2) *Least resources*: Which needs have the fewest resources currently available to meet the need? If more congregations are willing to invest

resources in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, should we invest our resources in Central or East Asia, where fewer congregations seem to focus their interest?

3) *Most impact*: In which area of need can our church make maximum impact? Some peoples of the world are ripe for a gospel harvest, other areas will need years of sowing and cultivation before the harvest is ripe.

4) *Greatest leverage*: Which need provides the closest fit with our resources to achieve optimum synergy? Since our congregation has many farmers should we focus on a needy group who could use help in developing their agriculture skills?

5) *Multiplication potential*: In which area of need can we establish ministry which will multiply and grow that will have lasting effect?

#### Resources

God has given every congregation unique resources which He intends to be used to impact the world, both the local community and the *uttermost parts of the earth*. Understanding our unique resources can help us find God's specific focus for us in world evangelization. Here are some of the resources which any church might have:

1) *Founding dream*: God uses a vision in the heart of a person or persons to bring congregations into existence. How is that vision or dream logically extended into cross-cultural ministry?

2) *Cultural heritage*: A congregation with strong ties to Eastern Europe or Latin America might be able to have great impact in establishing viable, indigenous, multiplying churches, as well as helping them reach out to unreached peoples, and do this work among the people they are already related to.

3) *Philosophy of Ministry*: A church with a strong philosophy of "soul-winning" through personal evangelism

## Vision: The Primary Ingredient

might focus its ministry on a people where individual decision making is a high value—rather than one which makes important decisions collectively. Churches that feature sensitive services will gravitate to ministries with cultural relevance, etc.

4) *Special Skills and Talents*: A congregation near a major university campus may have people uniquely qualified to minister to university students internationally through English teaching, or cultural exchange.

### *Opportunities*

Each church has existing relationships and links which can help to provide the connection to a clear and important focus in its ministry. Here are how those links might affect a church's focus:

1) *Denominational links*: Denominational churches will probably relate mainly with denominational mission in particular places.

2) *Current work relations*: For churches which already support a mission ministry, their focus will probably begin with missionaries or work they are already doing—or some extension of that work into contiguous areas.

3) *Geographic connections*. Congregations with members from a certain part of the world will probably look closely to that area to see where they might work.

4) *Mission Agencies*. Churches that relate to a particular mission agency will probably want to begin exploring areas suggested by that agency.

5) *Church Location*: Several congregations in the Tidewater Region of Virginia focus ministry on evangelizing seamen that come from around the world which dock at Norfolk. Education-oriented ministries will be especially interested in leadership training and development, etc.

Although we would suggest that the process of defining a church's missions vision is almost always appropriate, there are times when it is particularly important to evaluate and review it. For instance, when there is confusion about purpose and disagreements about priorities. When there are complaints about insufficient challenges, or when people no longer enjoy the work. Also when there is a sense of being "out of tune" with other elements in the ministry it is time to reevaluate. When there is a decline in members' morale, or there is excessive risk avoidance, or when there is an absence of a shared sense of progress or momentum, and also when there is a lack of trust and respect for leadership, churches need to review their vision and ministry.

### Getting Assistance

Congregation may need to get a facilitator or consultant to assist them in identifying, capturing, and communicating their vision. Obviously, this is a task that not just anyone is qualified to undertake. Qualities a congregation should look for in selecting someone to assist them in this area:

1) *In touch with God*: Someone who understands who God is and what He is up to, who knows Him through regular intimate meaningful fellowship.

2) *High regard for the local church*: This person needs to deeply appreciate God's love for the church and recognize the primary role and place of the local church in world missions.

3) *Appreciate the diversity in congregations and support their aspirations*: This person needs to understand and accept differences in doctrine, denominational emphases, styles, philosophy of ministry and priorities. The envisioning role is helping the church find God's mission vision, not the consultant's vision.

4) *Be an avid learner*. He needs to be a person who learns formally and informally, from seminars in the local church, and from leadership.

5) *Be authentic*: It needs to be someone who is actively involved in their own local church. Someone who is actually doing the things they advocate others to do.

6) *Be well established*: It needs to be someone who has the credibility which comes from staying in one place long enough to have accomplished something. It's hard to have confidence in a drifter.

7) *Listen well*: It's more important for someone to ask good questions than to provide good answers. Churches need to look for a person who will help *them* to discover vision, not to deliver it pre-packaged.

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# Funding Missions: The Challenge of the '90s

*Mission is changing in the local churches. Church-mission leadership must accept funding responsibility, while still looking for God to meet the needs. Four factors, when understood and applied correctly, are key to increasing mission support in contemporary North American churches.*

by Douglas Christgau

Tom Telford, veteran ACMC representative to local churches, recently wrote a list of “what’s hot” and “what’s not” in local church missions. An item that immediately caught my eye on the negative list was: “giving to church mission budgets.”

Sam Metcalf is president of Church Resource Ministries, a growing mission agency based in California. Recently we discussed the potential for CRM candidates to raise support money from churches. Sam candidly shared, “If a CRM missionary has two or three supporting churches, I’m happy. But individuals are increasingly more reliable than churches as support sources for our people.”

Operation Mobilization recently published its financial gift sources in the 1993 Annual Report. Money from churches comprised just 28% of the total. But individual were responsible for more than twice that amount.

Perhaps Telford is right. However, the fact remains that churches have tremendous potential to support missions. If churches are God’s instrument for the completion of the Great Commission, as so many are rediscovering, there must be some way to prevent their continuing decline in financing the effort. The passion of most local church mission leaders is for missions, not raising money. Fund raising is considered a necessary evil that many missions advocates would rather ignore.

Regardless, churches are constantly solicited for donations from mission agencies and missionaries. The opportunities for growth in the Christian church around the world are many.

Local church leaders must find ways to improve financial mission support. It’s important that churches see the “big picture” of world evangelization, which includes paying for it. Let me suggest four matters that churches must address in order to fund the effort for completing the Great Commission.

## The Best Funding Method

Missions funding methods vary in quality. The quality of the method greatly influences the effectiveness of fund raising efforts. Typical methods are:

### 1. Assigned from the general fund

Some like this approach because it provides “guaranteed” funding for missions. It makes mission funding an issue for the financial leaders of the church, not just a few missions enthusiasts. Two critical questions are:

First, how are the financial leaders of the church going to define “missions?” Hopefully a mission policy has been developed which answers this question. If not, church financial leaders might make some pretty broad applications of the term, leaving little for strategic missions to the frontiers.

Secondly, what percentage is assigned? Some years ago I attended a large church that gave 17% of their general fund to missions. Earlier, I attended a small church that gave 50% annually, including the year they built a new Christian Education facility. Mission leadership will work carefully and patiently towards increasing the percentage assigned to missions from the general fund so that missions get their fair

share of the resources.

### 2. Faith Promise

This approach was begun by A.B. Simpson over 100 years ago. It remains the method of choice for some of the healthiest mission churches in North America. In this system each member of the congregation prayerfully sets an amount he or she will trust God to enable him or her to give. While this emphasis on individual commitments may sound contrary to the values of the Baby Boomer sub-culture, Faith Promise giving makes mission support a congregational issue that is considered by every member. It stimulates spiritual growth because it teaches the meaning of “faith.” It encourages expectation and trust in the Lord’s provision.

Some 90% of Faith Promise commitments are realized in actual receipts. However, the proportion varies with how well educated the people are to the meaning of Faith Promise. Although financial leaders of the church may be edgy about how Faith Promise will effect general giving, the fact is that all giving tends to increase along with mission giving.

The simple act of separating mission giving from general giving has a positive impact, according to some church growth consultants. One claimed that giving will increase 25% when people are aware that a mission budget exists by separating it from the general fund. The Faith Promise system makes a clear statement regarding the separate status of mission funding.

Another advantage of Faith Promise is that it is submitted in writing

## Funding Missions

on a printed form composed by church-mission leadership. The Faith Promise response can provide useful data which can be gathered without violating donor confidentiality. Such categories of missions commitment as praying and going can be included on the card.

### *Combined unified giving*

This means that part of general fund goes to missions, but members may also give a Faith Promise to add to the amount going to missions. The usual intent of this approach is to combine the advantages of both these systems. It also provides a means (of funding) while churches transition into a Faith Promise program.

### *Individual designations*

In this system the church approves individual missionaries, then encourages the congregation to designate support that is given through the church. This method recognizes the “ownership” idea that is so important for the younger generation. There can be a formidable bookkeeping challenge in tracking multiple individual giving in a large congregation. Park Street Congregational Church of Boston has used this system for years. About 4% of their budget is spent on record keeping to administer it.

### *Cooperative church consortiums*

I coordinate a missions support consortium of 9 Connecticut churches which has funded missionaries in the last eight years. Missionaries supported through this consortium have raised their support in an average of 6 months, instead of the normal 24 months. An additional benefit is that when these missionaries return home on furlough, all of their support contacts are located within a 50 mile radius.

Although there are great advantages, consortiums require considerable initiative and administration by a church that is trusted by other congregations in the area. Consortiums are an intelligent alternative to the eroding church missions support base in North America.

Their efficiency can inspire younger donors who want to sense that their gifts are being managed in an effective way.

### **Balancing Mission Passion**

Whether or not we care to admit it, there’s an element of politics and public relations savvy that enters into church mission financing. To schmooze or not to schmooze, that’s a question that brings *angst* to many local church missions leaders.

### *“Mission evangelism” in the church*

I first heard Paul Borthwick, Missions Pastor of Grace Chapel, Lexington, Massachusetts use this term. It refers to events specifically planned to reach church people not interested in missions. No matter how mission minded a church is, there will always be a significant number who have not yet become “World Christians.” New people are constantly being added to the church who may have no previous education in missions. There also are the veteran church attendees who for one reason or another have little or no mission vision.

We need to go beyond serving foreign cuisine at mission dinners to create interest in attending mission events. For instance, the light drama from Caleb Team entitled “A View From On High” effectively complemented a Sunday morning missions message at our church. Although less than 15 minutes were devoted to mission preaching that morning, a strong impact concerning unreached peoples was evident. Scott Wesley Brown’s musical “Please Don’t Send Me to Africa” was performed by our choir with great success. The choir also learned some powerful songs drawn right from the “Perspectives on the World Christian Movement” course developed by the U.S. Center for World Mission. We need to remember that normally no more than 50% of church attendees will attend mission events beyond the Sunday morning service. Rec-

ognize this as a key time to vary methods to reach the broadest audience.

### *Mission personnel in non-mission ministries*

The more people sense mission leaders are for the whole church, the more likely it is that the whole church will be for missions. It’s tempting to tell mission committee members to devote themselves totally to mission leadership. They may be asked not to get distracted or be over committed by getting involved in other concerns. If that’s the case, how do mission people rub shoulders with the “Christian in the pew” who need to be mobilized? It’s easy to become so exclusive in one’s involvement that a “missions sub-culture” develops within the church. The potential for expanding the base of missions support is eliminated because no relational bridges are being built with those outside the “mission in crowd.”

### *Driving away marginal donors*

We must be very careful not to be so focused on missions that we lose perspective on what is important to most of the people in the local church. We need to make sure not to appear “weird” to the non-mission crowd.

Personally I know that I am tempted to be judgmental towards those not interested in missions. My attitude suggests, “I won’t respect your spirituality until you meet my minimum standard of righteousness, which includes praying for missionaries. “Biblically, this is not my judgment to make. People are going to judge if they sense they are being judged, and mission loses.

### *Strategic giving vs. public perception*

Responsible mission stewardship involves a strategy, but not everyone in your church is going to understand it. The fact that only .5% of church spending goes to frontier missions may trouble us greatly, but most of the congregation don’t know what frontier mission is all about. There is a public perception of what is “strategic” held by people who know little about missions, but are

part of the church funding base. For instance, a child of a prominent church family going into a domestic campus ministry may be thought of as “strategic” just because of their church connections. However, the best educational effort concerning missions strategy is going to pale when compared with close personal ties of a long time member committing to a missionary effort that is broadly perceived as credible.

#### Mission Information

Ian Hay, former general director of SIM, wrote an excellent article that expands some of the points below in the Spring, 1992 issue of *SIM NOW*. Our convictions and the congregation’s must both be considered. *Communicate effectiveness, not just finances*

We need to be selective in talking about money. It’s better to talk about the results of the financial investment, the spiritual value that the money is, in effect—purchasing. We need to use generic church publications for missions reports, not missions newsletters read primarily by people already sold on missions. Consistently present the subtle message that the missionaries and projects on the church’s budget are achieving their intended purpose and glorifying God. People will remember this when they consider mission giving.

Gaining exposure for missionaries in non-missions programming also communicates effectiveness. We consistently try to place missionaries in speaking roles where missions are not the main concern. Retreats for men and women are a tradition at our church. Both have been addressed by missionaries who spoke on Christian living topics rather than on missions per se.

Mission finance presentations should also communicate effectiveness.

When we present the missions budget to the congregation, documentation is readily available for most questions. Our answers are brief, specific to the point and factual. Preliminary presentations to the finance subcommittee, the board of missions and the board of elders all serve as practice sessions. We have also scrutinized our report formats. We

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## The fact that only .5% of church spending goes to frontier missions may trouble us greatly, but most of the congregation don’t know what frontier mission is all about.

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have agonized over how anyone would wade through our one hundred line item missions budget, and made several improvements in its readability.

#### *Informing people of needs*

For a long time at Black Rock we had only sporadically provided a report of mission giving needs. We also discovered that when we did print a report, the format was not understood by many, including two pastors!

If a need is clearly presented, the potential for the response of people is tremendous. At our church people still talk about the “Spirit of Black Rock.” This was a plane we purchased for Missionary Aviation Fellowship in Irian Jaya. Bolstered by the “can do” attitude fostered by that experience, the church has since purchased a duplex for furloughing missionaries, and a 900 acre tract of land which will be a training site for native believers in the Amazon jungle.

However, it can be demonstrated that informing people of needs can be tempered by emphasizing different spiritual truths. Calvary Church of Lancaster, Pennsylvania doesn’t share the specific needs of their missionaries,

believing true faith includes trusting the Lord to prompt people to give to the needs about which He is concerned. A weekly bulletin statement of the total dollar amount needed for missions has been enough information for this congregation of 1300 to increase their giving consistently, producing nearly \$1,000,000 for missions last year.

The quality and success of Calvary’s results can hardly be questioned, but there is Scripture to support high specificity in expression of need. Paul’s appeal in II Corinthians 8 and 9 include specific instructions of what he expected the people to do. So, consider the need of

people to be informed, without falling into the excesses too often typical of religious fund raisers.

#### *Knowing the donors*

Development professionals work hard to understand the funding potential of their constituency. I was surprised one day to discover that a friend who raised funds for a Christian school searched public records of alumni land holdings to help determine their ability to give. Although this may seem “too worldly,” research of mission giving is possible without violating donor confidentiality. Everyone has an opinion, but research provides facts.

#### *Integrity and accountability*

There is a real need to build checks and balances into our support system. We need to be careful that the authority does not rest with one single person. I’ll never forget a support raising experience in my early days as a “home” missionary. After presenting my need in just a few minutes to the pastor of a large church, he took out the church checkbook and gave me a significant donation. That amount was sent for my support every month thereafter. In that church the pastor was within the

## Funding Missions

bounds of his authority to take such action. But I wouldn't recommend it in these days when the integrity of church financial operations are being scrutinized and for good reasons.

On the other hand, often a leadership group reviewing support requests is too cumbersome. Many churches can't even evaluate every personal request, especially when there's a time obligation to give a response. A church mission policy should establish both the support priorities of the church and guidelines for responding to numerous requests. This must strike a balance between efficiency and appropriate distribution of authority.

### Love for Missions

When was the last time you heard of a Christian parent not supporting their child in missions? This is a "given" because we tend to support those who we love. The more people love missions, the more they will support it. Friendships with missionaries are key to congregations loving missions. Friendships foster trust, and trust means a great deal in missions giving.

The need for ownership is cited as a value of Baby Boomers, but it's true of virtually everybody. Why has General Motors successfully ushered it's Saturn into the highly competitive car market? It was introduced as a model of "ownership" management theory.

Missions must not be seen as belonging to a special interest group, nor just another program of the church. Our aim is not to have a great "mission church," but to have a "Great Commission Church," that has both local and cross-cultural evangelistic outreach. Dwight Smith, President of United World Mission, has explained this well in an APMC publication. Whenever I hear a person at Black Rock (my church) referring to "our program" or "their program" when referring to missions, music, youth or any other ministry, I know we still have a way to go.

What missionary is easier to love than one of your own members? A steady flow of member missionaries is the best way to assure that congregational mission giving keeps growing. In a small church this is almost automatically true. In a large church, it takes more work because few members in a large congregation are known by the whole body.

Some churches have grown to the point where they will support only member missionaries. The danger of this trend is in the exclusivity of the relationship. If there are problems in your church, what happens to the support for your missionaries? This is another reason to consider the consortium support agreement mentioned earlier.

As the Lord leads, we need to talk to people who we believe may be suited for cross-cultural or local ministries. Telling the fourth grader who wins the memory verse contest that he's going to be a preacher someday is not what I have in mind. Just be prepared to do something about the prayers you offer concerning potential missionaries in your church. This may lead to establishing your own missionary preparation program, even if its for just a few people. As Tom Telford has said: "Don't let people lay hands on themselves." When the Holy Spirit calls people to missions, His voice should be loud enough for others to hear as well.

Mission prayer should truly be our top priority. No one who loves God and missions would dispute this. We need to teach prayer as a priority over giving, as the *first* step to mission involvement for every member. It's important to provide a response mechanism to measure how involved your people are in praying for missions. If we record only financial support commitments, the subtle message is that money is the most important. If the priority of prayer is maintained, and if strong relationships grow between prayer partners and missionaries, giving is a natural by-product. God will honor our efforts to stress the priorities of mis-

sion involvement for the congregation.

In our love for missions, we also need to provide mission education options. According to Sunday School publishing giant David C. Cook, there are four prominent learning styles: innovative, analytical, common sense and dynamic. We should develop mission education programs and methods that employ each learning style. There are individual affinities for learning that cross sub-cultural norms of Boomers and Busters, etc. At various times of the year we could offer dramas, dinners, films, slide shows, videos, reading programs, formal educational courses, missionary guests, cross-cultural simulation games, prayer meetings, field trips, children's ministries, conferences, local outreaches and a host of other missions activities.

Missions education is stereotyped as boring, repetitious and archaic. It doesn't have to be that way! If quality and variety are maintained, more people will learn about missions. Quality giving will become one of a number of desirable by-products of this effort.

For some people there is no substitute for learning about missions that can replace being there themselves. There is lots of truth to the phrase: "Next best thing to being there." The most powerful source of missions motivation among Baby Boomers is visiting the mission field itself. Jim Engel's research report "Baby Boomers & The Future Of World Missions" published by Media Development Associates made that point very clear.

So we need to overcome the standing objections to short term trips—too expensive, or beyond the scope our church, and an added burden for missionary hosts, or that it takes work from the national—and plan one for your congregation. If your church can't do it, use the help of various agencies that will do it for you. Or, ask another church that is organizing a trip if you can join them. At the very least, recruit a few

people from your congregation to go with a short term program sponsored by a major agency. Short term mission trips not only excite people about missions, they challenge their Christian commitment in significant ways. Adults come home from missions trips with a “summer camp high” like that experienced by children. If properly directed, this inspiration can have great personal benefits both for the individual and the church’s missions ministry.

Mission trips don’t have to be limited to construction trips to Latin America—although that’s not a bad start. But wherever we go, it is true that a significant number of people in the church will develop a love for missions they could not attain in any other way except by participating in missions themselves on short term trips.

In spite of all the above, personal requests for donations may still be required. Mike Tucker explained this

concept in the Winter, 1987 issue of “Leadership” magazine. Too many church leaders think that asking for money is what the televangelists do.

Tucker’s point is that if we are willing to approach people personally for recruitment as Bible teachers and leaders of key committees, then why not also do it concerning financial giving? This doesn’t suggest special treatment for those with a giving heart. In fact, it is negative treatment if we won’t use the same approach to draw them into ministry. Tucker’s logic is sound.

Sometimes we have been short of Faith Promises at the end of our Mission Conferences. These circumstances have led me to write a few letters and make a few personal requests. Therefore, we should make more personal contacts with those who we believe have the gift and heart and means of giving for missions.

### Conclusion

This article is full of ideas. Most of them require work and to be implemented in order to improve the mission giving in congregations and local churches. Frankly, Tom Telford’s appraisal scares me. But I’m not going to be intimidated by current trends and lack of giving on the part of local churches. I am, and I hope others with me are, going to act prayerfully and aggressively to overcome the obstacles. I believe God has placed us in churches to help them have a growing role in world evangelization. This definitely includes financially supporting the cause.

*Douglas Christgau is mission pastor at Black Rock Congregational Church in Fairfield, Connecticut.*

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(page 44)

# The Church's Primary Role in Training for the Frontiers

by Gary R. Corwin

The January 1994 issue of the *IJFM* focused on the theme, "Training for the Frontiers. In my article subtitled "Who Does What?" I sought to outline the unique but complementary roles of academics, agencies and admonishers (mission mobilizers and researchers) in training for frontier missions. In both formal and informal responses to that article and presentation I heard some well-articulated concerns that suggested I had understated the role of the church in this all-important task. Since that was certainly not my intention then nor now, I thought a review of the article's underlying assumptions might be helpful.

The first basic assumption was that churches have the primary responsibility and are *the* most important source of mission training, including for the frontiers. They are the chief guardians of the process of character formation (the most essential of preparations), the chief venue for ministry experience, and the chief broker and quality control mechanism for all other training aspects. I wrote regarding the approach my article took that: "(it) is premised... on the assumption that local churches are the *foundational trainers* for outreach to the frontiers." And again, "Well-grounded disciples of Christ are the building blocks of any mission outreach, and only the churches can provide them. The work of academics, agencies and admonishers only builds on the most basic work that churches do of training disciples."

The second basic assumption underlying my article was that local

churches are generally not able to provide all the specialized training necessary to send and maintain well equipped missionaries on the frontiers. The training responsibility of the other players is always, as I said, "under and alongside of the churches." They exist to use their specialized skills to assist the churches to fulfill their responsibility of adequately equipping and maintaining apostles in frontier missions.

The third underlying assumption was that the academics, agencies and admonishers each have unique and complementary roles to play in assisting the assemblies (local churches) to fulfill their training responsibilities for reaching the frontiers. As the audience to which my article was presented (a joint meeting of the Evangelical Missiological Society and the International Society of Frontier Missiology) consisted almost exclusively of these three aforementioned groups, it only seemed reasonable to address the subject from their points of view. This seemed doubly so since one could scarcely have scratched the surface of the unique and central role of the churches' training task in the same short article. Hence the importance of clarifying, including looking at the last underlying assumption.

The fourth basic assumption was that forums need to be established, papers need to be written, presentations need to be made, and consultations need to be held that focus specifically on the churches' unique and crucial role in training for the frontiers. Initially, it may be difficult to get wide church participation in such an effort. Fear of being

embarrassed, or of being pressured to do what one really does not want to do are substantial hindrances. Groups such as APMC and AIMS could play an important role in overcoming such reticence. However, participation at such gathering should not be limited to the churches alone. Academics, agencies and admonishers should also be there. Together they/we should focus on the task from a specifically church-based point of view, something which the earlier joint conference was neither convened for nor sufficiently representative to accomplish.

Living as we do in an age when there is a genuine missions awakening taking place in many churches, it is understandable why a perceived lack of attention to the church's role in mission training raised some concern. The purpose of this short review and update is to say: "Amen and Amen" to both the motivation and source of that concern. Though my earlier article had a more narrow focus, due to its audience, the all-encompassing nature of the local churches' primary role in training for the frontiers cannot be treated as a simple add on. Therefore, my hope and prayer is that the forums be frequent and fruitful!

*Gary R. Corwin is an associate editor with the Evangelical Missions Information Service (EMQ/Pulse) and is a special representative with SIM, USA, in Charlotte, NC*



# Church-Mission Partnerships Reaching the Last Frontiers

by Edwin S. Walker

**B**aby boomers, people born between 1947 and 1964, are moving into church leadership. Churches that have boomer leaders are no longer willing to be silent participants without significant input into the missionary process. They can become a force for missions if local churches and mission agencies will work together in true partnership. But are the agencies ready to change and grasp the challenge? In other words, are they willing to give the churches a larger role in world evangelization, beyond finances and prayer?

In itself, change is neither friend nor foe. The danger lies in our failing to understand the times in which we live, so as to plan and proceed with biblical discernment. We need to be like the sons of Issachar, "...who understood the times and knew what Israel should do..." and like David who "...served his generation according to the will of God.

Prophetically, missiologist David Hesselgrave declares that "...the greatest obstacle to preparing for tomorrow's mission is an inability or unwillingness to face all of today's facts squarely and openly."<sup>1</sup> Naisbitt, in *Megatrends*, tells us that "The most reliable way to anticipate the future is by understanding the present."<sup>2</sup> Today's rate of change is so fast and persistent that our world will be substantially different by the year 2000. Engel and Jones, in their study, *Baby Boomers and the Future of World Missions*, make this statement:

The great challenge is for an all-new partnership between local churches and mission agencies. Some radical readjustments will be required. As this crucial step is taken, there is reason to be optimistic that the North American Church will play a pivotal role in helping AD 2000 plans become a reality.<sup>3</sup>

According to Engel and Jones, a cru-

cial component to the future of missions is for there to be partnerships between local churches and mission agencies. This is because baby boomers are a generation with different values. They have an entrepreneurial spirit, but distrust traditional institutions. They look to the local church to affirm the right of the mission agency to exist. Because of the values of the boomer generation, meaningful partnership between church and mission is timely. Not only is it timely but it also can restore to the local church its biblical role in missions.

This article will point out how an in-depth partnership can restore the scriptural role of the church as well as how several important benefits accrue through applying this approach. This article is a call for a new paradigm in church-mission relations in order to see effective evangelism through church planting among all the peoples of the earth in our generation.

## Churches and Missions

It has been said that "the Church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning." Dynamic mission outreach is one of the vital signs of a healthy local church. Churches are not only the goal of missions but also the means of accomplishing that goal. Missions—the story of redemption for all peoples through Christ—is the thread that ties all Scripture together into a meaningful whole (Luke 24:45-47). Missions is therefore not limited to a few Bible texts but permeates the whole of God's Word. It is especially in Matthew 28:18-20, the Church's evangelistic mandate, that our Lord brings special attention to bear on the scope of missions.

In this mandate our Lord makes an announcement ("all authority in heaven

and earth has been given to me"), issues a command ("therefore go and make disciples of all peoples"), and then makes a promise ("surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age"). The basis of this mandate is the lordship of Christ: "all authority" over spiritual/demonic powers, and also over all earthly human authorities, including governments. His promise to be present until the end of the age assures cross-cultural disciple makers that they will have His supernatural enabling and guidance.

The goal of the mandate is found in the command to "make disciples of all nations" (peoples, Greek: *ethne*). The command is buttressed by three present participles: "going, baptizing, teaching." These participles not only define the task but also show its scope and primary function. As we go ("in going") we are to win people to Christ—this is evangelization. "In baptizing" we are to unite believers together—this is starting churches. And "in teaching" we are to give the whole Word to the whole person, within the total socio-cultural context of the congregation being formed. Biblical disciple making therefore includes evangelizing, forming congregations, and teaching people to obey the whole counsel of God. The ultimate goal of missions is the glory of God in His Church, made up of saints from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. So it is very clear that the Church is both the means and the goal of missions.

If this is true, we might ask: Where then do mission agencies fit in? In Acts we read that:

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of

Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit..." (Acts 13:1-4a NIV).

Here we see the beginning of the first missionary team being formed. As we read through the rest of Acts, we note a distinction between the structured local congregation and the structured apostolic band. Thus we can state that biblically (as well as historically), God has raised up organizations and structures to assist the churches in fulfilling God's mission purpose of "making disciples of all peoples."

Seeing the task in this biblical perspective requires a great depth of meaningful partnership between churches and mission agencies. Seeking symbiotic church-mission partnerships would demonstrate, in today's world, the principles illustrated in the New Testament. Mission agencies should actively invite churches of the Body of Christ to be partners together with them in the task of world missions. While praising God for His mercies and blessings through mission agencies over the years, we ask ourselves how much greater the impact might have been if there had been a greater church-mission partnership over the years.

Unfortunately, the mission involvement of many evangelical churches, when compared with their potential, seems little more than tokenism. There are churches that take their mission involvement seriously, but see their role as having only one dimension: Financial support. Mission agencies tend to look to the schools for candidates and to the churches for prayer and monetary support. As important as these are, we might ask whether financial and prayer support on the part of the churches is the only role for the churches in missions? Should local churches not be

involved in preparing potential church planters? Still, how can church-mission partnerships be worked out practically? Each sending church is unique. Churches differ from one another in doctrinal emphasis, philosophy of ministry, size, wealth, biblical knowledge, spiritual health, evangelistic zeal, social context, cultural background, and affiliation. Furthermore, mission-field situations vary considerably: urban/rural, developed/underdeveloped, receptive/resistant, pro/anti-Western, holistic/dichotomistic, etc. Therefore, no single pattern can be laid down for partnership, and flexibility must be the mode. It may be best for some churches, at their present stage of development, simply to progress within their role as givers and intercessors. However, the ideal to which all should try to attain is to become churches that are pro-active in growing competent missionaries from within their churches.

### Church Planting

The fundamental task of missions is church planting evangelism among the unreached peoples of the world. The preparation of potential missionaries for this task calls for a practical contribution that neither a training institution nor a mission agency can provide as effectively as can a local church. Theological schools may teach the biblical doctrine of the Church; mission agencies may present an ideal picture of the Church they hope to establish overseas; but only personal involvement in the life and ministry of a healthy local church can adequately and practically equip the potential missionary.

To be learned, church life must be lived, which is more "caught" than "taught." People who have never experienced healthy church life and ministry in their own culture, but seek to plant healthy reproducing churches in foreign—and perhaps hostile soil—are at a decided disadvantage. All of us tend to reproduce what we have experienced. Adequate local-church experience is

crucial to the preparation of an effective church planter even a cross-cultural one. In the spiritual and practical preparation of many missionaries, at least in the past, institutions and para-church organizations have played a more important role than have local churches. For this reason, it seems that these workers have tended to plant institutions rather than churches even when they may be sent out as "church planters." If we correctly understand the mandate of our Lord in Matthew 28, to make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching; that is, by planting churches, an important key to the missionary problem has been resolved.

Mission agencies that take church-planting evangelism seriously should therefore want to work in partnership with local churches in the selection and preparation of potential missionaries who have experienced a healthy, balanced church life and ministry.

What are some characteristics of a church that can become a seedbed for missions? Besides being Christ-centered, Bible-based, promoting sound doctrine and life, a healthy church structures its times of being gathered together in a way that balances worship, fellowship, prayer, and teaching of the Word. A healthy church when scattered has vital and dynamic witness, service, and a prophetic voice in its community demonstrating God's supernatural presence, power, truth and love.

Such a church is relational. It is a congregation that knows and worships their Lord intimately and is totally committed to Him, especially on the leadership level. From these relationships with God and each others, the church develops the values that drive it. Missionaries are best formed by churches that are value driven, and so filled with the love of God, that they reach out, even cross-culturally, in loving sensitivity to a lost and hurting world.

Healthy churches have leaders characterized by servanthood, stewardship, and shepherd concern. Such

churches make sure that its converts are carefully disciplined, involved in ministry so that their spiritual gifts may be recognized, affirmed, and put to work in the life and outreach of the church to a hurting world (Eph. 4). It is a church with the philosophy that ministry is more important than structure. Such a church frequently rethinks and adapts its ministries, to better “serve (its) own generation according to the will of God.” Our observations indicate that a missionary candidate from a church that is rigid and legalistic about its work seldom makes a healthy cross cultural adaptation

### The Church Organic

The church that grows the best missionaries models a philosophy of ministry that is *organic* rather than organizational or institutional. In an organic church, the basic value is not keeping people under control, but training and equipping them so that they enthusiastically own and apply the church’s purpose and values. These purposes and values grow out of a living relationship with Christ linked with His Body. Leadership of the organic type church is based on interactive spiritual influence, rather than hierarchical line authority.<sup>4</sup> In the organic church fellowship, growth and maturity of the members is considered more important than “programs.” Of higher value than the preservation of institutional rules and programs is the glory of God in the church, manifested in Spirit-led diversity. The orientation of ministry is toward process (“go... train... release”) rather than product (“come... attract... hold”). Unity is based on mutual ownership of values, not on organizational controls.<sup>5</sup>

Organic church principles are easily transferred cross-culturally, whereas the cultural baggage of the missionary with an institutional or program-based orientation is a disastrous

handicap and open to fatal mission error. An organic approach frees the planted church to grow and multiply as the Spirit leads groups of people to live out the Word of God in their own cultural context. Although an institutional-type church may grow to a large size in its sending context, its institutional controls, when transferred abroad, often hinders the emerging church from being led by the Holy Spirit in a way that is in harmony with the local context.

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## The fundamental task of missions is church planting evangelism among the unreached peoples of the world.

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Another characteristic of an organic church that is a seedbed for missions is that it loves the lost and is or becomes burdened for the unreached. This may be the reason why Antioch, not Jerusalem, was the seedbed for missions in the New Testament. Jerusalem believers by and large evangelized Jews. The church of Antioch, however, reached out to Gentiles, as well as to Jews. (see Acts 11:19-21). With the current internationalization of the cities of the world, urban churches have a built-in training laboratory for cross-cultural missionaries in their own communities and need to follow the Antioch model. The mission purpose of the Church demands that churches reach out to the various people groups of their city.

In spite of our imperfections, let us be the churches God wants us to be, and produce missionaries who, if not perfect, are adequately equipped, who are capable to be effective cross-cultural workers who have practical skills and a sound understanding to do the task. It makes good sense to ask candidates to demonstrate that they can and have done the job in their own culture and language, before thousands of dollars are

invested to send them abroad. A positive ministry experience at home could save them from burn out when as new missionaries they face initial failures in the initial phases of their work. Those who have never adequately tested their spiritual wings in ministry at home can find early rejection by people of another culture more than they can bear.

### Mission-Church Partnership

But what about the cross-cultural dimension of the task? How does a local church and a mission agency begin a partnership in growing potential church planters and sending them out cross-culturally? To begin with leaders of the church and representatives of the mission agency meet to set goals. They share their burdens and visions. From

among the unreached peoples of the world, they decide which one(s) they will seek to reach together. They form a plan to select and prepare workers to do the job.

A large, urban church with many resources may wish to accept a whole city in an unreached people as its responsibility and prepare an entire team to plant a cluster of churches in that city. A rural church may not wish to tackle a city, but linked with other churches, may want to target an unreached tribal people. A small church may not be able to send and prepare a whole team and fully support them, but do want to prepare a couple to go to a country where a mission team is already at work, and link up there with an experienced missionary or gifted national to reach an unevangelized people of that country. In some communities, like-minded churches could form a consortium and accomplish together what none of the churches could do by themselves alone.

There are almost endless possibilities of working together. For example Worldteam has a generic contract for such a partnership that can be tailor made

## Church-Mission Partnerships

to fit needs of any church and mission agency in the context for church planting ministry.<sup>6</sup>

Partnership of this kind not only meets the desire of the baby boomer constituency in our churches to have meaningful involvement into the missionary process, but also has the potential to restore the church to a more biblical role that produce synergistic powerful results. This new paradigm in church-mission relations could avoid, or substantially eliminate, some of the problems often confronted in the traditional church-mission approach. Some of these are:

Lack of experience based training in a church context produces too few competent church-planting missionaries.<sup>7</sup> Volunteerism has tended to encourage the appointment of candidates who might not otherwise be selected.<sup>8</sup> Too many missionaries drop out.<sup>9</sup> Strained relationships between church and mission agency are avoided. Too many unhealthy churches are planted that do not have the potential of reproduction under national leadership due in part to missionaries without adequate church life and ministry experience. Another problem is appointees' spending long periods of time in support raising. Related to that is the problem of churches supporting many missionaries with very little focus in purpose or prayer.

An important by product of forming joint ventures between churches and missions is that it is breaking one of the major barriers in reaching the last frontiers with the Gospel. The problem is that with the traditional pattern, both churches and individuals for the most part support missionaries and not the agencies, leaving the agencies without the needed resources to research, plan, recruit, train, deploy and mentor a new team of frontier church-planting workers. Frequently starting a work in a new city or people group often costs the agency \$25,000 to \$50,000 before the first missionary is even sent. When the church and agency work in tandem

the start up cost is largely removed because the focus is on reaching an unreached people with the Gospel and not so much on the support of a missionary. This has a great influence on how churches allocate resources. A mission partnership unites churches and agencies in a common purpose to penetrate the remaining final frontiers.

Agencies traditionally finance their operations from two sources of undesignated gifts and "ministry funds" deducted from the support of their missionaries. Also the projects and programs on the older fields are well represented by missionaries on "home assignment," raising additional support from their supporting constituency. Therefore, some agencies with little difficulty can financially continue to multiply workers, and even start new ministries, on already established fields under the traditional approach. However, this approach often leads to problems, like:

—Institutionalization of ministry makes closure policy financially difficult for the agency.

—Paternalism and creating a climate of dependency on foreign skills and resources frequently develops.

—Long term expatriate leadership hinders the development of national leadership of emerging churches, or/ and often undermines the missionary vision of the national church.

It's time to break out of old patterns and begin to develop a healthy new missiology that is both biblical and timely. It is important that churches and agencies move towards substantive joint ventures to reach the last frontiers and complete the task of world evangelization in our generation. Only with the right people, coupled with the right support, sustained by divine guidance and enablement, can we fulfill our Lord's mission mandate, i.e., to start multiplying churches on new frontiers so that our Lord will be glorified among all the peoples of the world. This

is best done by churches and mission agencies working together in partnership.<sup>10</sup>

### Endnotes

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# Editorial: Church in Missions

This special issue of the *IJFM* is made up of articles that address the awesome challenge of the Church's involvement in world missions. Except for a few, the articles in this issue correspond to major presentations given at a consultation for mission mobilizers held in Aurora, Colorado, June 22-23, 1994. Under the theme "Mobilizing churches for the 21st Century," 125 mobilizers met to interact on the implications of major trends that are affecting the mobilization of churches in North America. The consultation was sponsored by APMC Inc., the U.S. Center for World Mission, and the Mission Mobilization Resource Network of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement.

Looking at the challenge, we need to realize that we are in the early stages of the transition from the industrial age to the information age. This shift will be every bit as dramatic as the change from the agricultural to the industrial age that occurred some hundred years ago. We are also in the early stages of World War II era leaders passing the mantle of leadership to the so called "Baby Boom" generation. These two generations have radical different world views that affect everything they do. In addition, the rise of Third World missions is challenging the traditional role of the North American missions industry.

These huge tectonic shifts are rocking the North American missions community at its foundations. The consultation illustrated the fact that some are oblivious to what is happening. Others are fighting the change at all levels, while some are pioneering creative ways to handle the change. Change is never comfortable. As industrial age hierarchical management styles give way to management styles of the information age, participatory management styles

will occur, that for some will be painful.

The communication and motivational styles that have worked so well in the past will be ineffective with Boomers and Busters. Also, partnering with the Third World sounds noble, but requires painful changes to long standing traditions. Is the North American missions community up to the challenge? There are churches and agencies and whole denominations that have advanced cases of what Joel Barker calls "Paradigm paralysis." These folks will become more and more irrelevant as time passes, critical of those who are pioneering new efforts.

But God always has had His paradigm pioneers. In the spirit of Paul and William Carey and Hudson Taylor they are still blazing the trails for missions into the 21st Century. With unwavering commitment to biblical principles and uncanny sensitivity to cultures and sub-cultures, they will write the next chapter of God's redemptive advance into and for the lost world.

As to the articles in this issue: First of all, it is important to note that the focus of the consultation was on how to mobilize local churches in missions. We specifically tried to deal with the changes that are occurring. These articles, mostly written by major presenters of the consultation, do not represent the be all and end all of mobilizing churches, but rather deal with specific issues of change and challenges of mission mobilization.

Secondly, by and large, our target audience was professional mobilizers, working with North American Caucasian churches. For this reason, the issues discussed may not be relevant for other cultural groups.

Finally, because the focus was on mobilizing North American Caucasian churches, we did not directly talk

about mission agencies and/or denominational sending structures, even though many of the participants, as well as presenters, are with such agencies. Our focus was on how to advance churches in missions in our changing environment. The underlying assumption was that churches and agencies will continue to play critical roles in world evangelization but both are going to have to adapt to the forthcoming changes. In other words, paradigms on both sides will need to shift.

I do not know what missions will look like in the 21st Century, but one thing is sure: "The gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all nations, and then the end will come." I believe the North American Church will play a key role in "declaring God's glory to all the nations," as a "testimony unto all peoples." Pre-boomers, boomers, busters, including "the buckaroos," who call Jesus Lord, will all have to have significant participation to accomplish the task.

The missions experience and entrepreneurial gifts of the North American Church should be shared with the global body of Christ to finish the task. With humility and thanksgiving we dedicate this special edition to all committed to advancing churches in world missions. None of us have the final answers. But read on—here are a few good steps to move us forward. As we learn these lessons and interact together, we will all become better equipped to finish the task that remains.

*Larry Walker, Southwest Regional  
Director of APMC, Inc.  
Guest Editor  
August, 1994  
Escondido, California, USA*

# Building the Home-Base for Global Outreach

*“The kingdom of God is a new order founded on the fatherly love of God, on redemption, justice, and fellowship. It is meant to enter into all of life, all nations, and all policies till the kingdom of this world become the kingdom of our Lord.”*

*Eric Liddess/World Shapers*

by Howard Foltz

**T**he worldwide missions enterprise rests squarely on the shoulders of the hometown missions base we call the local church. The adequacy of the local church is built upon the faith walk of the Christians at home base.

In 1987, a Minneapolis church felt reluctant to “lose” their pastor for three weeks when he had been invited to make an on-site inspection of a Bible translation project that the church had been heavily supporting in Indonesia. Finally, the congregation did take that step of faith, not only allowing the pastor to go, but actually began working hard to raise the funds for the trip as well as provide prayer covering.

The church became much more aware of their ministry to Indonesians and have a growing sense of their ability to work with God to really make a difference in the world. This growing sense of purpose produced tremendous benefits and the whole congregation is now more excited than ever about their growing role in world missions. Today this church is trusting God enough to release their pastor to serve part-time, outside their congregation, as a facilitator of other churches’ mission programs. *Mere intellectual assent to the value of missions has been replaced by a real heartbeat for missions, the distinctive earmark of a world class mission church.*

In this article, I want to outline God’s battle plan for winning men, women and children from all nations—all people groups—for His kingdom. We will examine some of the barriers that exist in today’s world which together form a great wall that blocks our efforts to bring Christ to about half of the peo-

ples of the world. God’s solution to the barriers is not just modern communications or more technology, as some may suppose. The real barrier is more basic and more invisible than modern technology. Key to overcoming the barriers is the work of the Holy Spirit in each church—every community of believers—responding to the biblical battle plan and to the current state of the global village in which we all live. The work of God’s Spirit is the heart of what I call a “missions sending church.” Let us look at a missions church, first of all ruling out what it is not.

From the biblical perspective, the church is not a building, neither does the essence of a church reside in its departments and programs. Secular businesses and social organizations have buildings and have departments and programs, but that does not make them churches. In the same way, the structure of a church does not make it a church. Rather, *a church is a local gathering of God’s people who are “built up” by God’s work in them and among them.* Essentially, a church is not the visible institution or structure, but rather *a living organism that is the result of divinely networked relationships—members together forming God’s family.*

## **The Living Church**

The indispensable elements of a church, then, are the interactions between God and His people, and secondarily, the divine effect that those interactions have upon the people’s relationships with each other and upon the world. These have eternal significance, whereas buildings, organiza-

tional structure and programs do not.

Three dynamics of God’s work in believers super-naturally set the Church apart from all other institutions and organizations. The first is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul said: “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God’s grace which He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding” (Eph. 1:7).

Redemption is at once a completed work when we receive Christ, but it also is an ongoing work in believers. To Timothy Paul wrote: “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst” (1 Tim. 1:15). The form of the verb for “to save” in this verse—according to the original Greek—means that salvation is completed and finished. However, there also is the ongoing work of salvation. Paul says: “For if when we were God’s enemies we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved in His life!” (Romans 5:10). “Shall be saved” in the original language is in a form showing that salvation is continuous ongoing action. We experience this in our lives as He uncovers areas by the work of His Spirit and “redeems” them as we confess these areas to Him. We’re growing and becoming more saved—being “bought back” by Him. The apostle John tells us that when Jesus appears, we will become like him at that time, even our physical bodies will be transformed by the complete

## Building the Home-Base

work of salvation (1 Jn. 2:3). Biblically speaking, we are saved, we are being saved, and we shall be saved!

The second essential dynamic of God's work in a local body of believers in Christ is the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes us witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Being filled with the Spirit needs to be an ongoing process and relationship, not just something we experienced years ago. What's important is our daily empowerment for witness to proclaim Jesus Christ to those who have never heard. The language of Ephesians 5:18 teaches that to "be filled with the Spirit" is something we are to actualize on a daily basis and use, that we are filled now, that we are to continue being filled by the Spirit, as a requirement for witness.

The revelation of God's Word is another ongoing and indispensable dynamic of church life. Paul said, "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation..." (Eph. 1:17). This ongoing work of revealing concerns who He is, who we are in Him and how we serve Him.

### Spiritual Aspects of Church Life

There are several dimensions of church life that emerge from the interaction between God and His people. One is *Spirit-filled leadership*. As God works in the midst of His people, He graces the group with different giftings. Among these are the fivefold ministries which lead the Church in the mission of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:11). There are also seven motivational gifts or functions that move the Church forward under the direction of God (Rom. 12:6-8). Also the nine manifestation gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 are available to every member of the Body of Christ to release the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The church must have gifted leaders who will see the vision of God to

complete the Great Commission. A survey conducted at Regent University, where I teach world missions, indicated that the main factor that influences a church's growth in missions is the senior pastor's leadership. Pastors therefore are the key players to world missions and its completion.

The original language term for leadership in Romans 12:8 means "to stand before" (Greek: *proistemei*, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, p. 60, and "be at the head of" BAG Lexicon, p.707) Leadership is therefore standing before God and receiving His vision. It is seeing what God is doing, and then in His wisdom and guidance to impart this vision to His people, helping them to cooperate with what He is doing in the world through the local church. Without the right kind of leadership in local churches, there will be little involvement in local evangelism and less outreach in missions.

The second aspect of church life resulting from the work of the Spirit is *edification* of the church. This means building up and equipping, frequently called discipling, training or nurturing. The New Testament word for this task is the same one used for mending one's fishing nets.

Another (third) feature is *worship*, including *intercession*. As the Spirit of God works among His people, He draws worship out of them. It is well known that we become like that which we worship, and God wants us to become like Him. Psalm 115:8 reveals that if we worship idols, we become like them. If we worship Jesus, we become like Jesus. On the other hand, if we "worship" the American culture, we become like the American culture and turn into cultural Christians. But when we allow God to work in our lives, He draws worship out of us. As we open our lives up to Him, seeing more and more of who He is and what He is doing and wants to do, we become more like

Him. Then we are drawn into intercession and a walk of communion with Him, through a daily life of prayer.

Fourthly, the Spirit of God inspires fellowship and *godly relationships*. The local church is a network of relationships—with God and with each other (Acts 2:42). The doorway to growth in the kingdom of God swings on the hinge of those relationships. The stronger those relationships are, the more we grow individually and corporately.

Do the above mentioned basics cover the total picture? The answer is: No. Even when taken together, the above three dynamics of God's work in a group of believers, including the four aspects of His work among His people do not constitute a church in the full sense of the word. One essential ingredient needs to be added.

### The Goal of the Church

Let us take a good look at Christ's mission commission in Matthew 28:18-20. Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age." In this passage Christ proclaimed the mission of the Church to go to all peoples ("nations") of the earth, evangelizing, baptizing and teaching them. Obedience to this commission is an essential task of the Church. It's important to see that the church exists for missions. Our mission to reach the world is not to be the goal of one of various legitimate departments or programs of a local church. Rather, all church departments and programs are related to and need to result in advancing the cause of world mission. *The Church is not for the Church itself. The Church is for the world. Missions is the goal of the Church.*

Our churches need discipling, teaching and nurturing so that our people may experience greater wholeness and health. But is that wholeness only for our sakes and personal benefits? The answer is absolutely not! Genesis makes it perfectly clear, as does the rest of the Bible, that our blessings received, like in the case of Abraham and his descendants were given to them then, and are given to us now, so that we might bless others (Genesis 12:1-3). As we experience salvation and healing and grow in wisdom, we are increasingly being equipped to participate in world mission along with the worldwide network of the Body of Christ.

Corporately we are commissioned to go to all the people groups—every tribe, tongue, and people—with the covenant blessings of Christ. In short, we are to complete our task of preaching the Gospel of the kingdom to prepare for the King's return (Mt. 24:14).

Up to this point I have outlined the essential ingredients of a church. We should note that without the essential element of world mission to all the peoples of the earth, a fellowship or local church is not a church in the biblical sense of the word. Without missions, it is merely an ingrown parody of a church, a "hot tub church" where people are just looking at themselves and each other as they enjoy the blessings of the hot tub. It is true that many wonderful things can and do happen in Christian fellowships, but if the people are not outward looking, vitally reaching out to the world in evangelism and missions, they are not a church as God designed

it. Emil Brunner, the great Swiss theologian, said it well: "As fire is to burning, so mission is to Christ's Church."

Of course, there are many groups which lack mission spirit and understanding, and we call them "churches" anyway. These churches may have structures, departments, committees and

to child-care in the nursery—is done with the spirit of outreach and mission to the world. The world class church does not settle for being an institution with a variety of programs. It sees itself, first and foremost, as part of the kingdom movement and its advance.

Every local church should have a church planting/ church growth strategy, a multiplication strategy for starting other congregations in their region—the church's "Judea"—outside of one's immediate "Jerusalem." Such churches start working with other churches to help them grow and/or plant new ones.

Local churches can develop strong disciples

through intermediate spiritual preparation of its members. A key factor is the availability of a biblical discipleship course or training program, such as Master Life from the Southern Baptists or the Navigators "2-7 course." In such study programs, believers' spiritual gifts should be discovered so they can be placed in appropriate ministries.

One main reason why the Holy Spirit renewal movement is not responding faster to world evangelization is because it is not adequately growing spiritual disciples who understand the Lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives for the world. Not everyone who is saved automatically becomes a spiritual disciple. Programs need to exist in the church on the local level that equip people to become the kinds of disciples that grow and disciple others. Spiritual gifts needs to be understood as well because these relate to one's spiritual job description. A person's ministry is determined by one's motivational gifts,

## MODEL OF A WORLD CLASS CHURCH

graphic here

programs firmly in place and functioning, but all without the mission of God's kingdom. When the institutional spirit overrides the mission spirit in a church, and departments begin to play the competitive games that are common to worldly institutions—departments vying with one another for funds, for staff, and prominence—the preeminent purpose of the Church is lost and soon forgotten. People of such churches forget and/or are ignorant of the fact that all aspects of church life are to contribute to the coming of God's kingdom and His mission.

We need to distinguish the so-called churches which lack the missions heart from true mission active churches. I call the latter "world class churches." Such churches, connected to the world, as the Lord of the Church ordained it, are truly world class churches. Everything done in such churches—from singing in the choir



## Building the Home-Base

and so Christians need to be placed in the Body according to their gifts.

We are here concerned with the heart of the matter, the vision, and the spirit of a local church. This focus does not mean a “department of missions and evangelism” due to the fact that organizational structures are secondary to the spiritual dynamics of a given church. We are defining and focusing on the essence of Church life, the heartbeat of a given church. The church in a given local expression needs to *be* evangelism and missions because that is the essence of the Church. So everything a local church does must center on, and needs to contribute to, its redemptive worldwide mission. When we hold to a lesser view of the Church, we are not looking correctly at the Church through the interpretive grid of Scripture. Our vision in this case is limited or has been distorted.

As we consider our own congregation we might ask: Are we connected to the world, going to others, especially the unreached, with the Good News? If so, is my church only ministering in “same-culture” evangelism, staying in our own “Jerusalem and Judea”, instead of moving to the fields beyond? Reaching peoples in our day within “Westernized” societies (such as those in the urban centers of Latin America or Europe) is comparable of the early church in Acts going to neighboring Semitic culture of Samaria. The Lord’s mandate for us to go “beyond Samaria”—to the ends of the earth—means crossing greater barriers.

### Measuring Mobilization

A world class church, because of its heart, is mobilized to reach the world for Jesus Christ. As church leaders are moved by a vision of God’s eternal purpose and plan and guided by a biblical view of world evangelization, they will see and release the church to be organized as a mission base. Remember how the apostle Paul wrote to the church

in Rome saying he wanted to visit them, serve them, and that they could help him on his way to Spain. (Rom. 15:24) He believed in developing them as a “mission base” in order to send the apostolic team on to totally unevangelized places and nations. Likewise, every local church is to be a sending base for missions!

Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. (2 Cor. 10:15b-16a).

If all of this sounds foreign to you, and to the people of the church, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to generate the growth we need in our lives and in our churches. God wants us to be filled with zeal for His kingdom, and for His eternal handiwork, and He is glad to start with you to do it!

To make it happen, the Holy Spirit works in individual believers to bring us to a point of commitment, and then He spreads the vision through us to others. As our vision and desire grow, groups and people in the church will find ways to mobilize, learn to understand their spiritual gifts, seek and get the needed training, and begin to mobilize others. The Association of International Missions Services (AIMS) has established a set of criteria by which to measure a congregations’ progress in its initial mobilization. A church may be considered mobilized—sufficiently organized to have its missions launched—when it meets the following criteria:

1) A world class church prays for the lost world and adopts at least one unreached people, remaining in dedicated prayer on behalf of this people group.

The unreached peoples of the world will be reached as different groups of Christians take personal responsibility for at least one people group to have access to hear the Gospel. Once meaningful prayer has begun and initial research has been made, creative opportunities begin to appear, including ways

to make financial investments. A good initial goal for most churches would be to invest at least \$100 per month toward the evangelization of a particular unreached people. One church in the Midwest, after adopting a Muslim people group, challenged their people to collect loose change each day for this purpose. By this means, in one year they raised \$100,000! With that same funding plan they sent and supported a new missionary couple as health professionals to live and work among this Muslim people. As a by-product, these same people have become better evangelists in their neighborhoods back home. Through adopting an unreached people group, this church went beyond prayer into mobilizing their own members for outreach. They found they had resources beyond what they ever dreamed possible. The blessings of God were rich and wonderful in this case, as they will in each case when God’s people reach out in His name to the lost unreached of the world.

2) A world class church budgets at least 10% of its total funds received for use in cross-cultural missions, and one-fourth of that missions budget should be directed toward ministry to the truly unreached frontiers of missions. Cross-cultural missions can be local in cases where the church is targeting a different social/people group in their community. For example, churches may have a mission to local Vietnamese refugees, a mission that demands a special and very specific strategy to reach them due to culture and language barriers.

Giving ten percent of the congregation’s offerings to missions is an entry-level goal. From there, the church can aim at giving one third or more of their funds to missions. A church in Hampton Roads, Virginia, actually gives 60% to missions. A church in Toronto, Canada, also gives over 60% of their church budget to missions. When, in their history, it came time for them to purchase land for a new church, an unexpected

buyer purchased the old property for 5.5 million dollars, enabling them to build a new church plant, debt free, at a better location. God truly blesses mission churches!

When a church says it cannot give to missions because of expenses, debt, or due to whatever reason, it is hindering the blessings of God to flow to the world. It is withholding the seeds that are to be cultivated to grow into productivity for God for His glory. Such a church will rob itself of church growth in their own “Jerusalem” because of their lack of applying the revelation of God to what He wants them to be and do. Designating a significant amount to be specifically targeted for the unreached frontiers is a recognition of and commitment to the strategic need to reach the unreached peoples—those which have been neglected until now. The unreached peoples of the world have been overlooked even until now in spite of the fact that the Lord’s commission has always had them as its prime target—to disciple “all peoples.”

3) A world class church asks God for 10% or more of all its adult members to personally participate in a cross-cultural ministry, at least once in their Christian experience. There is no substitute for a “first-hand taste” of missions. All the reading and learning you can experience at home, or in a classroom, cannot compare to first-hand—face-to-face, cross-cultural ministry. This can happen through a short-term mission trip. One partner church of AIMS aspires to have all of its members go on a mission trip—at least once. Imagine, what an incredibly meaningful way to invest your vacation time and money! If even one of every ten believers were to participate in short-term missions, it would revolutionize the Church and Christians’ appreciation for local “Jerusa-

lem and Judea” evangelism would follow, as well as cross-cultural missions in our “Samaritans” as well as to the ends of the earth.

4) A world class church also asks God for 1-2% of its adult members to emerge as career missionaries or tentmakers. The local church must be the seedbed for missions. Congregations should be gathering before the Lord in worship, listening for God to tell them which of their members He is calling and would want to send out. The pattern is Acts 13. As we pray, we need to recall that the Moravians send out one missionary for every 67 members.

By “tentmakers” we mean those missionaries who use their skills in a trade or profession in order to support themselves in another country, usually gaining access to restricted areas or countries. Another ministry option is that of the “nonresidential missionary” or the “strategic coordinator.” These are missionaries who coordinate outreach to a restricted access area or country without actually taking up residence there themselves. For instance, from southern France a nonresidential missionary team (or couple) could effectively coordinate mission outreach to Muslims in northern Africa.

5) Every world class church also helps other churches become mobilized according to the previous four criteria. Churches help other churches by sharing the vision they have gained, as well as the difficulties they have overcome. We need a movement, a Great Commission movement, in which the people of God become alive to the biblical mission mandate in new ways—praying, giving, sending and going. Each world class church should cooperate with the broader body of Christ, tearing down walls and working in harmony with other brother and sisters.

## Conclusion

In Christ, mobilization of congregations for global missions is very possible—if we proceed with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and do it one step at a time. It is clear that our mission mandate, as God’s redeemed people, is to bless all the peoples of the earth, a task which is becoming more clearly defined by increased information on the cultures and peoples that still need to be reached.

As God’s people, living where we do, we have been blessed with many resources. Above all, in Christ we are heirs to every spiritual blessing. Inherent within each of these blessings is the seed of mission to the world and its realization. The Church needs to challenge the forces of darkness, to claim the promised triumph of the Bride of Christ, and prevail against the gates of hell that resist our progress.

What are the actual steps to building our home world missions bases? It is my conviction that God, in His infinite creativity, has a unique custom made plan for each local church. Nevertheless, we can observe general guidelines and specific resources from the experiences of others that I have shared in this article, while at the same time drawing conclusions and applications for our specific situations.

*Dr. Howard Foltz teaches world missions at Regent University and is president of the Association of International Mission Services (AIMS). This article is a reprint and revision of Chapter 5 of his book Triumph—Missions Renewal for the Local Church, Messenger Publishing House, Joplin, MO.*

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# Seven Dynamics for Advancing Your Church in Missions

by Larry Walker

**F**our trends are radically changing missions in North America. 1) The transition from the industrial age to the information age is changing the way people communicate and the way people are managed. 2) The rise of the Third World missionary force is changing the role of the North American mission industry. 3) The generational transition to the Baby Boom generation is forcing us to rethink our methods of motivation and management. 4) The rising influence of ethnic groups in North America is breaking down the dichotomy between local and foreign missions.

Unless the mission community in North America adjusts to these trends, missions will become more and more marginalized. Those agencies and churches that have been most successful in the past are at greatest risk. Their past successes may have blinded them to the changing shifts in missions. Frontier missions is at particular risk. We are facing the most difficult challenge to reach the unreached peoples, especially those located in the 10/40 Window, just as the influence of missions in North America is declining. The methods and techniques that fueled the tremendous post World War II missions mobilization effort are ineffective when used with contemporary audiences. If the North American mission industry is to continue to play a key role in reaching the unreached, we must change or die!

For more than twenty years I have wrestled with the issue of how to get contemporary American Christians involved in God's global cause. Gene Getz was an important mentor during my

seminary years. At Fellowship Bible Church in Dallas, I experienced a church that excelled at relating Christianity to contemporary America. As a mission pastor at that same church, I was able to experience the failures and successes of involving a boomer congregation in missions. Now as a mission consultant with APMC, I have been exposed to some of the best mission churches.

In this article I would like to describe four major obstacles to missions that the North American mission community is not adequately resolving. Then I would like to describe seven dynamics that I believe will help any church advance in missions.

Professor Howard Hendricks on one occasion said that "A problem well defined is a problem half solved." I would like to describe four obstacles to advancing churches in missions. I will then describe how the seven dynamics help to overcome those obstacles. These are not the only obstacles to missions, but from my perspective, they are the major contenders.

The first obstacle to advancing churches in missions is the common perception that mission is peripheral to Christianity. From pastors in the pulpit to Christians in the pew, most perceive missions to be the domain of super saints, hyperactive Christians or maybe for those who are just a little weird. The dynamics that follow describe how to demonstrate the centrality of missions to our faith and how to relate world missions to "normal folks" in the pew.

The second obstacle is the ineffectiveness of mission leaders and enthusiasts in relating missions to contempo-

rary audiences. We have met the enemy, and he is us! Some mission leaders have been so much a part of the mission community and for so long that they have become inept at communicating missions effectively to the non-involved. The dynamics that I will discuss helps mission enthusiasts and leaders to analyze their audience and develop methods and techniques that relate to where people are.

The third obstacle to advancing missions in churches is the nature of pastoral ministry which tends to focus on local needs. The spiritual gift of pastor-teacher does not naturally lend itself toward global issues. Pastors, by training and experience are generally ill equipped to lead their church in world missions. In this article we will look at missions in the local church from the viewpoint of the senior pastor and the crucial leadership role he plays and what can be done in mobilizing churches for world missions.

The fourth obstacle to advancing churches in missions is the influence of the North American culture on the evangelical church. Materialism, pluralism, individualism, existentialism, hedonism, etc... are major obstacles to getting North American Christians involved in missions. The "Seven Dynamics" that follow describes how to raise up counter-cultural "World Christians" who will attract others to a Christian lifestyle focused on reaching the world.

God's purpose and plan for mankind will always be spearheaded by visionary leadership. Although Abraham, Moses, Nehemiah and the apostle Paul had very different personalities and backgrounds, yet all had one thing in

## Seven Dynamics for Advancing Your Church

common: Each had received a compelling vision from God of what He wanted them to do. The dynamics that follow are antidotes to the obstacles for advancing God's mission in today's world.

### **Dynamic #1: Vision**

*Vision is the process by which a church explores and promotes its unique role in God's global cause.* As I have observed mission programs around the country, visionary leadership is the driving force common to all effective programs. I have found two crucial dimensions to leadership:

The first is a clear, compelling and growing understanding of what God is doing. Visionary leaders understand that the foundation to a mission active church is a congregation with a solid and growing biblical theology of missions. As believers begin to understand that God indeed is a missionary God, and that the Bible is a missionary book, it virtually becomes self evident that the church is to be mission active. A sound biblical theology will clearly demonstrate that "frontier missions" is not a side issue for the radical few, but rather is the center stage in a 4000 year long drama with the spot light on the Lord of the Universe who is declaring his glory to all nations—His wonders to all peoples.<sup>1</sup>

Luke 24:45 says that "Jesus opened their minds that they might understand the Scriptures." Christians today suffer the same kind of cultural and experiential biases that distort their vision and understanding of God's Word. Visionary leaders find resources to teach the biblical basis of missions beginning in Genesis. In addition, they find ways of telling the story of God's glory as it has developed since the first century, showing the incredible progress of missions throughout the years. Then, coming to our day, they demonstrate the fact that there are adequate resources to finish the remaining task.

The first dimension of vision,

explaining God's relentless and glorious redemptive purpose, provides the stimulus for a very natural and even spontaneous Christian response. It counters the pluralism and materialism of our North American culture and makes missions central to our Christianity. Once we understand that God's redemptive purpose is to redeem a people from every people in order to display His glory, then our natural response is: "If that is what God is doing, then what role can I and my church play?"

This leads us to the second dimension of vision. I would like to refer to Barna's definition of organizational vision:

"Vision is the clear mental image of a preferable future, imparted by God to His chosen servants. It is based upon an accurate understanding of God, yourself and your circumstance (George Barna, "The Power of Vision")

This second dimension of vision does two things. It gives direction and focus, and also energizes members of the church to become involved in the vision. Vision is critical in this information age because vision helps us to prioritize among a constant barrage of competing needs, opportunities and choices. A mission program with a clear vision makes world evangelization tangible and do-able even for one local church. Although no one church by itself can evangelize all the unreached peoples, yet, if a church were to adopt one people group, then the task becomes very specific and do-able. Because it is specific, individuals within a church can see how they can contribute personally, which can energize a whole congregation. *The bottom line is that resources follow vision.* James Engel has said that "Resources come where there is vision, and the big job is to raise vision." How can a church increase resources for missions? The problem is not lack of money. It's a lack of vision.<sup>2</sup>

### **Dynamic #2: Management**

*Management is the process of*

*leading and empowering the church to carry out vision.* The role of management leadership is to help individuals in the congregation find their part in the vision. This places the mission leadership in a very active role of recruiting individuals of every age to participate in the mission vision of the church. *Vision without management leads to frustration.*

This view of management is a departure from the traditional view of mission participation. The traditional challenge to churches has been "some can go, some can give, all can pray." I have learned that this view is limiting and even demotivating. Even the terms "goers" and "senders" are too simplistic. Missions used to be "long term" and "over there" and therefore limited to the professional missionary. While professionals are still needed, many opportunities now exist doing "short term" work, "right here" where lay people can become involved. Personal involvement is a primary motivation for contemporary audiences. The function of management leadership is to help every member to use his or her spiritual gifts and experiences to help carry out the mission vision of the church. Mission active churches find creative ways for getting individuals directly and personally involved in local and foreign cross-cultural missions. Short term missions, international students, and local ethnic ministries are among the most common methods used.

Although the management structure will differ from church to church, there is normally a "missions pro," either a volunteer or staff, who is the key vision imparter. The mission pro also has the ability to organize teams whose main purpose is to get different types of people involved to carry out the vision of the church. Joel Roberts, mission pastor at Evergreen Baptist Church in Rosemeade, California, has forty-seven different teams in his church involved in local domestic and foreign mission projects. Roberts says that missions has become the "in-thing"

for the church. Personal involvement on the part of members has been the main key. Incidentally, mission giving in this church has gone from \$70,000 to \$400,000 per year in just five years.

The management dynamic also includes a strategic plan. Effective mission programs have a written plan that includes a motto, a vision statement, core values, strategy and goals. Mission active churches do not fly by the seat of their pants! They know exactly where they are going and what they need to get there. Aubrey Malphurs's book, *"Developing a Vision for Your Ministry in the 21st Century,"* is very helpful in this regard to explain how to develop a strategic plan.

As a suggestion, one of the routes to getting people involved in frontier missions may be to give them a hands on exposure in regular missions. Then in the context of regular missions, people can be challenged with the needs of the unreached on the final frontiers. Personal involvement is key to mobilizing churches for missions, including frontier missions!

### **Dynamic #3: Spiritual Disciplines**

*This is the process of providing the spiritual vitality that executes the vision and strengthens the management.* Just as all believers must dedicate themselves to personal spiritual disciplines in order to progress spiritually, in the same way, every church must dedicate itself to certain mission related spiritual disciplines in order to maintain and grow an outward mission focus. Any mission program will fail if it is not built on healthy spiritual disciplines.

Each discipline serves as an antidote to cultural forces that are undermining mission involvement. Corporate prayer for world evangelization serves as an antidote to the secular influence of American culture. Local evangelism serves as an antidote to the

pluralism of our society. Mission giving breaks the grip of materialism. Sending missionaries, from one's own congregation, makes missions very personal and tangible and counteracts the self-centeredness of our American way of life. Helping to mobilize other congregations in missions helps mission leadership in the church to give away their expertise instead of hoarding it for themselves.

Adopting an unreached people group is a great spiritual discipline for a

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## **It is our conviction that every ministry in the church ultimately exists to help the church fulfill its role in world evangelization!**

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church because it forces us to focus on the task remaining instead of focusing on oneself or on one's own missionary. Praying, witnessing, giving, sending, mobilizing, and adopting are all spiritual disciplines that counteract the negative forces of our culture and nurture our participation in God's global cause! There is a spiritual dynamic at work in each of these disciplines that gives spiritual blessings that cannot be understood nor explained naturally.

### **Dynamic #4: Integration**

*This dynamic makes missions a natural outflow of the life of the church.* Integration helps overcome the tendency to marginalize missions to a department in the church. If God is a missionary God, and the Bible is a missionary book, then missions should be a natural and central part of the life of the church, involving everyone in the church. The intent of the integration dynamic, then, is to make mission education and participation a spontaneous part of every age group and program

in the church. The intent is not to compete for people and finances, nor is it to try to make missionaries out of everyone. However, it is our conviction that every ministry in the church ultimately exists to help the church fulfill its role in world evangelization!

The integration dynamic accepts the fact that people have different receptivity levels. Everyone is not going to be a mission enthusiast over night. There always will be people open to missions, and those who are closed to missions. The integration dynamic allows for these various levels of receptivity and deals with people where they are.

It is critical that mission enthusiasts refrain from projecting, unrealistic expectations on people. Mission leaders have a special inclination towards missions that God uses to mobilize others. But if this inclination and zeal is overdone, mission leadership can very easily come across as dogmatic or fanatical. The goal is to attract people to missions, not to drive them away. Mission enthusiasts have been known to do great damage to the cause by their overzealous attitudes and approaches.

### **Dynamic #5: Leadership**

*This dynamic is helping pastors and boards to lead the church in missions.* Obviously, the pastoral staff and board of a church play a key role in advancing a church in world missions. Unfortunately, the staff and board are ill equipped to fulfill this responsibility. It is important to see why pastors are not naturally equipped to fulfill this role and to understand what can be done to help expand their mission vision.

Carl Palmer, Senior Pastor at Cedar Mills Bible Church in Portland, Oregon, has helped me to understand the difficulties pastors face in this area. Palmer was the mission pastor at Los Gatos Christian Church, and therefore is

## Seven Dynamics for Advancing Your Church

in a unique position to help us understand pastors. Palmer says that pastors are primarily shepherds and are overwhelmed by local needs. Furthermore, they lack training and confidence in missions. They lack the support of the mission team. Unless you have been a pastor, you do not understand the pressures placed on pastors by the multiple interest groups, each with their own pressing agendas.

Palmer suggests the following ten practical steps to correct this situation over the long haul:

- 1). Define a realistic and balanced picture of pastoral commitment to missions (don't overstate the case).
- 2). Explain how missions can be a blessing to the congregation.
- 3) Establish confidence in the effectiveness of the mission program.
- 4) Develop a 5-7 year plan for missions in the church (try to be patient).
- 5) Pray for the pastor, not just his mission vision or lack of it.
- 6) Plan to influence him through submitting to him.
- 7) Give him scholarships from the mission budget to key mission events.
- 8) Send the pastor and his wife to the mission field frequently (from the mission budget).
- 9) Pass on key books to him and mission resources (sermon helps etc.).
- 10) Involve the pastor in mission decisions, even if he isn't particularly interested.

It is critical to understand the difficulties pastors face and become a positive influence and help for missions.

### **Dynamic #6: Modeling**

*The principle here is that mission is best imparted to others through modeling.* Missions are a lifestyle. It revolves around passion, commitment, resolve and many other intangible values. A lifestyle is best transferred from person to person through modeling. It is the biblical pattern for transferring our faith

from parents to children (Deut. 6). Modeling is the most effective way of transferring mission vision from one person to another.

There are a number of ways a church can expose its people to good mission models. I know missionaries who are not good public speakers, but who are very effective in small group home meetings. When you think of it, short term missions is effective when participants rub shoulders with missionaries and nationals. Some of the ways to expose people to good mission models are through the pastor who can model a World Christian attitude to the congregation, or missionaries and Third World leaders can be brought into Sunday School meetings, home meetings, conferences etc.. Mission committee members and mission leadership can model a World Christian attitude to others wherever they are. Conferences can expose church leaders and members. Churches can mentor other churches in world missions. Note that good mission models always have at least three characteristics of compassion, competence, and consistency.

### **Dynamic #7: Contextualization**

*This dynamic relates missions to contemporary audiences.* Contextualization is an important mission concept that needs to be applied in Borneo but also in Burbank. However, for all intents and purposes, I believe the mission community violates contextualization when it comes to mobilizing churches in missions. Until recently, the mission industry in North America has largely been the concern of the pre-baby boom generation. We are facing a major crisis in the next few years because Christian baby boomers and busters have shown little interest in missions as it has been presented.

Jerry Nelson, the missions pastor at College Avenue Baptist Church in San Diego, told me recently that 85% of his mission budget comes from people

over 55 years old. And this is a boomer-buster church! The "graying" of the mission program in churches is a strong trend across the nation, that many churches are only recently seeing.

Unless we begin to look at the boomers and busters as genuine sub-cultures with distinctive values and assumptions and begin to re-engineer our methods and communication techniques in terms of their culture, missions will become increasingly marginalized in the North American Church. In the words of the apostle Paul, we should seriously consider: "I became a Baby Boomer in order that I might win the Baby Boomers." The dramatic contrast in the backgrounds and values of these two generations have greatly expanded the traditional "generation gap" between them. The information age is adding additional complexities to the different ways these two generations view and interact with the world.

The mission community has been slow to take this gap seriously. I believe we need to apply a missionary perspective and strategy to this problem. We need to analyze the boomers as we would any other culture and develop appropriate strategy, methodology and techniques accordingly. The mission community is dominated by the pre-boomer values of loyalty, duty and responsibility. These values helped this generation to excel during the Great Depression and World War II. We are greatly indebted to the accomplishments and values of this past generation. But to use those values to mobilize missions to the boomers and busters is to appeal to their weaknesses rather than their strengths. It just doesn't work. I suggest three expressed values that are particularly effective in relating missions to boomers and busters.

The first value is the idea of personal success. This value has evolved as the "pig in a python" generation has grown up. The hippies of the sixties said that personal success was "changing the establishment." As their dreams unraveled

during the seventies this value turned into materialism. Now, in the nineties, the boomers are re-evaluating what success is all about. The status symbol in the eighties was the BMW, in the nineties it is a job! Boomers are realizing that life in the fast lane was not all it was cracked up to be. We have an opportunity to help them find true success!

As Christians we know that ultimate success, significance and fulfillment are found only in God. If God is a missionary God, then our significance can be found in participating in God's global cause. In the words of Jim Elliot, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, in order to gain what he cannot lose." We want to help boomers see that there is no greater cause for their lives than world evangelization!

The second boomer value is the importance of fun, challenge, and adventure. Boomers have expressed this value in entrepreneurship, hedonism and risk taking. Can we find a biblical expression to this and a substitute for this value? Hebrews 12:2 says "Jesus, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross..." The omniscient God-Man, when he set his face like flint toward Jerusalem, knowing exactly what he would be facing, did it for the joy of it. Certainly, obedience was an important part of the picture but don't forget the joy!

There is one common trait I have found among missionaries. They love what they do! In my own experience as a missionary in Guatemala, my family and I experienced fear, depression, lice, worms and an endless list of discomforts and sacrifices. But we all look back at those years as truly the greatest in

our lives. For there is no joy compared to the pleasure of being a part of what God is doing and wants done. When we participate with God in his global cause, the nations get the gospel, God gets the glory and we get the joy. That is a great arrangement!

The third value is personal auton-

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**As Christians we know that ultimate success, significance and fulfillment are found only in God. If God is a missionary God, then our significance can be found in participating in God's global cause.**

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omy. This value is very important in understanding how to manage boomers and busters, leading them to get them involved in missions. The pre-boomer generation functioned generally under a hierarchical management structure. That worked well because loyalty, duty and responsibility were their expressed values. The boomers and busters, however, respond better to participatory management. Therefore it is important to give as much authority to them, along with the responsibility. If we involve the boomers and busters in planning for missions, they will be more interested in its implementation!

The pre-boomers had the attitude, give me a job, it doesn't matter what it is. The boomers want a job that fits their gifts and experience. Boomers need to be taken on a "niche hunt," helping them find their gifts and place. The apostle Paul alluded to this when he said that the foot should not do what the

hand was made to do, etc.

We do not know the "ins and outs" of what world missions will look like as carried out by boomers and busters. But I do know that it will be different than it has in the past. Some of us have the privilege of being paradigm pioneers. I believe with all my heart

that boomers and busters will play a key role in declaring God's glory to every nation on the face of the earth. The North American Church has the gift of entrepreneurship and the ability of sharing it with the global Body of Christ. It is my conviction and hope that entrepreneurial boomers and busters, partnering with the Third World missionary force, will finish the task of world evangelization in this generation by

AD 2000, or soon there after. So may it be to God's glory!

#### Footnotes

1. The "Perspectives Course", *The 4000 Year Connection*, by Don Richardson and *Destination 2000* by Bob Sjogren are examples of proven resources for believers nurturing a biblical world view by demonstrating the centrality of missions to Scripture.
2. The best source I have found for developing organizational vision is a book by Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century*. It explains how to develop vision in a very practical step by step approach.

*Larry Walker is regional director of ACRM in the Southwest. He and his family live in Escondido, Calif.*



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# Mobilizing Churches for Frontier Missions

by George Miley

Completing world evangelization will require a mobilization in both the “going” and “sending” of cross-cultural church planters on a scale broader than anything yet seen. One way to approach such mobilization is to think in terms of activating an army one individual at a time. On the other hand, if we could activate entire churches, the dimensions of this movement would expand exponentially.

In pursuing this thought, two clarifications are in order. First, thinking in terms of the total mobilization of churches does not inherently suggest bypassing mission agencies. More and more churches and mission agencies are crafting partnerships with integrity which affirm and release the grace our Father has given to both.

Second, words unfortunately carry meanings beyond those which a writer may wish to convey. Certainly “church” is such a word. When today’s Christians, especially in the West, hear the word “church,” the picture which comes to their minds is largely inadequate. It needs to be re-worked and elevated. The church is the most beautiful of God’s creations on earth (Eph. 1:22-23), filled with creative, gifted people (I Cor. 12:14ff.), and pregnant with unrealized potential. The principles of body life and ministry which empowered the 18th century Moravian community which gave birth to the most significant Protestant missionary thrust of their time are being sought after today by a small but growing number of local churches.

## Why mobilize churches?

### 1. Ownership.

If you were to arrive at your church for Sunday morning services, only

to discover that your facility had been destroyed by fire the night before, you and the rest of the body of believers would be thrust into some degree of trauma. You would have to deal with the question, “How are we going to respond to this emergency?” As a church you would invest time, energy, skills and money which you had not previously planned to invest to provide the church with another appropriate facility.

Hearing of your misfortune, how might I as a brother in Christ respond? Certainly with empathy, and perhaps with prayer. Maybe even with some small amount of financial assistance. But the dimensions of my response would be small compared to what I could and would do if that happened to my church.

Why? Not because I am hardened or unresponsive or uncaring. It really comes down to the correlation between ownership and investment. The world is full of needs. Whatever we say, in the end we find a greater capacity to invest of ourselves and resources in the areas where we experience ownership.

Another word for mobilization is investment. If all peoples on earth are to be blessed of God, there must be significant, grassroots investment on the part of God’s people in the process... investment of time, energy, gifting and resources. And the key to my ability to invest is my sense of ownership.

In grappling with this issue as a leader in a mission agency, I remember a discussion with a fellow mission executive which proved to be a watershed experience for me. “George,” he said, “world evangelization is a problem. We missionaries have bought the problem. But the solution lies beyond the scope of our resources and competency to solve. Actually, it is not our prob-

lem. It is the Church’s problem.”

The key to world evangelization is decentralization. Imagine what might happen if we were to take the overall task remaining, divide it into small, definable, doable bits and pieces, and then authentically transfer ownership of these small bits to local groups of believers. Imagine these local groups made up of godly, gifted people, released to design innovative solutions for their part in the overall task.

### 2. Gifting.

For many years I directed the ministry of missionaries on the LOGOS and DOULOS ships with Operation Mobilization. The responsibility to staff a ship quickly confronts you with the need for a much wider diversity of gifting and life experience than those of us have who were merely trained in Greek, Hebrew and theology.

God has graced His people with a wide diversity of giftings. The overall process of planting living and reproducing churches among unreached peoples is a complex process. It calls for many diverse gifts. The total pool of giftings in the Body of Christ must be applied meaningfully to the task remaining.

The vast majority of believers will find their God-given roles in world evangelization, not in the going, but in the sending. It is in the sending aspect that their giftings will be brought on line. The sending process calls forth such gifts as: serving, teaching, encouraging, hospitality, giving, leading, showing mercy, pastoring, healing, helping, administration, etc.

Over 99% of all believers will not leave home and join a secondary organizational structure. The only way they will find meaningful ownership and participation is by finding it right

where they are... in their churches. If we can design opportunities for them to participate in ways they are called and gifted of God, they will pay for the privilege of taking part.

Those who will be called to go will find most unreached peoples living in social and political systems where the vocational role of “missionary” is not understood or trusted. Many will go in “secular” vocational roles such as: students, engineers, social scientists, investors, teachers, consultants, lawyers, doctors, business people, health professionals, etc. We might ask: Where might we begin to look for these kinds of goers? The obvious answer is... in local churches.

### 3. Groups.

Most believers will only find real ministry fulfillment in the context of group or corporate ministry. Expressions of Christianity are powerfully influenced by one’s surrounding culture. I remember an evening meeting in Germany where I was waiting to preach while another member of our team was ministering in music. She had just moved to Germany after years on the DOULOS, and had practiced for a week on her song so she could sing it in German. When she finished she sat down next to me, and while I was being introduced she leaned over and whispered, “They didn’t like it.” My answer was immediate. “You have not yet learned to read a German response.”

She had just come from intensive ministry in Brazil. Brazilian believers are very expressive. They may shower you with complements, even hugs and kisses, regardless of how much they liked what you did. But Germans might be moved to the depths of their emotions and never flinch.

We Americans have been formed by the culture of individualism. We hardly understand group dynamics anymore. This negatively impacts our ability to understand such realities as group life and group ministry. It contributes to our inadequate understanding

of the Church. When we were born again God placed us by His Spirit into a family. We tend to have real difficulty getting in touch with this reality.

We think of ministry as something carried out individually. But recall a list of ministry giftings, and it becomes clear that most of us are gifted to minister corporately. How does someone who wants to serve do so all on his or her own? What about someone gifted to teach, to administer, to lead, or to show mercy? It is as we are brought into the experience of “body,” and as the group begins to find its common purpose in God, that my individual gifting can be fully engaged. The giftings of my brothers and sisters can now be applied to the areas where I am inadequate without their contributions.

### 4. Teams.

We can think of group sending as being done by churches, and group going as being done by teams. Ultimately the commitment to effective mobilization confronts us with the questions, “To what end are we mobilizing? What is to be accomplished?” Reduced to its essence, completing world evangelization calls for a focus on establishing or planting churches among the remaining un-churched peoples on earth. The New Testament approaches this through the use of teams. There are at least four compelling advantages to team ministry:

#### —Diversity of gifting

Church planting among an unreached people is a complex activity. The overall process calls forth a wider diversity of gifting than any one individual enjoys by him/herself. But a group of believers working together has all the potential for applying such diversity to a common mission.

#### —Personal nurture

Church planting among an unreached people is also a costly activity. Living cross-culturally, weathering disappointments, doing spiritual battle all take their toll. Serving together with others allows for mutual encouragement.

#### —Character development

Working together with others is not always encouraging and supportive. It inevitably calls for a transparency and vulnerability which can be scary and painful. The commitment to work out relational differences in the context of Christian love is essential to the ongoing process of character maturation. How effective will we be in planting healthy churches if we cannot work together harmoniously with others?

#### —Modeling community

Godly churches are the most beautiful thing on earth! The Father has chosen the church as the bride for His Son. When a church is healthy, her beauty becomes a powerful evangelistic tool. One of the most convincing ways to expose people to Jesus is to bring them into contact with the believing community with Jesus residing in their midst. Teams can provide this opportunity, being thought of as churches in microcosm.

So what does all this have to do with mobilization? If it is teams we want to mobilize, how and where are effective teams developed? It is far more than several people being in the same geographic location. A team has a common purpose and a relational bonding, both of which are developed over time in an environment of deepening trust and honesty. Powerful teams can be born and nurtured in the midst of the shared life of community oriented churches.

### 5. The End Product.

The mature fruit of evangelistic ministry takes us beyond individual decisions to Christian community. The New Testament describes the Church as being more than a location where we go to attend meetings or sign up for programs. The Church is a family of relational commitments, a body of interdependent ministers. If churches are what we want to see established, how do we learn about healthy church life?

Not long after I went to India I came across a powerful church planting

movement carried out entirely by Indians. At that time there were something like 200 living churches scattered throughout India who were part of this work. I was especially struck, having just come from a seminary in the US, with how these Indian leaders trained their future pastors. Once young men with potential for church leadership had been identified, they were brought to a mature church and allowed to be part of the life of that body. They participated in early morning prayers, Bible study, open air evangelism, and served the body in the most simple ways.

These future church leaders remained until those overseeing their development felt they were ready to be released. Church planters and leaders were trained in the context of local church life.

The awesome calling upon Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles (unreached peoples), established in Acts 9, was not released until Acts 13. The years alone in the desert were an important part of Paul's preparation. But so was the time in Acts 11 and 12 when Paul and Barnabas ministered as part of the church at Antioch. Having both come from the outside, they were authentically grafted into the life of that body. During the season of ministry there Paul honed an understanding of the realities of church life upon which his church planting ministry, recorded in Acts 13 and onwards, was based.

Are we comfortable to send out church planters who themselves have little proven experience in vital church life? Churches can be centers of mobilization for church planting teams focused on unreached peoples. Church life is best learned in the midst of church life.

#### 6. Commitment.

My wife and I once visited a wonderful missionary couple who had been working among Muslims for many years. We had known them during most of

that time, and wanted to learn about their ministry. Soon into our visit it was clear that they wanted to talk about their own personal needs. They were a hurting family.

In the course of our conversations about real human pain, we asked about their home church. "We are supported by 30 different churches," was their response. It was obvious that they did not have an authentic home church. During a time of personal

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## **I believe that if we will cultivate ownership of world evangelization within church fellowships, we will reap a mobilization explosion vast in its dimensions and awesome in its release.**

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need, there was no sending constituency to whom they could turn. They were alone.

All too often a missionary's sending constituency consists of a couple hundred names on a prayer letter list. This group has almost no capacity to respond meaningfully to the long-term personal needs which years of tough cross-cultural church planting can leave in their wake. If world evangelization is the responsibility of every believer, then those who go need sending communities who are as committed to them and to their mission as they are personally.

During the last gathering of the Antioch Network, as church leaders solved problems together, one of the issues we spent in-depth time discussing was the need for continuity in church leadership. The vision of a local church developing and sending a church planting team to an unreached people is not for every church. Specifically, church leadership must be as committed to this mission as the team is itself.

One leader told about the sense

of calling his church has for Bosnian Muslims. A congregation of barely 400 people, they have sent over 100 on short-term trips to minister to Bosnian war refugees in Croatia. As a result, a number of these Muslim people have given their lives to Christ, and a permanent church planting team has been formed. Their target is Sarajevo.

"We are sending our people into a war zone," he said. "As elders, we cannot guarantee their safety. Their commitment to Christ and His kingdom is obvious in their obedience. It is only right that our commitment to them and to this mission match their commitment."

#### **In conclusion**

A consensus is emerging that we are on the verge of mega-changes in how we think about and approach world missions. The number of new missionary candidates in many places is down. Giving to missions is soft. A maturing population of Christians has more and more difficulty in finding meaningful ways to connect with our traditional approaches. They want to participate and want ownership. They sense they also have something significant to offer. And they want to give it in the context of authentic relationships. I believe that if we will cultivate ownership of world evangelization within church fellowships, we will reap a mobilization explosion vast in its dimensions and awesome in its release.

*George Miley ministered among unreached peoples in Asia, Europe, Latin America and Africa during 20 years with Operation Mobilization. He is now president of Antioch Network, a fellowship of local churches, who are developing church planting teams to unreached peoples.*

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# The Turkmen: An Unreached People

by Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse

This Central Asian people say about themselves, "Look at the heart of a horse. It is big and tough. No wonder the horse is a fearless animal—feeling no emotions. Then look at the heart of a man. It is small and soft. No wonder he is easily frightened and hurt." To strengthen their easily frightened hearts, the men of this people devour raw chicken hearts to strengthen and enlarge their own.

Only a hundred years ago, Europeans held that this people is "more like wild beasts than men, who have no sense of fear and will never submit. Even their women and children will die fighting." Although the former USSR in 1924 claimed them as Russian citizens, consistently they were a problem as to taxes and conscripting into the Soviet army. The Turkmen are a proud people who, as a people group, have never really been loved by anyone, they have suffered much, and worse, they have never been approached with the love of Jesus Christ.

Since the 10th century AD, Turkmenia has been invaded regularly by the Mongols, Persians and other peoples. Turkmen have developed military skills. Many still maintain a strong nomadic lifestyle. In the 1800s, they became a dreaded people of Central Asia, with a reputation as marauding brigands who preyed upon unsuspecting caravans and indulged in slave trading.

In Turkmenistan, some three million Turkmen live around the edges of the Black Sand Desert. They herd sheep and goats, grow mostly cotton and weave and sell perhaps the finest carpets in Central Asia. Another two million live in surrounding countries such as Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, with refugees in Pakistan, Germany and the USA.

In the arid remoteness of Turkmenistan, the Turkmen have been isolated from the rest of the world. In fact, some who were displaced by the fighting in Afghanistan in the 1980s, were shocked to find that their language and religion were not the only in the world. While many live in cities such as the cosmopolitan capital of Ashkabad, (population 517, 000) most still live subsistence life as semi-nomads.

All traditional Turkmen claim to be Muslims, while others, due to 70 years of Soviet domination, claim to be atheists. In most cases Islam is only a thin veneer over the old animistic beliefs and practices involving mediums, shamans, magic, charms and curses that describe their daily lives.

## An Unreached-Hidden People

The Turkmen have not heard the gospel! But with the fall of Communism in 1992, a window of great opportunity has opened. Whole countries are capitalizing on the opportunity to influence the Turkmen. As Christians, what will be our part in seeing that the Turkmen hear the true way of Jesus Christ—the way that will fulfill their cultural heritage. The few Christian workers in Turkmenistan need God's refreshing and encouragement. Pray that more Christians will join them in ministry to Turkmen.

Only parts of the Bible are available in Arabic (translated in 1884) and the Gospel of John in Russian Cyrillic Script (1982). Translation of the N.T. in Turkmen (now the national language) has just been completed and translation of the O.T. is in process. But they have no Christian church! Among the more than four million Turkmen worldwide, only a few families are Christian.

## Prayer for the Turkmen

\* The Quran has been translated in Turkmen. Pray for the recent translating the N.T. in Turkmen, and the completion of the O.T. Pray for large scale distribution (sowing) of God's Word in all of Turkmenistan.

\* Pray for more laborers to be called to reach the Turkmen; that missionaries may discover innovative and culturally sensitive ways to reach them.

\*The Turkmen are searching for identity. Cults, secularism, resurgence of Islam are attempting to fill the void created by their Independence in 1991. Pray that barriers to the gospel may be overcome and that the Turkmen may find their identity in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

\* Pray for the leaders of Turkmenistan to govern justly, and that some would come to Christ. Pray that the strong family ties in the culture may be vehicles for the gospel.

\* Pray for the release of the Turkmen from the grips of superstition and the occult, that spiritual forces beneath the religion of Islam may be broken.

\* Pray for the very small band of Christian Turkmen. Ask the Lord to give them courage and joy as they seek to serve Him among their people.

## For more Information

More information on the Turkmen is available such as prayer and intercession guides, videos, a summary report on Turkmen culture and books and magazine articles. Contact the Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse in Colorado Springs, CO.; Caleb Project in Littleton, CO.; Anglican Frontier Missions in Richmond, VA.; Frontiers in Mesa, AZ.; People International in Pueblo, CO.

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