

Nine Game-Changers for Global Missions

Trends that Shape the Future

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Overview:

Article Summary

After interviews with 50 leading missional leaders engaged in global outreach the following nine trends emerged that could shape the future of missions: cities, mutuality, partnering, investing in leaders, combining good news and good deeds, greater financial accountability, business as mission, focus, and technology.



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Nine Game-Changers for Global Missions

One hundred years ago, if you had the capacity to survey every person in the world regarding religious belief, you would have discovered that in the year 1900 34% of the world's 1.65 billion people had checked the box "Christian" in one of its dominant forms of Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox. One hundred years later, with the explosion of conversions all over Africa, Latin America and Asia, with prolific church planting strategies and effective evangelistic outreaches like the Jesus film, the percentage of Christians is still at 34%. With our current population near 6.5 billion people there are, certainly, many more Christians today than in the year 1900; but the percentage has not changed. To create a different future--to change the trajectory of the church-- we need to think differently and act differently.

In 2009 I personally interviewed around 50 leaders of large churches that were effectively engaged in global outreach. It was a fascinating educational experience to hear what these externally focused leaders were thinking and doing. Each leader brought his or her passion and insight to the conversation. Each also expressed a desire to learn from others who walked in their global shoes. It is a new



Externally Focused leaders gather to discuss ways they are effectively engaging in global outreach

Nine trends that will shape the future of mission

Author William Gibson observes that "The future is already here – it's just not evenly distributed."¹ All around us are examples of innovators and early adopters who have discovered new principles—new and more effective ways of thinking, being and doing that have yet to become the dominant or prevailing way of living. After interviewing 50 leading missional leaders engaged in global outreach the following nine trends emerged that could shape the future of missions:

cities, mutuality, partnering, investing in leaders, combining good news and good deeds, greater financial accountability, business as mission, focus, and technology.

1. Cities

A little over 100 years ago, fewer than 8% of the world's population lived in cities. As of May 2007, more than half of the world's population lives in cities and this is a trend that will never be reversed. If this is the case, we need to consider new ways to engage the city. Urbanization refers to a process in which an increasing proportion of an entire population lives in cities and the suburbs of cities. Fueled by a desire for economic advancement, people are coming to the cities of the world looking for better job opportunities. In the past few years in China, for instance, with the move toward a capital-driven economy, between 90 and 300 million people have moved from the hinterland into the burgeoning cities of China. These are numbers "even at the low end match the entire workforce of the United States."² This is the largest migration in human history.³ To accommodate this migration, which is fueling China's

factories, China is building cities from scratch. “China has between 100 and 160 cities with populations of 1 million or more (America, by contrast, has nine).”⁴

Today there are over 400 cities with populations over one million and over half the world’s population now are urban dwellers. “By 2015 there will be more than 225 cities in Africa, 903 in Asia and 225 in Latin America...[that] will have more than 1 million people in each.”⁵ Urban missiologist Ray Bakke makes this astute observation, “Because missions is no longer across the ocean and geographically distant; it is across the street and is culturally distant, in our cities and in cities on all six continents. In reality we have moved from a world of about 200 nations to a new world of some 400 world-class cities.”⁶

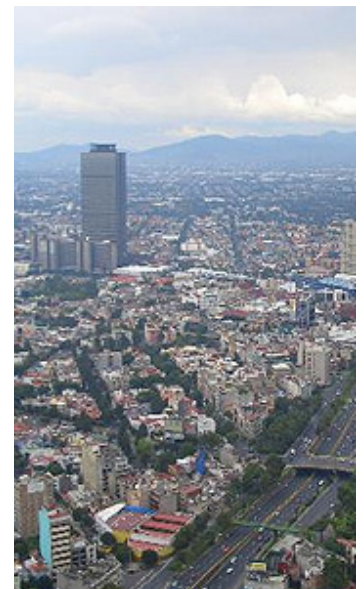
I recently met with pastors and Christian leaders who wanted to talk about city transformation in Italy. I have been thinking a lot about cities and talking with city leaders from around the world for the past several years (and actually wrote a book with my good friend, Sam Williams,

called *To Transform a City: Whole Church, Whole Gospel, Whole City* (Zondervan, September 2010)).

While in Florence, I met with a good friend of mine, Greg Lillestrand who was on the brink of accepting a new position with Campus Crusade for Christ that would allow him to concentrate on cities—his growing passion. According to Greg, “the “10/40 Window” has been a significant missions call for the past few decades to the unreached people groups of the world. This important task must be completed. In many ways the 10/40 window is the heartbeat of 20th century missionaries. The missional challenge of the 21st century is the city. It is the new “10/40 window” of the next generation. Fundamentally it is a different challenge than impacting the unreached in the remote places of the world since the unreached world is migrating into cities. Because 80 percent of western world missionaries did not grow up in an urban environment, this is a high learning challenge for the Body of Christ.” Each city is divided into three sectors—the public sector (government), the

private sector (business) and the social sector (human service and religious organizations). Within these three sectors are seven “domains” or channels of cultural influence:

- Education—Entities that engage in teaching and training
- Arts / Entertainment—Entities that consciously produce or arrange sounds, colors, forms, movements, or other elements in a manner that affects the sense of beauty / entities that afford pleasure, diversion, or amusement
- Government—Entities (local, regional, or federal) that serve the greater common good of society by restraining evil and promoting the good
- Religion—Religious or non-profit service organization, such as churches, synagogues, mosques, United Way, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.
- Family—The fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children
- Media—Entities that transmit information to the masses via radio, television, print or Internet
- Business—Enterprises that engage in the sale of goods or services.



As of May 2007, more than half of the world’s population lives in cities and this is a trend that will never be reversed

Tom Mullis, director of global outreach at **Perimeter Church** in Duluth, GA (www.goperimeter.org) is giving direction to Perimeter's effort in engaging those 400 world-class cities with populations of over a million people. Their strategy is to,

“partner with externally focused churches around the world to increase their capacity to develop leaders and build bridges of influence into public sector, private sector, and to those in greatest need to bring their cities into a transforming encounter with the kingdom of God.”

The Bible may begin in a garden but it ends in a city. For a closer look at ways Perimeter Church is engaging the cities of the world, watch this short vodcast: *Shifting Missions to World Class Cities: A New Ripple Effect?*

Perimeter Church is partnering with churches around the world to increase their capacity to develop leaders and build bridges of influence into public sector and private sector.



2. Mutuality

The future of missions will be The reshaped by mutuality between the East and West, North and South as both sending and receiving nations. Because there are vibrant believers and thriving churches in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eurasia, and even the Middle East, the West is no longer the saving force in world missions. This is underscored by the fact that some missiologists note that the gospel is growing in nearly every part of the world but the United States! Can we learn anything from Korea on prayer, from China on house churches, from Africa on worship? Mutuality reflects a shift from the one up / one down relationships stemming from a colonial approach to missions. Bishop Desmond Tutu complained that “When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, ‘Let us pray.’ We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.”⁷ Hopefully those days are behind us. Today there is a need for mutual respect and mutual learning. Missionaries from the west come not just to give but also to receive as true peers. And that’s the challenge. As one missions pastor said so well, “My biggest opportunity is to be a resourced, educated white guy and submit to a God-called foreigner who needs you.”

Matt Olthoff, mobilization pastor at **Mariners Church** in Irvine, CA (www.marinerschurch.org) notes, “there is a paradigm shift towards reciprocity that is taking place. What does it mean to come to the table as equals? The West is typically loud, directive and the one that leads by bringing resources to the table. But with 40% of our wealth disappearing overnight we’ve lost our biggest means of what we bring to the table.

Secondly the church is growing in leaps in bounds in developing countries while western church is dying. We in the West have always been givers but we need to learn to be receivers. Reciprocity is not about missions but this is about the church in community. When you come to the global table you realize that Africa and Asia have different inroads for reaching those people groups. African pastors reaching Africans in England... For us it is relationships that lead to partnerships.”⁸

Stacey Campbell, executive pastor at **Christ Community Church** in Greeley, CO (www.cccgreeley.org), is surprised by how much he and people from his church learn from their international partners through mutuality and partnering. He tells of one of their partners whose vision is to plant a million churches and has been arrested multiple times for his faith, and fully expects to die for his faith. “We have strong partnerships with strong leaders in these countries—people on the ground and we follow their lead. We probably learn more, are challenged more, and are provoked more by our partners than they are from us. They get raw end of the deal. One of my buddies just got back from Syria and told me, “Over here we live for Jesus. Over there they die for Jesus.”

Scott White, pastor of global outreach at **Lake Avenue Church** in Pasadena, CA (www.lakeave.org), tells how he navigates in the new world of mutuality and partnerships: “I like to ask questions, listen and learn because of the incredible challenge we in the western missions church face in terms of humility. This past century has been our era of missions through the organizations like the IMB (Southern Baptist’s International Missions Board), Campus Crusade, etc., but now we need a new

humility. In the past, partnership was us leading and you walking two steps behind us. In our post-Christian world the opportunity to be a missional church is to learn from missional church overseas. They can teach us to be a pilgrim people, and its imperative for us to relearn how to be a missional church, we have a missional church models overseas which we can learn from. We can be their students as we have been their teachers. Models are not as transferable as before but principles like humility, availability and being incarnational are eternal. We have an opportunity to be blessed by them and learn from them if we are willing. Most of the training we have is for a different era. We need to think differently or we will be confined to the equivalent of making missionary buggy whips.”¹⁰

Tim Senff of Crossroads Church in Cincinnati, OH (www.crossroads.net) unpacks what mutuality looks like in their partnership with their partner church, Charity & Faith Mission Church, in Mamelodi South Africa, a township of a million people, northeast of Pretoria. Moved by the AIDS crisis in Africa, Crossroads stepped up to the plate by raising \$750,000 to build an AIDS hospice in South Africa,¹¹ providing free medical care for AIDS patients. Although they led with a project they followed up with

relationships.

“Relationships changed the game for our people.”

You can hear about problems like HIV/AIDS and poverty in Africa, but when our people had faces and names for those problems, and began to know African heroes who are fighting those problems every day, that’s when a new chapter began for us,” says Tim. “We’ve organized seven big trips and have sent countless smaller teams of folks to Mamelodi—over 1,500 people—who do work in the township alongside South Africans during the day and then spend the night in their homes afterwards. This changed everything. No white people had ever slept in the township before. Just as important, over one hundred people from Mamelodi have come to Cincinnati to help us accomplish

Lake Avenue Church navigates in the new world of mutuality and partnerships by asking questions, listening and learning



our local mission. Mamelodi’s pastor Titus Sithole has spoken at Crossroads’ weekend services challenging our people, and the same has been true of our senior pastor, Brian Tome, in Mamelodi.”¹² Tim also recounts that the Mamelodi church has strengths and resources that Crossroads lacks. “They are so strong in prayer; they pray for hours at a time. Recently we sent the church scores of Polaroid photos of ourselves along with our prayer requests written in permanent marker on the front of the picture.” Tim then showed me a picture of a Mamelodi woman, eyes closed with tears streaming down her cheeks, holding the picture of a young Crossroads woman with the prayer request that she would be 100% for Jesus. Welcome to the world of mutuality.



Above: Crossroad realizes that the Mamelodi church has strengths and resources they lack. Crossroads recently sent scores of Polaroid photos with prayer requests because they are so strong in prayer

Watch Tim tell this story in this vodcast: House-to-House Partnerships in Overseas Missions: Making it Highly Relational.

3. Partnering

Partnering is different than mutuality.

Mutuality is needed for true partnering to exist but whereas mutuality has to do with the equality of those who come to the table, partnering pertains to the purposes or projects that require the need of real partners. Tom Mullis, at Perimeter Church points out that,

“the age of pioneering in Western missions is over but many don’t realize it.

Local people are more effective in reaching local peoples. But they do need training. We in the West started



Left & Bottom Left: Relationships changed the game for Crossroads

Bottom Right: Moved by the AIDS crisis in Africa, Crossroads stepped up to the plate by raising \$750,000 to build an AIDS hospice in South Africa, providing free medical care for AIDS patients



as pioneers but over the years we have deteriorated into patrons of projects. Now we need partnerships around shared values rather than bringing in our separate agenda or program.”¹³ Partnering is not about bringing prescribed programs with us but begins with what indigenous leaders in the country are trying to accomplish. Mike Kenyon of **Rock Harbor Church** in Costa Mesa, CA (www.rockharbor.org) understands this well. “There are still structural things the West can still bring but our posture is always to come as equal partners... as brothers and sisters. Our overseas friends don’t want great Western partners to come and save the day. This new reality provides and opportunity for collaboration.”¹⁴

Ian Stevenson, pastor of Go Ministries at **The Crossing** in Costa Mesa, CA (www.thecrossing.com) is pioneering mutuality in missions. Leaders from The Crossing recognize that people in each of the five countries they are ministering in have something to offer their church in suburban Southern California. In the summer of 2007, teams of people from The Crossing crossed the border

to help their partner church accomplish their goals and thirty people from their partner church in Mexico crossed the border to work with congregants of The Crossing in Southern California during their Serve Day.

Almost all the churches interviewed mentioned the absolute importance of long-term relationships being the singular key to sustainable and fruitful partnering. Matt Olthoff at Mariners Church shares a helpful insight on partnerships, :there is a big shift occurring now in missions.

It’s no longer ministry to or ministry for but ministry with.

If you look at partnership from the West it is very business oriented and transactional. The rest of world defines partnerships in terms of

In the summer of 2007, teams of people from The Crossing crossed the border to help their partner church accomplish their goals.

marriage—dating and courting... it’s a relationship. We talk in terms of “transactional.”

They talk in terms of communal. Our challenge is communicating reciprocity in greater means and measures.”¹⁵

In the spring of 2009 Mariners brought their overseas partners to Irvine where together they formulated their global strategies. Many leaders commented that this was the first time in their lives where they were treated as peers by those from the west.

Steve Hanson, global impact pastor for the **Church of the Open Door** in Maple Grove, MN (www.thedoor.org) develops the analogy of dating. “Sure, we support missionaries whom God sends out from our church, but we also have what we call ‘focused partners,’ of which we have five. I sometimes refer to our focused partners as marriages because we pursue them in the same way—we talk, we date, hold hands, we walk together, hug and kiss, get engaged, get married and have kids. These are long term partnerships and we don’t marry everyone we date.

Bob Roberts of **NorthWood Church** in Keller, TX (www.northwoodchurch.org) cogently sums up what is most needed. He advises that churches,

“don’t go in as the ‘savior’ but as a partner.

Realize that you are going to receive as much from getting to know them and experiencing them as you will give them. Don’t forget you’re a pilgrim, not a missionary. A missionary goes and gives with an end-game in mind or a project to complete. A pilgrim simply gives and receives on a journey.”¹⁶

Partnering may also pertain to the concept of Western churches



partnering together in different areas of the world. During the first gathering of the Global Connections Leadership Community, there was a huge 9'x13' world map hanging on a wall surrounded by pictures of what the participating churches were engaged in globally. The gathering started by asking each church to tell what they did and where they were engaged in the world. The exercise ended by the leaders placing stickers on the map that indicated their ministry presence. One of the first churches to present said, "As far as I know, we're the only U.S. church that works in northern India." By the time the 12 churches finished reporting, eight of them had put their stickers over northern India. Perhaps good partnering begins with good communication.

4. Investing in leaders

In 2009 jockey Calvin Borel, upset the 50-1 long shot odds and rode an unknown horse named Mind That Bird to victory in the Kentucky Derby. A couple weeks later, running in the second leg of the Triple Crown (the Preakness), Borel switched horses and this time rode Rachel Alexandra to finish first. In the third leg of the Triple Crown (the Belmont Stakes), he again put the riding crop against the flanks of Mine That Bird, and though riding valiantly came up short and finished in third place. Not too bad of a feat—running in the money in the three most prestigious races in the world. Sometimes it's better to bet on the jockey than the horse. The point is that leadership is everything. Wherever good things are happening there will be a capable and passionate man or woman leading the way. Churches that are effective overseas have learned to bet on the jockey. Keith West, pastor of missions at **Lake Pointe Church** in Rockwall, TX (www.lakepointe.org) says,

"We focus on a key leader of an indigenous church who shares our values and is getting the job done. We realized that if we came alongside these leaders we could accelerate what they are doing so they could become a regional influence. It's like the parable of the talents. We resource those who are doing the most with what they've been giving and help them excel even more. We want to find a few key partners, stay with them and pour into them to multiply their effectiveness."¹⁷

Durwood Snead, director of Global X at **North Point Church** in Alpharetta, GA (www.northpoint.org) says, "Our model is to work with indigenous leaders, help them develop, reproduce and multiply from there. These multiplying churches then become models for other churches that become movements of churches."¹⁸

Eric Hanson, director of International Impact, **Christ Community Church**, St. Charles, IL (www.ccclife.org) works with indigenous leaders who are doing church planting multiplication in six countries around world, "we are doing things the hard way. It would be easier for us to find a western missionary who could integrate our people there but we're led to indigenous leaders who have not been exposed to the west but we are seeing great fruit. We're always working up hill."¹⁹

Since 2005, in Sierra Leon alone they have seen over 1,100 hundred churches started with over 40,000 new believers, and sense that God is pouring out His spirit. Partnering with indigenous leaders does not mean they don't send their own people, but the people they send are in service to the local leader. How do you recognize good leaders who make great partners? The most obvious sign is they are already engaged in ministry without any outside help. Steve Hanson of Church of the Open Door says, "When

I go into a village, I don't know how to dig a well or build a building, but I do know relationships.

"When I walk into a local church in southern Uganda that is missing a roof because the people are using their monies to build houses for grandmothers to take care of AIDS orphans, I pay attention. They have a bigger God than I do."²⁰

Mariners' strategy is simple: Matt Olthoff understands that a country's ability to receive outside help is based on the country's leadership capacity. They begin by asking a potential partner, "Tell us what God is doing in your ministry? Can you take us to places where this is working? How can we help you make this sustainable? How can we help you leverage what you do well across everything?"²¹ For Ian Stevenson of The Crossing, God-sized goals distinguish one potential partner from another. "Our partner in Northern India is working to plant 500 churches by 2015 and 1,000 churches before he dies."

Keith West of Lake Pointe Church uses their "dating" process to identify the right leader: "First we send a scout team to see what is going on. If the team likes what they see regarding the work and leadership and something we need to investigate further I'll bring another pastor with me and vet further. This begins our dating process. We look for leaders who share our values and are getting the job done. We respond to responsiveness of the local leaders."²²

5. Combining good deeds and good news

Externally focused churches, by definition, are those churches that believe that the gospel is and has always been, a message that is best expressed in its fullness of both words of love and works of love. Good deeds verify the good news while good news clarifies the good deeds.

Evangelistically we believe that good deeds create good will and good will is a great platform for sharing the good news. Combining good deeds and good news is not novel in foreign missions. This has always been a strength of the sending church—to add a component of physical blessing to the people they are trying to reach. Cinderblocks and paintbrushes fit neatly and comfortably alongside of jungle mime and backyard Bible clubs in the tool box of the short-term missionary. What is new is the level of problem solving that externally focused missional churches are engaged in. What is new is the number of influential people who are speaking out for global holistic solutions.

In 2003 Saddleback Church's pastor Rick Warren was in Africa where he had just finished a Purpose Driven Seminar that connected to 90,000 pastors on the continent. Afterwards he was taken to a remote village where he met a local village pastor who faithfully downloaded Warren's sermons from pastors.com at a post office, 90 minutes away on foot. Meeting this obscure pastor proved to be both catalytic and providential as Warren began to pray about what he was to do with the influence God gave him. Under the African sky he began to articulate the big "giants" facing humanity around the world. He came up with five global giants.

1. Spiritual emptiness - "[People] don't know God made them for a purpose."
2. Egocentric leadership - "The world is full of little Saddam [Husseins]. Most people cannot handle power. It goes to their heads."
3. Poverty - "Half the world lives on less than \$2 per day."
4. Disease - "We have billions of people dying from preventable disease. That's unconscionable."
5. Illiteracy - "Half the world is functionally illiterate."²³

To take on the global giants Warren came up with his PEACE Plan. The Saddleback Website describes the PEACE plan:

The PEACE Plan is a massive effort to mobilize Christians around the world to address what Pastor Rick calls the "five global giants" of spiritual emptiness, corrupt leadership, poverty, disease, and illiteracy by promoting reconciliation, equipping servant leaders, assisting the poor, caring for the sick, and educating the next generation.²⁴

The goal of the PEACE Plan is to mobilize the body of Christ—the churches of the world to engage the five big giants and thousands of churches of all stripes are signing on to be a part of this global effort. Warren invites all comers. "We need to mobilize a billion Catholic and Orthodox believers. I'm really not that interested in interfaith dialogue. I am interested in interfaith projects.... We do have different beliefs but the fact is we serve the same Lord. Let's work on the things we can agree on."²⁵

Today churches are engaging the broken places of the world simply because these places are broken. "I like to ask people from developing countries what they think heaven will be like," says Steve Hanson of Church of the Open Door." Most of them say,

"It will be a place where I don't need to worry about food and I won't hear my children cry because they are hungry." This is a far different view of heaven from most westerners who may view heaven as a mix between a nice beach and a country club. Having enough food doesn't even cross our minds. "Give us this day, our daily bread," is a prayer I've never had to pray," Steve goes on to say but for the two billion people on earth living on less than two dollars a day, this is their daily prayer and the church has the opportunity to be an answer to that prayer.²⁶

Churches are taking on big projects and going to places where the church has never gone before. Churches are engaged in providing alternatives for young children enslaved in sex trafficking in Thailand and India. Mark Connelly, senior pastor of **Mission Community Church** in Gilbert, AZ (www.mission68.org), is passionate about what they are doing globally:

"we don't have members; we have missionaries.

In the church foyer we don't have a map with pictures of commissioned missionaries; we are the ones who are going. Initially we asked ourselves who are the most broken and hurting people on the planet? Sex trafficking came to our attention. What can we do to rescue these women and children and bring them to Jesus?"²⁷

Mission Community Church found a partner in former Congress woman Linda Smith, founder of Shared Hope International (www.sharedhope.org) Mark said, "Point us in the right direction" and she pointed them to Fiji in the South Pacific and a holistic village called Homes of Hope (www.visionabolition.org/village.php). Homes of Hope is a 43-acre Fijian village that rescues girls and

their children from the streets and the brothels and gives them a safe place to live, be educated and discipled, learn to run a business, earn their own money, buy their own home and get the physical, emotional and spiritual healing and restoration in the name of Jesus. Mark says, “We send teams with resources every six to eight weeks to help them build out that village. This month we made space for eleven more girls to be rescued.” To the people of Mission Community Church, this is not just missions... it’s the beginning of a movement. To give legs to the movement they started Vision Abolition (www.visionabolition.org) so other churches could join in this transformational ministry. One new church partner raised \$81K on Easter Sunday, during the same hour Superstition Springs was raising another \$20K. Other than Homes of Hope, there is no safety and escape for women captive to sex trafficking. Because of the success they are seeing in Fiji, they feel that this model could be replicated throughout the South Pacific.

What was happening in Fiji opened their eyes to what is happening in the

Phoenix area—a hub for child prostitution where the average age of a child prostitute is 13 years old.²⁸

Mark and other pastors began meeting with government officials to work towards ending sex trafficking in the Phoenix area. In the spring of 2009, thirty pastors from the greater Phoenix area started Streetlight Phoenix (<http://streetlightphx.com/>), a cooperative effort between the faith community and other domains of society to end child prostitution and establish safe houses in their community. “We believe that when churches come together people will come together and share resources that serve the greater good of the community. It is then that it is possible to change the world in sustainable ways.”²⁹ And that’s what they want to do...change the world.

David Thoresen of **Pantano Christian Church** in Tucson, AZ (www.pantano-christian.org) is committed to community development as an integral part of holistic ministry. In its simplest form community development takes two forms—need based, where one sees a community filled with needs and asset based, where one sees a community—even poor communities filled with

asset to solve their own problems. With their two-fold focus on church multiplication and community transformation they stumbled upon an organization called CHE-Community Health Evangelism (<https://www.cheintl.org>). The basis of CHE is the conviction that transformation comes from within community. The community decides what the problems are and what a better future looks like. They find local assets and do their own transformation. This approach really doesn’t require much from outside: We’ve already heard about how communities have been figuring out transformation with their own resources—what they always thought only others could do. If a church decides it wants a building, money comes from the church.³⁰

Good news and good deeds are great traveling companions. Jonathan Martin of Good Shepherd Church says that even in the toughest of countries they don’t want to leave Jesus at the immigration booth. Jonathan says, “When we are asked if we they intend to proselytize people through their service we tell them, ‘We’re here to make Jesus known and Jesus gets known through his followers doing good’ as opposed



The basis of Community Health Evangelism is that transformation comes from within community. The community decides what the problems are and what a better future looks like. They find local assets and do their own transformation.



to ‘We are not here to get followers of Jesus.’ So far that has worked for us.”³¹

One more insight regarding the blending of good news and good deeds may rise from how different generations think about the Great Commission. Mariner’s Matt Olthoff related that the missional question for the Boomer is “What is true?” The missional question for the Busters is “What is authentic?” But the missional question for the Millennials is “What is good?” Most likely good missional thinkers will be asking all three questions but to engage the younger generation of missionaries, a church must engage in “good” for the communities they serve.

6. Greater financial accountability

American churches are incredibly generous. “U.S. church donations to both humanitarian and evangelistic transnational ministry now total about \$4 billion annually.”³² However churches that engage in global ministry are thinking differently about who, what and how they support missional engagement. One thing is clear however;

the days of cutting a check and hoping for the best are rapidly going away.

With all the needs and opportunities in the world, global missions leaders of the future are trying to maximize every dollar expended on global outreach. The paradigm of funding partnering is challenging. Mike Robinson, “Unleashing Pastor” at Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock AR (www.fbclcr.com) says, “our challenge is how we develop sustainable and healthy partnerships with indigenous people without enabling those who need help. When a gringo walks through the door

the nationals see a dollar sign which only leads to paternalism and dependence. The untold story is this: When Americans leave and take their money with them, the churches fold. All around the world we see skeletons to great intentions of Americans.”³³

After returning from ten years in East Asia, Jonathan Martin, was asked to be the pastor of global outreach at **Good Shepherd Community Church** in Boring, OR (www.goodshepherdcc.org). Living overseas as a supported missionary he had seen the effects of well-intended but misplaced finances. This trail of financial havoc led him to ask the question,

“How can we get behind indigenous works without destroying them?”

How can we be lavishly generous but incredibly wise in our giving?” Meeting with a group of other like-minded leaders Jonathan came up with four guiding principles that inform all overseas giving decisions that form the acrostic RAISE.³⁴

R—Relationship. We cannot bypass relationships and must always lead with relationships—real, viable and incarnational relationships. This is why we must have our own people we know and trust on the ground since money is only as good as the people it follows.

A—Accountability--never give to directly an individual pastor or indigenous missionary. We give through organizations that provide oversight and accountability. Good people are ruined by easy access to money, no matter how well-intentioned they are.

IS—Indigenous Sustainability: This is all about helping locals do ministry without having to continually need foreign money. If our work won’t continue on without western money, we don’t do it. “Ask yourself: “Will the project I give to require ongoing and

continual foreign funds to keep it alive, or are these funds seeding a plant that can be eventually watered and grown by locals?” If the project cannot fairly quickly be funded, maintained and multiplied by locals we don’t invest in it.

E—Equity: We as Americans can create entities that destroy local life. If we build orphanages where children get better care and education than a parent can provide, parents will often bring their children to the orphanage. “The financial gift should not create economic inequities in the place it is given.” We may think, “This pastor shouldn’t have to live in this shack... let’s build him a house.” This is not an evil thing, but we need to do so with the knowledge that his congregation may no longer see him as one of them - but an American puppet, and they will never learn to financially support that pastor. And why should they? “The Americans will give to us and always come to the rescue.”

Externally focused churches of the future support mission-critical projects that their global partners deem important. This type of giving can only come from a trusted relationship. Kirk DeWitt, **Calvary Community Church** in Westlake Village, CA (www.calvarycc.org) says, “I think it is important to have a trust relationship with our partners in other country. For example if we come and say, ‘We want to sink a well,’ sinking a well may be their seventh priority. On the other hand, if we go and ask them what they need, they may come up with something off the wall like two SUVs because they think “We just have one shot at this American money.” But as we get to know each other in a trusted relationship we can discover what we can do to empower them to accomplish their mission. “This is way different than “What can we give you?”³⁵

Although most church global budgets are substantial there is some anxiety regarding the future of giving. One pastor said, “We know how 40 year-olds respond to giving opportunities but we haven’t figured out how to motivate 20-30-year-olds to give.” John Chung, minister of mission at **Park Street Church** in Boston, MA (www.parkstreet.org) notes that “in this age of missions our 20 and 30-year-olds are more excited about AIDS orphans and water more than evangelism and church planting. How do we combine these?”³⁶

Dave Hall of **Emmanuel Faith Church** in Escondido CA (www.efcc.org) provided this insight: “All models are based on older patterns of giving.

Younger people respond to be invited into a movement not a program and bureaucracy.

For the older generation they were content to give money to a church like they would invest in a mutual fund. They give a check to the church and trust that the church knows best how to invest this money. Younger people think more like investment bankers who look for specific singular investment (giving) opportunities, like helping to dig a well in Southern Uganda or caring for AIDS orphans.”³⁷ This is a new reality churches will need to navigate. The age of the mutual fund may be over.

7. Business as mission

A new possibility for funding that is emerging is attached to the effectiveness of business as mission. I’ve been told that those who seek to do business as mission fall into three categories: “Job Fakers”—supported missionar-

ies that operate under the cover of “business”—usually some type of consulting or educational service. The second group are “Job Takers.” These are folks who serve as expats overseas occupying jobs that nationals could do. The last group is called “Job Makers.” These are business people that go into a country to create jobs and livelihoods for people. Of the three sectors of society, Public (Government), Private (Business) and Social (Churches and NGOs) it is business that fuels the other two sectors. There is no social program as good as a full-time job with benefits. Northpoint’s Durwood Snead says: “Our biggest challenge is a funding crisis that existed before economic downturn. Business as Mission is new model for funding. A well-run business will provide salaries of those doing business as mission. In an unreached world business as mission is a big thing God has for this time in history. All countries desire economic development so we’re trying to figure out kingdom business. If we are employing people we have great freedom to use the Bible as management textbook to do this in countries closed to traditional missionaries. These are authentic businesses and government welcomes them.”³⁸

Emmanuel Faith’s Dave Hall, says, “My challenge is figuring out how I help maximize these entrepreneurs for the kingdom. Whereas before the inroad was teaching English, now God is raising up a whole new group of people from the business domain. The traditional missionary who dabbles at something else will fade away, while fully professionals with kingdom mentality are the future.”³⁹

Ryan King, minister of international missions at **The Austin Stone Community Church** in Austin TX (www.austinstone.org) is trying to demystify global engagement and intentionally engaging business people in their ministry to Turks. “The energy

we have here is for being global. We have a church full of what we might call “cosmocrats”—people who will fly overseas just to attend a wedding or those who regularly travel overseas for business. So, we are trying to make them cosmocrats for the Kingdom.” Desire is translated into strategy: “The first trip we took to Turkey was a group of CEOs and businessmen. We did this purposefully to show them that we wanted to engage the body beyond doctors, nurses, etc. We investigated a business idea—a cheesecake factory. Interestingly enough, there is a market; Turks love cheesecake. Go figure. We have also looked into the possibility of buying an exercise gym as a way to engage Turks. We are sitting on a goldmine of people to send and we’re racking our brains in how to do this.”⁴⁰

Lake Avenue’s Scott White notes that “as we become post-Christian our funding model needs to be different. Much of our ministry’s footprint is not sustainable the way it is. Many cultures around the world do not have a charity ethos regarding asking for personal funding so there is therefore must less of this kind of resource application potential. This is another area from which we can discover (or recover) other models for mission resourcing. We must train in different ways to make bi-vocational funding the new norm of sustainability.”⁴¹

8. Focus

There is a power of focus. On the flipside the most frustrated pastors I interviewed were those whose church supported scores of scattered legacy missionaries they inherited who were serving all over the map. Much of the time, these missionaries were not the home-grown variety but nephews of former staff, or friends of friends, or a missionary tied to a designated gift. In the past the oft-unstated missions

goal was have representatives from the church on every continent of the globe. The more yarn and pictures the better. This is changing. Churches that seem to be most effective in making a global impact are focused churches. When asked what **Central Christian Church of the East Valley** in Mesa, AZ (www.cccev.com) was doing globally, a staff member did not hesitate: “We are focused on holistic transformation through the expansion of the kingdom of God throughout North-east Africa. We focus on unreach and unengaged people groups. Unreached people groups include those who may have an expression of Christianity but no church. An unengaged people group has no known believers with no one trying to reach them. Unengaged people will die without ever meeting a believer or hearing the gospel. All our efforts are along this focus.”⁴²

It doesn’t take long to figure out what these folks do and don’t do. **Fellowship Bible Church** in Brentwood, TN (www.fellowship-nashville.org) describes their two-fold strategy in their vision: “We are committed to reaching the nations with the Good News of Jesus Christ, building people up in the faith, and launching people into kingdom service... primarily through the ministry of the local church. We’re also committed to compassionate love for people who suffer from disease, war famine and neglect.”⁴³

Ian Stevenson from The Crossing in Costa Mesa, CA says: “For us the biggest thing is focus. A lot of churches have full menus of stuff they keep adding to. We encourage individuals to go where they want to go but as a church we partner with five places to go and make a difference. Organizationally we just do five. We have folks that go to France and a person in Zimbabwe but as organization these efforts are not what we promote from pulpit. For

the sake of focus we stick with our five partners.”⁴⁴

David Thoresen, director of international outreach at Pantano Christian Church outlines the power of their dual focus: “Our focus is church planting movements coupled with community transformation. We believe that wherever Jesus’ church is present lives and communities should be improved. God has brought us into relationship with some great indigenous partners who share our vision and passion that each church would have within its DNA the tools and desire to multiply itself. Wherever we plant churches we want to transform communities and clean water has been very big for us since it is tied to so many other areas of transformation. Our partner in India has started 750 churches and our partner in Nigeria has planted over 400 oral churches among one people group. Multiplying churches and transforming communities...that’s what we’re about.”⁴⁵

For Tim Senff, at Crossroads Church in Cincinnati, focus adds synergy to global engagement with Mamelodi, South Africa: “Our church loves to be able to focus our prayers, our thinking, our going, and our giving on one massive need of the world in a specific location of the world. We’ve discovered the power of focus—going deep rather than broad in an area. How we approach money, prayer, worship, spiritual warfare is changed by focus. Our focus even caused us to change our mission from “Connecting seekers to a community of growing Christ-followers” to “Connecting seekers to a community of growing Christ-followers who are changing the world.” If there is not a ‘so what,’ people flounder. They want to be part of a movement—a social force to change the world.”⁴⁶

9. Technology

With every breakthrough in communi-

cation technology there has been those who have exploited that technology to advance the gospel. The printing press, radio, TV, and the Internet have allowed the church to increasingly enter a world without boundaries. All around us are glimpses of churches that are discovering the power of technology—of impacting a country without ever physically visiting that country. Churches and believers that understand the times are using digital

Crossroads has discovered the power of focus—going deep rather than broad in an area to change the world.



communication to further kingdom causes. Walt Wilson, founder and chairman of Global Media Outreach reports that “each day more than 5 million searches are done on the Internet for spiritual terms.” On his own Website they “see a decision for Jesus Christ every 35 seconds.”⁴⁷ Tech-savvy mission leaders are shrinking the world with technology. At Rock Harbor Church, a group of folks committed to Uganda developed and advocacy team and used Facebook raise \$6 thousand to build three wells:

Dave Gibbons of Newsong Church in Irvine is big on technology. How do we use technology and innovate to be more effective and efficient in what we are trying to do? As a whole, the church is way behind the culture. We need to take technology to the next level and be more like Google that has a dedicated part of their budget for R&D. At Newsong we have an innovation lab where we are birthing new ideas for the church. We have top level business and Web developers in this room thinking about breakthrough ideas. We just started a site called YangDang.com where we connect churches who want to serve with service opportunities that fit their passion and DNA.”⁴⁸

Northpoint’s Durwood Snead found out how useful and seamless technology could be on a recent trip to Eastern Europe. “Europe is like plowing concrete. I met a guy named Stephan in Dubrovnik who asked lots of questions about Christ.” He had traveled to Dubrovnik looking for answers and so he and Durwood exchanged email addresses. Soon they connected over Skype and Durwood initiated a weekly Bible study over Skype. Eight weeks later he came to Christ and is “growing like a weed and says he knows hundreds of others like himself.” Northpoint uses technology to train global church leaders. Lead Pastor Andy Stanley hosted five live Web events in the

first three months of 2009 for pastors all around the world (www.driveinternational.org) “We want to identify leaders in Europe and then help them.”

Where do we go from here?

Most global missions approaches and programs are simply iterations of how churches have approached missions for the past 150 years. But new realities call for new approaches that can lead to greater missional effectiveness. What can you do to help create a global missions environment that reflects the coming realities?

1. Cities: What global cities are you engaged in? How could you identify others who are committed to those same cities with whom you could network / partner?
2. Mutuality: Evaluate the relationships your supported missionaries have with the people they work with. Are these relationships shaped by mutuality and collegiality or by patronage? What could you do to create and foster relationship of mutuality?
3. Partnering: Who are the “stakeholders” in each of your global locations? What “skin” does each have in the game? Does the way things are currently organized make sense through the lens of “equal partners in the venture?” What changes do you need to make?
4. Investing in leaders: Who are the potential, progressing and proven leaders that you are resourcing in each of your locations? Do you know enough to answer the question, “What does each local leader need that would greatly increase his / her impact and effectiveness?”
5. Combining good deeds and good news: Evaluate each of your ministry locations as to how you are combining words of love and works of love. Good

deeds verify the good news while good news clarifies good deeds.

6. Greater financial accountability: What are you currently supporting that would not continue if you were to pull your dollars out of the project?
7. Business as Mission: In view of globalization and the importance of job creation, is there anything you could do to help create life-giving work in countries you work in? Who in your church has expertise in entrepreneurship or in business creation? How can you link what these people do to what God wants done in the world?
8. Focus: Review all the missionaries you support, the places where they minister and the type of work they do. Are there ways of identifying locations or target groups (e.g. children, orphans, students, women, etc) that you could focus on? Going forward, could you focus your future efforts on a few key locations or a few key ministry emphases? What might those be?
9. Technology: How can you use technology to enhance each of the above eight areas?

Global Connections Leadership Community

For a limited time we will be launching other Global Connections Leadership Communities. If you would like more information on how you can be part of helping to shape the future of global missions, please contact Bonnie Randle at bonnie.randle@leadnet.org.

Endnotes:

- ¹ William Gibson, quoted in *The Economist*, December 4, 2003 Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Gibson. Accessed June 20, 2009.
- ² Fishman, Ted, *China Inc.* Simon and Schuster, New York, (2005), p.7.
- ³ Author's comment: It is important to recognize that although millions of people choose to live in large cities because of stated reasons, many of the world's poor migrate to cities out of desperate poverty and the need to survive.
- ⁴ Fishman, Ted, *China Inc.* Simon and Schuster, New York, (2005), p.7.
- ⁵ Praalad, C.K. *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid.* Wharton School Publishing, Upper Saddle River, NJ (2006) p. 12.
- ⁶ Bakke and Sharpe 83.
- ⁷ Phillip Jenkins.
- ⁸ From personal interview with Matt Olthoff, March 17, 2009.
- ⁹ From personal interview with Stacey Campbell, May 6, 2009.
- ¹⁰ From personal interview with Scott White, May 5, 2009
- ¹¹ Available at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mamelodi>. Accessed June 20, 2009.
- ¹² From personal interview with Tim Senff, March 10, 2009.
- ¹³ From personal interview with Tom Mullis. March 17, 2009.
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- ¹⁸ From personal interview with Durwood Sneed, May 6, 2009.
- ¹⁹ From personal interview with Eric Hanson, April 8, 2009.
- ²⁰ I heard Steve Say this in an Interview June 25, 2009.
- ²¹ I heard Matt say this in a conversation at Leadership Network's I-3 Conference in Dallas, Texas on January, 28, 2009.
- ²² From personal interview with Keith West, June 16, 2009.
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- ²⁶ I heard Steve say this in an interview June 25, 2009.
- ²⁷ From personal interview with Mark Connelly, May 7, 2009.
- ²⁸ Available from: <http://www.brandedphx.com/learn-more/modern-day-slavery/>. Accessed June 28, 2009.
- ²⁹ Available from: <http://streetlightphx.com/connect/about-us/>. Accessed June 28, 2009.
- ³⁰ From personal interview with David Thoresen, May 5, 2009.
- ³¹ From personal interview with Jonathan Martin, June 15, 2009.
- ³² Global is the New Local. Interview by David Neff. Christianity Today, June 2009 p. 39.
- ³³ From personal interview with Mike Robinson. March 17, 2009.
- ³⁴ Jonathan Martin. *Giving Wisely: Killing with Kindness or Empowering Lasting Transformation?* (Last Chapter Publishing, 2008).
- ³⁵ From personal conversation with Kirk DeWitt April 2, 2009.
- ³⁶ From personal interview with John Chung, May 7, 2009.
- ³⁷ From personal interview with Dave Hall, May 7, 2009.
- ³⁸ From personal interview with Durwood Sneed, May 6, 2009.
- ³⁹ From personal interview with Dave hall, May 7, 2009.
- ⁴⁰ From personal interview with Ryan King, March 24, 2009.
- ⁴¹ From personal interview with Scott White, May 6, 2009.
- ⁴² From personal interview June 17, 2009.
- ⁴³ From personal interview with Brian Petak, May 15, 2009.
- ⁴⁴ From personal interview with Ian Stevenson, March 10, 2009.
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- ⁴⁶ From personal interview with Tim Senff, March 10, 2009.
- ⁴⁷ Bailey, Andrea (editor). *World Wide Witness: Are People Really Meeting Christ Online? And If So, How?* Outreach Magazine, Jan / Feb 2008. p. 78.
- ⁴⁸ From personal interview with Dave Gibbons, April 8, 2009.

About Leadership Network:

Leadership Network welcomes your response. The primary writer is Eric Swanson. Editorial advice was given by Warren Bird, Director of Research and Intellectual Capital Support for Leadership Network. Contact them via bonnie.randle@leadnet.org
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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the NIV translation.



This report was compiled by Eric Swanson, the Director of the Global Connections Leadership Community for Leadership Network. He is the co-author of *The Externally Focused Church* (Group Publishing, 2005) *The Externally Focused Quest* (Jossey-Bass 2010). Eric and his wife Liz have three grown children and reside in Colorado.

Additional Resources:

VIDEO

The Unchanging 34% Trajectory: Looking for a New Future in Missions, Eric Swanson, director of Global Connections Leadership Communities for Leadership Network, suggests that global missions in today’s church needs to move from “average” to “great.” The percentage of people who identify with the Christian faith has not changed in 100 years; it continues to be 34%. “A change in trajectory will not come from doing what we’ve done, but doing something different,” he says.
TIME 2:19

Turning Missions on Its Head: African Churches Pray for Americans
Tim Senff of Crossroads Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, describes an unusual partnership his church cultivated with a cluster of churches in Africa. One outcome was that the African Christians put the American’s photo in their homes, praying that the Americans will be freed from the bondage of stuff. Another outcome: “Literally the floodgates of heaven opened up to our church.” TIME 2:34

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