



# Lausanne World Pulse

Providing Evangelism & Missions News, Information and Analysis

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

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## PUBLISHER'S MEMO

### On Migration, Diaspora, and Displaced Peoples

By Lon Allison

**A few months ago I was asked to preach at a local church on Acts 2, focusing especially on the section regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.** I was struck by a new insight. The first preacher of the gospel following the ascension of Christ was not Peter! The first verbal proclamation was by the Holy Spirit utilizing the voices of 120 disciples (Acts 2:6-12)! And the first listeners were more than three thousand people from over fifteen ethnic groups—located to the north, south, east, and west.

Thus, the first proclamation event was a multicultural experience in every way. Immediately following that event, Peter preached the specifics of salvation and over three thousand people were saved. Fifteen different ethnic groups from Europe, Asia, and Africa came to faith that day, and the “diaspora” of the gospel began. It started spreading to three continents the first day it was declared.

Clearly, this was a “God thing”—and clearly a strong form of instruction to Christ-followers of every epoch.

This fact should give us “hope” as we discuss Migration, Diaspora, and Displaced Peoples in this month’s Lausanne World Pulse. We need not be concerned for the gospel to be understood by people in every ethnic group and family on the earth. It is. And the reason it is is because the gospel reaches into and meets the needs of every soul.

A movie titled “Slum Dog Millionaire” just won the Oscar for Best Picture this year. Set in Bombay/Mumbai, India, it is a powerful film about poverty, injustice, despair, and hope. I commend it to all my friends and ministry colleagues. At its core, the film reminds us that all people, regardless of ethnicity, long for the same things. The longings to be safe, to be loved, to be forgiven, to see justice, and to have hope run through the souls of every human being. This film teaches that.

As I viewed the movie a second time, I found myself deeply wishing to present the good story of Jesus and what he offers to the characters in the film. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation to ALL who believe (Romans 1:16).

### Across the Ocean and Across the Street

Our concerns need not be for the efficacy or transforming power of the gospel. Rather, our concerns need be more with the Church and her willingness to get the gospel to the peoples of the world located not just across oceans, but across the street.

I live in DuPage County just outside of Chicago (USA). In my county, there are nearly one million people. In 1970, according to the 2008 Ethnic American database, only one person out of 140 was from a non-white background in this county. In 2010, that figure is expected to be one person in three.

By 2020, we anticipate that one person in two will be from Asia, Africa, or Latin America. It is hard to convince people of this truth. It is hard for me to believe sometimes. But the evidence is there not only in statistics, but every time I visit my local stores, coffee shops, or restaurants. The peoples of the world are coming to my neighborhood. Perhaps this is true for you in your country as well. Never before have people groups all over the globe been migrating to other parts of the world in such numbers and at such a speed. This is one of the chief aspects of the phenomenon we call “globalization.”

I urge all readers of Lausanne World Pulse to read the articles on this topic this month. Then, prayerfully consider what responsibility God wishes you to take personally and through your ministry. The gospel is sufficient, and we the Church are assigned the enormous task of bringing the whole gospel to the migrating world. This is a challenge worthy of our lives.

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## NEWS BRIEFS

### **AROUND THE WORLD: Religious Freedom on the Decline**

Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and now Kyrgyzstan have passed very restrictive religious laws, which all but force the evangelical Church into hiding. Unfortunately, the future for the evangelical Church in the former Soviet Union doesn't look very bright, either. Kazakhstan is also considering strict legislation. While the president has sent the matter to the constitutional courts for consideration, Sergey Rakhuba, vice president of [Russian Ministries](#), says, "Knowing how things work there, they just simply follow each other's example. Most likely, Kazakhstan will follow the example of Kyrgyzstan." The religion laws require two hundred or more people in a church to register with the government. If that's not done, it's illegal to meet. In addition, there are restrictions on what can be taught to young people. And, evangelism outside the walls of the church is prohibited without a permit. ([Mission Network News](#))

### **AROUND THE WORLD: Hunger in Families Skyrockets around World**

Studies show an increasing number of people are going without basic nutrition. In 2007, close to one in eight Americans struggled to feed themselves adequately, according to a report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. [Bread for the World Institute](#) reports that the number of people going hungry worldwide has increased by seventy-five million in the last two years. Randy Hurst, [Assemblies of God World Hunger Day](#) director, says extending compassion to those in need is an ongoing part of the Church's mission. Learn more about World Hunger Day at: [www.worldhungerday.ag.org](http://www.worldhungerday.ag.org). ([Assemblies of God](#))

### **AROUND THE WORLD: New Website to Help Christians Engage with Scripture**

The [Forum of Bible Agencies International](#) recently launched a new website, [Scripture Engagement](#). The site offers encouraging scripture engagement methods, thought-provoking articles to download, news of upcoming events, videos, books, and links to useful sites and journals. For those using “translating the Bible into action,” all of the hard-to-find articles at the end of each chapter will be posted on this site. Visitors will find ways of engaging with scripture, different kinds of ministry and media, language issues, cultural issues, and more. ([Scripture Engagement](#))

### **CONGO: Protection for Vulnerable Must Be a Priority**

As Rwanda and DRC join forces against rebel militias, protection of civilians must be the priority, warns

humanitarian agency [World Vision](#). Thousands of Rwandan troops recently entered eastern Congo as part of a joint military offensive with the Congolese army against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a mainly Hutu group, accused of taking part in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. "Imminent violence may mean more deaths and displacement for people affected by decades of war," said emergency director for World Vision east DRC Bekele Hankebo. The people of eastern DRC have faced brutal conflict, rape, multiple displacements, and recruitment into armed groups for more than a decade. "Tens of thousands of people remain displaced from their homes," said Hankebo. "Any further outbreaks of violence threaten to push vulnerable families into an even more vulnerable and dangerous position." ([World Vision](#))

#### **COSTA RICA: Relief Work Continues after Earthquake**

Relief work continues in Costa Rica after an earthquake claimed more than a dozen lives on 8 January 2009. The count of displaced people is over 3,700. Current needs include personal hygiene items, water purification, and sanitary equipment. Relief workers also continue to search through debris from the magnitude 6.1 earthquake, but road damage has made the sites difficult to reach. Road damage is extensive. [Association of Baptists for World Evangelism](#) (ABWE) missionaries, including Ryan Rought, have been helping to search through debris for victims and have set up shelter points. Some missionaries in the area have been able to visit the relief camps and offer hope there. Since Rought's regular ministry is in law enforcement in Costa Rica, he has had countless opportunities to share the hope of Jesus Christ with the actual relief workers. ([Association of Baptists for World Evangelization](#))

#### **ENGLAND: Pro-God Advertisements on London Buses**

Three separate pro-God advertisement campaigns on the sides of London buses recently hit city streets in the British capital. The BBC has reported that buses adorned with the slogan "There definitely is a God" are from the Christian Party, while the Trinitarian Bible Society chose a biblical verse. The Russian Orthodox Church is also preparing bus advertisements. The adverts, which are unrelated, came a month after the British Humanist Association placed "No God" slogans on buses across England. The cost for the Christian Party's two-week campaign on one hundred buses was £35,000 (about \$51,000 USD). ([Assist News](#))

#### **ERITREA: Mass Arrests Raise Concerns for Welfare of Church**

Mass arrests of Christians in Eritrea are raising concerns for the welfare of the church. According to Glenn Penner, with [Voice of the Martyrs Canada](#), "Eritrea is probably the most closed country in Africa today." In the past few months over one hundred Christians have been detained and transferred to a military facility. Reports indicate that some have been severely mistreated and an unspecified number may have died due to untreated injuries sustained while in detention. Authorities continue to insist that those arrested are behind bars for reasons other than practicing their faith. The government stands behind its 2004 statement that "no groups or persons are persecuted in Eritrea for their beliefs or religion." Yet, in May 2002, the government banned and closed all independent churches not operating under the umbrella of the Orthodox, Lutheran, Catholic, and Muslim religious structures. ([Voice of the Martyrs](#))

#### **GAZA: Bible Society and Open Doors Provide Relief for Suffering Residents**

According to the Palestinian Bible Society (PBS), many residents of the Gaza Strip suffer from psychological problems because of the aggression of the governing forces, lack of jobs, isolation from the outside world, and a feeling of insecurity. Bible Societies in Israel and Palestinian areas have launched a joint initiative called "Standing in the Gap," offering practical as well as spiritual relief for the suffering Gazan people. [Open Doors](#) is co-supporting a part of the program called "Love your Neighbor/Comfort my People." This immediate relief is for both Christians and Muslims. ([Mission Network News](#))

#### **INDIA: Relief Camps Closed in Orissa**

Government authorities in Orissa state have shut down relief camps, forcing thousands of Christians displaced by the wave of violence that began last August 2008 to flee. Believers have been left without adequate protection against further attacks or compensation for damages sustained. Many of the believers were threatened with violence while in the camps and fear further attacks if they return to their homes. Officials are providing

some of the refugees with 10,000 rupees (\$201 USD). However, the sum is inadequate to meet their long-term needs and it is unlikely that many will be able to secure employment, as local Hindus often refuse to hire Christians. ([Voice of the Martyrs](#))

### **LIBERIA: Bible Marathons Encourage Faith in Christ**

Bible Reading Marathons have been held through [Bible Pathway Ministries](#) since 1990, typically beginning with prayer and concluding with eighty hours of scripture reading. As a result of these marathons, the country is being reached with the gospel. Ken Sharp with Bible Pathway says since their ministry began to provide Bibles and copies of *Bible Pathway*—their daily devotional guide—Liberia has experienced much change: “What they're seeing now is a vast turn to the Lord through the preaching and the sharing of the word of God within their communities. Forty percent of the country's population has now come to accept Christ as their Savior.” Five Bible Reading Marathons are scheduled for April and May 2009, with the intent of reaching over a third of the counties in Liberia. ([Mission Network News](#))

### **SRI LANKA: Anti-Conversion Law Likely**

Sri Lanka's Parliament is expected to pass the country's first anti-conversion law. The proposed legislation, titled “Bill for Prohibition of Forcible Conversions,” was presented a second time to members of Parliament in January 2009. Currently, Sri Lanka's constitution guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. However, it also calls for Buddhism to hold the “foremost place.” A number of observers and commentators are saying the legislation is in reaction to the decline in the number of Sri Lankans choosing to follow the Buddhist teaching. Buddhist leaders have expressed concern about the growth of Christianity, especially in the country's rural areas. These Buddhist activists accuse Christians of offering jobs or money in order to get people to convert to Christianity. They were also harshly critical of many Christian aid organizations that worked in the country just after the 2004 tsunami. ([Gospel for Asia](#))

### **SUDAN: Students Multiply Bible Training**

As warfare and genocide have run rampant in Sudan, it's become more difficult for westerners to enter the country to preach the gospel. Building up native pastors and leaders is, therefore, critical. Five students from Sudan left the country years ago to escape the violence. The students, who attend [Grand Rapids Theological Seminary](#) in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, are now dedicated to delivering the gospel message back to their home country. GRTS professor David Livermore says that the students are aware of the challenges ahead and are prepared to face them. "Sudan's needs are huge, but one of the key ways that the Church has identified for them to address these needs is by having better educated pastors and leaders," says Livermore. The students will be joining hands with [Serving In Mission](#) to accomplish this mission and to multiply their own ministry training to reach as many people as possible. ([Mission Network News](#))

### **UGANDA: Workers Needed for Outreach**

Violence continues between the Lord's Resistance Army and Ugandan troops. But even as these tensions persist, a ministry is gearing up to reach out to internally displaced people living in refugee camps. Lorella Rouster with [Every Child Ministries](#) (ECM) says many of the kids in these camps are plagued by memories of seeing family and friends murdered. ECM is sending short-term teams in June and July 2009 into some of the camps to reach out with the gospel. Children will be involved in Bible teaching, games, and some educational activities. The ECM teams will have a first aid clinic as well. ECM is looking for short-term mission participants. ([Mission Network News](#))

### **ZAMBIA: Zimbabwe Refugees Flee to Neighboring Country**

As a result of Zimbabwe facing runaway inflation, high unemployment, a disastrous agriculture policy, and rampant disease, thousands of refugees are fleeing to Zambia. Zimbabwe refugee camps are springing up near the border with Zambia, laying a heavy burden on the goodwill of its neighbors. The problem is that Zambia's government is taking land from subsistence farmers and giving it to the Zimbabwean refugees, many of whom were commercial farmers who lost their land as the result of President Mugabe's agriculture policies. This is

creating turmoil in the Church (many of whose members are subsistence farmers), because it's threatening Zambian livelihoods. ([Mission Network News](#))

### **ZIMBABWE: Schooling for Orphans and Children**

[Serving In Mission](#) (SIM) plans to enable three thousand orphans and children in Zimbabwe to go back to school by paying their school fees, purchasing some school uniforms, and providing writing materials. SIM is running this project in partnership with the United Baptist Church (UBC) of Zimbabwe. SIM representatives add that ensuring educational opportunities for children is critical to mitigating HIV-related vulnerability. ([Serving In Mission](#))

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## **THEMED ARTICLES: Migration, Diaspora, and Displaced People**

### **Diaspora Occurrences in the Bible and Their Contexts in Missions**

By Narry Santos

#### **Introduction**

The term *diaspora* refers to the Jewish dispersion (i.e., to the scattering of Jews outside Palestine). It is also the technical name for all the nations outside of Palestine where Jewish people had come to live. However, the applicability of the use of *diaspora* has been widened to any religious or racial minority living within the territory of another religious or political society.

In this article, the term *diaspora* will be used as a reference to the Jewish dispersion throughout the known world during the biblical period. The purpose of this article is twofold: (1) to survey how *diaspora* is used in the Bible and during biblical times and (2) to describe how Jewish diaspora (including Jewish Christian diaspora) is related to Christian missions.

#### **Diaspora in the Bible and Biblical Times**

The term *diaspora* is found in the New Testament, the LXX (or Septuagint), related Old Testament words, and extra-biblical literature during the biblical period.

##### ***“Diaspora” in the New Testament***

The verbal substantive, *diaspora*, commonly translated as “scattered,” occurs only three times in the NT (John 7:35; James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1). In John 7:35, the Jews in Palestine raised the questions, “Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?” Through these questions by the Jews, I see their use of *diaspora* (“scattered”) as a reference to the Jewish minority in the midst of other religions—in this case the Greek-speaking environment.

In James 1:1, James greeted “the twelve tribes scattered among the nations” in his salutation. The mention of the “twelve tribes” probably refers to the literal twelve tribes of the nation of Israel, although some scholars have seen the “twelve tribes” as a figurative reference to the true people of God (thus, broadening the Jewish roots to include the Church of James’ day).

In 1 Peter 1:1, Peter described his audience as “God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” Like the use of James, the Petrine diaspora refers to the scattered communities outside Palestine. These scattered communities were to view their lives on earth as temporary (thus, as aliens, sojourners, pilgrims, foreigners, who belonged to heaven).

##### ***“Diaspeiro” in the New Testament***

The verb form of *diaspora* is *diaspeiro*. This verb appears in only three instances in the NT (Acts 8:1b, 4; 11:19). In each instance, *diaspeiro* relates to the scattering of the Christians of Hellenistic Jewish origin (Greek-

speaking Jewish Christians from the diaspora) in areas where there was non-Jewish majority (Acts 11:19), but also in the area around Jerusalem and toward Samaria (Acts 8:1). The unique contribution of these verses in the use of *diaspeiro* is that those who were scattered served essential factors in the expansion of early Christianity or to missions (Acts 8:4-8, 40; 11:19-21).

### ***“Diaspora” in the LXX***

In the Greek translation (i.e., LXX or Septuagint, including the Apocrypha) of the Hebrew Old Testament, the technical term, *diaspora*, is found in twelve passages, generally referring to the “dispersion of the Jews among the Gentiles” or “the Jews as thus scattered.” This noun, *diaspora*, is used in the LXX of the exile of the scattered people of God among the Gentiles. Moreover, diaspora can refer to both the dispersion and the totality of the dispersed.

### ***Related Words in the Old Testament***

There is no fixed or technical Hebrew equivalent for the Greek word *diaspora*. In Deuteronomy 30:4, the Hebrew root is *ndt*, which in the niphal means, “expelled, driven out.” The nearest Hebrew term, which may correspond to diaspora is *golah*, or *galot*, or the emphatic *galota* (from the Aramaic root, *galo*).

The three Hebrew words of *ndt*, *golah*, and *galota* can mean the process of “leading away,” “deportation,” or “exile.” They can also mean the state of those “led away,” “deported,” or “exiled.” They have become technical terms for exile or banishment after the destruction of Jerusalem and the loss of the Palestinian homeland. However, in the LXX, they are always rendered with words other than *diaspora*.

### ***“Diaspora” in Extra-biblical Literature***

Aside from biblical literature, sufficient extra-biblical sources picture the period of Jewish diaspora. These sources support two main reasons for the diaspora; namely: (1) forced deportation triggered by conquests of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman empires; and (2) voluntary migration triggered not by shame but by optimism and restoration of dignity.

During the diaspora, there were probably few major cities or regions that were without a community of resident Jews. The origins of the Jewish communities in Babylonia came from the exile, when many Jews decided to remain in Babylonia (despite the permission of Cyrus for the Jews to return to their land; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23).

Evidence seems to point to the direction that the total Jewish population of the diaspora considerably exceeded the Jewish population in Palestine<sup>1</sup>, and that diaspora Jews constituted a group of significant size. Scholars often suggest that five to six million Jews were living in the diaspora during the first century, but such figures are only speculative.

What was the economic situation of the diaspora Jews? While the general impression from the papyri “is that of a hard-working people earning its living by tenacious labor,” there were many who prospered, and no branch of economic life was closed to them.<sup>2</sup>

Specifically, Jews of the diaspora were soldiers, land-owning farmers, agricultural laborers, shepherds, artisans, manual workers, traders, merchants, bankers, government officials, and slaves.<sup>3</sup> In some Roman writings, Jewish poverty was a byword (Juvenal *Sat.* 3.14-16; 6.542-547). However, there were also some very wealthy Jews. Thus, diaspora Jews were found in almost all socio-economic strata of that period.

### **Relationship between Diaspora and Missions**

Diaspora and missions can be seen as related through the contextual check of the diaspora passages for indicative elements in missions. Such a contextual check shows God’s sovereignty in the Jewish diaspora. In fact, God’s sovereignty establishes the framework for the missionary expansion of Christianity.



### ***“Diaspeiro” Passages for Missions***

The earlier context of Acts 8:1b and 8:4 dealt with persecution and martyrdom. In Acts 7:54-60, the stoning of Stephen happened. Right after Stephen’s martyrdom, Luke immediately narrated the breaking out of a “great persecution” in Acts 8:1a. Saul carried out this persecution by trying to destroy the Jerusalem church. He went from house to house, heartlessly and systematically dragging off men and women and putting them into prison (Acts 8:3).

Aside from persecution, the later context revealed the emphasis on missions. The Hellenized Jewish Christians, who were scattered in the diaspora, “preached the word wherever they went.” Particularly, Philip preached about Christ in Samaria (Acts 8:5). As a result of his preaching and miraculous signs, people listened. Many were healed and were rejoicing (Acts 8:6-7). Many people also believed Philip’s message and were baptized (Acts 8:12).

Thus, we can see that persecution (along with martyrdom) became the trigger of the diaspora of Hellenized Jewish Christians. These Christians used their diaspora outside of Jerusalem to be the setting for their missionary efforts.

In other words, it was their context of persecution that enabled them to fulfill Jesus’ commission that they be witnesses “in all Judea and Samaria” (Acts 1:8). In its wider context, the persecution of Acts 8:1 and the subsequent mission efforts in Acts 8:4 resulted in the formation of “the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria,” which was strengthened, encouraged, and which grew in numbers and lived in the fear of the Lord (Acts 9:31). Thus, the inception of such separate communities can be traced to the persecution during the Jewish Christian diaspora.

Let’s now check out the *diaspeiro* context of Acts 11:19 for missionary elements. The preceding context talked about the apostles’ hearing the news that the Gentiles were receiving the word of God (Acts 11:1). Peter explained before the Hebraic Jewish Christians how God opened the door to the Gentiles (Acts 11:2-18). Peter’s explanation was received well, to the point that the people praised and said, “So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

This opening of the missionary doors for the Gentiles was exemplified in Acts 11:19-21. Those who were scattered by the persecution related to Stephen’s martyrdom went to the northern portions of “Phoenecia, Cyprus, and Antioch” (Acts 11:19a). Although the missionary efforts already expanded to the point of leaving Palestine, the recipients of their outreach efforts were Jews only (Acts 11:19b).

But the mission extension went further when some “men from Cyprus and Cyrene” (Acts 11:20a) went to Antioch and “began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20b). The Greeks responded in great numbers and “believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:20c), as the Lord’s hand was on the missionaries.

Thus, in this strategic passage on the diaspora, we see the further fulfillment of Christ’s commission (Acts 1:8) that his people be witnesses to the “ends of the earth.” From the missionary effort to Jews in Jerusalem to Jews in Samaria, the outreach opened widely to the Gentiles, who belonged to the ends of the earth.

### ***“Diaspora” Passages for Missions***

Admittedly, there is no immediate context of missions in John 7:35 (on the contrary, the context is that of hatred, hostility, misunderstanding, and unbelief by the religious leaders toward Jesus; cf. 7:32, 41b-44); however, the scope of the diaspora is far and wide (i.e., among the Greeks and Gentiles).

Similarly, the scope of missions is far and wide—reaching the nations throughout the world. In the Great Commission, the extent of going and making disciples is to “all nations.” As we have seen in the previous section, the Jewish diaspora reached many nations. There were only a few major cities or regions that were

without a community of resident Jews. Thus, both the diaspora and missions are far-reaching and global in scope.

In addition, the context of hostility and hatred in John 7:35 is similar to the context of suffering and persecution in Acts 8:1. From this similarity, we glean that mission work is usually triggered by hostility, hatred, suffering, and persecution. God's global work greatly expands within the context of pain and persecution.

In James 1:1, the New International Version (NIV) translates the word *diaspora* as “scattered among the nations”—focusing on the dispersion of the “twelve tribes” “among the nations.” In 1 Peter 1:1, the enumeration of the locations in the diaspora (i.e., Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia) shows the far-reaching spread of the Jewish dispersion. This also formed part of the far-reaching spread of missions.

Thus, we have seen in our inspection of the diaspeiro and diaspora passages in the New Testament how God used suffering, persecution, and dispersion as the context for expanding his kingdom and enabling his people to fulfill their commission to become witnesses to all the nations and to the remotest part of the earth. He used the diaspora to expand the missionary work to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles.

### **Conclusion**

After seeing the use of the word or concept of *diaspora* in the NT, in the LXX, in related OT words, and in extra-biblical literature during the biblical period, we have described how Jewish diaspora (including Jewish Christian diaspora) is related to Christian missions. The relation is evident in God's providential hand in the spread of missions through his chosen tools of suffering, persecution, and diaspora.

(For a full list of references used for this article, email: [info@lausanneworldpulse.com](mailto:info@lausanneworldpulse.com))

### **Endnotes**

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### **Migration, Displacement, and the Kingdom of God**

By Mark Russell

**People have always migrated from one place to another for good and bad reasons.** Think of the wise men coming from the east to see the King of Kings as a baby in his manger. On the other hand, think of Cain, forced to move after killing his brother, Abel. Throughout the Bible we read stories of people on the move. Abraham started a long journey out of Ur; Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt; the disciples scattered around the Roman Empire; Paul took off on various missionary journeys; and the Bible ends with a book by John while he was living in exile.



The story of God's people is definitely one of movement. And perhaps the most famous refugee of them all was Jesus. In what is frequently a forgotten side note in his story, Jesus and his family were forced to flee to Egypt to avoid the infant massacres of King Herod.

While some people willfully choose to move to follow God, many others move involuntarily as a result of war, famine, or some other massive or inescapable problem in their home country. As one who has moved willfully, I, Mark, can testify that there are still significant challenges related to cultural adaptation and separation from extended family. However, forced moves produce even more difficulties as refugees tend to be subject to stereotyping, prejudices, de-individualization, inadequate living conditions, and a lack of dignified employment.

We are experiencing migration never before equaled in the history of the world. Relatively inexpensive transportation has meant that people are frequently displaced quite far from their homeland. For example, my hometown of Boise, Idaho, USA, has seen an influx of refugees from far-flung countries such as Eritrea, Iraq, and Burma.

In Ted Lewellen's work, *The Anthropology of Globalization*,<sup>1</sup> he points out that migrating people often develop a new identity—or at the least have their previous identity significantly altered. Moreover, the current trends of migration have largely eliminated the historical dichotomies (such as rural/urban) and have produced the need to look at things in a more fluid way. Social networks can be borderless due to increases in efficiency and decreases in the cost of transportation and communication technologies. The world is changing and so is the face of migration.

### **Rising to the Challenge**

As ministers of the gospel, we have to think about these complex issues and develop appropriate responses. Samuel Escobar<sup>2</sup> says migration produces four primary challenges for the Church:

1. How to be compassionate Christians and have loving attitudes that are frequently contrary to popular culture.
2. How to educate inside the churches that ensures that people are informed of the issues and have their negative (sinful) attitudes challenged and corrected.
3. How to have a prophetic ministry to the society at large. Christians should be speaking up for those who are suffering and seeking to create solutions and to combat political ideologies that sometimes seek to make the strong stronger at the expense of the weak.
4. How to make migration an avenue for the evangelistic mission.

Escobar balances a difficult issue quite well. Instead of focusing fully on the injustices of migration, he also optimistically sees the possibilities of how Christians can use massive migration as an avenue for evangelism. However, he also doesn't casually dismiss the social component and argues for its inclusion in Christian considerations of the topic.

Christine Pohl argues for the centrality of the biblical tradition of hospitality and the significance of the identity of the people of God as resident aliens, making a case for holistic ministry to migrants. She says that the missiological implications are that we should live out of "concern for the physical, social, and spiritual well-being of migrants and refugees."<sup>3</sup>

Pohl adds that this should be central to Christian witness and not peripheral to it. She points out that we are not "just passing through" this world in a detached and unconcerned way. Rather, we should recognize that this world is not our home, while simultaneously creating homes and communities that are life-giving and life-sustaining.

### **Meeting Spiritual and Physical Needs**

By and large, refugees are poor and have little opportunity to improve their situations. In Isaiah 58:1-10 we discover that one of the main denunciations given by Isaiah against Israel was for her sin of ignoring the poor. This was because Israel failed to act as a picture of the coming king when she neglected the poor. Jesus Christ, the coming king, would heal and preach good news to the poor as predicted by Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-2) and later confirmed by Christ himself in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 4:18-21; 7:18-23).

Based on the preceding few verses (and so many others not mentioned), it is an inescapable reality that God has always been mindful of both the physical and spiritual needs of his people.

When the Church neglects holistic ministry and chooses to address only the spiritual needs of the people, the Church may be repeating the same error that Israel committed. The Church is the body, the bride, and the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 1:18-23; 4:7-13; 5:32), unlike Israel, who was just a shadow of the coming king. This means that whatever Israel was called to do, we are called to do in even greater fashion!

God has compassion for the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. He calls the Church to reach out to such people with his love.

All physical suffering is a product of living in a sin-filled world. The Church has an answer that the so-called “secular” relief organizations do not have. We know how to deal with sin, and consequently, meet the physical as well as the spiritual needs of people. The Church should preach the whole gospel to the whole person. The Church has been preaching salvation to save the “soul” of the sinner. However, in addition to “soul salvation,” the Church needs to be involved in teaching about economic development and social justice to both its members and the community around.

### **Life in Exile**

I, Daniel, was born in Uganda in 1976, the youngest of eight, from Rwandan refugee parents. I grew up wondering why my parents left our home country of Rwanda. As a child, I learned that my parents were victims of the so-called “ethnic hatred” that began in 1959 and resulted in the deaths of many people. Survivors fled to neighboring countries. My parents went to Uganda.

In 1935, the Belgian colonial administration introduced a discriminatory national identification on the basis of ethnicity. *Banyarwanda* (Rwandans) who possessed ten or more cows were registered as *Batutsi*, whereas those with less were registered as *Bahutu*. From then on, enmity arose between the two main groups. Almost in a regular manner, killings of the Batutsi became a habit. In the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s massacres of Batutsi were common. *Between April and July 1994 (just one hundred days) over one million Rwandan people, mainly Batutsi and some moderate Bahutu, were killed.*

In 1995, we moved to Rwanda. Unfortunately, my father died in exile and was never able to return. I am thankful to God for taking me to Rwanda and for helping me leave refugee life. I am now enjoying life and serving God in Rwanda to my own people. I can share the gospel with ease because I do it in my own language and in my culture. As a refugee, the Ugandans teased me and gave me different names because I was Rwandese (Rwandan). Growing up as a refugee was never enjoyable. We were people on the move; we never settled in one place for long. We were always moving in search for food, cattle, and so forth. Because of the unfavorable conditions I grew up in, I developed a heart to serve the under-privileged. That’s why I want to blend the knowledge from these two fields of study to serve the poor holistically.

### **Injustices and Violence**

Life as a refugee is hard. Refugees suffer injustice and are oppressed in numerous ways as Daniel was in Uganda. In the Bible, there is a constant call to seek justice for the oppressed. In Isaiah 1:17, the Lord had this to say: “Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.” The principle here is to provide justice for everyone who is suffering injustice.

In the New Testament Jesus was upset because Pharisees and teachers of the law neglected to offer justice to the oppressed. In Matthew 23:23, we read, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill, and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ”

In one of the most important moments of his ministry, Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest. He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39).

One of the best ways to express love is to see to it that justice is imbedded in the laws of society in order to protect and liberate the oppressed, especially women and children. Nevertheless, when we look at what is happening around the world, we realize that justice is lacking in most parts of the world. There is ample evidence that violence against women and children by warring groups in Darfur is reaching alarming levels. Extreme violence has been a feature of the civil conflict since it erupted in 2003. However, in the past months, **attacks on women and girls**, both within and outside camps for the displaced, have soared.

Now that we have just seen a few examples of what the Bible has to say about injustice, what should our response be?

1. Be encouraged that our Lord is mindful of the oppressed and is disturbed by injustice.
2. Seek to define our role as the Body of Christ. By defining our role, we will be led to advocate for those who are being oppressed.
3. Develop situational approaches that help the aliens in our midst.

This is, after all, what the Apostle James called “true religion” (James 1:27).

*(This article was co-written by Daniel Ryumugabe, a native Rwandan, who is the transformation coordinator of Urwego Opportunity Bank in Kigali, Rwanda.)*

#### **Endnotes**

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#### **Ministering to Diasporas: An Interview with Dr. Sadiri Joy Tira**

**Dr. Sadiri Joy Tira, Filipino-Canadian missiologist and Lausanne Movement Senior Associate for Diasporas, talks about “people on the move” and how Lausanne’s Diasporas Leadership Team is working toward Lausanne’s mission of “the whole Church bringing the whole gospel to the whole world.”**

**Q: What is your role as Lausanne’s Senior Associate for Diasporas?**

**A:** Part of my responsibility is, using the Lausanne platform, to initiate and motivate diaspora Christians to actively participate in world evangelization. Another responsibility is to communicate and represent Lausanne’s work whenever and wherever I am given a chance. I do have a team of associates called the “Lausanne Diasporas Leadership Team” who work with me toward Lausanne’s mandate and goal.

**Q: Briefly discuss the “global diasporas” as you see them with the eyes of missions.**

**A:** To begin, I need to define our use of the term “diaspora.” Then, I will give you a brief overview of the global diaspora situation and how it is relevant to missions.

We use the term “diaspora” to refer to the phenomenon of “dispersion” or movement of any ethnic group. For our discussion, I will also use the terms “migration” and “people on the move” to refer to this people movement.

In 2005, the [International Organization for Migration](#) estimated that the number of international migrants had reached 192 million. This means that approximately one of every thirty-four persons in the world is a migrant. This figure, extrapolated by experts, is expected to reach 200 million by the year 2010. This is a lot of people—five times more than the entire population of Canada. This is not to mention the Internally Displaced People within their region or country. This includes refugees, migrant workers, trafficked people, international students, government and armed forces personnel, people involved in family reunification plans, permanent immigrants to accepting countries, etc.

Factors leading to diaspora can be of a voluntary or involuntary nature, such as urbanization, rapid globalization in the labour industry, geopolitical shifts, catastrophic natural disasters (e.g., hurricane, flood, earthquake, tsunami), national and ethnic conflicts, socio-economic advancement, cultural exchanges, and pandemics resulting in a crippling of the workforce (e.g., HIV/AIDS). The “push” factors contributing to mass migration are as myriad as are the “pull” factors drawing the migrants to host countries.

The top ten receiving countries are the United States, the Russian Federation, Germany, Ukraine, France, India, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Australia, and Pakistan.

We read in the Bible about “people on the move.” In the Old Testament we read about Abraham and his children, who during their journey encountered Jehovah. In the New Testament we read about Jesus Christ, who came with the message of the good news for all nations (Matthew 28:16-20). We read stories of the early Church being persecuted and consequently scattered (i.e., diaspora).

In Acts 17:26-27, Paul articulated a missiological purpose for human migration:

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

This time of mass migration in our borderless world presents the whole Church with unprecedented opportunities to take the whole gospel to the whole world—a world that is wide open because of people who are moving to all four corners of the globe. This brings us to the idea of “diaspora missiology.”

**Q: “Diaspora missiology.” Would you describe that term for us? What is the difference between “diaspora missiology” and “traditional missiology”?**

**A:** If “diaspora in missions” refers to dispersed ethnic groups who are actively engaged or actively involved in fulfilling the Great Commission regardless of vocation and denominational affiliations of individuals involved, then “diaspora missiology” is, as Professor Enoch Wan of Western Seminary defines, “a missiological study of

the phenomena of diaspora groups being scattered geographically and the strategy of gathering for the kingdom.”

Now diaspora is not a new phenomenon. People have been moving throughout all human history. Social scientists (including sociologists, anthropologists, and human demographers) have always studied the mass movement of people. But now, due to the number of migrants, even lawyers (immigration lawyers), economists, and political scientists are carefully paying attention to this phenomenon.

Migration seems to be affecting everyone and promoting change in many communities. We also have to remember how the migration factors (e.g., the post 11 September 2001 World Trade Center terrorist attacks context; natural disaster situations) are requiring change in government policies. Epidemics such as AIDS and the HIV-virus are a push force for thousands of people—a situation calling for the attention of the international medical community. Furthermore, in a world where everyone is increasingly connected, something like an illness affecting a small number of migrants has the potential of affecting many more, and so migration is a factor in national health care programs. The challenges and opportunities presented by migration are all-pervasive!

In recent years, missiologists too have started to focus their attention on the great “scattering” of people. This is what “diaspora missiology” has focused its lens on. In this emerging field of missions, researchers are to learn much about the phenomenon of diaspora from social and political scientists in the thematic study of topics such as globalization, urbanization, ethnicities and race relations, ethnic and religious conflicts and their resolutions, pluralism, and multiculturalism. Then, missiologists face the task of integrating the factual findings with missiological understanding in ministry planning and evangelism strategy.

To clarify, diaspora missiology has these elements:

- Its focus is holistic Christianity and contextualization.
- Conceptually, diaspora missiology is de-territorialized (the “loss of social and cultural boundaries” in mission strategy), glocal (a mission strategy that is simultaneously local and global), inter-disciplinary, and hybrid.
- The perspective of diaspora missiology is non-spatial (not geographically divided or confined; i.e., home/foreign, regional/global, urban/rural), and is borderless. It is transnational and global. For example, planting churches is not only on land, but also aboard ships among seafarers.
- The diaspora missiology paradigm goes where God is going and moves providentially where God places people spatially and spiritually, in contrast to traditional missions’ “sending and receiving.”

**Q: How are you addressing the opportunities presented by diasporas through the Lausanne platform?**

**A:** There are many groups (churches, organizations, denominations, local parachurches) already engaged in reaching diaspora people (i.e., international student ministries reaching foreign students on university and college campuses). We have organizations ministering compassionately to “people on the highway” (refugees). In the academic field, there is the Institute for Diaspora Studies (IDS), hosted by Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, USA, and by Alliance Graduate School in Manila, Philippines. Specialization in diaspora studies is also taking form at Fuller Seminary, Torch Trinity Graduate School in South Korea, and Tyndale Seminary in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The Oxford Centre for Missions Studies (U.K.) has several African and Asian students studying specific diaspora groups. This is an encouraging development in recent years.

For the first time, the Lausanne Movement formed the “[Lausanne Diasporas Leadership Team](#)” (LDLT). The LDLT is convening a strategic consultation from 4-9 May 2009 in Manila, Philippines, gathering diaspora

specialists, including sociologists, anthropologists, demographers, theologians, government policymakers, legal experts, key denominational leaders, and mission organizations that have a diaspora mission thrust. We are also inviting representatives from non-government organizations, particularly labour recruiters and select business people.

We are hoping to formulate an Evangelical Diaspora Theology and Strategy to present at Lausanne III in Cape Town in 2010. Hopefully, our humble contribution to mission literature and practice will be embraced by the whole Church. It is our prayer that this will result in a calibrated and synchronized advance of the gospel of Jesus Christ among people on the move.

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### **Sometimes “Do Not Talk to Strangers” Is Not the Holy Spirit’s Way**

By Lorajoy Tira Dimangondayao

**After a quarter of a century in Edmonton, my Filipino-Canadian, Christian-worker parents were being reassigned “out east” to Toronto—Canada’s most multicultural city.** We packed up their garage, placing in one corner an older television set, a bookshelf, rugs, picture frames, kitchen utensils, an office desk, winter clothes, and more. They were amazed by the amount of stuff they had accumulated over the years.

We thought of calling the Salvation Army to pick up the items. My father was dialing the number of the nearest Salvation Army outlet when a man walked past. He was obviously new to the neighbourhood, looking downcast and confused. As he walked passed the house, my father hung up the phone and asked the man to come inside the garage. “I have many things here,” my father said. “If you find anything you need, you can have it.” The man pointed to an old, dirty jacket, asking, “How much is that? I need it for the cold days coming soon.” Our spirits were stirred to help this humble stranger. My father told him again that he could have anything inside the garage, including an old car. The man replied, “I would like to have it, but I don’t drive.”

My father began asking more personal questions:

My Father (F): Where do you live?

Neighbour (N): Just four houses from here.

F: My name is Joy Tira. What about yours?

N: My name is Vik.

F: I was born in the Philippines. How about you?

N: I came from Mauritius (East Africa).

F: Really? My wife and I almost went to live in your country. In 1982, we applied to work with a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that specialized in community development, and while living there we wanted to tell many people about our life experiences. I am glad to know that people from Mauritius, like you, have become our neighbours. How long have you been living in your house?

N: I have been here since May. So only six months!

F: Do you have a family?

N: No, just me and my friends. There are six of us who are renting the house for \$2,500 a month.



F: That is quite a bit of money.

N: Yes, indeed. I don't know where to get my share for the rent this coming month. Our employer is not paying us well so the Union made us strike. I am afraid to lose my job and go home empty-handed.

F: By the way, you have a very interesting name. Are you a Muslim, a Christian, a Hindu? You look like you came from India, but your accent is different from Indians.

N: No, I only speak English and French. But my grandfather came from India and immigrated to Mauritius. I am not a Muslim. I am a Christian. I am a follower of Jesus Christ. What about you?

F: Praise God. You are my brother in Christ!

N: Hallelujah! Really! You are a Christian from the Philippines?

F: Yes, I am. Let me hug you in the name of Christ!

They hugged each other in front of the open garage.

This time, their conversation shifted to a conversation of Christian brothers with kindred spirits. My father told him, "Please, please take anything you need." Vik picked up many items. We had to call our good friend to bring his pick-up truck to haul everything to Vik's house.

By the end of the morning, the garage was half empty. At Vik's house, my mother gave the men lasagna for lunch. Later in the afternoon, we went back to their house to give them more food and clothes for the winter.

As we were leaving, Vik shared, "Only two of us here are Christians. The four other fellows are Hindus. Please pray for their salvation. Could you come again? I hope we can study the Bible together." My father replied, "Of course we will come again!"

This was a providential meeting! Only God could orchestrate such a conversation. When I was younger my parents used to tell me, "Do not talk to strangers." However, sometimes the Holy Spirit stirs our hearts to lead us to action. Obedience to God's leading overrides fears, doubts, and selfishness.

Please pray for Vik and his countrymen. Could this be yet another diaspora missions among these Eastern Africans who just arrived in Canada? A local congregation has committed to visiting them and plans to show them the Jesus film. It is unfortunate that only a week later my parents moved to Toronto and were not able to nurture their friendship with Vik and his friends.

### **Immigration and Canada**

In the past, Canada has been characterized by its hospitable immigration policies. Even so, when our family relocated to Edmonton over twenty-five years ago, encounters with other visible minorities, particularly newly-arrived ones, were novel. Today, new immigrants seem to be everywhere in our city.

I purposely talk to strangers now. Just last week I struck up a conversation with a family who had just arrived from New Delhi. They had come to Edmonton as permanent immigrants and had no family in town. I admired their courage to brave the odds in a new land.

Yesterday, I met a Filipino worker who initially thought I was Chinese. When I said, "Thank you" in Filipino, she breathed a sigh of relief and exclaimed in our mother-tongue: "Oh, you are a *kabayan*—a fellow Filipino!"

Statistics from Canada Citizenship and Immigration indicate that in 2007 alone, Canada:

- welcomed 302,303 foreign workers as temporary immigrants,
- granted initial entry to 233,971 foreign students,
- welcomed 27,956 refugees, and
- granted 236,758 people permission to make Canada their home as permanent immigrants.

Today, despite the global recession of late 2008 to the present, Canada continues to welcome immigrants in the thousands. Many more people like Vik and his countrymen are arriving in Canadian communities. Canadian Christians are called to make friends with the “strangers” among us, and the Canadian Church, called to minister to them, is compelled to be strategic in mobilizing the followers of Christ in diaspora to advance the kingdom among them.

I imagine my parents are also talking to strangers in their new city, and turning them into friends.

**Lorajoy Tira Dimangundayao** is communications director for the [Filipino International Network](#).

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## **Inside India: Where Are the Indian Missions in Influencing the Indian Diaspora around the World?**

By John Amalraj

**Mahatma Gandhi realized his life’s calling when he was living as a “diaspora” outside the country.**

Gandhi, like many other Indians, went to London for his higher education studies and graduated in law. Later, he and his family moved to South Africa, where he could practice law and build his career. It was in South Africa that Gandhi realized his calling to be a leader of the masses. It was in the diaspora setting that his experiments with truth started. After his success in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India and eventually was handed the baton to lead the Indian Independence movement. India has never been the same.

Thousands of Indians migrate to different parts of the world for better prospects in education, career, and quality of living. In a globalized world, the choice to migrate to other countries is not a difficult one. Many countries actively look for skilled immigrants who will help build their economy; Indians, like those of other ethnic communities, seize this opportunity. The growing Indian diaspora in recent times have become very influential in their adopted countries. This trend is likely to increase in the coming years as India’s booming economy continues to grow and politically takes its rightful place in global affairs.

Major denominational churches in southern India, like the Marthoma Church and the Church of South India, have sent pastors to serve the flocks who have migrated to other countries. In most places, the purpose has been to provide pastoral care to their own congregations. In a few exceptions these congregations have made attempts to reach out to their own communities who are not yet followers of Jesus Christ. A few have even tried missions (e.g., Marthoma Church Youth in Chicago, Illinois, USA, is involved in mission trips to Mexico; a Tamil congregation in Singapore is involved in mission trips to Cambodia). Pentecostal and charismatic groups have been more involved in mobilizing others in their diaspora community to follow Christ.

**Pandita Ramabai of Mukti Mission** was challenged to follow Jesus and be involved in missions during her overseas visits. Brother Bakht Singh, who established an indigenous movement of churches across the country, decided to follow Jesus while completing his higher studies in the West. There are many more Indians who have been influenced during their lives as diaspora and are now actively involved in missions.

## **Influencing the Indian Diaspora in this Generation**

It is in this context that we have to ask the question: How we can influence the Indian diaspora to be disciplined to follow Jesus Christ in our generation?

Most Indian mission organizations have long been pre-occupied with the task of reaching the unreached within Indian political boundaries. The least mission leaders have done in involving the Indian diaspora is to raise funds that will support the mission work in India. This is often done by kindling the sentiments of the Christian diaspora community to gratefully acknowledge their roots by contributing their surplus income to meet the mission needs in India.

In the context of these fund-raising efforts among the Indian diaspora, mission leaders have ministered at large to the spiritual needs of the Christian community. Little or nothing has been done to envision and equip the Indian Christian diaspora to reach out to their communities or to others in their adopted countries.

### **The “Diaspora Strategy”**

The Apostle Paul’s mission strategy to reach the unreached was to go to the places where the Jews were scattered within the Roman Empire. The Jewish diaspora became the gateway to reach the Gentiles with the gospel. Paul’s calling as an apostle to the Gentiles was fulfilled greatly because of this “diaspora strategy.”

The diaspora strategy is not new. For example, during the colonial age, pastors and priests were first sent to minister to the settlers in foreign lands before they started to reach out to the indigenous people in those lands. It is now time for us in India to deploy this strategy to reach every Indian person, and thus all peoples.

For many centuries, the Jewish community waited for their Messiah. When Jesus Christ was sent into this world, the Roman Empire and the Jewish nation had relative peace from war which facilitated the life and ministry of our Lord. Scholars have interpreted this to say that the Roman Empire, their governance, and their roads and trade was a *kairos* (the “right or opportune moment”) movement in God’s plan of salvation. The Indian diaspora’s growing influence and the rise of India in the global affairs is also a *kairos* movement in the global mission movement. Indian missions must rise up and take the challenge of reaching Indians and the world for Christ. There are two ways this can be done:

1. **Indian mission organizations must start sending their workers to serve the diaspora community in other countries.** The main purpose of this should not be focused on raising funds for missions back home, but to envision and equip the Christian diaspora to fulfill their calling in their adopted countries. The role of such workers must be to envision and equip Christians in effective witnessing in their workplaces and marketplaces. As this ministry grows, we will have many diaspora Indians expressing their desire to move to other needy places in the world to fulfill their mission call.
2. **Indian Christian leaders need to create viable structures that will help Indian mission organizations to recruit, equip, and send missionaries to other countries.** Many workers will also choose to return to India and be involved in the mission movement. It is time we tell the Indian Christian diaspora that we do not just need their money, but we need them to be involved in the global mission movement. We must play the catalyst role to make this happen.

The global mission movement is in a very critical stage with the population of Christians in Asia, Africa, and Latin America eclipsing those living in the West. The economic power structure is also slowly shifting from the West to the East. India has a very important role to play in this context. The Indian Church and mission leaders must release their personnel to be involved in global missions. The first task in this is to envision and equip the Christian Indian diaspora to influence others in their adopted countries to follow Jesus Christ.

When Gandhi returned to India, congress leaders took special efforts to integrate his leadership into their movement. This changed the movement from being an elite movement to a mass movement. It is difficult to say

how the Indian mission movement will transform the world if we begin to involve the Indian Christian diaspora in our task. However, a transition has to take place in the Indian mission movement so that the Church of Jesus Christ will continue to grow across the world.

How will we respond to this new challenge in missions? How long will we still claim we are busy serving the tribal and Dalit people groups in rural areas? We need to look beyond our immediate context and widen our horizon to the global vision. The Great Commission is not limited to political boundaries. It is a global commission and we Indians cannot restrict it to India. Let us join hands together and take up the call to be involved globally.

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## **From Burma to Korea: Outreach among the Myanmar Diaspora Community**

By Tereso Casino

**In 1975, diplomatic relations between the Republic of Korea and the Union of Myanmar (formerly Burma) was established.** This relationship paved the way for bilateral trade and cultural ties. South Korea is now home to an estimated two thousand nationals from Myanmar. These people include workers, diplomats, religious leaders, and refugees.

The workers (euphemistically called “migrant workers”) make up the largest Myanmar diaspora population in Korea. Since the early 1990s, migrant workers have served mostly in the so-called 3-D jobs—Dirty, Difficult, and Dangerous—and send hard-earned money to support families and relatives back home. In the late 1980s, a small number of Myanmar students registered in a handful of universities and theological institutions in Korea. In the future, more students will be registering in Korean universities as the Korean Embassy in Yangon begins offering scholarships to qualified students.

Along with the influx of migrant workers are a few asylum seekers who show up as political, religious, or economic refugees. Political refugees flee Myanmar because of their past political activism. Religious refugees claim to have suffered from repressions and oppressions so they find refuge in Korea. Economic refugees, however, belong neither to political and religious classifications, having difficulty supporting their claims with facts. It seems, though, that most refugees come from some of the major ethnic groups in Myanmar.

The “religious workers,” although small in number, represent the Protestant/evangelical communities in Myanmar. As of February 2009, seven regular Myanmar congregations exist in Korea, mostly led by Myanmar church leaders who currently study at theological schools in Korea.

### **Onnuri Myanmar Community**

Ministry among Myanmar nationals in Korea commenced with a few leaders reaching out to their countrymen while studying at local schools. A good case in point is Onnuri Myanmar Community (OMC), established under the visionary leadership of Rev. Dr. Yong Jo Ha, senior pastor of Onnuri Community Church. Dr. Ha envisioned the training of “national missionaries” in Korea by supporting the education of a select but qualified group of leaders from countries where Korean missionaries have difficulty working.

In December 1994, OMC was born under the leadership of a Myanmar pastor, who at that time was completing his doctoral program at a local seminary. In the early days, OMC had actively reached out to the Burmese

Buddhists. Later, the population shifted to ethnic lines as new leaders took charge. The Chins now represent the majority, with a trickle from other ethnic groups. Most members at OMC are in their forties or older. Asked by a leader why many came to Korea, they gave a candid reply: “We came here to work and earn money in order that we can start small business when we go back to Myanmar.”

Partnership plays a key role in the expansion of diaspora ministries at OMC. The Korean host contributes substantially to the outreach (e.g., salary, food, clothing, medicine). OMC does its part as it collects funds from members to support two “national missionaries” in Myanmar. New members are taught that OMC “exists to glorify God by being a community of worship and mission-directed community.” Strategies they use to fulfill this objective include holding prayer meetings, conducting Bible studies, observing regular worship services, and organizing care group meetings on Sundays.

The most effective strategy among Myanmar diaspora is the “shelter.” Operating the shelter requires quite a bit of planning, personnel, and resources; however, it helps those who come for rest (including the sick and injured) and provides temporary housing whenever they lose jobs.

Burmese Buddhists also come to the shelter for fellowship. Twice a year, OMC holds two major evangelistic campaigns during Chuseok (the Korean traditional harvest time) Lunar New Year. Chuseok events seek out other migrant workers (i.e., nationals from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Russia, Mongolia, or Pakistan). Lunar New Year events aim to reach out to the Myanmar Buddhists.

As people from Myanmar love music, singing (a leader calls it “sing-song”) is a major feature in all organized events. Members of the Myanmar community in Korea face many challenges such as homesickness, language barriers (Korea is a mono-linguistic and mono-cultural society), culture shock, and remittance of their earnings. The existence, however, of concrete and intentional ministries that address their spiritual and material needs makes a big difference in their stay in Korea.

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## **Immigration and North America: Who in the World Is My Neighbor Anyway?**

By J. D. Payne

**Of all the countries, by far the United States leads the world as a host country, receiving thirty-eight million immigrants in 2005 alone (approximately thirteen percent of the population).** Although Canada did not receive nearly that many people, its immigrant population for the same year comprised almost nineteen percent of its overall population.<sup>1</sup> Such global movements of people to North America provide an outstanding opportunity for local churches to experience the advancement of the kingdom among many unreached people groups.

Unfortunately, we do not know many of the characteristics of the people the Lord has brought to this continent. The following are some significant challenges that interfere with both our understanding of and our desire to reach our neighbors.

### **The Macro Perspective**

Recognizing high evangelical percentages, missiologists identify most of the thirty-six countries and territories representing North America (see Table 1) as “reached.”<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1. Countries and Territories of North America**

Anguilla	Guatemala
Antigua and Barbuda	Haiti
Aruba (Netherlands)	Honduras
Bahamas	Jamaica
Barbados	Martinique (France)
Belize	Mexico
Bermuda	Montserrat (U.K.)
British Virgin Islands	Netherlands Antilles
Canada	Nicaragua
Cayman Islands (U.K.)	Panama
Costa Rica	Puerto Rico
Cuba	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Dominica	Saint Lucia
Dominican Republic	Saint Vincent and Grenadines
El Salvador	Trinidad and Tobago
Greenland (Denmark)	Turks and Caicos Islands (U.K.)
Grenada	United States of America
Guadeloupe (France)	U.S. Virgin Islands

The problem with such reporting is that we receive the macro-level statistics of various nation-states, thus not truly representing *panta ta ethne* (all the peoples) residing in those countries or territories.

For example, [Joshua Project](#) notes that some of the highest priority Unreached People Groups (UPGs) are residing in North America (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Joshua Project's Highest Need People Groups Living in North America<sup>3</sup>**

Name	Need Ranking	Location	Est. Population
Arab, Najdi Bedouin	92	United States	5,500
Tay, Tai Tho	91	United States	600
Arab, Saudi-Najdi	91	United States	5,500
Arab, Ta'izz-Adeni	90	United States	4,900
Berber, Arabized	85	United States	23,000
Parsee	85	Canada	26,000
Parsee	85	United States	76,000

Also, according to Joshua Project, there are several peoples listed as UPGs when scattered across the globe with populations of ten thousand or more members residing in North America (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Joshua Project, UPGs with a Population of 10,000+ Living in North America**



<b>People Group Name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Est. Population</b>
Punjabi	Canada	828,607
Jew, English Speaking	Canada	303,477
Japanese	Canada	61,473
Jew, Eastern Yiddish-Speaking	Canada	51,789
Hindi	Canada	46,753
North African, generic	Canada	41,213
Somali	Canada	35,165
Bengali	Canada	31,073
Parsee	Canada	26,080
Jew, Israeli	Canada	17,608
Turk	Canada	16,707
Khmer	Canada	15,722
Indo-Pakistani	Cuba	34402
Pocomam, Southern	Guatemala	40,959
Arab, Palestinian	Honduras	54,434
Deaf	Honduras	33,599
Arab, Syrian	Mexico	422,595
Jew	Mexico	39,142
Mixteco, Juxtlahuaca Oeste	Mexico	27,565
Sarnami Hindi, East Indian	Trinidad and Tobago	523,393
Han Chinese, Cantonese	Trinidad and Tobago	20,282
Jew	United States	4,763,719
Khmer, Cambodian	United States	229,113
Bengali	United States	154,848
Urdu	United States	151,811
Thai, Central	United States	136,630
Parsee	United States	76,195
Phu Thai	United States	51,478
Jew, Bukharic	United States	50,797
Kurd, Northern	United States	48,579
Pushtun, Northern	United States	47,335
Somali	United States	24,290
Uzbek, Northern	United States	24,290
Berber, Arabized	United States	23,319
Sindh	United States	21,568
Sinhalese	United States	20,798
Jew, Spanish Speaking	United States	14,349
Okinawan	United States	12,996

Burmese, Myen	United States	10,565
Tatar	United States	10,160

### People Blindness

Related to the fact that many North American countries have high evangelical percentages, many UPGs are removed from the global UPG listings when they immigrate to North America. Joshua Project has a listing of 189 such people groups and [Global Research Department](#) of the [International Mission Board](#) has 133 people groups.<sup>4</sup>

For example, according to Joshua Project, the Japanese are designated a UPG if they are residing in Japan, Italy, Germany, Russia, and several other nations. However, if located in the United States, they are no longer considered a UPG, but rather a reached people group.<sup>5</sup>

According to Joshua Project, the Japanese living in the United States have a substantial evangelical population present that would rightly remove them from the UPG listing. However, if I *only* look at the UPG listing of those residing in North America, seeing a group as “reached” is not likely to cause me to consider asking whether they are “unreached” in other nations, thus not resulting in my attempt to develop global evangelization strategies that would give priority to reaching them “here” in order to reach them “over there.” Such a removal from UPG lists, without some “flag” to inform researchers and missiologists that this particular people group is unreached elsewhere in the world, creates a blindness to the unreached nations residing in North America.

The work of the researchers comprising the people group databases of Joshua Project and the Global Research Department have provided outstanding work, producing these two amazing resources guiding our understanding of the evangelical statuses of the thousands of peoples scattered across the globe. Although excellent information apparently exists for such peoples residing outside of North America, these two resources have large discrepancies when their North American data is compared. Joshua Project lists 113 known UPGs in North America; Global Research provides a number of 240 UPGs. Despite the fact that research of this nature is difficult, findings are always in flux, and some people groups can be identified by more than one name, there is a difference of 127 UPGs—a discrepancy much too large to develop effective global strategies. We must develop a better understanding of the UPGs in North America.

### The Evangelical X-Factor

Closely related to people blindness is the question: How many of the world’s peoples living here are followers of Jesus?

One of the greatest ironies in missions today is the fact that although we have a good understanding of the evangelical status of many of the world’s peoples in other nations, for the most part, we are ignorant regarding the evangelical status of the peoples of the world living in our backyards. We have climbed steep mountains, forded rivers, and journeyed into dark jungles to collect data regarding the world’s peoples, yet we have failed to cross the street to understand our neighbors.

Hundreds of people groups living in North America, including those who are distinguished as UPGs living outside of this continent, have an evangelical status of “unknown.” For example, Joshua Project records as “unknown” 231 people groups in North America while Global Research lists a much larger number of 794 “unknown” people groups, with the United States and Canada having the greatest number of these peoples. *I, therefore, suspect the actual numbers of UPGs in North America greatly exceed the present numbers of known UPGs as listed by Joshua Project (113 UPGs) and Global Research (240 UPGs).*

### Global Strategic Implications

If we fail to understand who our neighbors are, we will miss a strategic opportunity the Lord has given to North Americans. Especially in the United States and Canada, we have yet to value significant cross-cultural church

planting. Part of this lack of value is derived from the fact that we lack a proper understanding of the peoples here. I do see encouraging signs on the horizon among some denominations and mission agencies.

Yet, for the most part, cross-cultural church planting is something to be accomplished “overseas.” The following words from Ralph Winter were shared at the historic [Lausanne](#) meeting decades ago; yet, the contemporary growth in annual immigrants to the West makes them even more relevant for today.

Are we in America, for example, prepared for the fact that most non-Christians yet to be won to Christ (even in our country) will not fit readily into the kinds of churches we now have?.... Present-day American Christians can wait forever in their cozy, middle-class pews for the world to come to Christ and join them. But unless they adopt E-2 methods and both *go out after these people* and *help them found their own churches*, evangelism in America will face, and is already facing, steadily diminishing returns. You may say that there are still plenty of people who don’t go to church who are of the same cultural background as those in church. This is true. But there are many, many more people of differing cultural backgrounds who, even if they were to become fervent Christians, would not feel comfortable in existing churches.<sup>6</sup>

Without knowing the peoples living here, we will not be able to integrate our local evangelization strategies with other brothers and sisters across the globe attempting to reach the same peoples elsewhere. If we do not overcome our ignorance regarding our neighbors, we will fail to develop local strategies to reach immigrants with the gospel, plant highly reproducible models of churches with those new believers, equip them in the faith, and partner with them as they return to their peoples with the gospel elsewhere.

Since the world is our parish, we must overcome these challenges and better understand who in the world our neighbor is.

## Endnotes

1. “UN Statistics Show Migration as a Dynamic and Diversifying Force in Global Development.”

[www.un.org/migration/presskit/pressrelease12sept.pdf](http://www.un.org/migration/presskit/pressrelease12sept.pdf).

2. For example, the United States boasts of a twenty-six percent evangelical population, clearly above the two percent or ten percent (depending upon the source) evangelical percentages designating a “reached” area. For a full report of the evangelical study, see [religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf](http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf).

3. According to the [Joshua Project website](#), “The Priority-Ranking (or Need-Ranking) was developed to identify the people groups that have the greatest spiritual need and priority attention. The higher the ranking, the greater the need. The maximum score is 100 points.” Note: [The Global Research Department](#) of the International Mission Board reflects different names and populations for these groups.

4. For a listing of these peoples, see the appendices in J. D. Payne’s “In Through the Back Door: Reaching the Majority World in North America” at [northamericanmissions.org/files/In%20Through%20the%20Back%20Door.pdf](http://northamericanmissions.org/files/In%20Through%20the%20Back%20Door.pdf).

5. Discussion of this shifting in status because of geography has been discussed by others. See Patrick Johnstone. 2007. “Affinity Blocs and People Clusters: An Approach toward Strategic Insight and Mission Partnership.” *Mission Frontiers* 29(2): 8-15. For the online version, see [www.missionfrontiers.org/2007/02/PDFs/08-15%20Bloc,%20Clusters,%20Peoples.pdf](http://www.missionfrontiers.org/2007/02/PDFs/08-15%20Bloc,%20Clusters,%20Peoples.pdf).

6. Douglas, J.D., ed. 1975. *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*. Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA: World Wide Publications, 221-222.

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## The Directives to Diaspora Christian Leaders

By Tom Houston

**There are two kinds of migrant leaders: some are voluntary migrants; others had no choice but to leave home.** The voluntary migrants are often frowned upon by the people back home; they are seen as having been materialistically-motivated to leave. Even if they were not, they are often more prosperous now, and their Christian authority is seen to be compromised. They are seen to have deprived the work of God in their home country of the gifts and experiences they took with them.

Even those who felt they had no choice but to leave are still open to the temptations of materialism. Their first goal is to survive, and they have to bend all their efforts to do that. They want to prosper, and when and if they do, it gets into their blood—but not without a tinge of guilt about how well they are doing compared to those left behind at home. This can be masked by developing a critical spirit of the people back home. Where this is so, they do not easily develop a practical concern to make a sacrificial contribution to the evangelization of their motherland.

When this is the case (and they are part of a diaspora church), they tend to become ethnic ghettos, and the church tends to have varying degrees of internal strife. They do not make much of an impact either on the host population or on their country of origin.

### Changing Hearts and Habits

How can it be different? There is an answer in Jeremiah 29. This is a letter from Jeremiah in Jerusalem to the first generation of deportees to Babylon. We may summarize what he says in this way:

- **See it as in God's plan (29:11)** and believe it has a positive purpose.
- **Take the long view.** Count on seventy years, not two years (29:10). Do not be susceptible either to triumphalist or doom-mongering prophets (28:2, 29:8-9). Get property and become self-sufficient in food (29:5). Have healthy families (29:6).
- **Make a social, spiritual, and economic contribution to your host city (29:7).** Take advantage of the administrative opportunities presented to you (e.g., Nehemiah, Daniel and his companions, or Esther).
- **Make a new and deeper covenant start in knowing God (29:12-13).** Having escaped the ruts of your previous life, seek God whole-heartedly and discover him in new ways. Plumb the depths of the word of God like Ezra. Much of the truth that we take for granted emerged from this period. There is much we would not have known if the people of God had not been scattered. The concept of the new covenant came out of the diaspora. The promises we love so much come from this period. They that waited on the Lord from Judah to Babylon like slaves needed to learn “to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint,” and even dream of mounting up on wings like eagles.
- **Keep hope alive (29:14).** There is a future and a hope. It may not be in your generation. If the exile was to last seventy years (i.e., two or more generations), and those who got the letter would not live to see the return, they could leave that to their faithful God.

There is evidence that some diaspora churches are following Jeremiah's guidelines, and the contribution to world evangelization is remarkable.

*(This article was edited from “Postscript: The Challenge of Diaspora Leaders for World Evangelism” in SCATTERED: The Filipino Global Presence, edited by Luis Pantoja Jr., Sadiri Joy Tira, and Enoch Wan. 2004. Manila, Philippines: LifeChange.)*

**Rev. Tom Houston** has been a pastor in Scotland and Kenya. He has served as the Chief Executive Officer with **The British and Foreign Bible Society** (1971-1983), as president of **World Vision International** (1983-1988), and as international director for **The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization** (1989-1994).

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## PERSPECTIVES

### Hidden and Forgotten People

By Elba E. Somoza

**When Jesus introduced his ministry (Luke 4:18), he mentioned the passage in Isaiah 61 that speaks of bringing freedom to the imprisoned, to those in jail.** I have always been struck by this double mention of prisoners or captives. The passage in Isaiah also speaks of broken hearts.

Evangelism is the task of bringing the good news of salvation to people and helping them to heal the wounds of the heart. In the words of John and Paula Sandford (founders of **Elijah House**), it is “the evangelization of the heart” because we bring the good news of Jesus to broken hearts. From a place that fully reflects the ministry of Jesus, I have felt his call to work with the brokenhearted in a very specific area: restoration and recovery of men and women who have suffered different kinds of abuse—physical, sexual, or emotional.

In 2000, Norberto Saracco, **Lausanne** International Deputy Director for Latin America, asked me to train women who were going to work in counseling at the church he pastors, Iglesia Buenas Nuevas, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. We started with the course, “Healing the Wounds of Life,” an inner-healing process through the different stages of life. During the course, I began to learn about the leaders and their stories, and I saw that some of the women had suffered different abuse. These problems required a specific treatment and could not be solved merely with prayer. Unless the Church were to generate a space for their restoration, these hidden and forgotten (repressed, rather) things would turn the women into “hidden and forgotten” people.

#### Healing in the Women

We decided we would begin restoring the women’s lives (and equip them to help others) the following year. We saw the process of bringing freedom, grace, love, and the healing power of God to broken lives. We saw the women stand up for their rights, leave the secrets, and put themselves in the place of victory Christ wanted to give them.

This work is oriented toward the recovery from abuse. History cannot be changed; however, the consequences can be transformed and new capacities can emerge from the place of the injury. In the words of Isaiah, the women can have “a crown of beauty instead of ashes.” When scripture says that God “chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things,” it can be seen as referring to the people who are “hidden” and “forgotten” in our churches. These are the silent and wounded soldiers carrying their burdens without hope of restoration and with the mistaken “conviction” of having to submit to that pain, as they submitted to abuse before.

One of the distortions that abuse generates in people who are victims is that instead of occupying the healthy place of victim, they put themselves in the place of protecting the abuser and keeping silent. These experiences quench the spirit in the life of the person.

#### Healing in the Men

Because some of the women were married to men who also had been abused, the group also saw the need to work with men. If the women were hidden and forgotten in churches because no one knew what to do with them, more so were the men who, in their manliness, kept the secrets and the shame to themselves. These men may also be potential abusers of others.

I shared this issue with Pastor Saracco. The problem was we did not know who would lead the men's group. I knew of no one who worked within the framework we had been using. We formed the men's group with the same criteria as the women's group, and one of the pastors was included with the idea of continuing the work later. The men accepted my coordination.

This was a wonderful experience, and we were amazed at the need the men had to open their broken hearts to receive the grace of God.

### **Therapeutic Groups with the Goal of Restoration**

Today, we work with men and women, some of whom have recovered. This kind of work could be compared to "therapeutic" groups rather than self-help groups. Although recovered individuals can lead the group under supervision, they follow a list of topics for a year. Groups meet for two hours each week. Since our church is multi-cultural and multi-social, the groups are heterogeneous, which adds a great richness to the experience.

Each group makes a pact of confidentiality when it starts. This is important because we work with people who belong to the same church, and it would be devastating for a person going through a restoration process to have his or her deepest intimacy revealed.

With each passing year, people come with greater hurts and with stories of great grief. Many people, when they learn about this work, are profoundly touched and say, "What a harsh task!" However, they share that even though their life histories are extremely difficult, they can say with the writer of Romans (Romans 5:20), "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more."

### **The Dual Mission of the Church**

As I reflect upon the mission of the Church and the concept of hidden and forgotten people, I believe the Church has an outward mission (evangelization) and an inward mission (formation for the maturity of the integral life of the individual). Generally, when we think of hidden and forgotten people, we have in mind marginalized people or people living in extreme conditions. This is true; however, there are many more people of these people in the seats of our churches.

Our leaders are not exempt from suffering abuse. If they do not work on their histories and heal their hurts, they will transmit these burdens to those under their authority. Hurting people hurt others when they do not heal their own hurts.

The Lord is calling us to recognize and bring light to those who are forgotten and hurting. Jesus came for them; we need to dedicate time and an attentive ear to them, firmly believing that the ministry of Jesus has power and validity in the midst of this impersonal and solitary world. We believe Jesus is the same today, yesterday, and forever. For this reason:

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. (Isaiah 61:1-4)

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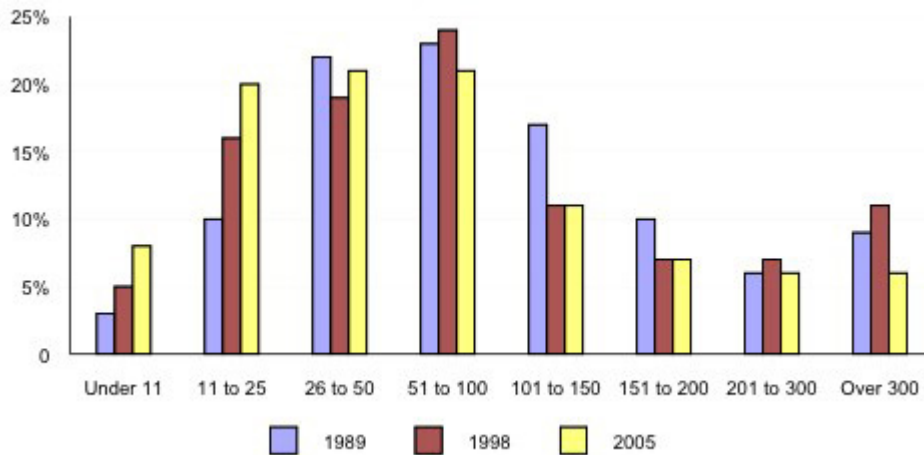


## The Growing Importance of Larger Churches in England

By Peter Brierley

The results of the 2005 English Church Census were published in September 2006 in a book called *Pulling Out of the Nose Dive*. The detailed county results are given in *Religious Trends No. 6 2006/2007*. Both were published and distributed by [Christian Research](#) in September 2006.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of churches of different sizes in England in 2005, and how that has changed since 1989.

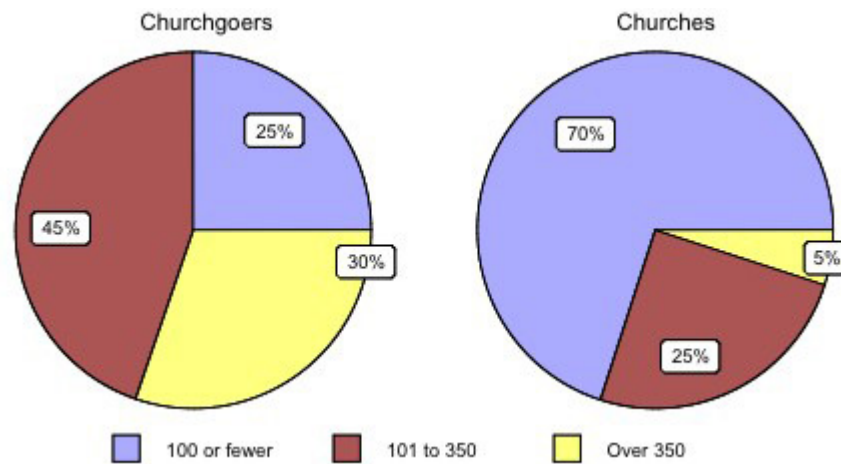


**Figure 1: Size of English churches, 1989-2005**

The average size of churches seems to be getting smaller. This is clear from the increasing proportions of churches which are very small and the reducing proportions of churches which have more than one hundred people. In 1989, the average size of a Sunday congregation was 123 people; by 1998, this had become ninety-eight and had dropped to eighty-four in 2005. These figures include Roman Catholic churches which, on average, are four times larger than others, and if these are excluded, the average size for Protestant churches becomes, respectively, eighty-seven, seventy-three, and sixty-seven in 2005.

### Churches and Churchgoers

The proportion of churchgoers varies by the size of the church. With two-thirds, seventy percent, of churches having fewer than one hundred people in their congregation in 2005, it is interesting to see that cumulatively these accounted for only a quarter, twenty-five percent, of churchgoers. Figure 2 illustrates the disparity between number of churches and number of churchgoers.



**Figure 2: Percentages of churches and churchgoers, 2005**

### The Largest Churches

The largest churches, some five percent of all the 37,500 churches in England, are collectively responsible for almost one-third of churchgoers. These churches are therefore a significant element of English Christianity.

There are many Catholic churches whose Sunday congregations are over one thousand people, but among other denominations, the chief ones are:

10,000	Kingsway International Christian Centre, Hackney
5,500	Kensington Temple, West London
5,000	Hillsong in Central London
4,000	Ruach Ministries, Brixton
2,500	House of Praise, Woolwich
2,500	St. Thomas Crookes, Sheffield
2,490	Holy Trinity, Brompton, West London
2,200	Jesus House for All Nations, Brent
2,000	All Souls in Central London
1,680	Holy Trinity, Cheltenham
1,450	Basingstoke Community Church
1,400	Community Church, Southampton
1,400	St. Andrew's, Chorleywood
1,400	Renewal Christian Centre, Solihull
1,200	Kingdom Faith Church, Horsham
1,100	Woodlands Church, Bristol
1,100	Trinity Baptist Church, West Norwood
1,080	St. Ebbe's, Oxford
1,030	Jesmond Parish Church, Tyneside
1,000	Christian Centre, Nottingham

1,000	St. Saviour's, Guildford
1,000	Altrincham Baptist Church, Manchester
1,000	Gold Hill Baptist Church, Chalfont St. Peter

Nine of these twenty-three churches have more than two thousand attendees on a Sunday; fourteen have between one and two thousand. Among the nine, five are Pentecostal (all with substantial black congregations), three are Church of England, and one is Independent. Among the fourteen, five are Church of England, four are New Churches, three are Baptist, and two are Pentecostal.

By comparison with church sizes in the United States and other parts of the world, these would not be called “mega-churches”; however, in terms of churches in the U.K., these are, in effect, our mega-churches.

Taking just those with congregations of 350 or more (as shown in Figure 2), there are no Methodist or United Reformed churches in this size bracket.

Virtually all the 1,900 churches with more than 350 people in their congregation are either Catholic (1,350) or evangelical (460); the remaining seventy are considered broad or liberal.

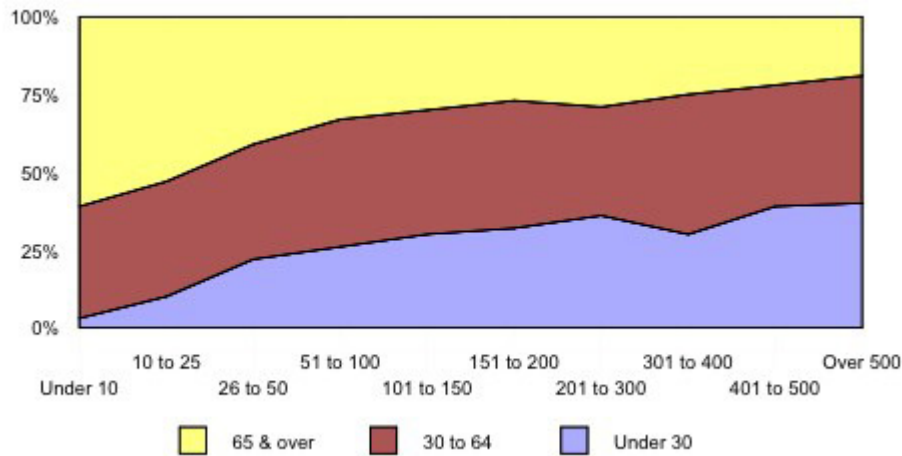
There are also virtually no churches with 350 or more in rural areas, and just thirty spread across numerous commuter rural areas (and all between 350 and 400 people). There are one hundred churches of this size in city centres, 310 in inner city areas (many of which are Roman Catholic), 165 on council estates, 920 in suburban areas, and 350 in separate towns.

### The Attractions of Larger Churches

The census showed a number of interesting correlations between size and other factors. For instance:

- **The larger the church, the greater the likelihood that it was a growing church, indicating the significance of strong leadership and clear vision.** These churches tended also to attract those who went to church less than once a month (presumably because they could be anonymous in such surroundings, while appreciating the warm welcome such churches frequently give).
- **The larger the church, the greater the proportion of non-white people attending.**
- **The larger the church, the greater the proportion of younger people in it.** This was perhaps because the parents of children were attracted by weekday activities which allowed their children to interact with other Christian children. This was especially true of parents in their twenties. Fifty-seven percent of these attend churches inside Greater London and twenty-six percent attend churches with congregations in excess of two hundred people outside Greater London. This illustrates the fluidity of churchgoers and the amount of interchange there is between different churches. “Have wheels, will travel” is very much true of GenXers and their church attendance!

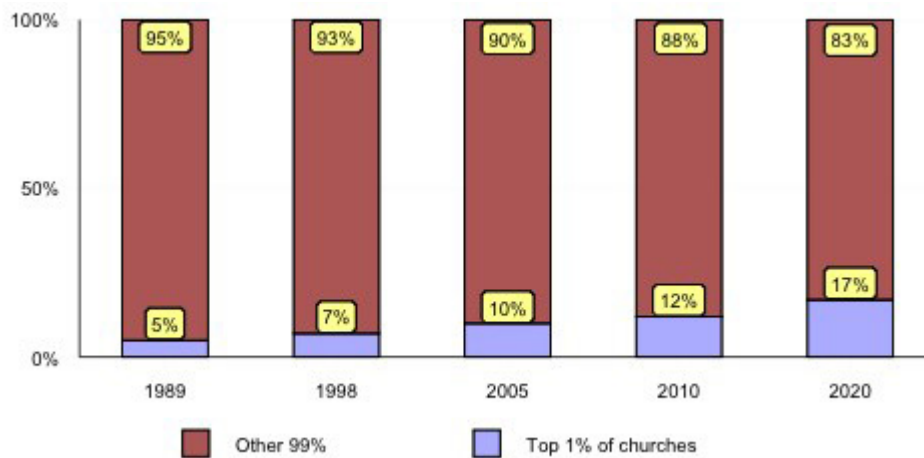
The proportion of people of different ages attending different sizes of churches is illustrated in Figure 3. More than half of the smallest congregations are those aged sixty-five or over, whereas they are less than a quarter in congregations in excess of four hundred people.



**Figure 3: Age of churchgoers by size of church**

### The Increasing Significance of Larger Churches

If we take the Church of England as an example, then there are some 160 churches with average Sunday attendance in excess of 350 people, about one percent of all Anglican churches. Yet in 2005, this one percent of churches attracted ten percent of the total Anglican attendance in the country! As Figure 4 shows, this percentage is increasing, and likely to continue doing so according to present trends.



**Figure 4: Proportion of larger churches among total Church of England church attendance**

These churches are all led by men; the largest Anglican church led by a woman is just under three hundred in size. Most, however, have women on their immediate senior team. Five in six are evangelical. Their average age is slightly under the average age of Church of England incumbents, but more stay beyond the normal sixty-five retirement age to leave at seventy.

In what ways are such churches different? They have a number of attractions, which are as true for larger churches of other denominations and for the Church of England:

- Relevant preaching/teaching
- Quality worship (which usually means different styles)
- Friendly people (people are looking for friendship, not just friendliness)

- A warm welcome
- All life stages are present, so there is company whatever a person's circumstances
- There are a wide range of activities, including high quality children's/youth work, often led by a children's worker and/or youth worker
- Large commitment to local community

Why do people continue to go to larger churches? A number of focus groups were held in 2001 among those who had joined a larger church in the previous year, and they were specifically asked this question. They replied as follows (in priority order):

- The opportunity to grow spiritually
- The convenience of going to a church near where they lived
- They regularly sensed God's presence in the worship
- They found the teaching helpful
- They found the worship inspiring
- The people were friendly
- There were appropriate activities for their family
- It was a caring congregation

Focus group participants were also asked what activities were particularly attractive in a larger church. These included:

- Evangelism in the local community
- Practical discipleship was provided
- Pastoral care was delegated to a team
- There was an effective prayer ministry
- The leaders thought strategically

It mustn't, however, be assumed that larger churches are perfect. Key problems newcomers to larger churches found included:

- Difficulty getting to know other people
- Needy people being overlooked, or not noticed if absent
- A contentment with being a passenger, or watching as an uninvolved spectator
- Ineffective communication of activities
- The professional nature of the services, sometimes more apparent than real, suggesting they could never fit in and help.

### **So What Does All This Suggest?**

It is clear that larger churches are the exception rather than the rule, and that collectively across the country they draw significant proportions of churchgoers. The church experience of churchgoers is thus of a resourceful, thriving church with quality teaching and worship.

Leading larger churches is a major opportunity and requires special people who have good leadership skills, are able to work well with a team relationally and administratively, and have quality communication gifts. It is likely to be a stressful occupation, requiring adequate support with constant encouragement to maintain their spirituality. A delicate balance is needed between not being too remote and inaccessible to their congregation and yet not being overwhelmed and pressurised by multitudes of calls upon their time.

The programme of larger churches is often a compelling call for further helpers and volunteers reaching into their local communities in many different ways. This requires good servicing, reliable communication, and

continuous training. There will be dozens of ways in which Christian commitment can be provided, with pastoral care a key issue for all involved.

The opportunities afforded for evangelism are many, the stimulus for personal Christian growth high, and the joy of building a more effective kingdom for the Lord a huge plus factor. There is no doubt that a large, active, serving church draws the needy, the curious, and the seeking. Equally precious in God's sight, however, is the solitary, lone minister serving faithfully with commitment and dedication to a small, unresponsive, indifferent community with few resources and little support and encouragement.

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## URBAN COMMUNITIES

### Part 1. The Global Village on the Urban Edge: The New Face of Urban Ministry

By Michael A. Mata

#### The New City

At the dawn of this new millennium humanity has achieved a demographic milestone: for the first time in human history, more people live in cities than in rural areas, and the new urban immigrants are no longer a minority. Explosive population growth and a torrent of migration from the countryside are creating cities that dwarf the great capitals of the past.

The movement of people from the country to the city and from foreign lands to Western countries is not a new narrative. However, the conventional explanation of the "push" of poverty and the "pull" of economic opportunity does not fully explain the current level of movement.

Neither poverty, nor overpopulation, nor economic stagnation serve to trigger mass migration, although they obviously play a significant role. A natural catastrophe will generate movement or displacement; however, it is usually temporal. Certainly, wars and political repression fuel mobility patterns. However, in the past twenty-five years or so the prime factor in the movement of vast numbers of people has been the allure of contemporary urban life with its promised economic opportunities and material amenities.

Due to the global commoditization of Western culture cities like New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, and Berlin have become worldwide symbols of the good life. Well-advertised air routes and cheap fares have turned far-away cities into magnets for millions of people who leave their homelands in search of the more glamorous and exciting life they have seen on the screen or heard in the beat of a song played on the radio.

Since the founding of the first city, cities have been at the hub of all important activity, shaping the political, intellectual, and moral character of our societies. They are the centers of communication, commerce, creativity, and cultural life. However, the radical technological and economic changes of the last quarter century have transformed cities into vital links of a highly interconnected global village.

With this global transformation has come the emergence of a new cultural perspective that is decidedly urban, Western, technology-driven, and consumption-oriented—forever shaping the consciousness of the village's inhabitants and challenging our notion of "urban." In turn it raises provocative questions about the mission or role of the Church in the emergent global village.

## **Globalization**

Cultural invasion is also nothing new. It has been with us at least since Alexander the Great spread Hellenism from the Nile to the Ganges. Where new ideas once advanced at the foot pace of advancing armies, they are now spread instantly by satellites bringing Hollywood's fantasies and Madison Avenue's commercials to places as widely separated and isolated as the Alaskan tundra, Guatemalan villages, and the Kenyan bush. It has been said that the formation of culture is the process of the telling of stories. Today's far-reaching signals have new tales to tell of affluence, freedom, and power.

Far from uniform, the emerging global culture is a shifting mixture of experimentation and innovation in which the more and the less developed countries learn and benefit from one another, each mutually transformed, ignoring and adopting elements of one another, each mutating almost immediately in the process.

Indeed, these transformations take place almost invisibly, without the conscious decisions of the people affected. Yet even under repressive governments, which are ineffectual in curtailing the flow of information, nearly all sectors of the village are subject to what can be called "cultural synchronization" (or as it is more commonly called "globalization"). Driven by urbanization and reinforced by innovations in telecommunications, there is a real fear that this homogenizing process will absorb every cultural nuance into one big "MacWorld."

## **Exegeting the New Urban Landscape**

You need not spend time in distilling statistics or information to get a glimpse of what our future may hold. Jaime Lerner, the ecologically-friendly architect and daring former mayor of Curitiba (Brazil), declared, "If life is the art of encounter, then the city is the setting for encounter."

Once you start looking with a new set of lenses, these encounters are everywhere. In fact, the clues of these evolutionary and revolutionary processes are ever visible in our urban communities (i.e., in the built landscape). In other words, within the spatial dimension of our global village—our cities—there are clear signs of the emerging urban reality. All sorts of factors (demographic, political, economic, ecological, theological, and so on) interweave to form the living, vibrant, and imperfect miniature world that is a city.

In turn, all of these dynamic variables interact with and are affected by its built substance: some of it is beautiful and good to be in, some aggravates the human condition. But the interplay contributes to the creation of new patterns of social life and interaction.

Take, for example, Los Angeles, which might possibly be the best setting to explore the emerging trends and the role of the faith community. In the heartland of Los Angeles there is a dazzling constellation of global culture that simultaneously reaches out to every corner of the world and draws in to Los Angeles an amazing array of once "exotic," but now ever-familiar, influences. Reproduced on its streets and in its neighborhoods are the microcosms of Taiwan and Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand. There is:

- a Little Tokyo and a vast Korea town;
- a huge Mexican barrio and a sprinkling of maquiladora-type factories;
- a Little Manila, complete with remnants of pro-Marcos and anti-Marcos factions;
- Armenians periodically reviving their animosity with the Turks;
- Jewish diasporan settlements from Iran, Russia, and Brooklyn debating Middle East politics;
- African marketplaces teeming with discussion of current events in Cape Town and Addis Ababa;
- purveyors of soul food, as well as food from Seoul, Kosher burritos, and sushi pizza;



- more Samoans and Tongans than now live back in their Pacific homelands;
- mosques, temples, and religious centers for worshipers of every color and creed; and
- quite possibly the largest concentrations of Salvadoreans, Guatemalans, and Belizians outside of Central America.

The kaleidoscopic landscape of Los Angeles is now approaching that of a world atlas and almanac, and we as a society, and much less the Church, are only beginning to grasp the significance what this means and what it may foreshadow. More important, these multicultural expressions of local community reflect powerful global forces at play. The "city," then, is the text, or guide, to what is happening on a global scale.

At first glance, the city can be overwhelming in its complexity reflected in its design and structure. Yet, on closer examination we find that the values, hopes, ideals, and beliefs of the emerging, new, multicultural, urban world are expressed explicitly and distinctively in the urban landscape itself.

Take for example, the Westin Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. When construction of this 35-story, tri-cylinder, mirror-faced structure was completed, there was no doubt the building spoke of power, privilege, and prestige. Its style was to appeal to the kind of people who benefited from the emerging global economy and could afford to eat, stay, and play there. All others would have to be satisfied with simply traveling on the external elevators up to the revolving bar on top of the building. (Architectural style has as much to say about the promotion of certain values and a cultural perspective as it does about the role and function of the structure itself.) Ironically, the fickle economy necessitated a change in ownership and in marketing. Today, the hotel is a prime spot for special high school events and has a more eclectic clientele.

Urban form is never devoid of social content: it is merely the grid within which we organize our daily lives. People give life to the city, they embody culture, and they express it in distinctively new and creative ways. Just as the city is an imposing and complex amalgam of structures, it is a place of human activities that can be just as complex and overwhelming.

If there is one distinct feature of this social dimension of the emerging urban reality, it is the increasing diversity of the city's residents. Immigration adds ethnic diversity and continues to create ethnic enclaves. Regional migration creates geographic subcultures, and divisions along color lines reinforce their own kind of diversity. Communities forged along lines of generational or sexual preference have emerged and will continue to be important.

A look at and into corner shops or neighborhood shopping malls can reveal the cosmopolitan character of the evolving city. They are places where the material needs and desires of their customers are catered to. Attractive, intriguing, descriptive window displays and outside signage not only advertise what products are being sold but who would most likely frequent a particular shop. Koreans have transformed neighborhoods into their own likeness in Los Angeles just as Indians and Pakistanis have in London. Immigrants from Asia have established colonies in all the major cities. Indeed, this hyper-mobility has been a huge factor in the creation of a world without borders.

One of the tragic specters of the pursuit of happiness translated into purely economic and material terms is the people living on the streets. Homeless people may not have access to secure lodging; nevertheless, they need a sense of identity and place, well as a sense of community and belonging. Their make-shift "urban camps" are considered an eyesore to some; however, few of us would actually walk up to them and intrude into their space. The uses of space by homeless persons demonstrate that while the urban landscape is constructed with solid materials, it is the people of the city that make the built substance malleable.

Our use of space is evidence of that reality. For example, youth are quite adept at modifying space. When standard sitting places prove inadequate, they sit on other structures like low free-standing walls. Once that act is executed that space is converted: the wall is now a bench and the bench itself a footstool. Public space can become intimate space when a romantic kiss is exchanged. A blank wall on a building becomes the canvas of freelance artists or the space to declare the territorial influence of a local youth gang. Urbanites change space, free up space, convert space—working into it who they are and revealing what they are about.

### **The Spiritual Dimension of the New Urban Landscape**

Religious traditions—the spiritual dimension of the urban context—provide yet another and, perhaps, most the provocative layer of texture built into the landscape. Traditional and established Judeo-Christian forms of religion are still very present. Their places of worship remain impressive in their architectural style, but the activities inside are increasingly disappointing in appeal and often disconnected from the change around them. However, contrary to popular thought, the built environment testifies that religion is alive and well in the emerging urban world.

While historic forms of religion continue to attend to the spiritual needs of their constituencies, they now have to be understood in relation to a host of different and evolving religious expressions. As people move to a new land or city, they carry with them their beliefs and understanding of the sacred. It should not be too surprising to find, even in the most prosaic of neighborhoods, transplanted expressions of world religions and sects. Asian architectural design may reveal a Buddhist temple in the new community. A Muslim tower on the urban horizon testifies to the growing global presence of the Islamic faith in the city.

The built environment further demonstrates that the religious community is not only about effecting how people live their lives, but about converting buildings and space as new expressions of that transformation. In the middle of Los Angeles, for example, two blocks from a Holiness church, one block from a former synagogue (now a Korean Presbyterian church), four blocks from a historic Presbyterian church, three blocks from the founding Church of Religious Science, a vacated mortuary is transformed into an Islamic Center. Every Friday afternoon at their appointed hour of worship, the neighborhood becomes a Muslim community. Scenes like these punctuate the urban landscape—ever transforming and converting space into sacred place.

Christians are among the faithful writing their signature onto the landscape. Examples abound:

- a former movie theater is now a Christian bookstore
- an entertainment auditorium becomes a place of worship
- a former auto repair shop offers spiritual sanctuary
- a duplex is remodeled into a house church with an education center

A neighborhood house in central Los Angeles is now the international headquarters of the Evangelical Holiness Mission Center of America, just two houses up from the Buddhist Center. Who is evangelizing whom? The answer is not clear, but the evidence in the landscape suggests that buildings are indeed being converted. But not all conversions are successful or permanent. The multi-layered signage on an empty corner facility in south Los Angeles reveals that over a few years time it was a pub, then a repair shop, and was converted to a church before becoming vacant space.

Religious structures are converted as well. Traditional structures take on new forms as old-line congregations open their doors to other ethnic groups and faith expressions. We see not only different ethnic groups residing in the same community, but even their respective religious expressions coming together, if not to worship in concert then at least to share the same roof. A Lutheran church in Hollywood shares its facility with a Korean Reform church. A Pentecostal church shares space with a Korean Presbyterian church. A Disciples'

congregation jointly celebrates in their facility the Jewish High Holy Days with a Jewish congregation. Religious structures may also be converted into secular space, as in the increasing occurrence of former Catholic or Episcopal sanctuaries becoming microbreweries or distinctive restaurants.

These new religious expressions in the built environment point to the irreducible fact of religious pluralism and other sources of cultural diversity that greatly increase the significance of the question about the locus of Christianity. In other words, given these global transfigurations, what is the role of the Christian faith community in this emerging urban world?

This question will be answered in [Part 2. The Challenge for the Christian Church: New Roles in the Urban Context](#).

**Rev. Michael A. Mata** has extensive experience in urban-related programs, and his skills and expertise lie in developing practical approaches to faith-based community development, congregational redevelopment, transcultural ministry, and community conflict transformation. His research interests include social-cultural analysis of the urban landscape and assessing the social ecology of religious institutions in urban communities. He currently serves as the urban development director for World Vision U.S. Domestic Programs and provides assistance in the areas of community engagement and collaboration.

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## **Part 2. The Challenge for the Christian Church: New Roles in the Urban Context**

By Michael A. Mata

**In Part 1, we discussed globalization in the new urban city.** We also touched upon the spiritual dimension of the new urban landscape. Here we will answer the question “What is the role of the Christian faith community in this emerging urban world?”

The quest for community will be increasingly difficult in the coming years as technological and communication innovations foster new patterns of social life. Certainly the rise of self-help groups reflects the need for community. So do youth gangs and Internet chat rooms. Not discounting their benefits, sooner or later people will discover that these groups or experiences do not suffice. At the same time, Christian-based communities or cell groups have already challenged the conventional concepts of “church.” These ancient forms of church foster stronger networks of community among people of faith, hold each other accountable, and facilitate the movement outward.

### **Facilitating Community-building**

The role of the Church may well go beyond community-building among believers. Admittedly, it may be tough going within a diverse and fluid urban culture, and yet in the long run more rewarding for the Christian Church to effect coalitions with neighborhood groups, civic associations, and non-profit entities to work for broad objectives of economic, environmental, social and cultural justice. More important, the facilitating of community-building may prove to be a viable vehicle by which the message of the gospel can be clearly articulated and affirmed within the public arena.

But the Church will be faced with much more than the task of bridging individuals, groups, and organizations. Racial, ethnic, and regional divisions continue to be significant in the urban context, despite the facility of movement and contact. The widening chasm between the “haves” and the “have-nots,” both politically and economically, will only exacerbate divisions corresponding to ethnic and geographic lines of separation.

### **Learning from the Voices in the Margins**

One of the lessons learned from observing the emerging urban world is that the fault lines of division are seldom static or easily discernible. For example, just when it appears that boundaries between political and geographic rivals are beginning to erode, new tensions appear. Ideological battles are likely to be waged on numerous fronts, challenging religious leaders to be responsibly involved in these conflicts as ministers of reconciliation.

Moreover, attention must be given to the smaller, or less vocal, communities whose importance may be overshadowed by such tensions. Those of the dominant cultures have much to learn from those on the periphery.

Indeed, the main stimuli for rethinking the mission of the Church may well come from the bottom and from the edge, from those sectors of the world that have been on the fringes of the fading modern era. Places where:

- Christians are poor, especially Africa and Latin America;
- Christian minorities are surrounded by non-Christian cultures, as in Asia;
- communities of faith live under political oppression, as they do in many parts of the world;
- the churches of color are poor; and
- women are agonizing together over what it means to be faithful and female in institutional structures that perpetuate patriarchy.

These are the "voices from the margins," which have been forced to the sidelines—the basements, kitchens, slums, and *colonias* of the dominant culture. It is their struggle and hope that now enables them to offer a vision for the Church that may prove to be a true liberation because it has not been squeezed through some religious grid or distorted by the narrow function of mainstream religion.

The institutional Church has much to learn from local indigenous groups. Still the message of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reverberates in the urban village today: the beloved community must be lifted up. They shall know us by our love. The message is clear: we are to proclaim unity, not uniformity, among our neighbors of the new urban village. In the spirit of reconciliation a new sense of people-hood is being called forth.

Besides ethnic diversity and religious pluralism, the global village appears to be characterized increasingly by consumerism. To be sure, we find the pursuit for hope alive, but some seek to find it in status and material wealth. The consumer culture so evident in nearly every billboard or corner-mall of the city is driving people to work harder just to keep up, partly because they feel they need the material amenities of a comfortable life.

They have confused standard of living for quality of life. Ultimately, the "American dream," whether it be the domestic or international version, will reveal itself to be an illusion for most people. At the same time, the problems of the needy and disadvantaged are likely to become even more severe and not so distant.

Clearly the challenges to the next Church require a sober assessment of the economic future. But taking our Christian faith seriously argues strongly for an optimistic appraisal of the future. Perhaps Christianity's greatest contribution lies in the very orientation it poses toward the future itself. The Christian faith has always included a central message of hope—something learned from those who have struggled on the margins. As the world is being reshaped, that message will need to be clearly presented as never before.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As we continue into the twenty-first century, every aspect of what we call the urban context is indelibly marked by the powerful changes emanating from the globalization of our world and the advances within technology. The profound transformations in peoples, institutions, demography, and geography are physically evident in the new urban reality. The continuous class and ethnic conflict, internal social disorder (communal, familial, and individual), spiritual movements, and patterns of geographic mobility and economic stress have become part of our multicultural urban terrain.

The Christian faith has never had a greater opportunity or a more urgent responsibility to live and proclaim its truths. The Church faces challenges as it attempts to remain faithful to its roots and relevant to a kaleidoscopic

world. Yet its message of healing and hope seems never to have been more needed. A Christian response to these challenges demands discernment of the action of God in new ways, and this may mean ultimately carrying out faithful and bold ministry within postmodern forms yet to be conceived.

**Rev. Michael A. Mata** has extensive experience in urban-related programs, and his skills and expertise lie in developing practical approaches to faith-based community development, congregational redevelopment, transcultural ministry, and community conflict transformation. His research interests include social-cultural analysis of the urban landscape and assessing the social ecology of religious institutions in urban communities. He currently serves as the urban development director for World Vision U.S. Domestic Programs and provides assistance in the areas of community engagement and collaboration.

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## LAUSANNE REPORTS

### Lausanne Consultation Explores Role of Christian Counseling in World Mission

By Bradford M. Smith

**Nineteen Christian caregivers from the fields of counseling, pastoral ministry, psychology, psychiatry, social work, and theology met in Mexico City 6-9 January 2009 to explore the future role of Christian counseling** in the Church's global mission of taking "the whole gospel to the whole world."

The 5-day Lausanne Consultation on Care and Counsel as Mission was sponsored by the [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#) and hosted by Saul and Pilar Cruz of [Armonia Ministries](#).

After considering current trends, opportunities, and threats, consultation participants reached agreement regarding the rising challenge of poverty and suffering around the world, the necessity of addressing this challenge with holistic and integral transformation, collaborative and creative processes, local and indigenous initiatives, and the pursuit of biblical social justice and healing. The participants, from eleven countries, were united in a desire and vision to bring the whole gospel to the whole world through the channels of care and counsel as mission.

As a result of this consultation, plans were made to create a network of international mental health workers and scholars and to connect Care and Counsel as Mission with local churches, mission agencies, seminaries, and other organizations. The group looks forward to future collaborative research projects and the development of an institute that will provide an opportunity for study and training in culturally-appropriate forms of Christian counseling.

At the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization Congress ([Cape Town 2010](#)), Care and Counsel as Mission will have an opportunity to share its vision through plenary addresses and workshops. In addition, several members will be involved in providing actual care and counsel at the congress through a prayer and guidance center available to those attending the congress.

If you are interested in more information about Care and Counsel as Mission, or desire to be connected with this network, please visit the [website](#) or contact me at [careandcounsel@gmail.com](mailto:careandcounsel@gmail.com).

**Dr. Bradford M. Smith**, a Boston (Massachusetts, USA) area psychologist, is chair of the Lausanne Care and Counsel as Mission Interest Group and president of Care and Counsel International. Leading up to the 1989 Lausanne Congress in Manila, he was Lausanne's director of program development and Congress participant selection director.

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