

Friday afternoon 3rd October

Plenary

What A Coup Taught Me About Ecclesiology and Missions

Jean Johnson (Jean@fivestonesglobal.org)

Jean Johnson is a veteran missionary, trainer, and author with over 35 years of experience in cross-cultural ministry. As the director of Five Stones Global, she equips missionaries to make disciples in ways that are biblical, reproducible, culturally-effective, and locally sustainable. Jean served long-term in Cambodia and is the author of *We Are Not the Hero: A Missionary's Guide for Sharing Christ, Not a Culture of Dependency*.

Abstract

Ecclesiology and mission are inseparably linked—each shaping and sustaining the other. Most of us involved in cross-cultural mission are sent by churches, supported by churches, or engaged in starting or strengthening churches. Whether we go to plant new fellowships or partner with existing ones, the local church is often our launching point, co-laborer, and ultimate goal.

Yet too often, we reproduce what we know. By default, we export church models shaped by our personal or denominational experiences—models often deeply Western in form. While well-intentioned, this can hinder contextualization and prevent local believers from discovering biblically faithful, culturally meaningful ways of being the church. The result? Churches that depend on outside structures and resources rather than growing organically from within.

In this session, we will explore two pathways forward. First, we must plant biblical functions and call out local forms—rooting churches in scriptural practices such as prayer, praise, fellowship, and disciple-making, while allowing local believers to shape the forms through their own cultural lens.

Second, we must return to biblical function and rethink form—challenging the global Church to rediscover New Testament patterns of church life and to reimagine expressions that resonate within each cultural context.

Only when biblical purpose is paired with indigenous expression can churches thrive, multiply, and endure. This plenary invites us to reflect deeply and reframe how we plant and partner in ways that are both faithful to Scripture and fruitful across cultures.

Respondent

Michael Cooper

Michael T. Cooper (PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is Missiologist in Residence with East-West and directs theological education initiatives through Ephesiology Master Classes and Kairos University. He has more than thirty years of global ministry and teaching experience, with research focused on archaeology, missiology, movements, and the intersection of theology and culture. He is the author of *Ephesiology: A Study of the Ephesian Movement* (2020), *First Christian Voices* (2023), and *Mind the Gap* (2026).

Biblical-Theological Model of the Church

Serving the Lord in Pastoral Care: Paul's Farewell Speech to the Ephesian Elders at Miletus (Acts 20:18-35)

Robert L. Gallagher (robert.gallagher@wheaton.edu)

Robert Gallagher is a professor emeritus of intercultural studies at the A. Duane Litfin Divinity School at Wheaton College Graduate School in Chicago where he has taught since 1998. He has served as the chair of the Intercultural Studies department (2011-20), president of the Midwest Mission Study Fellowship (2019-20) and the American Society of Missiology (2010-11), an executive pastor in Wollongong, Australia (1979-90), and a theological educator in Oceania since 1984. In addition, he functions as the teaching pastor at Lombard Church, Lombard, IL (C&MA; 2019-Present) and an instructor of cross-cultural workers for the mission agency One Collective in Elgin, IL (2016-Present).

Abstract

While at Ephesus In Acts 19, Paul proclaimed and taught the purpose of God's kingdom and the good news of his grace which he obtained through the blood of his Son. The reality of grace was for those who repented toward God and had faith in the Lord Jesus.

Paul's pastoral address to the Ephesian church elders at Miletus in Acts 20 sheds light on his cross-cultural methods and topics of proclamation in the city of Ephesus (Acts 19) together with his manner of living and instructions to the congregational leaders. Paul exhorted them to keep watch over all the flock and be alert because vicious predators wanted to come after he had gone to destroy God's people by misrepresenting the reality of Jesus Messiah. He had continuously warned the Ephesian church for three years that such a heretical situation would arise. As shepherds the elders needed to protect the people because groups within and without would arise to distort the truth and lead members away from the Lord.

The Anatomy Analogy: Conceiving the Interdependent Nature and Mission of the Global Church as Integrated Body Systems

Sarah Lunsford, PhD (sklunsford@liberty.edu)

Sarah Lunsford (PhD, Columbia International University) is an instructor of global engagement for Liberty University and the book review editor for *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*. She has served as an international church planter in Asia and is the author of *Missiological Triage: A Framework for Integrating Theology and Social Sciences in Missiological Methods*.

Abstract

Today's global mission landscape is complex. As multiple nations and agencies work in overlapping networks in every sphere, the topic of global church ecclesiology becomes more pressing. This paper explores key topics and challenges related to global church ecclesiology for our shared missiological purpose, and it presents the human anatomy of integrated body systems as an analogy to help us conceive how the global church can function with interdependence and mutuality. The analogy of integrated body systems will leave room for differentiation of cultures, doctrines, and mission emphases as separate body systems while encouraging neuron-like koinonia across all spheres of the global church as the means to facilitate our shared identity and mission. Missional implications will be made for areas that currently exhibit weak global church integration and how to strengthen them in a manner that resembles robust integrated body systems in the global body of Christ.

Theological and Biblical Bridging of Six Dichotomies on Church Mission, Cultures, and Generations in a Polarizing World

Narry F. Santos (narrysantos@gmail.com)

Narry F. Santos (PhD New Testament, Dallas Theological Seminary; PhD Philippine Studies, University of the Philippines) is Associate Professor of Christian Ministry and Intercultural Leadership at the seminary of Tyndale University in Toronto, parttime Senior Pastor of Greenhills Christian Fellowship (GCF) Peel and GCF York in Canada, and Vice President of the Evangelical Missiological Society Canada. He wrote academic books (*Family Relations in the Gospel of Mark and Slave of All*) and edited mission compendiums (including *Mission and Evangelism in a Secularizing World* and *Mission*

amid Global Crises) and contributed chapters in diaspora books and biblical articles in academic journals.

Abstract

The increasingly polarized world culture affecting North America can be evident in four dichotomized ways that Canadian Christian churches seem to view the mission of the church. These four dichotomies are the sacred–secular divide, clergy–laity divide, Sunday–Monday divide, and church–community divide. Two other dichotomies can also be found in the congregational mindsets of cultural and generational divides. To move away from these polarizing paradigms, this paper proposes that the church shift to the “bridge” metaphor in relation to its mission (i.e., sacred and secular bridge; clergy and laity bridge; Sunday and Monday bridge; church and community bridge; cultural and generational bridges).

This paper presents the following two lines of support for the “bridge” metaphor shift: (1) four theological concepts (i.e., the Lordship of Christ over all of life; the Spirit bestowing gifts to all believers; the mission of God for all days; and the kingdom of God in all creation); and (2) biblical examples in Acts for cultural bridge-building (Acts 6:1-7; 11:19-21; 13:2 [cf. 4:36; 21:39]) and in Genesis for generational blessings (from Abraham [Gen. 12:1-3; 15:5; 17:5-8] to Isaac [Gen. 26:3-5] to Jacob [Gen. 28:13-14] to the twelve sons of Jacob [Gen. 49:1-28]). Finally, this paper concludes with two implications of the theological and biblical bridging of the six dichotomies of church mission, cultures, and generations: (1) church mission is to be integrative, intercultural, and intergenerational; and (2) church mission is to be modeled by pastors, leaders, and the whole church.

Templum in Mundo: Liturgical Retrieval and the Maturing of Evangelical Missiology and Missions

Rev. Eric Burrows-Stone (ersstone@gmail.com)

Eric is a pastor in the Alliance of Reformed Churches and ministers to a congregation in rural Michigan. Eric was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in 2022, but had nearly a decade of prior ministry experience, which he gained while living as a monk. Besides ministry, Eric has also taught introductory church history and theology courses, engaged in spiritual direction and offered conferences on spiritual formation and prayer. He has a passion for bringing together ministry and academic interests; and especially enjoys exploring the intersection of liturgical worship, formation, and missiology.

Abstract

There has been a growing trend to appreciate liturgical worship and elements within Evangelical circles. This strikes the author as a positive movement away from much of contemporary Evangelical worship, which, with its emphasis often being centered primarily upon preaching - rather than the wholistic engagement of the body, soul, and mind demanded by liturgy - too easily gives the impression that worship and Christian faith is about intellectual assent. This essay will explore how liturgical retrieval can help further missional theology and practice in three parts. The first will examine the biblical-theological connections between Church, liturgy, and mission. The second examines how liturgical worship shapes the Church's identity, fostering a renewed and deepened sense of mission. And the third explores how liturgy can simultaneously captivate and catechize non-believers, helping them explore and discover the God's vision for humanity. The findings explored through these lenses, will hopefully encourage pastors, church leaders, and theologians to retrieve and incorporate liturgy as an essential element of missional practice and theory, and so help deepen the Church's commitment to and engagement of the great commission.

Historical and Case Studies

Modality and Sodality Collaboration in Missions: A Biblical and Contemporary Case Study from Ephesus to the Netherlands

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Rev. Dr. Daniel (Sung Ho) Ahn currently serves as a Research Fellow and Managing Editor for A Dictionary of Asian Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Greater Boston, USA. He has extensive experience in teaching and intercultural missions with OMF (Overseas Mission Fellowship) across Europe, North America, and Asia. He has also served various multiethnic, diaspora, and refugee communities in the Global North.

He earned his Ph.D. in World Christianity from the University of Edinburgh, UK, and holds a Master of Divinity and a Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary in the US. Prior to his academic career, he worked as a mechanical engineer at the R&D center of Hyun-Dai Motor Company, holding a B.S. and M.S. in mechanical engineering.

Abstract

This paper explores the theological foundation and practical implications of collaboration between modality (local church) and sodality (parachurch) in missions, drawing from Paul's ministry in Ephesus as described in Acts and its contemporary application in diaspora and multiethnic ministry of the International Christian Fellowship (ICF) in Wageningen, the Netherlands.

Paul's mission strategy in Ephesus exemplifies a dynamic partnership between the local church and parachurch structures. Upon arriving in Corinth, he met Priscilla and Aquila, a tentmaking couple who became key partners in his missions (Acts 18:2-3). Paul later entrusted them with the leadership of the Ephesian church (Acts 18:18-19; 1 Cor 16:19), while simultaneously establishing a missional training center at the lecture hall of Tyrannus as a parachurch organization (Acts 19:9).

This dual structure proved highly effective: Priscilla and Aquila disciplined Apollos, a gifted teacher who later strengthened the church in Corinth (Acts 18:24-28). Meanwhile, Paul's disciples from the Hall of Tyrannus – such as Epaphras – planted churches throughout Asia Minor, including Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea (Col 4:12-16). This strategic collaboration resulted in the rapid expansion of the gospel,

leading to the emergence of multiple churches across the region, including the seven churches later addressed in Revelation (Acts 19:10; 19:20).

Building on this biblical model, this paper presents a contemporary case study of ICF in Wageningen, a church established by Dutch Reformed leaders to reach diaspora individuals often overlooked by traditional white-majority congregations. Functioning as both a local church (modality) and a mission-oriented community (sodality), ICF actively trains believers to engage migrants and refugees, while sending disciples to Wageningen University to reach international students from unreached regions.

This study highlights how the integration of modality and sodality can revitalize mission efforts in a secularized European context and offers practical insights for churches seeking to engage diverse populations in today's globalized and multicultural contexts. By bridging biblical theology with contemporary missiology, this paper affirms the necessity of modality-sodality collaboration as a reproducible and adaptable model for effective missions, both locally and globally.

Missional Ecclesiology: Past, Present, and Future

Shawn P. Behan (shawn.behan@gmail.com)

Shawn Behan is a graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary, completing his dissertation on Lesslie Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology. He currently teaches at Missouri Baptist University and Maryville University. His research includes Lesslie Newbigin, missional ecclesiology, theology of mission, and practical theology.

Abstract

The missional ecclesiology exploded on the scene in the early 21st Century, paving a way for a revitalization of the Church in the West. It's refocusing on God's missionary purpose for the church and its application of missio Dei theology to the current context of the declining church in the West made missional ecclesiology very attractive to many churches and theologians. Yet, in its short life it has moved in many directions, often times losing its vitality and focus. Thus, in this paper we will consider three things: 1) the history of the concept of missional ecclesiology, 2) the current context of the missional ecclesiology, and 3) a proposed direction forward for missional ecclesiology. As a rather modern ecclesiology, it still has much to offer, but it needs to return to its core in order to offer a compelling vision for the Church moving forward.

Using Henry Venn's Three "Selves" to Nurture the Mission of Rural and Small-town Churches in Post-Christendom Canada

Peter Bush (petergbush25@gmail.com)

For over 35 years Peter Bush has been a minister of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, serving congregations in remote, rural, suburban and small-town contexts in Canada. Peter is the son of missionary parents. His academic research and writing has included the involvement of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in Residential Schools, reflection on the tension being amateur and professional in the ministerial calling, the rise of Korean and African clergy serving English-speaking small town and rural congregations, and the impact of diaspora Christians on Canadian congregations.

Abstract

Many rural and small towns congregations in Canada have declining memberships, some are in communities facing rural depopulation, others are in decline simply because fewer people are attending church. These congregations struggle to fit the model of church that evolved in Canada over the last half of the 20th century. That ecclesiological model was predicated on a full-time professionally trained clergy person serving a congregation meeting each Sunday in a church building. Those dual pillars of "real" church have become increasingly difficult for many rural and small-town congregations to afford.

This paper proposes Henry Venn's three "selves" of self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating provide ways forward for rural and small-town congregations in Canada to re-claim their identity as part of the mission of God in their communities. While Venn imagined the three "selves" for growing churches, those principles can free congregations struggling with unsustainable models of church to shape an ecclesiology to fit their mission context.

Rural and small-town Canada provides scope for churches to live out the mission of the kingdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ. As congregation members are freed from the financial burden of a model that is beyond their ability to afford, they are freed from the cycle of fundraising dinners and bake sales to put energy into connecting with their communities in ways that fit their context. They are freed to claim who they are as churches engaging in the mission in their context, living out the call to be witnesses to Jesus in their Jerusalem.

Evaluating “Missions Within Reach” 30 Years Later

Sherman Lau (slau@pacificlife.edu)

Sherman Lau serves as Lead Pastor of Killarney Park MB Church, an intentionally intercultural church in Vancouver, BC. He also teaches intercultural ministry courses at Pacific Life College in Surrey, BC. He completed a Doctor of Intercultural Studies from Western Seminary in Oregon in 2022. His vocational objective is to advance the development and praxis of intercultural ministry in the Canadian multicultural context.

Abstract

This paper is a reflection on the lasting impact of the "Missions Within Reach" Conference, hosted in Toronto, Canada in 1993, which was pivotal in introducing intercultural ministry. We invite you to explore how the ideas presented then continue to resonate today, based on our evaluation and insights drawn from the original compendium.

Methods

Reimagining Mission in a Digital Age: The Church's Role in Gaming Communities

Romans Ten (romans@guardiansgold.com)

Romans is a gaming strategist and digital evangelist who helps creators grow online. Founder of REACH Conference, he equips believers to share the Gospel in gaming spaces worldwide.

Andrew Feng (andrew.feng@indigitous.org)

Andrew Feng is a missions strategist and pastor with a ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary. As Chief Program Officer at International Friendships, Inc., he engages unreached communities through innovation. Informed by ministry experience across Asia, international student outreach, marketplace engagement, and social impact initiatives, his research invites the Church to reimagine mission in a digital age and embody the gospel in online spaces.

Abstract

Gaming has become one of the most influential social ecosystems in the world, with over 3 billion players globally and 61% of Americans gaming weekly. These digital spaces now function as “third places,” where people gather, build identity, and seek connection. Yet the Church has remained largely disengaged from this mission field.

In this paper, we argue that gaming communities offer a critical opportunity for digital mission. Drawing from Acts 2 and Acts 17, as well as insights from thinkers like C.S. Lewis, we propose three practical strategies for engagement: (1) repurposing church spaces as gaming hubs, (2) building and moderating church-led Discord communities, and (3) equipping Christian Content Creators (CCCs) to live out their faith online.

We highlight emerging case studies where churches and creators are already seeing fruit—“from Rocket League tournaments leading to baptisms to Alpha groups hosted within online games. Alongside this promise, we explore the theological, cultural, and practical challenges of digital ministry, including spiritual formation, mental health, and ecclesiology in virtual spaces.

Our hope is to equip churches with a posture of humility and innovation, meeting people where they already are and reflecting the love of Christ in the digital spaces they call home.

Academia Proxenia: A Framework for Engaging the Academy for Mission

Timothy Nagy (tmn203@exeter.ac.uk)

Timothy Nagy is a Ph.D. Candidate in Theology at the University of Exeter. His doctoral research proposes an "interdisciplinary apologetics network"—an original theoretical framework for cognitive contextualization. He leverages proxenia and a biblically-informed understanding of ambassadorship to demonstrate its application. Holding an M.Th. in Applied Theology (Oxon), his work has been published in *Pneuma*, *Ecclesial Practices*, and the *Journal of Youth and Theology*. Originally from western Massachusetts, he and his wife Anna are now based in New York City. Nagy recently joined the Religious Studies faculty at the University of Mount Saint Vincent in Riverdale, NY.

Abstract

This paper introduces the "interdisciplinary apologetics network," an original theoretical framework designed to foster cognitive contextualization for intelligible gospel resonance. Building on R. Daniel Shaw's work, it emphasizes the critical role of cognitive approaches in missiology. The paper argues that understanding the academy as a proxeny network—rooted in a biblically-informed understanding of ambassadorship and reframing academic engagement as a diplomatic task—enables more effective cognitive contextualization by bridging intellectual divides. Crucially, it explores how leveraging interdisciplinary cognitive connections with biblical teaching can address Alan Tippet's "problem of parallax" (cognitive distance), a key obstacle, particularly in hyper-specialized academic contexts. After discussing pre-evangelism as a point of application for this framework, the author proposes a method incorporating bi-disciplinary dialogue, conceptual blending, and AI, aiming to transform cognitive environments and foster receptivity to Christian truth. This approach moves beyond

traditional apologetic methods by engaging diverse fields to create shared understanding and reduce barriers to belief. The framework culminates in a practical methodology for activating this interdisciplinary network, offering a fresh perspective on missional engagement in contemporary intellectual landscapes.

Commonsense Christian Ecclesiology: The Church and Mission Working in Unity to Fulfill the Great Commission

C. Tim Chang (ctchang@liberty.edu)

Dr. C. Tim Chang, professor of Global Studies at Liberty University's Rawlings School of Divinity, brings rich experience to the Evangelical Missionary Society National Conference. Born in Seoul and a U.S. immigrant, he holds degrees from Baylor, Dallas Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. from Fuller Theological Seminary. From 2006-2017, he served in Northeast China, aiding North Korean refugees. Teaching courses like Cultural Anthropology, Mission History, and Korean Christianity, Chang recently presented at Oxford University on Christianity in North Korea (Oxford Religious Symposium, 2024) and co-authored *Pathway to Christian Intercultural Communication* (McGraw-Hill, 2025) with his daughter, Ashley.

Abstract

Commonsense Christian ecclesiology affirms Jesus Christ as the head of the church, the believers as His body, and its purpose fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20). However, history reveals frequent deviations into Cultural Christianity, where cultural, doctrinal, or political agendas eclipse the teachings of Christ. This contrasts with Jesus Christianity—a Christ-centered model rooted in biblical discipleship.

This paper uses the 4Q Model of the Church, which categorizes churches by their alignment with the “Way of the Cross” versus the “Way of the World” and by their institutional intensity from “Low Church” to “High Church.” It also draws upon the Twelve Basic Principles of Jesus Christianity (e.g., the Lordship of Jesus, Gospel proclamation, and unity) to analyze church history from the New Testament to the postmodern era.

Patterns of faithfulness are examined in Spirit-led movements like the New Testament Church and the Moravian missions. In contrast, periods of failure include medieval corruption and contemporary denominational fragmentation. The postmodern church—shaped significantly by the Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement—now faces challenges like secularism and hyper-individualism.

The Christian church must return to Jesus Christianity by walking in biblically commanded unity, engaging in biblical contextualization, and relying on the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Such a return will empower local churches as Gospel centers for global evangelization. Rejecting Cultural Christianity and embracing the vision of Christ in John 17:20–21 is essential for the church to fulfill its calling: to proclaim the Good News with power and love until Christ returns.

Deep Listening in Christian-Muslim Engagement: A Decolonial Vision for Mission

Jose Abraham (joseabraham@fuller.edu)

Dr. Jose Abraham is Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, where he teaches courses on Islam, World Religions, Missiology, and Global Christianity. He earned his Ph.D. from McGill University, focusing on the Mappila Muslims of Kerala, South India. His first book, *Islamic Reform and Colonial Discourse on Modernity in India*, examines how colonial modernity shaped Islamic reform movements. Trained in Christian theology and comparative religion, he previously taught at Concordia University, Montreal, and United Theological College, Bangalore. His forthcoming book explores Orientalism and Islamophobia and their implications for Christian-Muslim engagement and faithful Christian witness.

Abstract

This paper argues that deep listening is both a theological imperative and a missional practice essential for the church's faithful engagement with Muslims today. It begins by critically examining how colonialism, Orientalist scholarship, and Protestant-liberal frameworks constructed Islam as Christianity's illiberal Other. This construction shaped colonial missionary efforts and continues to sustain structural Islamophobia in the postcolonial world. Even today, distorted representations of Islam persist—undermining mutual understanding and deforming Christian witness. While theological models of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism have offered various frameworks for Christian engagement with other religions, they often fail to foster genuine encounter. These paradigms allow Christians to speak about Muslims rather than with them. The result is a detached, disembodied theology that overlooks the relational and ethical demands of Christian mission. In contrast, the paper explores a decolonial approach to Christian-Muslim engagement, informed by contemporary Islamic scholarship and missiological theology. Drawing on thinkers such as Talal Asad and Shahab Ahmed, it highlights how Islam is increasingly understood not as a fixed, transhistorical system, but as a discursive tradition—shaped by interpretation, cultural context, and embodied

practices. Islam resists the modern Western category of “religion” as a privatized, belief-centered domain and instead operates as a holistic way of life. Engaging these insights alongside biblical narratives of hospitality and Amos Yong’s “ortho-triad” of orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy, the paper contends that deep listening is not merely a method but a posture. It reimagines Christian mission not as domination or negation, but as joining with the Spirit to participate in God’s redemptive work among Muslims through humility, solidarity, and shared life.

Training, Sending, and Going

An Intercultural Relational Model for Transformative Training in Mission

Estera Pirosca Escobar (piroscae@gmail.com)

Estera Pirosca Escobar is a PhD student in Intercultural Education at Western Seminary. At the nexus of diaspora missiology and the relational interactionism paradigm, her research explores diaspora international student ministry workers in their practice of relational discipleship of international students in the US. Prior to beginning her doctoral studies, Estera held various campus ministry and leadership roles in a church-based and later a parachurch international student ministry. Estera is a Perspectives on the World Christian Movement instructor and a writer for Our Daily Bread and other Christian devotional publications. Estera, her husband, and two children, live in Nashville, Tennessee.

Abstract

Throughout Scripture God reveals the educational nature of His work as well as what He calls His followers to be and do. Jesus, the master educator, called and trained his disciples by utilizing a variety of creative educational methods. As Jesus' followers, believers are called to be His witnesses and make disciples of all peoples, which includes crossing cultural boundaries. As such, intercultural education becomes a paramount issue in the calling of the church to train for mission. Within a Christian worldview, it is beneficial and supported by some scholars and theologians to incorporate educational theories that have been developed in secular research. This is particularly applicable when the theories speak directly to the transformational work taking place in the lives of the trainer, those being trained, and the community around them. In this paper I will propose an intercultural relational model for transformative training in mission. The model is based on three theories woven from secular and Christian educational literature. I will explore transformative learning theory as a secular constructivist theory first developed by Jack Mezirow and later expanded upon by other scholars. While this theory has great application to the process of transformation and change in adult teaching and learning, it is not a theory based on Scriptural principles and has limitations in recognizing only the human level of a more complex reality. Within Christian education, I will look at two theories, covenant transformative learning theory and relational interactionist paradigm.

Mission as ecclesiastical diffusion: The “two-structures” in transition

Alan Totire (atotire86@gmail.com)

Alan Totire serves as the Intercultural Department chair at the University of Valley Forge. He has been in intercultural ministry for 33 years, serving in places like Turkey, China, South Korea, India, and Thailand as a short-term missionary, pastor, and professor. He graduated from Moody Institute, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and earned his PhD in Intercultural Studies from Trinity International University. He is passionate about discipleship and equipping the church for the mission of God. He has been married to his wife, Jessy, for 20 years, whom he met in South Korea. They are both ordained ministers in the Assemblies of God and pastored in South Korea and in Connecticut.

Abstract

The Protestant missionary movement’s success is credited to William Carey’s vision of the missionary society, which enabled missionaries to traverse the world and to plant churches in lands that were unreached with the Gospel. These missionary societies formed the sodalities of churches, as explained in Winter’s article regarding modalities and sodalities. However, with the recentering of Christianity to the Global South and the Global North becoming increasingly secular and post-Christian, this suggests a challenge to the two-structure paradigm. This paper explores how mission has been diffused to the local congregations, how the function of apostolic teams seeks to revitalize the structure of sodalities, and concludes how both can function symbiotically for the Gospel in the 21st century.

Viewing Ralph Winter’s Modality and Sodality through the Lens of John Flett’s Trinitarian Theology

Robert Reese (rreese@johnsonu.edu)

Robert Reese was born in Zimbabwe, the son and grandson of American missionaries. He and his wife served there as missionaries from 1981 to 2002. He earned a Ph.D. in Missions at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in 2005 and soon began teaching missions and training new missionaries. Along the way, he authored three books on missions. Currently he is an adjunct professor at Johnson University in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Abstract

Ralph Winter introduced the concepts of modality and sodality at a meeting of the All-Asia Mission Consultation in Seoul, Korea in August 1973. He described them as God's two redemptive structures that have always been essential for God's people. The local church is the epitome of a modality consisting of a body of all ages and levels of Christian maturity. However, for the sake of reaching the world for Christ, Winter believed there must also be a second structure, a sodality of mature Christians who cooperate to extend the faith to new areas through the formation of independent missionary societies. Perhaps inadvertently Winter has thus created a separation between church and mission. This article investigates whether Winter's two structures stand the test of a trinitarian theology as described by John Flett in his book *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, published in 2010. The question that the article seeks to answer is whether a robust ecclesiology informed by trinitarian theology can overcome the apparent divide between modality and sodality.

Local or Global? Global Christianity, Secularization, and the Bifurcation of Mission.

Tim Silberman (tsilberman@smbc.edu.au)

Tim has been teaching in the Centre for Cross-cultural Mission at Sydney Missionary and College since 2007. There he helps to prepare people for ministry within and beyond Australia with an emphasis on evangelism, missional ecclesiology and inter-religious engagement. In 2021, he completed his doctoral research exploring factors influencing local church involvement in mission through the University of Sydney. This is now published as, 'Engaging Neighbors and Nations' (Pickwick, 2024). Tim is committed to seeing local churches effectively partnering with the missions community to fulfil the Great Commission.

Abstract

Local churches are communities of faith, sent by the Lord Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to participate in the mission of God so that all peoples might hear the gospel. A local church's engagement in this task will be profoundly shaped by its convictions regarding ecclesiology and the theology of mission. Yet it is not theology alone that determines their mission participation. Mission involvement is also influenced by a church's perception of spiritual need in different parts of the world. This has been a feature of Christian approaches to mobilization since New Testament times, but shifts in global Christianity and the growing secularization and pluralism in Western contexts, are reshaping views of mission. In many western contexts, an apparent increase in local

spiritual need, together with a perceived decrease in spiritual need at a distance, has led some local churches to a bifurcated approach to mission. This bifurcation disconnects local and distant mission activities from each other such that the sending of missionaries to unevangelised nations becomes a secondary task which is unrelated to local mission efforts. This disconnection is further exacerbated by a lack of theological clarity around the mission of the church and what it means for a local church to participate in God's mission. This paper explores the causes and qualities of this bifurcation and proposes strategies to develop a more unified approach to local and distant mission that strengthens a local church's mission in all spheres.

Multiculturality and Immigration

Reading Isaiah Missiologically from Black and White Perspectives and Implications for the Mission of the Church

Sean Christensen (Sean.Christensen@worldteam.org)

Sean Christensen (MDiv, Columbia International University) is a PhD candidate at CIU researching African American perspectives on racial inclusion in U.S. based mission agencies. Sean works in the global arm of World Team as the Prayer and Gospel Growth Coordinator bringing training and pastoral care to World Team's missionary body. He and his family served in Haiti for 13 years.

Abstract

This paper presents evidence that one obstacle to racial unity in the American evangelical church is the divergence in Black and White perspectives on the church's mission. I will attempt to provide representative examples of missiological perspectives by African American authors and provide historical and sociological explanations for the divergent perspectives on the mission of the church. I will show that seeing the missiological purpose in the messianic prophecies in Isaiah builds a common ecclesiology and missiology centered on the Messiah Jesus. Lastly, I propose that Christians in the White majority subculture must demonstrate humility and initiate listening well to their African American brethren as a first step toward loving unity within and between local churches and toward sincere collaboration in local and global mission.

Shared Altars: How experiences with multiculturalism, oneness, togetherness, inclusionary vision, and ethnic diversity contribute to churches' cross-cultural postures

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Ken Nehrbass is the president of EMS, and teaches in the college of behavioral sciences at California Baptist University

Eunice Hong (eunice.hong@wheaton.edu)

Eunice Hong is Director of Research and Assistant Professor of Ministry on the Wheaton College Graduate Faculty. She earned her M.A. in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary and Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from Biola University. Eunice is also an ordained minister

and served as an English ministry pastor of a Korean immigrant church in downtown Los Angeles.

Abstract

Church leaders do not seem to agree on what is meant by a “multicultural church;” but they do agree that achieving such a vision is difficult- though not impossible. Churches’ journeys toward this “elusive dream” (Edwards 2008) are affected by five MOTIVEs: multiculturality, oneness, togetherness, inclusionary vision and ethnic diversity. Churches’ leveraging of these five MOTIVEs results in seven cross-cultural postures: 1) Shared Space, 2) Monoethnic, 3) Advocate, 4) Multiethnic, 5) Language Group, 6) Reconciling, and 7) Culture Blending. While Monoethnic churches are predominately made up of one ethnic group (that is, more than 80%), **churches with a multiethnic posture include members from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.** Churches with an Advocate Posture are deeply committed to addressing issues of racial reconciliation, though the congregation is predominantly one ethnicity. Similarly, churches with the Reconciling Posture also have this deep commitment to diversity but have achieved the goal of becoming ethnically diverse. In churches with a Shared Space posture, different language and cultural groups are present, but they remain separated in terms of vision, finances, events, worship services, and leadership. Churches that have a vision of multiculturality but designate specific campuses or worship times to target specific ethnic groups have a Language Group posture. Lastly, Culture Blending churches have a single leadership team and budget, reaching various cultural groups who worship together regularly by blending various languages, worship and leadership styles. Here we have developed an assessment tool to help churches measure their experiences in these five MOTIVEs, providing insight into their current cross-cultural posture and allowing them to identify areas of improvement.

New congregations in the Canadian kaleidoscope: An autoethnographic analysis of thirty new congregations in the Waterloo region

James Watson (jwatson@tyndale.ca)

James Watson earned a PhD in intercultural studies from Fuller Theological Seminary and has served interdenominationally as a congregational consultant and researcher. Research topics have included: church planting, tentmaking

leaders, interfaith witness, and immigration. He currently serves as Internship Program Coordinator and Lecturer in Practical Theology at Tyndale University in Toronto, Canada.

Abstract

Thirty worship services of congregations which started within one Canadian regional municipality in the past decade were visited to offer comparative public event analysis as an ecclesial geographical assay. An authoethnographic approach combined the researcher's personal experience with the field research and was supplemented by additional data (literature review, Canada Revenue Agency charitable data, and key informant interviews with denominational organization leaders) to triangulate the data collection and analysis.

A Qualitative Study of Bilingual Worship Experience in BMAA Churches

Ricky Williams (ricky.williams@bmats.edu)

Ricky Williams, professor of Church Ministries at Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary (BMATS) in Jacksonville, Texas, hails from Pittsburg, Texas. Williams attended Jacksonville College in the early 1970s, earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Texas at Tyler, a Master of Divinity at BMATS, and a Doctor of Ministry in Intercultural Studies from Reformed Theological Seminary. During college, he married Priscilla Gibson from Port Arthur, Texas. Ricky served as assistant pastor at Mt. Selman Baptist Church and FBC of Jacksonville, TX. Ricky went to Mexico as a missionary in 1980, serving 38 years in the Huasteca Potosina.

Abstract

This qualitative study focused on describing the worship experience of members of Baptist Missionary Association of America (BMAA) churches that worship bilingually (English/Spanish). By interviewing members of these churches, this study described and evaluated the phenomenon of those worshippers in bilingual worship.

The results of this study encourage monolingual congregations, especially in the BMAA, to add another language to their worship format. This addition, making the worship bilingual, could enhance their ministry to the ethnic groups in any church's neighborhood. This enhancement could benefit the BMAA, which comprises 1132 churches, 6 percent of which have Hispanic congregations that worship only in Spanish. However, only four congregations (0.35 % of 1132) conduct worship bilingually (Spanish

and English). Recent research (Youseff 2023) indicates that Spanish/English preaching is scarce. This same study on bilingual preaching noted the need to study bilingual worship. Youseff recommended more research where culture, language, and population density vary. My study included both bilingual preaching and bilingual worship. The location of the four churches interviewed occurred in distinct population densities.

This study resulted in three findings. First, those interviewed recognized the difficulties of a bilingual service but believe the spiritual benefits outweigh the problems that accompany it. Second, bilingual worship can minister to first- and second-generation Hispanics in the same family who cannot worship in Spanish or English only. Third, bilingual worship evidences unity and acceptance between both cultures in the worship experience.

Additional Presentations

Responding to first readers of *God Draws Near*

Craig Ott, Ben Noonan and Chris Wright respond to Collin Cornell's book *God Draws Near* published this year by Baker Academic. Collin Cornell will respond to the panelists.

Abstract

This session offers considered responses to new Baker book entitled *God Draws Near: Rethinking a Biblical Theology of Mission*.

Mission Trends of Global Chinese Diaspora Church Today

Jeanne Wu (seedbed.worker@gmail.com)

Jeanne Wu (PhD, TEDS) currently serves as Theological Catalyst for the Middle East with an international organization and on the executive team of Global Diaspora Network. Jeanne and her husband have served among Arab refugees/diaspora/ war victims in the Middle East. Besides frontline ministry she is also active in researching, writing, consulting, teaching and training in both English and Chinese. Her most recent publications include *Asians in Diaspora* and *Diasporas in Asia* (Langham).

Abstract

This paper examines the evolving dynamics of the Chinese diaspora church, particularly in relation to political and religious developments in China, and their implications for diaspora mission work. As of the end of 2023, 50 million ethnic Chinese live abroad, with notable population growth in regions such as Africa. The paper discusses the relationship between overseas Chinese and their "homeland," noting how China's political shifts have reshaped migration patterns, and particularly highlights the impact of three political developments: (1) the BRI, (2) the 2018 Regulations on Religious Affairs, and (3) the 2020 Hong Kong National Security Law on both the Chinese diaspora and mission work.

Despite challenges, the paper emphasizes how these developments have catalyzed new mission strategies among the Chinese diasporas by providing real examples on the fields. This paper presents these new trends as the "New Three": (1) New Economic Settlers, (2) New Fields for Chinese Diaspora Church, and (3) New Waves of Exodus. In conclusion, the paper calls for thoughtful engagement with these trends, urging the Chinese diaspora church to respond faithfully to the shifting tides of global politics and

mission work, while being mindful of both the challenges and opportunities for advancing the Gospel.

Public and Political Discipleship: A Innovative Model in Church Planting

Chris Gankon (Ph.D. Student) (chris.e.gankon@biola.edu)

Chris Gankon, a church planter and former missionary in Nairobi, Kenya, has also served as a professor at a Christian University in Kenya and a faculty member at a Theological Seminary in Nigeria. Currently, he is pursuing his Ph.D. at Biola University, La Mirada, California. His 27-year marriage and three sons are a testament to his commitment to family. Together with his wife, he is pioneering the International Peace and Development Initiative, a Nonprofit organization advocating for peace and developmental projects in developing countries. His passion for mentoring and awakening the political consciousness of Christians is evident in his work.

Abstract

According to Matt.13.24-25, Jesus presented a parable, stating, “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.” (KJV). In the 21st century, the mission of God in the public and political spheres is a matter of great significance that Missiologists cannot afford to neglect. These arenas hold significant potential to influence the sociopolitical transformation of any society and, therefore, represent a vital mission field. If Missiologists remain passive or ignore the public and political dimensions of life, the consequences could be dire—the enemy will continue to sow tares, disrupting the peace and stability of society. This paper, therefore, advocates for the inclusion of public and political discipleship in church planting. The local church, as the most effective platform for discipleship, should incorporate public and political engagement into its discipleship strategy. This approach involves integrating faith with civic responsibility, especially in the context of planting new churches. This model emphasizes the importance of striking a balance between fostering spiritual formation within the church and equipping the congregation to address the world’s issues as responsible citizens ready to engage with their neighbors. The paper will highlight important, public and political discipleship considerations in Church Planting, such as a holistic approach, community engagement, leadership development, collaborative efforts, advocacy and action, teaching, and resources. At the same time, the paper will analyze the advantages of public and political discipleship, which include building strong

community relationships, empowering faith-based community services, and serving as a strong witness to the world.

The Becoming Church: An Essential Mark for a Church on Mission

Ryan Gimple (RGimple@csuniv.edu)

Ryan Gimple (PhD, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) is an Associate Professor of Christian Studies at Charleston Southern University. He and his wife served in Asia with the International Mission Board for nineteen years after graduating from Wheaton College. His research circles around the intersection of missiology, adult learning theory and covenant epistemology.

Abstract

One, holy, catholic, apostolic and becoming? Jesus deserves a becoming bride, and so the church must be ever-transforming, always growing, and continually learning. The biblical metaphor of the church as the bride of Christ contains the idea of a transforming church. A rigid, stagnant, entrenched church is not a becoming bride for our Lord. A church empowered by the Spirit will be ever-changing and transforming into the likeness of Jesus. No local expression of the church has fully yet arrived, but all are on the way into the eternal and universal ideal that Christ has built. Although the traditional marks of the church do not explicitly state that the church is always changing, the mark of the becoming church is compatible with the classical formulation. History demonstrates that the church has required great changes in its past, and that we can expect more changes in the church ahead. In order to hold fast to the gospel in a changing culture, the church must transform. This presentation cannot adequately look into all the practical implications of the transformative process but will explore implications of the mark of the becoming church for issues related to topics such as an ecclesiological minimum, contextualization, inreligionization, and the homogenous unit principle.

Anglican

Looking Back to See the Future: How 19th Century Anglican Mission Agencies Evangelized the Globe

Brad Roderick (brad.roderick@tas.edu)

Brad Roderick is an Anglican Priest who after thirty years in church planting ministry in the US and Asia, currently serves as the Vice President of Academic Affairs at the Trinity Anglican Seminary in Ambridge, PA. He earned his Ph.D. in Missions from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and has taught missions in seminaries in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United States.

Abstract

This article is one attempt—or perhaps I should say three—to find answers to question of how a Church that is bishop led can engage in missions where there is no bishop. We will be looking at the three main 19th Century Anglican approaches to sharing the gospel and planting churches in places where one might think Anglican ecclesiology would limit success. The first is grassroots ministry, growing the church from the ground up, under the direction of a denominational missionary society. Second, we will explore the role of British chaplains who used their careers to gain access to unreached peoples. Finally, we will explore outreach approaches that began by sending missionary bishops who then allowed the church to expand into new territories. After this historical tour, we will explore the relative benefits and dangers of each approach as we consider how to move forward in reaching the more than 2 billion people considered to be “Frontier Peoples,” who currently have no sustained Christian missional presence.

Missionary Bishops: Historical Models and Their Significance for Today

Ed Smither (edsmither71@gmail.com)

Ed Smither serves as Dean of the School of Missions and Intercultural Ministry and Professor of History of Global Christianity at Columbia International University. His published works included *Christian Mission: A Concise Global History*, *Mission in the Early Church*, and *Mission as Hospitality*. Prior to serving in higher education, Ed served for 14 years in intercultural ministry in North Africa, France, and the USA.

Abstract

When the Episcopal church’s Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society was reorganized in 1835, a new structure developed for sending missionaries—particularly missionary bishops—to the American West. That year, Jackson Kemper (1789-1870) was set apart

as the first missionary bishop—tasked with establishing Episcopal congregations in the western frontier states. In this paper, I first sketch out the work of Kemper in the American West. Following a brief survey of his life, ministry practice, and theology of mission, I conclude by discussing the relevance of missionary bishops in mission today.

Developing the Diaconate in the Latin American Context

The Rev. Tara L. Jernigan (tara@anglicansw.org)

Tara Jernigan is the Archdeacon of the Anglican Diocese of the Southwest, serving the church in both the United States and Mexico. She is a graduate of Trinity Anglican Seminary where she serves as an adjunct and of Nashotah House Theological Seminary where she is a member of the board of directors.

Abstract

The current rapid growth of orthodox Anglicanism (Anglican Church in North America) in Mexico reveals an essential role for the diaconal order, especially in the historically diaconal ministry of catechesis, to support the ministry of the local congregation while grounding the ministry in the relationship with the bishop and diocese. Deacons in the Mexican Church articulate a call to catechetical ministry and can be aided in forming their missionary vision as follows:

1. Models of Biblical and historic deacons who served to bring the Gospel into the deacons' native cultures and languages.
2. Training and historical models of nimble and specialized ministry for a rapidly changing ministry context.
3. The ability and willingness to carefully adapt the inherited practices of Anglicanism in a way which honors and enriches the Mexican culture and people, resulting in a church which is genuinely Anglican and genuinely Mexican for future generations.
4. The willingness and ability to work alongside leaders from outside of Mexico as the Mexican church takes its rightful place as a full and contributing member of the Anglican Church in North America.

Planting an Anglican Diocese (or two) in the Horn of Africa (1980s – 2025): Bridges and barriers

Grant LeMarquand (bishopgrant777@gmail.com)

Grant LeMarquand (Th.D. Wycliffe College, University of Toronto) is Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies at Trinity Anglican Seminary, and retired Anglican Bishop of the Horn

of Africa. His academic research and writing focuses on African biblical interpretation, the Bible and mission, and African church history. He is married to one wife, Wendy, a retired family physician. Grant and Wendy have two grown children and one grandchild. They live in Alberta, Canada.

Abstract

Anglicanism in the Horn of Africa has been through several stages, the most recent of which has been the surprising multiplication of churches in the Gambella and Assosa regions of western Ethiopia adjacent to the Sudan and South Sudan border. During the second civil war between the Islamist Khartoum government and largely "traditionalist" southern Sudan (now the independent country of South Sudan), refugee camps in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia saw explosive church growth, especially of Anglican churches. Believers in the refugee camps soon moved out of the camps bringing the gospel (often in an Anglican form) and establishing communities in towns and villages. This paper will examine what attracted Sudanese/Ethiopian traditionalists (especially Dinka, Nuer, Anuak and Opo people) to the gospel and to Anglicanism, and will explore how leaders have been trained and ordained. We will not shy away from discussion of the many failures as well as the obvious successes

Orality

Looking at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word: Relational Transformational Growth through Orality

Roberto Aguayo Pearce (roberto@fdm.world)

I have been serving as a missionary, pastor, and educator in Mexico for the last 20 years. I also work as an administrator at FDM.world working on training pastors around the world in family ministry. I received an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Systemic Change from Nova Southeastern University in 2002, and I am currently finishing my dissertation for my Ph.D. in Intercultural Education at Western Seminary.

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyze the importance of orality through the lens of the Biblical story found in Luke 24:13-35. In it we see the interaction of Jesus with the two men on the road to Emmaus. This story will be used as an example to help us expand and focus our understanding of how the Bible, God's Word, works in us to bring about Relational Transformational Growth.

Expressions of Orality in the Diaspora Romanian Evangelical Church: A Case Study

Estera Pirosca Escobar (piroscae@gmail.com)

Estera Pirosca Escobar is a PhD student in Intercultural Education at Western Seminary. A native of Romania, Estera was born during Communism and was raised in a Romanian evangelical church. While her research has been focused on international student ministry, Estera's personal experiences with orality from her upbringing prompted her to pursue a study on expressions of orality in the diaspora Romanian evangelical church. Estera is also a Perspectives on the World Christian Movement instructor and a writer for Our Daily Bread and other Christian devotional publications. Estera, her husband, and two children live in the Nashville, TN area.

Abstract

The story of the Romanian evangelical church during the 20th century was marked by the rule of communism in complex and multidirectional ways. The body of Christ behind

the Iron Curtain was isolated from the rest of the world for a season and yet survived in miraculous ways. As a result of communist persecution, the Romanian evangelical church embraced oral means of communication in worship, church, and home life that continued even after the communist regime fell. Diaspora Romanians carried this tradition into Romanian evangelical churches in the countries where they moved to and passed it on to the next generation in an intercultural environment. This paper will examine a narrative inquiry study employed to capture the significant experiences and insights of diaspora Romanian evangelical Christians in their practice of orality relationally in the church and at home, both during their life in Romania as well as in an intercultural setting, after moving to the United States. The results show the tremendous power of the community of faith as a microcosm of the Church to be the place where youth were brought up in the faith through creative methods of orality, as well as the place where persecuted believers found strength through dedication to memorizing God's Word. This incredible dynamic was brought to a different culture where challenges of adaptability continued to shape how expressions of orality were embraced and taught within the diaspora Romanian church.

Relational Oral Hermeneutics

Soo Min (James) Park (parkjames.11.09@gmail.com)

Pastor Soo Min (James) Park is the founding and Lead Pastor of Dawning Light Community Church, a multiethnic congregation in Olympia, Washington. He has nearly 20 years of ministry experience serving multiethnic or diaspora churches. He holds dual B.S. degrees in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and Materials Science and Engineering from UC Berkeley. He also earned a Master of Divinity from Westminster Seminary California and is a Ph.D. candidate (ABD) in Intercultural Education at Western Seminary. As a pastor-scholar and research missiologist, his research interests include intercultural discipleship, diaspora missiology, intercultural leadership, orality, educational frameworks, and systematic theology.

Abstract

This paper addresses the limited research in the convergence of orality and Relational Interactionism. Orality, while emphasizing person-to-person communication in a community, tends to overlook vertical relationships in relational matrix. The paper reframes oral hermeneutics by introducing Enoch Wan's Relational Interactionism into traditional oral hermeneutics approach, presents practical relational elements for relational oral hermeneutics application, and provides a case example of relational oral

hermeneutics from John 4:1-26 for a ready demonstration of the framework it introduces.

ISFM

Culture and the Gathering of Disciples of Jesus in Frontier Mission Contexts

HL Richard (ricind@hushmail.com)

H, L. Richard has been engaging issues in Hindu cultural contexts for four decades and has published widely on Hindu-Christian encounters and related topics.

Abstract

The central missiological concept of culture is discussed with a focus on cultural expressions of disciples of Jesus. Culture is rooted in the image of God, thus in creation. It carries over into eternity as visions of heaven reveal distinct cultural identities with people from every people, language, and nation. Clearly God created and embraces diverse cultural expressions, thus distinctly cultural churches are to be developed and supported and encouraged. Some practical pointers related to cross-cultural ministry and frontier people groups will be presented.

Detoxifying Christianity Through Reimagining Ecclesiology: How Frontier Missiology Can Reform Harmful Practices and Cultivate a Healthier Global Church

Manuel Becker (m.becker.fm@gmail.com)

Manuel Becker has been a missionary and researcher in Thailand for over a decade and serves on the leadership team of SEANET and on the executive team of the International Society of Frontier Missions. He holds an M.A. from Columbia International University Korntal, Germany, and is the author of *The Great Victor* as well as several theological articles published on the German Logos Software blog. Currently, he is working on a book on hermeneutics and intends to start his doctoral studies in theology in 2026.

Abstract

God is on a mission to redeem his creation and invites us to partner with him. Yet, certain expressions of traditional Christianity hinder rather than help this mission.

Within frontier missiology, there has long been awareness of harmful Christian practices that obstruct kingdom growth. These include clergy-dominated structures that undermine the priesthood of all believers, an overreliance on sermon-based discipleship in large, impersonal gatherings rather than relational, accountable small groups, approaches to discipleship that extract individuals from their social networks, incomprehensible gospel presentations, and a neglect of equipping believers to practically follow Jesus in the context of their everyday oikos relationships.

Likewise, the broader deconstruction movement, occurring globally, critiques harmful traditional beliefs and ecclesial structures. However, a significant distinction exists: while the broader movement often stops at deconstruction, frontier mission (FM) missionaries—deeply committed to following Jesus—move beyond deconstruction to reconstruction. Tasked with pioneering new expressions of faith among the unreached, they are less bound by institutional tradition and more open to innovation, which uniquely positions them to overcome toxic expressions of traditional Christianity.

This paper argues that FM must not only catalyze healthy movements among the unreached, but also offer holistic models of following Jesus for the global church. By identifying toxic elements and embodying healthier alternatives, FM can foster contextual, love-driven, and multiplying discipleship. In doing so, missions can once again serve as the mother of theology—birthing new expressions of ecclesiology and praxis that advance God’s reconciling mission in the world.

Seeking Fellowship Without Alienating Family - Practitioner Reflections from the Hindu World at the 2025 Rethinking Forum

Scott Walker (scott@margnetwork.org)

Scott Walker has walked alongside Hindu people for 15 years in both India and in the US diaspora. He is the national director of MARG Network, an organization focused on Hindu issues. He speaks on Hindu ministry issues and is a Perspectives instructor.

Abstract

A major challenge across the broad swath of gospel engagement with forward caste Hindu families is how to address the idea of ekklesia (“church”) amongst new disciples of Jesus from Hindu families. Questions of identity (what does it mean to be Hindu? must someone be called Christian to be a disciple of Jesus?), ongoing relationship with not-yet-believing family members (can a new disciple associate with relatives who continue to worship idols? is attendance allowable at holidays that include worship of

other deities?), participation in mutually exclusive cultural communities, prejudice, and language must be addressed. How can these considerations be addressed in the Hindu world?

To this end, this session will present reflections from the organizer of the 2025 Rethinking Forum, which focused on the theme of “Hindus and the Church”. These reflections draw from the 26 different presenters, representing a wide variety of backgrounds, denomination, and models of praxis, who spoke on this theme over the course of the 3.5 day conference. Presenters shared how they have approached ekklesia for new Hindu disciples of Jesus; particularly, both positive and negative lessons were shared. The Rethinking Forum is organized by the MARG Network and has been ongoing for more than 25 years, including 40 plus gatherings in India, the United States, and the UK.

Mentoring from Everywhere to Everywhere

Perlita Tan (perlitan@fuller.edu)

"After Perl prayed, “I am willing to go where less people are willing to go,” God called her to become His missionary among Kalagan Muslims. God also blessed her with opportunities to reach Tagbanua tribal Filipinos and Indonesian students, and to serve His people as mission mobilizer, lead pastor, and adjunct seminary professor.

Abstract

As I reflect on IJFM’s theme, “What is the Future of Frontier Missions?” one exciting opportunity is mentoring can now be done from everywhere to everywhere thanks to the new normal of online meetings! The content of my presentation is like a mini handbook on how to start an online mentoring ministry among Muslim Background Believers. The listener will find many helpful tips, such as important considerations when mentoring Muslims and other UPGs online, and suggested program and curriculum for mentoring MBBs. It is my hope that by sharing what God is doing among a group of MBBs through online mentoring, both new and veteran workers will be encouraged to engage or re-engage in Muslim ministry.

And as I reflect on EMS’ theme of “Ecclesiology and Mission,” I see challenges but also opportunities for the church to become more involved in mission, physically and virtually.

Arts

Restoring the Body: Arts and Trauma Healing as Missional Ecclesiology

Dr. Beth Argot (beth_argot@diu.edu)

Dr. Beth Argot directs the Arts and Trauma Healing (ATH) program at Dallas International University, where she also serves as Associate Professor of World Arts and Associate Director of the Center for Excellence in World Arts. She has taught MA and PhD courses since 2019. She is a certified ATH Master Facilitator and has trained with the Global Trauma Recovery Institute and the Trauma-Informed Practices and Expressive Arts Therapy Institute. Beth serves with Artists in Christian Testimony and teaches globally. Her cross-disciplinary research explores worship and the arts as practices that foster both healing and spiritual formation, drawing from neuroscience and historical worship traditions.

Abstract

Restoring the Body: Arts and Trauma Healing as Missional Ecclesiology

The Church, as the Body of Christ, is not merely a messenger of the Gospel but its living embodiment—called to heal, restore, and nurture spiritual and communal renewal through Spirit-led witness in a fractured world. Amid rising global trauma, the Church's mission must include forming healing communities that address both spiritual and psychological wounds.

Trauma disrupts the brain's ability to process emotional, sensory, and cognitive experiences, often resulting in spiritual disconnection. Many trauma survivors struggle to engage with God—not because of disbelief, but because trauma impairs the capacity to feel, trust, or respond emotionally to spiritual truth. Traditional verbal teaching may bypass the areas of the brain where trauma is stored, leaving the Gospel intellectually understood but emotionally inaccessible.

This presentation explores how holistic, arts-integrated worship practices—rooted in trauma-informed care and whole-brain engagement—can equip the Church to embody Christ's restorative mission in ways that foster healing, spiritual integration, and renewed communal identity.

For missions to be effective in trauma-saturated contexts, the Church must recognize that healing trauma is not peripheral to the Gospel—it is central to clearing the way for authentic encounters with Christ.

Framed within a theology of the Church as a dynamic, reproducing community, this model envisions an ecclesiology that is liturgically rich, culturally responsive, and deeply restorative. Case studies from global contexts will highlight how trauma-informed, whole-brain worship is renewing congregational life and extending the Church's witness as a creative, healing presence in the world.

Poetry Is Our Program: Subversive Strategies for Kingdom Community

Kyle Lee (kyle.lee@indigitous.org)

Kyle grew up all around the United States and was a missionary kid to Kenya throughout high school. He earned his Bachelors in English at the University of Virginia and is a spoken word artist, podcast host, and producer having worked for InterVarsity as a Media and Marketing Producer and Strategy Manager, Hilton Hotels as a Complex Marketing Manager, and now Indigitous US as a Director of Strategy.

Kyle's passion is to inspire the Church to think differently and boldly engage the world with the Gospel in faith and relevance through digital storytelling, thought leadership, and strategic partnerships, working to catalyze the called and make Kingdom work more effective in the digital age.

Abstract

In a world where church planting strategies often center on logistics, metrics, and models, this workshop proposes a radically different foundation: poetry. Through years of leading poetry workshops in diverse missional contexts, I have seen firsthand how creative expression—particularly poetry—can catalyze authentic spiritual formation, foster deep vulnerability, and form sustainable, Christ-centered communities.

This session explores how poetic practice functions as a subversive strategy for Kingdom community. Participants will examine how collaborative poetry workshops can be used for small group formation, confession, communal liturgy, and leadership development—especially among the de-churched, the spiritually curious, and those outside traditional ecclesial spaces.

Rather than treating the arts as ancillary to mission, this workshop centers poetry as praxis—an embodied, Spirit-led way of gathering people, cultivating belonging, and planting new expressions of church. Drawing from real-world case studies, theological

reflection, and interactive methodology, attendees will leave with tools to initiate their own creative gatherings and integrate poetic practice into their missional rhythms.

In the tradition of the prophets, the psalmists, and Jesus himself—who used poetic speech to reveal the inbreaking Kingdom—this workshop invites us to reimagine church planting not as a franchise to replicate, but as a story to co-write with God and others.

Soul Care for Artists & Creatives in the Church

Jhonny A. Nieto Ossa (jhonnyandersonn@gmail.com)

Jhonny A. Nieto Ossa grew up on the Amazon triple border of Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, where he has done community development work. He studied music at the Pedagogical University of Bogotá. He and his wife, Ninoshka, have taught critical contextualization in schools of translation in Latin America. Nieto has a master's degree from Alliance University (also known as Nyack College) and is director of ALDEA (Latin American Association of Ethnoarts), facilitating ethnodoxology efforts in Latin America. Nieto is a certified instructor of the Arts for a Better Future course by the Global Ethnodoxology Network. DMin in Studies from CMM Faculty of Theology, and currently studying a DMin in Global Leadership in the Theological Seminary of Puerto Rico.

Abstract

Addressing the challenges faced by artists and creatives in the Church requires more than a spiritual, theological, or artistic discipleship program. Soul care is not a set curriculum, as we discovered while leading a discipleship process with over 90 artists in a local church. What proved essential was understanding the human condition and the healing work of the Holy Spirit. Worship leaders must renew their minds, confronting the roots of defensiveness, reluctance to share talents and knowledge, compulsive behaviors, and other common struggles among church artists. This transformation requires symbolic language that reaches the heart, as Jesus taught that our actions stem from within. Creatives must grasp this truth and seek the image of God that heals, enabling them to minister from a place of restoration rather than brokenness.

The Enduring Resonance of Indigenous Hymnody in Brazilian Churches

Héber Negrão (heber.negrão@gmail.com)

Héber Negrão is the anthropology and ethnoarts coordinator at the Evangelical Missionary Linguistic Association (Wycliffe in Brazil) and the president of the Global Ethnodoxology Network. He has been involved in ethnoarts ministry in Brazil ever since

2006. He and his wife worked with Oral Translation for the Temb  people in northern Brazil. Currently he and his family are living in Dallas, as H ber is pursuing his PhD in World Arts at Dallas International University. His passion is to see every people praising God using their own arts in a culturally appropriate way.

Abstract

Amidst a spiritual revival within the Wayampi church, an ethnic group from northern Brazil, a poignant request emerged: “These new translated songs are ok, but what about those old songs about God that your friend Tom composed in our style, many years ago? We want those songs.” Tom Avery was a pioneer in encouraging the development of indigenous hymnody, a corpus of local composed hymns, among indigenous churches in Brazil. As a Wycliffe ethnomusicologist, it was his goal to “tap into the heart music of a people to reach them most effectively with the message of God’s word in songs” (Avery 1996). In the twelve years Avery worked in Brazil, he empowered local believers to express their new-found faith in their heart music. While many communities were able to integrate locally composed hymns into their services, three particular groups experienced a delayed development of indigenous musical expression. This session will present these three distinct case studies from indigenous churches in Brazil, analyzing how locally composed songs serve as essential elements in shaping the ecclesiology of emerging Christian communities.

Missiology and the Black Experience

My Friend, the Enemy: The Challenge of Mission in a Fractured Church Context

Jessica Janvier (jnbrooks3@gmail.com)

Jessica Janvier (PhD, Columbia International University) is a writer and academic whose focus crosses the intersections of African American religious history, church history, and theology. She currently serves as an adjunct professor at Meachum School of Haymanot, which focuses on contextualized theological education for black communities around the nation and for Columbia International University. She is an associate pastor in the United Methodist Church and has worked as a transition leader for the Global Methodist Church. She earned her bachelor's degree from Howard University, a Master of Divinity from Nyack College's Alliance Theological Seminary, a Master of Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary, and a PhD from Columbia International University.

Abstract

In 1968 William Pannell published *My Friend, the Enemy*. In it, he highlighted the tensions of being black in American evangelicalism. As blacks were fighting for liberation, he found himself at odds in this trajectory with his evangelical brethren. This tension still persists today. The focus of this paper is to examine the tensions Pannell brought to the surface, their contemporary echoes, the challenges they present to mission, and a unifying way forward that draws on the reservoirs of ancient Christianity.

Movement as Mission: Reclaiming African Diasporic Spiritual Practices in Ecclesial Spaces

Heather Denson (Hdenson98@gmail.com)

Heather Denson serves as an Assistant Principal at Murphey Middle School in Augusta, Georgia, and as an Associate Minister at Tabernacle Baptist Church, where she actively participates in the Prayer Ministry, Stephen Ministry, Dance Ministry, Worship and Arts Ministry, and Youth Ministry. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Clark Atlanta University, a Master of Education in Secondary Mathematics from Cambridge College, and both a Master of Divinity in Pastoral Care and a Doctorate of Ministerial Leadership from Columbia International University. She is currently pursuing a Master of Educational Leadership at Clark Atlanta University. Heather's ministry is rooted in a passion for embodied worship, spiritual formation, and holistic care within the Black church tradition. Her work is guided by the truth of Acts 17:28 – *“For in Him we live and move and have our being.”*

Abstract

This paper explores the theological and missiological significance of embodied worship—particularly movement, rhythm, and dance—within the Black church tradition. Drawing from African diasporic spiritual practices, it argues that movement is not merely expressive but missional, serving as a conduit for healing, communal memory, and divine encounter. Through the lens of liberation theology, pneumatology, and cultural anthropology, the study examines how embodied worship reclaims ancestral ways of knowing and being that have been historically marginalized in Western ecclesiology. By centering the Black church as a site of spiritual resistance and renewal, this presentation highlights how movement functions as a theological language of mission—one that speaks to trauma, identity, and the Spirit's active presence in the gathered body. The paper also

considers implications for pastoral care, intergenerational ministry, and the formation of ecclesial identity among young adults in contemporary Black church contexts.

Friday overnight/Saturday early morning

This is the global region session for those for whom the Dallas times are unsuitable.

Participants in the EMS Global Online Track will pre-prepare a 20-minute video presentation which will be made available prior to the conference. Viewers will be able to post comments on the video. This means that the online sessions are for discussion, not presentation. It will be assumed that attendees have watched the videos beforehand.

Global

Ecclesiology as Missiology: John Eliot's Theology of Missions

J. C. Boyd (jacobboyd93@gmail.com)

J. C. Boyd is a historical theologian specializing in English Puritanism. He holds a PhD in historical theology and serves as adjunct faculty at Liberty University. His current research explores the intersection of ecclesiology and missiology in Puritan thought. Boyd lives in South Asia with his family, where he is engaged in local church ministry and theological education for current and aspiring pastors.

Abstract

This paper explores the missionary theology of John Eliot (1604–1690), a Puritan pastor and missionary to the Native Americans in New England, arguing that his missiology was fundamentally shaped by his ecclesiology. For Eliot, the church was both the means and the end of missions: he believed that evangelism and discipleship should take place within the visible, ordered life of the local church and that the goal of missions was the planting of covenantal congregations governed by Word, sacrament, and discipline. Eliot employed the ordinary means of grace—preaching, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and corporate prayer—as his primary tools in evangelizing and discipling Native converts. He trained indigenous pastors, established church membership based on public confessions and regenerate faith, and insisted on pastoral oversight through church discipline. By 1671, Eliot had helped establish nine Native American churches, each led by qualified local elders. In contrast to modern movement-driven missiology, which often prioritizes rapid multiplication over theological depth, Eliot's church-centered approach offers a

theologically rooted alternative grounded in Scripture and Reformed ecclesiology. His postmillennial vision for the expansion of God's kingdom shaped his conviction that lasting missionary fruit would come not through sociological strategies, but through the slow, Spirit-wrought formation of local churches. This paper argues that Eliot's example provides a historical precedent for recovering a church-centered missiology in contemporary practice, one that recognizes the local church as both the means and end of the Great Commission.

The Church as a Priesthood

Samuel Rajkumar (samuelhrajkumar@gmail.com)

Samuel Rajkumar is the President of Believing Churches & Missions, head quartered in Bangalore India. As a research analyst for the past 9 years, his area of interest is culturally viable and economically sustainable church planting among the rural poor in South Asia. He is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary (Th.M 2009) and is currently finishing up his Ph.D work at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL. He has a dual Master's degree in Economics and Advanced Financial Accounting. He is a bi-vocational Christian financial advisor and Investment consultant. He resides with his wife and three sons in Bangalore, India.

Abstract

The concept of the NT church in contemporary South Asia has been revisioned and over written by the colonial expressions of foreign faith and practice. With the dissipation and disintegration of the post Christian era in the west, churches in south Asia are on the verge of an existential crisis. Many of them relying on external funding maintain a fluid concept of the church – the church is what the donors describe them to be! Most mainline denominational churches are filled and governed by nominal Christians. Urban churches grow through evangelistic efforts in the first seven years or so and then evangelistic growth gets replaced by the illusion of transfer growth. The number of new church plants is increasing at a diminishing rate, and the death of existing churches is increasing at an exponential rate. A key reason for many dying churches is the failure to understand and prepare for perpetuity of the church.

It is therefore necessary to retrace the concept of the New Testament church indigenously and in a culturally relevant manner. This paper critically evaluates church growth during generational transitions in church composition, purpose, mission and leadership. The priesthood of the church in its entirety and not a delegated group is an important step in accurately unpacking the New Testament concept.

Remember the ladies: The need to recognize gender dynamics in church planting movement strategies

Eliza Kettering (elizakettering@gmail.com)

Eliza is a Ph.D student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary with a focus on diaspora missiology. She has also been serving in Central Asia for twelve years, where she focuses on university student work as well as research on unreached people groups in the region.

Abstract

Donald McGavran's web movements have been fundamental to missiological methods for decades. He recognizes the importance of the relational web for the spread of the gospel in a community. Church Planting Movement (CPM) strategies continue to espouse this concept by adding that new, faithful believers will quickly evangelize to their web network. Despite leaning heavily on sociological ideas to support web movements and rapid reproduction, these missiologists fail to recognize the gender and power dynamics of a community. Historically, women tend to come to faith first in a community but hold a lower status within their family and society. A woman's position of weakness has significant implications for CPM strategies. To quickly evangelize their new faith through their web of influence could be reckless and unnecessarily dangerous for women. This paper will argue that missionaries must consider gender dynamics when proposing web movements and rapid reproducing church planting methods. First, this paper will examine major contributors to CPM methodology. The analysis will include their understanding and definitions of web movements with rapid reproduction to show that there is currently no conversation about gender dynamics in culture. Next, there will be an analysis of the roles and status of women in society. This paper will then show the negative consequences for Christian women when one ignores the power dynamics of society.

Dynamics of Multicultural Team Diversity: Responses to Cultural Differences Between Team Members

Jim Derksen (jimderksen15@gmail.com)

Jim Derksen has served as an international worker in Africa since 2005, with a role since 2012 developing monocultural and multicultural teams. He earned his PhD from Johnson University, focusing on the ways multicultural team members responded to cultural differences among teammates. Jim has led team development seminars in Africa, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and North America, with the goal of equipping team members,

team leaders, and organizational leaders so that teams can collaborate effectively in healthy ways, especially in multicultural contexts.

Abstract

An increase in the number of Christian workers from the global South working cross-culturally in areas where workers from the global North are working has led to more opportunities for collaboration on multicultural teams. To understand the interaction dynamics between multicultural team members, a grounded theory case study analysis of five multicultural teams from Christian organizations was undertaken to explore the responses of multicultural teams and their team members when they experienced differences among team members (Derksen 2024). The individual-level results of that study outline the ways team members perceive, interpret, react to, understand, and adapt to differences with their teammates from other cultures and how those interactions change as awareness and understanding increase. The implications of this study outline ways for team members to overcome the barriers of lack of awareness, misunderstandings, and ineffective adaptation to differences among team members.

Polycentric Leadership in Practice: Rethinking Congregational Engagement in Today's Complex Reality

Joseph Handley (jhandley@a3.email)

Abstract

This paper explores the practice of *ekklesia* oriented around the theme of polycentric leadership as a model for navigating the complexities of modern congregational life. Rooted in the early church's Spirit-led governance and adaptable structure, polycentric leadership emphasizes shared authority, collective wisdom, and decentralized influence.

It resonates with the *missio Dei*, the priesthood of all believers, and the nature of the Trinity, offering churches an alternative to balancing tradition with innovation and rigid structure with a shared leadership platform. Informed by examples from restricted contexts and global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, this approach equips the church to engage effectively in diverse and challenging social, cultural, and digital spaces.

By embracing polycentric principles, the church can release its members into their unique callings, foster resilient communities, and adapt to the demands of an interconnected, rapidly changing, and increasingly hostile world.

Saturday 4th October

Plenaries

“We believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church”: The church and the mission of God in the Nicene Creed

Grant LeMarquand (bishopgrant777@gmail.com)

Grant LeMarquand (Th.D. Wycliffe College, University of Toronto) is Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies at Trinity Anglican Seminary, and retired Anglican Bishop of the Horn of Africa. His academic research and writing focuses on African biblical interpretation, the Bible and mission, and African church history. He is married to one wife, Wendy, a retired family physician. Grant and Wendy have two grown children and one grandchild. They live in Alberta, Canada.

Abstract

The year 2025 is the 1700th anniversary of the first draft of the Nicene Creed. Although this is rarely noted, the nature of the church according to the eventual form of this Creed is, is inescapably missiologically. Because the church believes in One God, the church also must be one, so that the world may believe. Because God is Holy, the church, although sinful, is called to be holy by living lives of obedience to the Holy One and by showing mercy because God is merciful. Because God desires all “nations” to come to him, the church is called to go into the world and so become truly Catholic global, universal. Because God sent the Son in the power of the Spirit, making Jesus the apostle, the church “called by the Father to witness to the Son in the power of the Spirit” is likewise apostolic sent.

Respondent

Anna Daub

Dr. Anna Daub is the Director of Special Projects and Partnerships for Global Theological Initiatives and Assistant Professor of Missions at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. She holds a PhD in Applied Theology from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina and an MDIV in Missiology from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. She has also served overseas in South Asia and worked with international students in the United States.

Tribes, Tongues, Peoples, and Nations: A biblical theology of a stock phrase

Zane Pratt (zgpratt@sbts.edu)

Zane Pratt serves as Senior Ambassador for Seminary Partnerships & Theologian-in-Residence with the International Mission Board, SBC. He came to this position after living and working overseas for 23 years. He also serves as Assistant Professor of Christian Missions at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Zane and his wife Catherine have been married 36 years, and they have two grown children and three grandchildren

Abstract

Ralph Winter famously divided the history of the modern missionary movement into three phases: to the coastlands, to the interior, and to unreached peoples. This reflected the impact of his address at the Lausanne Conference in 1974, in which he urged mission agencies to look beyond geography to the mosaic of ethnolinguistic people groups that constituted the world's population. He based the legitimacy and importance of this approach to missionary activity on the biblical theme of peoples and nations found in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, correctly noting that those words had different ranges of meaning in the world of the Bible than their modern usage. In the half-century since that pivotal address, mainstream Evangelical missiology has been deeply influenced by Winter's emphasis on people groups, and such an approach has become widely accepted in missionary practice. This, in turn, has led to extensive discussions about what constitutes a people group, to focused research on people groups and on their respective states of evangelization, and on concern regarding the fluid nature of people group identities and the impact of people groups that have disappeared on the eschatological position, based on Matthew 24:14, that links the evangelization of every people group with the return of Christ.

Two verses from the Book of Revelation, Rev 5:9 and 7:9, are cited frequently in the biblical justification for a people group focus. Both verses include tribes, tongues (or languages), peoples, and nations, in different orders, the first as the scope of the atoning work of Christ and the second as the scope of the multitude in heaven. The second of these passages is the basis for the vision statement of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board. The repetition of words that have close ranges of meaning is taken to reinforce the centrality of a people group focus in the missionary task.

However, a biblical theological examination of this combination points in a slightly different direction. Various combinations of these words are found in the Book of Daniel to refer to either everyone in the given empire or everyone in the world. Similarly, the word grouping is used in Revelation several more times to refer negatively to the peoples of the world under judgment. Taken as an oral formulaic expression, it seems probable that the reference is a general one to totality, and not as a mathematically precise insistence on every people group that has ever lived.

This in turn helpfully integrates with two other issues in missiology. A biblical concern is that the Book of Acts seems to focus on places rather than peoples. A practical concern is that urban settings are often characterized by a blurring of the lines between people groups, with varying levels of alliance and affiliation occurring between different groups. With over half the population of the world now living in urban settings, this reality has a profound impact on the practice of missions. Any approach to people groups needs to blend ethnolinguistic realities with places and urban settings, with the ultimate intent of comprehensive evangelization of the world as it exists, both in the current day and in the final day.

Respondent

J. Keith McKinley

J. Keith McKinley is Professor of Christian Missions at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Director of the Bevin Center for Missions Mobilization, and Chairman of the Department of Missions, Evangelism, and World Religions. He earned his BHS in Respiratory Therapy at the University of Louisville, and M.Div. and Ph.D. at Southern Seminary. Before joining Southern, Keith and his family served as missionaries of the International Mission Board for twenty years in Southeast Asia. Keith is married to Gail, and they have four children and one grandchild. He is the author of *Reviewing Leadership: A Model for Missiological Assessment of Leadership Theory and Practice*.

Biblical-Theological Model of the Church

The Irreducible Ecclesiological Minimum: Terminus or Starting Point in Church Planting?

J. D. Payne (jd.payne@samford.edu)

J. D. Payne is the Thomas Welby Bozeman Chair of Christian Ministry at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. He has published sixteen books on missions and evangelism including *Apostolic Church Planting* and *Discovering Church Planting*. He has served in pastoral ministry for nearly twenty years and twenty-five in the Academy.

Abstract

A perennial debate is found in church planting conversations. Should church planters focus on minimalistic work, only passing along basic essentials to new believers, or impart familiar and often complex ecclesiastical expressions? Contemporary arguments polarize ecclesiologies into two categories. Some advocate, if matters are kept simple, then sanctification is compromised. Others disagree, noting that starting works with much complexity hinders the gospel from spreading among the unreached. Groups are polarized between those desiring church health and others desiring church multiplication.

The presentation is an attempt to call church planters to an irreducible ecclesiological minimum as the starting point for contextualized church planting. Rather than embracing the complex and ubiquitous pragmatic or paternalistic ecclesiologies, planters should begin with a contextualized biblical ecclesiology. Church planters are to plant the church that the Spirit births in time, not what the church should become over time through sanctification.

The first portion of the presentation will address the contemporary debate, pragmatic and paternalistic ecclesiologies, and a brief summary of the missiology and history of indigeneity and contextualized church planting.

The second portion will address a biblical ecclesiology of the church as a group with a common call, confession, commitment, community, and commission. An irreducible ecclesiological minimum will be postulated and advocated for future church planting endeavors that fosters both healthy and multiplying churches.

Narrative Dynamic Ecclesiology: Organization and Operation of the Church

Enoch Wan (ewan@westernseminary.edu)

- Research Professor of Intercultural Studies and Director of Doctor of Missiology Program,
- Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon, USA,
http://www.westernseminary.edu/Faculty/PDX/Pages/wan_enoch.htm
- President of EMS (Evangelical Missiological Society), www.EMSweb.org
- Advisory Board, Global Diaspora Network
<http://www.jdpayne.org/2011/04/02/global-diaspora-network-video/>
- Founder/Editor - multi-lingual electronic journal, www.GlobalMissiology.org

Mark Hedinger (mark.hedinger@culturebound.org)

- Executive Director and Culture Trainer, CultureBound
- Adjunct Professor, Western Seminary
- Co Coordinator of the International Mission Training Network (IMTN)

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to employ a narrative approach to formulate a dynamic ecclesiology of the Church in terms of organization and operation. The paper is organized into two parts. With the use of “Relational Interactionist Paradigm” and “Transformational Paradigm” -

- A narrative dynamic ecclesiology is proposed by describing the pattern and process of interaction between personal Beings/beings.
- Missiological implications will be derived.

Revisiting "Who Really Sent the First Missionaries" - the Role of the Local Church in the Sending of Missionaries

Marvin Newell (marvnewell@gmail.com)

Dr. Marvin J. Newell has spent over 48 years engaged in Christian missions. He is presently Ambassador at Large of Missio Nexus, an association of missions in North America. Previously he served as a missionary in Papua, Indonesia, a mission administrator, a professor of missions, director of a missions association (IFMA), and senior VP of Missio Nexus. He is the author of six mission related books, the newest: Taking You Under My Skin: A Novel about Love, War, and the Unreached.

Abstract

Fifty years ago, Dr. Harold Cook, newly retired esteemed and long-tenured Professor of Missions at Moody Bible Institute, wrote an article published in the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (Fall, 1975) that raised eyebrows in mission circles. That article, entitled, “Who Really Sent the First Missionaries,” was written by Cook as a corrective to the then current and increasingly prevalent thinking about the role of the local church in the mission sending process. Centered on the example of the church at Antioch described in its sending action found in Acts 13:1-4, Cook’s premise was that although the church at Antioch was important to the sending of Barnabas and Saul, it was neither central nor supreme. By implication, neither should it be today.

In this paper a grammatical examination the Acts 13:1-4 passage will be conducted by way of four primary considerations: 1) the consideration of the church’s involvement vs. solely the prophets and teachers; 2) the two uses of the word “sent”; 3) the consideration of the imposition of hands; 4) the consideration of the phrase “set apart for me.” It is hoped that a balanced picture will emerge between the role of the Holy Spirit and the local church in the sending of missionaries today.

Transforming Ecclesiology: Bridging Ecclesiology and Missiology Through Relational Interactionism

Soo Min (James) Park (parkjames.11.09@gmail.com)

Pastor Soo Min (James) Park is the founding and Lead Pastor of Dawning Light Community Church, a multiethnic congregation in Olympia, Washington. He has nearly 20 years of ministry experience serving multiethnic or diaspora churches. He holds dual B.S. degrees in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and Materials Science and Engineering from UC Berkeley. He also earned a Master of Divinity from Westminster Seminary California and is a Ph.D. candidate (ABD) in Intercultural Education at Western Seminary. As a pastor-scholar and research missiologist, his research interests include intercultural discipleship, missional theology, intercultural leadership, orality, educational frameworks, and systematic theology.

Abstract

This secondary data research paper reinterprets traditional Western ecclesiology by transforming its key attributes—catholicity, unity, holiness, apostolicity, militant and triumphant, visible and invisible, marks of the Church, baptism, Eucharist, preaching of the Word, Church discipline, and covenant nature. It shifts these attributes from being predominantly static, synchronic, definitional, descriptive, propositional, and abstract in

approach, accompanied by a low view of mission and an overemphasis on institution. The paper proposes a move of these attributes toward a more diachronic, dynamic, both definitional and participatory, prescriptive, narrative-formational, and higher view of mission, characterized by relational interconnections centered on the Triune God through the lens of Relational Interactionism. The resulting ecclesiastical attributes offer a substantially more intersectionally fluid perspective on ecclesiology and missiology for the Church, missions, and academia—yielding a more Scripturally faithful ecclesiological understanding and outlook that integrates mission and ecclesiology more cohesively and coherently. This integration is expected to serve as a catalyst for greater effectiveness, efficiency, and faithfulness in missional endeavors, strengthening the Church's fidelity to Scripture and more actively promoting the Church's obedient response to the Great Commission.

Matthew 25:40 and "the Least of These": Interpretive Implications for a Missional Ecclesiology

Jerry M. Ireland, PhD (jerry.ireland00@gmail.com)

Dr. Ireland currently serves as an active duty chaplain with the US Navy. He previously served as Department Chair for Ministry, Leadership, and Theology at the University of Valley Forge. Prior to that, he and his wife Paula served as missionaries to Africa for over 12 years. Jerry's publications include *The Missionary Spirit: Evangelism and Social Action in Pentecostal Missiology* (Orbis 2021), *Evangelism and Social Concern in the Theology of Carl F. H. Henry* (Pickwick 2015), and he currently serves as one of the series editors for Baker Academic's Foundations for Spirit-filled Christianity Series.

Abstract

Two approaches dominate the church's interpretation of Matthew 25:31-46 as it concerns the identity of "the least of these my brothers": a universal approach that considers Jesus' statement as establishing the way one treats the poor and needy as a (or even 'the') primary condition for salvation, in contrast to a particularist or narrow approach that rather understands Jesus as referring to how one receives the disciples sent in His name. In this study the various exegetical bases for these two dominant arguments will be examined in light of Matthew's thematic interests. That is, what are the dominant theological threads that run throughout Matthew's gospel, how does Matthew 25:40 cohere with other themes and emphases, and how does either interpretation fit with what the rest of the New Testament (NT) says about this subject. These are the questions this study will examine. In the end, I will propose that a narrow interpretation is most consistent with Matthew's theology and with that of the NT as a

whole, where “the least of these my brothers” refers explicitly to cross-cultural missionaries. I will then draw out some general conclusions for a missional ecclesiology.

Mission to the Nations: An Ecclesiological Perspective

Rev. Nestor Abdon (nestor.abdon@yahoo.ca)

The Rev. Dr. Nestor Abdon is a ministry practitioner and missiologist who seeks to understand the nature of diaspora movements in the context of God’s redemptive purpose. Currently, he is serving as the Global and Local Outreach Pastor of Bramalea Baptist Church in Canada. He holds a Doctor of Public Administration degree from the University of the Philippines, and Doctor of Intercultural Studies from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. His dissertation has been converted into a book on the intersection of migration and mission.

Abstract

In all of scripture, God has a purpose for the nations in glorifying him. His mission is to draw all nations to him. Delineating God’s mission to all nations necessitates asking several questions: what is the biblical meaning of nation (ethnos) and, why is the mission to the nations salient in God’s mission? The first question lays the foundation for clarity of God’s intent and the second question delves into the theology of ethnicity and its missiological implications. It is imperative, however, to further ascertain the mission to the nations from an ecclesiological perspective as the nature and role of the church is essential to God’s salvific act. This paper seeks to answer these three questions with the intent to highlight the nature of the church as an ecclesial (assembly) community of the nations and a missional community that seeks to disciple the nations. The paper seeks to posit that an ecclesiological perspective of mission to the nations requires key shifts in mission endeavor from programmatic to relational mission, engaging not just in gospel proclamation (evangelism) but in discipling, and directing gospel proclamation for the reached and unreached people groups. This challenges the assumption of the prevailing perspective of “finishing the task” of reaching out to all people groups as the end goal of mission.

Historical and Case Studies

Identity, Security, and Ecclesiology: Missionary Relationships to Expatriate Christians and Churches in Restricted Access Nations

A.G. Smith (agsmithresearch@gmail.com)

A.G. Smith (PhD, Columbia International University) is a qualitative researcher in Strategy at Pioneers. Previously, she trained first-term missionaries on the Arabian Peninsula, and also helped start a Christian nonprofit for asylum seekers in Europe.

Abstract

Due to security concerns in Restricted Access Nations (RANs), evangelical missionaries often present their vocational identity across social fields, concealing their missionary identity. Most literature regarding missionary security and identity in RANs focuses on the missionary's relationship with the local government or the indigenous populations they seek to reach with the gospel. However, in many contexts, expatriate churches also exist where the missionary seeks to do pioneer church planting among indigenous populations. This results in a unique environment in which the missionary must navigate their missionary identity and role among the non-missionary Christian expatriate community. This paper, derived from qualitative research on missionary identity presentation in the Middle East, explores the complex and varied relationships between church planting missionaries and the expatriate church community. Missionaries may avoid the expatriate church altogether for the sake of security. They may participate in the expatriate church cautiously, while also concealing aspects of their missionary identities and roles. They may also participate in the expatriate church with more openness about their missionary identity, serving the church with a mobilization and training focus. Each approach brings benefits and challenges; this paper evaluates these options and provides guiding questions for the missionary's relationship to expatriate gatherings.

The History of Short-Term Missions And Why it is Important for the Modern Church

Rachel Stewart (rachel.stewart@okbu.edu)

Rachel Stewart is a native of Oklahoma and serves in the Avery T. Willis Center for Global Outreach at Oklahoma Baptist University. She earned a B.A. in Communication

Studies from Regent University and a M.A. in Intercultural Studies from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. She has extensive cross-cultural experience, having led teams in twenty different countries over the past 10 years. Her short-term trip experiences have grown and expanded her understanding of positive team dynamics, strong leadership, and student engagement in diverse cultures. In her spare time, Rachel enjoys family time, photography, genealogy, hiking, National Parks, and a good book.

Abstract

Since the explosion of Short-Term Missions (STM) in the 1980s, American churches have sent innumerable STM teams around the globe to serve, witness, provide relief, engage the unreached, and support established churches among the nations. This paper seeks to shed light on the beginnings of the STM movement, highlighting the factors that led to its rapid growth in the late twentieth century in order to demonstrate the effects of STM on the modern church and its missional goals. Numerous missionaries and indigenous pastors & leaders have received those teams. While an overwhelming number of such experiences have been beneficial, there have also been plenty of mistakes made and STM has received scathing critiques on occasion. Nevertheless, STM has not only persisted, but grown exponentially.

As something that impacts both missions and the local church, STM is a topic that should be engaged with a heart of understanding. By providing a full understanding of, and appreciation for, the factors that led to the expansive wave of STM, further investigation can help foster the successful implementation of future endeavors in STM.

Without Walls, Without Names: Reimagining Church and Mission Amid Hostility in India

Santosh Kumar (santosh.kumar857272@gmail.com)

I served as a Professor and the Director of the Research and Development Cell at Spicer Adventist University, India, prior moving to USA. I hold a Doctor of Missiology degree from Andrews University, MI, USA. I received a Fellowship and currently pursuing PhD at TEDS, USA.

Abstract

Christian mission in India faces a paradox: while the nation upholds its identity as a diverse and democratic society, many Christians—primarily converts—experience exclusion, hostility, and persecution from their own families and communities. Those who embrace Christ often endure verbal abuse, social rejection, legal restrictions, and

even threats to their lives, making traditional church structures increasingly unsustainable. How can the church exist and fulfill its mission when its visibility invites danger?

This paper proposes and emphasizes the emerging reality of faith communities in India that exist without walls, names, or institutional recognition. Moving beyond conventional church-planting models, it examines how underground believers form dynamic, relational faith networks that thrive in homes through personal discipleship, oral traditions, and digital platforms. These communities reject rigid structures, instead embodying fluid, decentralized expressions of faith that adapt to hostility, surveillance, and legal constraints.

Grounded in *Missio Dei*, martyrdom theology, and the suffering church paradigm, this study argues that persecution does not suppress mission but compels its reconfiguration, requiring a shift from structured, location-based ecclesiology to faith expressions that are adaptable, organic, and deeply embedded in personal relationships. Through ethnographic case studies of unnamed Christ-followers and house churches in Northern India, this paper highlights the lived experiences of believers who persist in their faith despite the risks they face.

This study challenges Western-centric church-planting paradigms by blending theological analysis with real-life narratives. It contributes to a broader missiological discourse on how the global church can learn from persecuted faith communities—where resilience, adaptability, and relational discipleship sustain the mission of Christ in the face of adversity.

Insider Movements and the West: Viewing the Western Church Through IM Lenses

Christopher E. Robersshaw (chris.robbershaw@asburyseminary.edu)

Christopher E. Robersshaw is a PhD candidate in Intercultural Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary and a PhD student in Education at the University of Kentucky. He has served as a pastor and educator in the U.S., Hong Kong, and South Korea, with over a decade of experience in cross-cultural ministry, teaching, and academic support. A former department head and church planter, his research explores theological education, culture, and ethics. He currently works as a research assistant at UK's Evaluation Center and is an ordained elder in the Free Methodist Church.

Abstract

This paper explores how theological lenses developed to understand Insider Movements (IM) in missiology can offer fresh insights into the Western Church, particularly its traditional and house church expressions. While much has been written in defense or critique of IMs, few have asked what these movements reveal about the ecclesial assumptions and practices of the West. Drawing on Leonard N. Bartolotti's nine theological lenses including ecclesiology, authority, culture, pneumatology, history, and conversion initiation, this paper applies these categories to Western contexts. The analysis challenges institutional and individualistic tendencies in Western churches and raises questions about formal structures, sacramental practices, cultural entanglements, and spiritual authority. In conversation with scholars such as Rebecca Lewis, Roland Allen, Frank Viola, and Matthew Bennett, the paper critiques bounded set paradigms and explores centered set models of discipleship. Using case studies, biblical exegesis, and missiological theory, it argues that IMs present not only a contextual model for unreached people groups but also a prophetic mirror to Western ecclesiology. The Western Church, whether institutional or organic, must discern how to balance the visible and informal, the apostolic and the indigenous, the rooted and the prophetic. Ultimately, this paper contends that insider lenses uncover both the excesses and the blind spots of the Western Church, inviting a deeper, Spirit led reformation of what it means to be the Body of Christ in a post Christian society. Theological engagement with IMs, then, is not simply a matter of missions but a matter of ecclesial identity and renewal.

Deconstructing Church and Reconstructing Creation: Canadian Missiology as “Righting the Canoe”

Peter J. Schuurman (office@globalscholarscanada.ca)

Peter Schuurman (PhD U Waterloo) is executive director of Global Scholars Canada, a Christian professors' guild focused on transnational service in higher education. His second book co-authored with Angela Reitsma Bick, *Blessed are the Undone: Testimonies of the Quiet Deconstruction of Faith in Canada* (New Leaf 2024) uses the metaphor of a canoe camping trip to describe the journey of "undone" Christians in Canada. He is a former campus minister now adjunct faculty at Redeemer University and lives in Guelph, Ontario with his family where he attends New Life Church.

Abstract

According to 2023 polls, self-identified Christians have become a minority in Canada for the first time since before Confederation, as the number of religious “nones” trends upward. This paper explores the canoe metaphor and qualitative data presented in my

co-authored book *Blessed are the Undone: Testimonies of the Quiet Deconstruction of Faith in Canada* (New Leaf Press 2024).

This paper argues that the re-election of Donald Trump as President further exacerbates the negative perception of the (evangelical) church in Canada, as Christianity becomes further associated with white Christian nationalism, the legacy of colonialism, discrimination against LGBTQ+ persons, disregard for climate change, and an anti-science posture. In response, the deconstructed church best mobilize for a mission of reconciliation, following a path similar to the ethos of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This includes reconciliation with indigenous peoples, LGBTQ+ persons, climate activism, and scientific investigation. This calls for a shift of posture from defensive apologetics to pro-active apologies.

Whatever variety of ecclesiologies shape the church of the future, it will be argued that they must have stronger ties to land, place, and parish. The deconstruction of faith in Canada is inevitably linked to the decolonization of faith in Canada, and key to such repentance is a stronger land ethic, symbolized by the canoe.

If our shared canoe is tipping or even sinking, we need practises that stabilize and redirect our current ecclesiology and ecology. In fact, only an ecclesiology that is deliberately linked to a stewardly ecology will bring healing to our land, church, and culture.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Mandate for Females to Wear Traditional Muslim Clothing – the Manteau and Rousari – and the Church's Response

Philip O Hopkins (philhopkins@gs.edu)

Philip O. Hopkins has a PhD. in applied theology from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (Wake Forest, North Carolina) and a PhD. in Iranian history from the University of St. Andrews (Scotland). He lived outside the United States for almost 20 years analyzing ethnic and minority peoples and population segments in Iran and the Caucasus area. His main academic interest concerns how Christians in Iran – both ethnic Christians and those who converted to Christianity – interact among themselves and among the general population. Currently, he is professor of missions at Gateway Seminary and chair of its missions and intercultural studies department.

Abstract

In 1909 American Presbyterian missionary to Iran Howard Baskerville resigned his teaching post in Tabriz, Iran to fight for Iranians warring against governmental troops during the Constitutional Revolution. He died at 24 years old. His death proved impactful for Christianity in Iran and Iranian/American relations. In 1975, in a paper presented for the Bicentennial Celebrations of American Independence at Pahlavi University in Shiraz, Iran, politician Ali Pasha Saleh praised American missionaries and called the United States the hero of freedom in Iran. Saleh connected the Constitutional Revolution with the American Revolution and described Baskerville as the 'Lafayette of Iran'. As late as 2005, in Tabriz, the Islamic Republic of Iran, with then President Mohammed Khatami presiding, unveiled a bust of him. Over 100 years and two regime changes later, Iranians still love Baskerville. Baskerville serves as an example of a Christian missionary who fought against the repressive and unbiblical policies of a government. Baskerville's actions illuminate a question faced by many American evangelical Christians: when is there the biblical, moral, and ethical responsibility to violate a country's laws?

This paper argues that American church and those focused on Iran should be careful when addressing issues related to the Islamic Republic of Iran's edicts surrounding female dress. Knowing the history of the Iranian Church, Christian missionary involvement in Iran, some background on laws in Iran related to attire, how Iranians view the world and their culture, and the history of how missionary activity is perceived in relation to government all help in making wise choices in relation to a sensitive, controversial, and contentious issue.

Methods

From “churching” to full church integration: Church planting with red-light communities in kolkata

Sydney Dixon (sydney.dixon22@proton.me)

Sydney Dixon has served globally for over 20 years in campus ministry, leadership development, and church planting across Eastern Europe, South Asia, and West Asia. She holds an M.Div. in Biblical Counseling and a Ph.D. in Applied Theology from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dixon currently mentors and teaches aspiring global workers at Radical’s residential training center in West Asia.

Abstract

Complete obedience to Jesus’s Great Commission necessitates the presence of healthy local churches. Through faithful gospel proclamation and demonstration, the church must invite all people into its community through repentance and faith in Christ, including those from difficult and marginalized segments of society. Jesus teaches that caring for the least among us is akin to ministering directly to him (Matt 25:31–48). This paper proposes strategic elements essential for addressing the gaps in current ministry efforts among Kolkata’s red-light (RL) communities in fulfilling the “churching” components of the Great Commission—beginning with evangelism and discipleship—and achieving full local church integration. The proposal draws from previous research that identifies three main gaps in the current ministry strategies of five selected Kolkata-based RL ministries: a final goal for full integration into a healthy local church, repurposing unreached people group (UPG) strategies for RL community ministry, and specialized partnerships for aftercare. This paper offers strategies to fill those gaps utilizing essential elements of a church planting model.

How the Church Can Mobilize for Mission Using Culinary Art

Ellie Asker (ellieasgarova@gmail.com)

Ellie is a PhD student in World Arts at Dallas International University and a passionate researcher exploring the intersection of art, language, culture, and faith. Originally from Azerbaijan, she earned her Master’s from Azerbaijan State Economic University and advanced her education with a Master’s in Linguistics from the University of Gloucestershire. She worked as a project coordinator for translation and language development in Azerbaijan, gained valuable insights into cultural exchange, and

published a community cookbook to celebrate cultural heritage. Ellie has presented her research at a conference and aims to illuminate how art expresses connections between culture and faith.

Abstract

This study explores the potential of culinary art as a theological and missional tool in church outreach, highlighting its capacity to build community, promote hospitality, and foster intercultural connection. Drawing on ethnographic observation within my cultural context, case study analysis, and theological reflection, this research addresses the question: How can culinary art be meaningfully and biblically utilized in cross-cultural discipleship mission efforts? Culinary art is recognized as a valuable yet underexplored resource in formal theological discourse, carrying significant theological implications that offer practical pathways for building relationships, contextualizing the gospel, and embodying hospitality as a mission. A notable example is a cookbook project that enhanced engagement, while initiatives, like church potlucks and intercultural culinary competitions, offer opportunities to celebrate diversity and strengthen communal bonds. Culinary art fosters table fellowship within the church as worship and mission. It promotes a sense of belonging in home groups and encourages inclusivity through diverse dishes. Inspired by the early church's practice of sharing meals, these gatherings reflect biblical values of generosity and hospitality, creating a rehearsal for the heavenly feast, fostering joy and well-being through shared recipes. Ultimately, engagement with culinary art deepens relationships and facilitates gospel sharing. This study contributes to contextual missiology and ethnodoxology by theologically reflecting on cultural practices and suggesting practical implications for church leaders. It calls the church to reimagine mission through culinary art, hospitality, cultural sensitivity, and nourishing practices in a divided world, inviting future research on the lasting effects of culinary-based ministry on spiritual and communal growth.

Collaborate: An Interactive Collaboration Process at the Lausanne Movement Congress in Incheon, Korea

Ann Chow (ann.chow@adaptiveleaders.com)

Ann is a business and leadership consultant and coach with Adaptive Leaders. She graduated with an MA in Theology from Regent College. She teaches leadership and project management at Redeemer University and is an expert facilitator with PopUpThinkTank. She is a business and leadership consultant and coach with an extensive background in facilitating collaborative processes and guiding complex conversations. She specializes in helping leaders and teams align diverse perspectives,

navigate uncertainty and co-create strategies for lasting and meaningful change. Ann has a proven track record of empowering leaders to align vision with action to achieve meaningful results. She creates change in new and innovative ways.

Abstract

Seoul 2024: The fourth Lausanne Movement Congress this past September 2024 held in Incheon, Korea gave significant time and resources towards asking the question of how we can co-labour with the Lord in the gospel and ‘let the church declare and display Christ together.’ In other words, how can we envision the whole body of Christ demonstrating that Jesus is King as we venture into an uncertain future, following in-step with the Holy Spirit? What is a wise response to the pressing problems and opportunities of our current time and place, requiring a prayerful integration of every expertise and experience?

What action is the Lord calling us to in these complex times? What will it take for the global church to move together in response?

At Seoul 2024, we squarely faced 25 commonly recognized issues and opportunities identified by every region of the world, stemming from a 2-3 year listening process.

For the purposes of the congress and as members of the program team, my colleague Dave Benson and I designed a collaboration process that invited all 5300 participants onsite and 2000 virtually, from 200 countries and in 7 official congress languages to ‘get in the water’ together. The value of hosting interactive sessions around these 25 issues would initiate extensive cross-experiential connections to increase trust; from highly skilled experts in collaboration to those who have never collaborated before. Congress participants immersed themselves into a facilitated conversation, highlighting the importance of collaboration by experiencing a thoughtful human-centered design thinking process.

Creative Problem-Solving for Missions: Training Churches in Innovation Using Design Thinking

Nick Wu (nick@indigitous.org)

Nick guides young adults and students in digital missions projects. He has a passion for telling stories for the missions world through videos. He has helped Indigitous launch their Innovation Internship, and has facilitated design sprints, workshops, content creation, and children’s books. He is currently working on his MA in Intercultural Studies at Dallas Seminary.

Kyle Lee (kyle.lee@indigitous.org)

Kyle grew up all around the United States and was a missionary kid to Kenya throughout high school. He earned his Bachelors in English at the University of Virginia and is a spoken word artist, podcast host, and producer having worked for InterVarsity as a Media and Marketing Producer and Strategy Manager, Hilton Hotels as a Complex Marketing Manager, and now Indigitous US as a Director of Strategy.

Kyle's passion is to inspire the Church to think differently and boldly engage the world with the Gospel in faith and relevance through digital storytelling, thought leadership, and strategic partnerships, working to catalyze the called and make Kingdom work more effective in the digital age.

Abstract

The church, as the Body of Christ, is called to be a dynamic, reproducing, and mission-oriented community. However, churches struggle with living missionally because they have become institutionalized and resistant to change. While the world is rapidly evolving, new methods and strategies are to be considered in reaching new people. The church can cultivate creativity, adapt to new challenges, and remain relevant by innovating fearlessly and faithfully.

This presentation and paper explores how Indigitous facilitates design thinking as a framework to equip churches to embrace innovation in problem-solving for missions and ministry strategies. Design thinking is a human-centered, iterative process used widely in business and technology to solve problems. Applying this to the church and missions means addressing challenges and gaps while seeking innovation from the Spirit and showing God's love to empathize with whom we want to reach.

Churches can use the design thinking process to empathize, ideate, and prototype solutions and strategies. Through design thinking workshops, Indigitous has helped church congregants of multiple life stages come together to brainstorm and problem-solve towards challenges their church is facing or challenges their supported missionaries are facing. Prototypes have ranged from new ministries and solutions aided by technology. Through design thinking, churches can be spurred to creativity, engage multiple generations and disciplines, and be empowered to embody the gospel in new missional contexts.

Will God Save My Avatar?: The Vitality of the Doctrine of Embodiment for Successful Digital Engagement by Local Churches

Coy Merry (cmerry294@students.sbts.edu)

Coy serves as the Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church in Morgantown, Kentucky. He has been married to his wife, Kobe, since 2024, and they are expecting their first child in January. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D in Christian Missions at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, under Dr. Keith McKinley.

Abstract

With the continued development of technological and social media platforms, the church is in a unique position regarding gospel access. Many governments and Non-governmental organizations are working toward bringing global internet access, meaning that most, if not all of the world population will be able to be reached in some way through digital means. Currently, in the United States alone, over half of the population holds an account with the social media platform TikTok, despite concerns over national security. Globally, through online gaming, virtual and augmented reality, social media, and other digital means, the world is gathering in the digital public square. There has never been a time in history in which the global population has been more connected, yet research shows that most of the world, by self-reporting, struggles with loneliness. The church is exceptionally positioned to reach the world utilizing technological means. Yet, that which may bring access, if not properly used, will not bring about effective gospel change. In this paper, I will argue that the doctrine of embodiment must be at the forefront of our strategy for the church to have effective digital evangelism. I will argue this by putting forth a doctrine of embodiment, applying it to the digital person, analyzing how this affects evangelism, and finally, building a digital strategy that seeks to reach the embodied person through digital means with the hope of the gospel.

Contextualization in the Caste System

Jennifer Daehling (jenniferdaehling@icloud.com)

Jennifer is the Missions Minister at her church in Midland, Texas. She has been married to Danny for 23 years, and they have 3 children. Jennifer has had the opportunity to travel around the world training and encouraging church planters. She has a heart for the lost, especially those belonging to unreached, unengaged people groups. Jennifer

completed her masters in Intercultural Studies at Columbia International University in 2022, and she is currently working on her PhD.

Abstract

Insider Movements are a controversial topic among missiologists. Those against these strategies worry that such high levels of contextualization may produce syncretism. In India, where culture and religion are so tightly bound, the lines between healthy contextualization and syncretism become even more blurred. In addition, since Hindus worship many gods, it is a valid concern that new believers may simply add Jesus to their pantheon. This study compares two church planting methods used among Hindu Background Believers in Northern India. One is an Insider Movements, where many of the cultural and religious aspects of Hinduism have been adapted to use in their worship of Christ. The other is slightly less contextualized, with Hindu religious practices being rejected in worship. Participants were interviewed to gauge their doctrinal beliefs and religious practices to see if they were biblically orthodox. The participants' answers seem to indicate that both groups have true, saving faith in line with Scripture. The findings suggest that the Insider Movement approach is a biblically acceptable method to use among Hindus in India, and that this highly contextualized strategy is no more likely to produce syncretism than a less contextualized ecclesiology.

Training, Sending, and Going

Understanding the Role of Cultural Memory in church Ecclesiological Structure

Roy Oksnevad (Roy.Oksnevad@gmail.com)

Roy Oksnevad, PhD, is a seasoned ministry leader and scholar with decades of experience in cross-cultural evangelism. He began as a pioneer inner-city church planter in Hoboken, New Jersey, and later served as a missionary in Belgium, ministering among Muslims. Roy helped launch the South Asian Friendship Center in Chicago and spent 20 years directing Muslim Ministry at the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism at Wheaton College. He is the author. Now residing in Chanhassen, Minnesota, Roy and his wife Darla enjoy being closer to two of their children and their grandchildren.

Abstract

This paper examines how cultural characteristics inform the ecclesiological structures that church leaders and members employ. While modern missions often focus on methodologies and identifying transformational leaders to catalyze church planting movements, this study shifts the focus to the influence of cultural memory on ecclesiology. It highlights the importance of considering the cultural heritage, behavior patterns, and values that new believers bring into their new fellowships. I will be drawing upon Geert Hofstede's 6 cultural values as markers to understand the gravitational pull these cultural values have in forming new churches. Through my experiences in inner-city church planting in the USA and with first-generational Christian leaders from Muslim backgrounds at Pars Theological Centre, the paper reveals how achieving a mature, stable church is a complex and time-consuming process. Ultimately, this study explores the cost of discipleship and its impact on ecclesiological structures.

Generational Differences in Mental Health and Other Ministry Challenges: Boomer and Gen Z Missionaries Need Each Other

David R. Dunaetz (ddunaetz@apu.edu)

David R. Dunaetz was a church planting missionary in France for 17 years where he and his wife started two churches and helped move a third one beyond missionary

dependence. He is currently Professor of Organizational Psychology at Azusa Pacific University, Lecturer in Leadership at Johns Hopkins University, and Adjunct Professor of French at Claremont Graduate University. His research program focuses on interpersonal processes in churches and mission organizations. He is the editor of the Great Commission Research Journal.

Abstract

As Western culture evolves, missionaries from the West are facing new challenges. These challenges can be observed in the North American churches where many of these missionaries were raised. In this study, we seek to understand what the greatest challenges for church leaders (including missionaries) are, how they relate to age, and how this information can benefit missionaries, especially church-planting missionaries. In this study, North American church leaders (N = 347) indicated how great 79 commonly faced challenges were perceived to be, as well as their age and information about their church's size and growth. A factor analysis reduced these 79 challenges to 16 clusters of challenges. Six of these clusters were related to age. Older leaders found maintaining their mental health, self-management, and church finances less challenging than did younger leaders. The differences in mental health were especially strong. In contrast, younger church leaders found evangelism, creating effective programs, and addressing problems associated with social media use less challenging than did older leaders. Moreover, churches with younger leaders were growing faster than churches with older leaders. The cultural dynamics producing these differences in North American churches are likely to act on missionary teams comprised of North Americans. For older and younger missionaries to benefit from each other's strengths, it might be beneficial for both older and younger missionaries to form teams together.

Movemental Ecclesiology: Rediscovering a Pre-Christendom Hermeneutic of Church Multiplication

Wes Watkins (ww@rightbox.com)

Wes Watkins (formerly Warrick Farah) is the editor of *Motus Dei* (2021) and coeditor of *Margins of Islam* (2018). He is an adjunct professor at Arab Baptist Theological Seminary and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. As a missiologist with One Collective, Wes facilitates the *Motus Dei* Network and is a researcher at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.

Abstract

This paper contends that ecclesiology can be revitalized by viewing the church as a dynamic movement rather than a static institution. Drawing on early Jesus movements in the first-century Mediterranean world and current church planting movements (CPMs) in least-reached contexts, it demonstrates how reproducible, network-based expressions of church thrive by prioritizing disciple-making over programs and flexible structures over rigid hierarchies. The study acknowledges the inevitable sociological process of institutionalization while noting that institutions need not stifle growth if shaped by missional purpose. Practical case studies highlight communal discernment, distributed leadership, and a hermeneutic rooted in Scripture. Further, the Western church's decline suggests a pressing need for "movemental ecclesiology" reclaiming its New Testament DNA to address institutionalized forms. By challenging conventional paradigms, this research underscores the transformative potential of movemental patterns to foster renewed witness, emphasizing contextualization and Christocentric disciple-making across World Christianity.

Called by whom, to what, to where? A critique of co-vocationalism

Austin G. Holcomb (aholcomb@nobts.edu)

Austin serves with the International Mission Board as a Seminary and Pipeline Liaison in the United States. He has previous field experience as an international church planter working in the Sahel and Horn regions of Africa. Austin is currently working toward a PhD in Missiology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Abstract

Covocationalism is being promoted as a new strategy for many North American church planters. Brad Brisco of the North American Mission Board is credited with developing the concept over the last decade. Several churches and practitioners have adopted and affirmed his training model, but the term itself has received little academic attention. The definition is nearly identical to "bi-vocationalism," with the main distinction being that "covo" ministers desire, and thus feel called, to pursue another vocation that allows them to remain in the marketplace indefinitely while also planting a church. The term marks a deliberate shift toward a missional mindset in which church planters steer away from traditional church models that anticipate "full-time" clergy.

This research critiques the conceptual framework of the covocational model by examining underlying assumptions. During the presentation, scholars will learn about the historical emergence of the term and consider key biblical texts related to ministerial vocation. They will then hear several concerns related to pastoral vision,

prioritism, and theological anthropology. While there are practical and corrective aspects about covocationalism, this study argues the concept may unintentionally contribute to ministerial burnout and cause more confusion surrounding the pastoral office and mission of the church in North America.

A Preliminary Survey of Support Available for Marketplace Participants Transitioning to Vocational Ministry

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Rommel Acob is a third-year Masters of Divinity student at Tyndale Seminary. He has spent over 20 years working in Finance, first at a public accounting firm and then at a government not-for-profit. With the support of his wife, church, and a Christian boss, he left his manager role of 10 years after discerning a call from God to prepare for full-time vocational ministry. This transition experience has informed his interest in the topic of his paper.

Abstract

This paper undertakes an autoethnographic reflection to identify the challenges of transitioning from the marketplace to full time vocational ministry, focusing on the areas of (1) discernment, (2) reorienting marketplace skills and practices to ministry, and (3) reforming or reaffirming identity and character. Though similar challenges are experienced by Christians remaining in the marketplace, either serving in ministry at work or in their free time, this paper instead spotlights the challenges as they are experienced by someone transitioning out of the marketplace into full time ministry. A preliminary survey of Christian literature and community support reveals a gap in the resources available to assist Christians making this transition, especially an overreliance on potentially difficult-to-access mentorship by those with practical wisdom from lived experience. Therefore, this paper hopes to inspire the Church to bridge the existing gap by encouraging those with lived experience to share their wisdom more widely and readily. It also hopes to inspire further study to broaden the limited conclusions of this preliminary survey.

Stronger support in this area can help those preparing for ministry to avoid or overcome future obstacles and risks in their ministry, as well as mitigate the risk of employing unsupported ministers in churches and missions. Not only does this improve the quality of competency in church ministry, but it opens the potential for a greater quantity of ministers emerging from the marketplace when they perceive the increased support available to them from the Church.

Multiculturalism and Immigration

Perceptions of South Carolina Evangelicals on Immigrants and Immigration and their implications on church planting and church evangelism strategies

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Dr. Ryan Klejment-Lavin is an Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies at Columbia International University. Prior to his current role, he spent thirteen years serving in intercultural ministry in Indonesia and South Korea. His research explores how religion and worldview shape moral beliefs through lived experience—especially among refugees.

Since 2007, Ryan has been married to Carolyn. Together, they are proud parents of two sons, Noah and Finnian.

Abstract

The trends of global migration and refugee crises have been well documented. For many, the desired destination of relocation has been the United States. Evangelical Christian congregations have long been at the forefront of refugee resettlement and immigrant engagement in the United States. However, immigration issues have more recently become a political battleground that has the potential to draw in local churches. In this fraught context, research is needed to understand how churches are navigating their long-established engagement with the current political atmosphere.

This paper examines findings from recent research I've undertaken with a team of researchers for World Relief (WR) amongst Christians and congregations engaging with immigrants. While the larger research project was conducted across the United States, this present paper zooms in on the context of South Carolina.

The main objective of this mixed-methods study is to explore how evangelical congregations in South Carolina are responding to the issues of immigration and refugees. Data were generated from three focus group discussions (N= 26), in-depth interviews with pastors (N =4), and congregational surveys (N=34 in South Carolina, N= 223 in U.S. total).

The analysis reveals that there is a very real tension regarding the question of how the United States as a whole and how local evangelical congregations should address immigration and immigrants. Several main themes emerged, including influences on

congregant perceptions of immigrants and immigration, perceptions on the U.S. government's handling of immigration, and the conflation of political affiliation and faith.

The findings suggest that there is an opportunity for pastors and congregations to positively engage with immigrants and immigration through ministry, but individuals need to reflect on the degree to which their thoughts are informed by their faith versus their political leanings.

The Vital Role of Local Urban Missionary Outreach The Vital Role of Local Urban Missionary Outreach to the Poor and Homeless in Major U.S. Cities

Glen Bagley PhD (glenbagley0903@hotmail.com)

Glen Bagley is an educator and pastor based in Phoenix, Arizona. He brings over 35 years of pastoral and teaching experience to his ministry. His dedication to family is evident in his 44-year marriage to his wife, Rhonda. Together, they are proud parents of two married daughters and cherish their role as grandparents.

Glen's educational background is diverse. He has taught high school and college courses in biblical studies, world religions, philosophy, and ethics. His passion for teaching extends beyond the classroom, as he has actively served as a pastor and church planter. His international endeavors include engagement with churches throughout Asia.

In addition to his pastoral work, Glen has contributed to academia as a Professor of Cross-Cultural Studies at the South China University of Technology and has lectured on Current Global Cross-Cultural Relations at Peking University in Beijing.

Abstract

Abstract: Faith-Based Responses to Urban Poverty: The Mission of Local Churches in Major U.S. Cities

Urban missionary outreach is an indispensable component of the Evangelical mission to embody Christ's love and compassion in modern society. This paper underscores the importance of local urban missions in addressing the pervasive challenges faced by the poor and homeless in major U.S. cities. Drawing from historical biblical principles and contemporary best practices, it highlights the role of the Church in not only meeting immediate physical and spiritual needs but also fostering long-term transformation and self-sufficiency among marginalized populations.

Key insights include building meaningful relationships with vulnerable communities, cultivating collaborative efforts among churches and faith-based organizations, and

leveraging resources to provide holistic care that addresses material deprivation and spiritual brokenness. Furthermore, the paper explores the importance of contextualizing ministry strategies to urban environments, ensuring cultural relevance, and aligning with the unique challenges of modern urban life.

Through case studies and practical recommendations, this paper calls the Evangelical community to a renewed commitment to urban outreach, emphasizing that such efforts are not optional but integral to fulfilling the Great Commission in today's world. By prioritizing local urban missionary outreach, churches can serve as beacons of hope and restoration, transforming cities and individuals alike for the glory of God.

Rebalancing Ecclesial Life Around the Greatest Commandment: The Oikos as the Foundational Context of Church and Discipleship

Manuel Becker (m.becker.fm@gmail.com)

Manuel Becker has been a missionary and researcher in Thailand for over a decade and serves on the leadership team of SEANET and on the executive team of the International Society of Frontier Missions. He holds an M.A. from Columbia International University Korntal, Germany, and is the author of *The Great Victor* as well as several theological articles published on the German Logos Software blog. Currently, he is working on a book on hermeneutics and intends to start his doctoral studies in theology in 2026.

Abstract

This paper argues that the *Missio Dei* is ultimately about reconciling all of creation and establishing shalom. To participate in this mission, the church must return to Jesus' greatest commandment: to love God and one's neighbor. While much attention has been given to loving God, the practical outworking of neighbor-love in everyday relationships has been neglected. Neighbor-love is expressed not only in service to strangers but in how we treat those closest to us—spouses, children, relatives, and neighbors. In mission contexts, this neglect is common, as missionaries become so focused on serving others that they overlook their own families, leading to broken marriages, neglected children, and compromised witness.

This paper emphasizes the biblical centrality of the *oikos* as the primary context for discipleship, reconciliation, and church life. Investing in these relationships is foundational to God's mission. Healthy families are a powerful witness and key to sustainable transformation. A case study of a movement focused on *oikos* relationships

illustrates how a single household's transformation led to the multiplication of family networks turning to Jesus without any formal church structures.

The final section outlines practical applications for reorienting ecclesial life and discipleship to cultivate Christlike love within the *oikos*. Prioritizing a healthy *oikos* is not in competition with reaching the lost, but is the fertile ground from which authentic mission flows. Rebalancing the church's focus calls for a more holistic and relational ecclesiology—one that equips believers to live out the greatest commandment in the daily messiness of their closest relationships.

Envisioning “Ekklesia”: Toward a Robust, Flexible Vision of Church in the Middle East & Beyond

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S.T. Antonio (pseudonym) participates in the Great Commission in the Middle East alongside his wife through training, disciple-making, and research & writing. He is a graduate of Biola University and a perpetual member of its Torrey Honors College, and he holds MDiv and ThM degrees from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Antonio is the editor-in-chief of Seedbed, a journal by and for practitioners in least-reached communities (www.seedbedjournal.com). He is also author of *Insider Church: Ekklesia* and the *Insider Paradigm* (2020, William Carey Publishers).

Abstract

The global church espouses a bewildering diversity of ecclesial visions, frameworks, and values for "church," which can lead to disagreements in practical strategy for making disciples among communities who have not yet heard God's good news. Underlying such disagreements are specific points of confusion, tension, and lack of clarity regarding the nature and activity of biblical "ekklésia" (the church). Such confusions not only hinder missional collaboration, they produce mental roadblocks in the face of practical disciple-making scenarios. I contend that the global church needs a transformed theological imagination of biblical ekklésia which integrates and transcends these tensions through a reinvigorated vision enriched by two things: (1) biblical and theological depth, and (2) cultural and practical flexibility. To unpack this, I first survey select ecclesiological trends in the contemporary debates about "church-planting movements" (also known as "disciple-making movements"). Second, I propose a broad theological framework – originally designed for church planters in the Middle East – for helping God's people reimagine several critical issues which prevent ecclesiological imaginative progress. Third, I illustrate the relevance of this framework by applying it to

two practical church-planting challenges which I and my colleagues have faced in the Middle East.

The Influence of Christian Faith Sharing through Social Media on Christian and Non-Christian Young Adults

Glen A. Bowman (gbowman@york.edu)

Glen Bowman grew up in a non-Christian home and attended UC Berkeley, receiving a BA in psychology. After his conversion, he attended Harding School of Theology and obtained a MA in Christian Ministry and Grand Canyon University, receiving a PhD in psychology. He has worked as a minister for most of his career but also worked as an assistant professor of psychology at York University. He currently teaches communication online at Grand Canyon University and psychology classes at Colorado Christian University.

Abstract

Two qualitative descriptive research studies explored how young adults describe the influence that Christian faith sharing through social media has exerted on their thoughts and behavior. One study sampled young adults who did not identify themselves as Christians while the other contained almost all Christian young adults. Overlapping codes from each study were synthesized to form codes, categories, and themes that described Christian and non-Christian young adults' experiences as follows: positively focused Christian faith sharing content through social media has a nearly universal appeal to young adults; positive experiences with Christian faith sharing through social media result in young adults improving in their spiritual thinking, emotions, and/or motivation; Christian faith sharing through social media often has a poor reception from young adults when not clearly based in facts, has a negative tone, comes from hypocrites, or uses Scripture poorly; negative emotions stemming from Christian faith sharing through social media may lead to negative thoughts about Christians and Christendom; positively perceived Christian faith sharing through social media can result in positive changes in behavior directly connected to the post's content and/or general growth in spiritual behavior; negative Christian faith sharing experiences through social media regularly result in a "fight or flight" behavioral response in the young adult recipients; and young adults often seem to underestimate the influence of Christian faith sharing through social media on their thoughts and subsequent behaviors. The church could glean from the data and themes to share their faith more effectively through social media with young adults.

Anglican

Shoki Coe's Contextualization and Cross-cultural Anglican Ministry Today

Duane Alexander Miller (drdamiller1232@gmail.com)

Duane teaches at the Protestant Faculty of Theology at Madrid. He lives there with his wife and daughters and has written broadly on Anglican mission, conversion from Islam to Christianity and World Christianity. Duane is a native of Montana and received his PhD from the University of Edinburgh.

Abstract

The word “contextualization” was coined in the early 1970s in the context of the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches. The need for the new word—if not an entirely new concept—was attributed to rapid social and political change and the perceived deficiencies of institutions and practices which had been inherited by the churches in the two-thirds world, especially Asia and Africa. The issue of Anglican frontier mission corresponds in many ways to those conditions of social change and a need for creativity. In this paper I will consider whether and how the model of the contextualization proposed by Shoki Coe (and others) can be used to envision novel instantiations of the missionary episcopate.

Anglican Ecclesiology in the Japanese Context

Rev. Aaron Pelot (aaron.pelot@tsm.edu)

The Rev. Aaron Pelot, STM is a deacon in the Reformed Episcopal Church with an interest in missiology, cross-cultural Christianity, practical theology and canon law. He lectures in Anglican Studies at the Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Oreland, PA; and is a PhD Candidate at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. His current research considers how Anglican liturgy is inculturated in postwar Japan and how Anglicans can think and live out their faith missiologically in modern times from traditional Anglican missiological principles. He also researches in Japan Studies (日本学) and canonical matters within the Church.

Abstract

This paper will examine what role Anglican missions organizations, provinces and individual figures played in shaping the ecclesiology of Anglicanism in Japan and how

these structures relate to the present state of the church today. By providing a lay of the land and how missions have factored into the Japanese landscape, we then can consider how recent ecclesial trends and changes affect the current witness of Anglicans in Japan. Under consideration will be the consolidation of the Dioceses of Tokyo and North Kanto and how their ecclesial histories reflect the current ecclesial trends in Anglicanism more broadly; how local voices in Kanto and Kansai reflect the varying perspectives on what it means to be an Anglican in Japan; and how frontier missions can find a renewed field for domestic and foreign outreach alike through an orthodox understanding of Anglican ecclesiology and missiology that is rooted in biblical Anglicanism.

Affirmation of Imago Dei Dignity through Embracing Indigeneity in the Indian context

The Ven. Leah Kadwell (lkadwell@gsi.org)

Rev. Leah Kadwell, Archdeacon of the Good Shepherd Church of India, is a dedicated advocate for the marginalized and a bridge-builder across cultures. Having spent 20 years in Hyderabad, India, she worked behind the scenes to empower her Indian colleagues in ministry, strengthening the Church's impact. Since 2017, Leah, based in Minnesota, has become a sought-after global speaker, sharing insights on faith, resilience, and justice. Author of *Resilient Heart: A Story of Crossing Cultures, Building Bridges, and Embracing Uncertainty*, she passionately champions exploited communities worldwide. Married to Kevin, with two adult children, Leah finds joy in professional sports, coffee, cooking for others, and devouring books. Her empathetic presence and commitment to listening make her a trusted confidante for the burdened and hurting.

Abstract

The Good Shepherd Church of India is a thriving indigenous church movement that exemplifies authentic Christian expression rooted in the ancient church and Indian culture while overcoming historical imperialism and contemporary neo-colonialism that threaten its advancement. Good Shepherd advocates for indigenously chosen faith practices while striving to affirm dignity grounded in the Imago Dei. As many in the Majority World seek Christ, they battle oppression, poverty, marginalization, and enforced conformity that inhibit their spiritual expression. In response, the Good Shepherd Church has established a theologically sound ecclesiastical framework emphasizing the Kingdom of God and the dignity of humanity, promoting community-led worship, catechesis, mission, and unity. This framework encourages local believers to engage authentically with their faith while dismantling structural injustices. Good

Shepherd envisions a collaborative effort to champion indigenous decision-making, economic empowerment, and the building of Kingdom Communities that reflect the diverse, vibrant expressions of Christianity in the Majority World. By embracing their unique identities and rejecting foreign-dominated influences, these communities can lead the way toward a fulfilling engagement with the broader global church, affirming their place in the mission of God's Kingdom.

The Restoration of Anglican Missionary Ecclesiology: Unpacking Roland Allen's Theology of Spirit & Order

The Very Rev. Steven Richard Rutt (steven.rutt@arizonachristian.edu)

The Very Rev. Dr. Steven Rutt has fifty (50) years of experience as a pastor, church planter, missionary, published author, and international teacher in biblical, theological, and intercultural studies within fourteen countries. Since 1993 he has served as founder and president of Covenant Renewal Ministries, Inc.—a non-profit missionary organization—which has enabled him to function as a conference speaker internationally. Dr. Rutt's publications on Christian Mission include *Roland Allen: A Missionary Life* and *Roland Allen: A Theology of Mission – Towards a Missiology of Spirit and Order* (Cambridge, England: The Lutterworth Press, 2018).

As an Anglican churchman, Dr. Rutt serves as a Priest, Theologian, and Dean (Western Deanery DMA) within the Reformed Episcopal Church. He is also a member of the Society of Anglican Theologians. Since 2013, Dr. Rutt continues to serve as Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Arizona Christian University, where he has taught courses in Historical Theology; Church History; Paul's Life and Mission; Early Christian Creeds and Church Councils; and, various books of the . Dr. Rutt is married to his college sweetheart, Sue, for the past forty-nine years, and they have four wonderful children—who married Christian spouses—and have given them thirteen delightful grandchildren.

Abstract

The Anglican missionary and missiologist Roland Allen (1868-1947) advanced a vision for the Church that encased a combination of Spirit and Order—that is, pneumatology and ecclesiology. He believed that the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to apply apostolic principles in any given situation through the Church. His contribution to missiology stemmed from a Pauline understanding of an indigenously-led Church with its faith and practice rooted in the , Creeds, Ministry and the Sacraments and was, therefore, 'fully equipped' with ministry to function as a permanently empowered Church. Roland Allen proposed the restoration of an apostolic order to enhance evangelism, particularly

through the laity to pioneer regions where the Church had no current witness. In the 19th century, Allen's prescient awareness and voice for potential Church growth in the Majority World (Africa, Asia, and Latin America) has still today maintained his ongoing contribution to missiology and advances: (1) the historical significance for what he believed were universal (timeless) apostolic principles and (2) how these principles provided flexibility within a framework of Spirit-driven Church growth to deal with a changing missionary environment.

Ekkios Church: A New Anglican Province for Muslim Background Believers

Yassir Eric (yeric@eimi-korntal.eu)

Abstract

ISFM

The Church in Egypt: From a Mission Field to a Mission Force

Tharwat Wahba (tharwatw@yahoo.com)

The Reverend Dr. Tharwat Wahba earned his Ph.D. in 2009 from the London School of Theology. His dissertation was on the history of Presbyterian Mission in Egypt and Sudan. Dr. Wahba is a consultant for the Middle East mission with Frontier Fellowship and an adjunct professor of mission and evangelism at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo and other seminaries. He is the chairman of “Out of Egypt” Network. He served as professor of mission in the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo for 22 years. He served as the chairman of Pastoral, Outreach, and Mission Council of the Synod of the Nile, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt (2012–2021). He served with Campus Crusade for Christ in Egypt as a staff and a campus director for 12 years. His interest is for evangelism, church planting, and frontier missions in and from Egypt and the Middle East.

Abstract

Egypt’s Christian heritage reflects both an influential past and a transformative present in global mission. In the early centuries, the Egyptian Church significantly shaped Christian theology, monasticism, and mission, sending missionaries to regions as far as Ethiopia, Ireland, and India. However, following the rise of Islam, the Church lost much of its global connection and influence, retreating into a minority status. The nineteenth century brought renewed evangelical engagement through Western missionaries, who established schools, hospitals, and national evangelical churches. While Egypt succeeded in fostering self-leadership through seminaries and local clergy, self-support and self-evangelism remained limited, with outreach largely restricted to nominal Christians and minimal engagement with Muslims or other nations. Over the last three decades, however, Egypt has undergone a notable transformation from a mission field to a missionary force. Para-church movements played a pivotal role by training and mobilizing Egyptian youth, breaking cultural barriers, and instilling a missionary vision. Today, over 300 Egyptian missionaries serve across the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and beyond, marking a historic shift in the Church’s role. Despite ongoing challenges—fear, limited resources, and weak strategic planning—the Egyptian Evangelical Church increasingly participates as a sending force in global mission.

Mission History in Viswema Offers a Strategy for Evangelizing Longchang

Richard Haney (haney.richard@gmail.com)

Richard L. Haney served Presbyterian congregations in Richmond, Virginia from 1979 to 2014. He received his PhD in mission theology from Middlesex University (Oxford Centre for Mission Studies London) in 2014. His dissertation explores translation ideas from Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh and Michael Polanyi. From 2014 until retiring in 2024, Richard served Frontier Fellowship as Executive Director.

He taught Evangelism at Union Presbyterian Seminary (Richmond, VA) from 2005–2012 and Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (2013–2022). Richard serves on the boards of three mission entities: The Antioch Partners, World Christian Research and the New Wilmington Mission Conference.

Vizhü Neikha (vizhuneikha96@gmail.com)

Vizhü Neikha is an Angami-Naga from Nagaland, India. He completed his Master of Divinity at Shalom Bible Seminary (SBS), Nagaland and his Master of Theology at Oriental Theological Seminary (OTS), Nagaland. He is currently working as an intern at OTS.

Abstract

Northeast India –a region of diverse indigenous groups– is both a mission center and a mission field. It is an intersection point of indigenous beliefs, Christianity and Hindu-right movements which provides both opportunities and challenges for frontier missions in the region. This study begins with an analysis of 20th century history of Christian Missions in Viswema, Nagaland, India and draws implications from this analysis for frontier mission efforts in the contemporary Northeast India, particularly on the three villages of Longchang, a sub-tribe of Tangsa-Naga tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, India. The similar cultural contexts between Viswema and Longchang leads to the intertwining of the two. Viswema is seen as a model context for mission in Longchang.

The study suggests that the success of Longchang awaits the proactive participation of the local Christians in evangelism. It envisions mission efforts in Longchang through Prayer Centers, healing ministries and conversion testimonies, Bible translations, outsider missionaries learning local languages, a consistent ethical lifestyle of the Christian witnesses and youth evangelism through sports and recreational activities.

The study recognizes that the greatest challenge in Longchang remains the Hindunised religion of *Rangfraa* and therefore recommends a collaborative effort of local Christians, Tangsa Baptist Church Association and the missionaries at Longchang for an in-depth research for the success in Longchang.

5 Reasons Nomads Think “Church” Is a Bad Idea (and What to Do About It): Voices from a Seven-Culture Panel Discussion

Ron Ahlbrecht (ron@nomadicpeoples.net)

Ron has been a student of nomads since 1993. He and his wife walked alongside them, entered their afflictions and have been comforted and supported within their communities. In 2014 he began learning from nomads globally and has been part of the Nomadic Peoples Network Shepherding Team since 2018.

Abstract

Despite their strategic presence across the 10/40 Window, nomadic peoples remain among the least-engaged—and least responsive—communities in global missions. Why? Many existing church models and strategies—rooted in sedentary assumptions—unintentionally undermine core elements of nomadic identity: communal belonging over individualism, mobility as a resource, clan-based organization, group autonomy, and distinct cultural heritage. This paper argues that biblical patterns of faith and fellowship—from Abraham to Jesus—often align more closely with nomadic ethos than with modern church structures.

This work draws on a collaborative panel presented at the 2025 Nomadic Peoples Network Global Gathering in Kenya, which brought together 90 participants representing over 50 languages and at least six major nomadic groups: Rendille, Afar, Mongolian, Fulani, Tuareg, and Sama Bajau. The author’s initial presentation—structured around the five key reasons nomads often perceive church as irrelevant or alienating—sparked an extended discussion among panelists and attendees. Their insights, recorded and supplemented through written contributions, form the backbone of this paper.

By listening to nomads and long-term practitioners, this research invites a reevaluation of mission paradigms and explores biblically faithful, culturally resonant ways to invite nomads to follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd. It concludes with practical reflections on how sending movements—especially those emerging from Ibero-America, Africa, and

Asia—can avoid repeating Western missteps and foster more relevant, relational, and resilient expressions of church among nomadic peoples.

Could it also provide a corrective to how we have normally done church?

Staurocentric Missiology: Toward a cross-centered Missional Model

Uchenna D. Anyanwu (uanyanwu@frontierfellowship.com)

Uchenna currently serves with Frontier Fellowship as the Associate Director for Diaspora Ministry and Intercultural Engagement. He obtained a PhD in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary (2020) and is the author of *Pathways to Peacebuilding: Staurocentric Theology in Nigeria's Context of Acute Violence*. Uchenna has also contributed to a couple of recently-published volumes on Global Missions including the State of the Global Commission Report by the Lausanne Movement, and also holds three graduate degrees (MDiv. MA in World Missions, and MA in Mental Health Counseling) from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Abstract

"Missiologists and mission practitioners agree that the triune God is a missionary God and Jesus Christ is the missionary par excellence. Jesus crossed culture to radiate God's glory, becoming the Way that leads humankind to eternal life. We must then ask: What was Jesus's missiological motif? How did Jesus accomplish the task of ransoming "people for God from every tribe and language, and people, and nation"? (Rev. 5:9). Undoubtedly, Jesus's death on the cross and his resurrection is the bedrock upon which Christ's missionary venture on earth rests.

I argue that the cross (stauros) is the missionary motif that the triune God chose for his missionary purpose of reconciling humankind to himself, to one another, and to his creation. The thesis is that the staurocentric motif remains the missionary God's motif that those walking in the missionary steps of Jesus must adopt in their missional journey.

Ekkios Church: A New Anglican Province for Muslim Background Believers

Yashwant Koli (For security reasons)

Yashwant Koli is an India strategy demographic analyst. He has been engaged with issues of India's Backward Castes - starting with the Dalits - for the past five decades.

In the last decade, he has been researching, writing and speaking on the need to focus on the Other Backward Castes (OBC), the largest bloc of least engaged/reached people groups in the world. Most recently, he has been involved with developing cross-caste training for the majority of Indian Kingdom workers to engage and bless the OBC people groups of India.

Abstract

There is a major disconnect between the large Indian (nationals) harvest force and the largest Frontier People Groups, particularly in north India. This paper will explore the new challenges of the changed context of mission within India, from South Indian cross-cultural workers going to the North, to North Indian workers needing to be equipped to cross CASTE barriers to engage and reach the largest FPGs. These largest FPGs are predominantly from Other Backward Castes (OBC) communities whereas the majority of the Christian workers are from Dalit (Scheduled Castes) or Tribal (Scheduled Tribes) backgrounds.

The paper will include a brief testimony of how it took a “second conversion” for a Dalit background Christian worker to overcome his natural fear/hatred of OBCs to reach out to them in love. He has now been involved for the past couple of years with a pilot project equipping frontline Kingdom workers, mostly from Dalit and Tribal backgrounds, to engage the OBC communities around them.

While this is a relatively new challenge in North India, this process unfolded in South India over a century ago. The paper will look at relevant lessons as documented in the chapter on “The Sudra Movement in the Telugu Country” in J. Waskom Pickett’s 1933 study, *Christian Mass Movements in India*. These will be supplemented by a personal family history in the Telugu region from that period onwards.

The future of frontier missions: Converging Peoples, Nodes, and Villages

Rotimi Akinpelu (rotimi@joshuaproject.net)

I experienced the miracle of new birth 25years ago during a Church retreat. Gripped by the absoluteness of God’s purpose, I became a roving teenage evangelist. After graduating from the University of Lagos, I committed my life to serving as a full time cross-cultural missionary. My 14years of labour spans catalyzing creative evangelism, multiplying disciples on 200+ campuses, fostering indigenous church planting in 55 communities and equipping gospel workers across 13 countries.

Chris Clayman (chris@joshuaproject.net)

Chris Clayman is the executive director of Joshua Project, an initiative that highlights peoples and places with the least access or response to the gospel so the Body of Christ can prioritize its prayer and mission efforts. Rotimi Akinpelu is the director of people group adoption for Joshua Project. Akinpelu lives in Nigeria and is passionate about seeing indigenous churches started and thriving among the remaining unreached people groups.

Abstract

“And it shall come to pass in the last days , says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh” (Acts 2:17, NKJV).

Establishing breakthrough churches among frontier people groups remains the greatest mission task. Great progress has been made but the missions landscape has changed. The Global South now possibly sends more missionaries than the Global North. Globalization, migration, urbanization, politics, and technology have drastically altered ideas, identities, and relationships. An individual may be born into a frontier people group but also layer identity with affiliation to country, political party, religion, profession, or hobby.

With their geographic and cultural proximity, Global South missionaries will need to take the mantle as the primary instruments God will use to expand his Kingdom. Furthermore, the movement, layered identities, and broadened relationships of many frontier peoples have created opportunities for a multi-nodal missional approach.

A convergence is needed between saturation missions strategy that seeks to start a church in every village, focused missions efforts on frontier people groups, and emphases on urban missions. A peoples emphasis still needs to be a primary lens but missional nodes need to be leveraged for gospel breakthrough. Cross-cultural workers, along with same- and near-culture workers, should focus engagement on the strategic, cultural, commercial, social, and spiritual nodes of the people. These are often cities but could also be towns that serve as strategic connection points or even social media platforms where the people “gather.” Saturation to every village should spread from these nodes.

Arts

Worship in Wartime: Reimagining Church Identity and Mission through Indigenous Song in Ukraine

Robin Harris, PhD (Robin_Harris@diu.edu)

Robin Harris served for decades in cross-cultural contexts, including ten years in northern Russia. She co-founded the Global Ethnodoxology Network (GEN) and now serves as Chair of Dallas International University's Center for Excellence in World Arts. Her publications include co-editing *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (William Carey Library, 2013) and *Storytelling in Siberia* (University of Illinois Press, 2017).

Steve Benham sbenham@miwc.org

Stephen Benham is President of Music in World Cultures (MIWC), an international mission empowering all voices to worship Christ, and Professor of Music Education at Duquesne University. His research emphasizes the role of music education in shaping identity and faith, especially in persecuted and vulnerable communities. In 1996 he launched a mission initiative in Ukraine that became a model for projects and partnerships in Georgia, the Baltics, the Balkans, Africa, the Caribbean, and South Asia.

Abstract

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian evangelical church experienced a revival of congregational singing, drawing heavily from Russian-language worship traditions and Western contemporary Christian music translated into Russian and Ukrainian. During this time of renewed religious freedom, Russian and Ukrainian languages coexisted in worship, with translated songs offering accessible expressions for a newly energized faith community. However, the creation of indigenous Ukrainian worship music was largely overlooked.

In the wake of Russia's war on Ukraine, the evangelical church is now re-evaluating this borrowed worship tradition. With increasing national emphasis on Ukrainian language and identity, churches have begun transitioning entirely to Ukrainian-language songs. Many now critique Western worship imports (e.g., Hillsong, Elevation) as theologically and poetically inadequate to express the grief and resilience of a suffering nation.

In response, Ukrainian Christian leaders and musicians are initiating a movement toward songwriting rooted in local theology, language, and aesthetics.

Ethnodoxology-based training programs and graduate degrees are emerging to support this cultural and spiritual shift. This paper explores the early stages of this movement and offers missiological and ecclesiological insights for contexts where worship and identity are being reimagined in response to conflict and cultural transformation.

Temple to Church and Back: Gospel Taiwanese Opera as a Transformative Medium

Dora Kung (Dora_Kung@diu.edu)

Dora Kung, a native of Taiwan, is an assistant professor at the Center for Excellence in World Arts at Dallas International University. She is currently pursuing an MA in Theological Studies with a concentration in intercultural studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Since 2017, Dora has served international students from South Asia with International Friendships Inc. (IFI) and previously spent a decade leading student ministry at a Chinese church in Ohio.

Abstract

Although *Koa-á-hì* (Taiwanese opera) has been performed in diverse contexts, traditionally it is associated with religious festivals or celebrations at local temples. When reimagined through a gospel lens, however, it becomes a compelling medium for communicating biblical narratives and nourishing the body of Christ beyond conventional contexts and models of ministry.

From an ethnodoxological perspective, this study explores how gospel *koa-á-hì* engages audiences, negotiates the dynamics between cultural resonance and theological integrity, and creates new avenues of belonging and conversations, both within the church and between Christ followers and the wider society. The findings suggest that gospel *koa-á-hì* embodies an incarnational missiology. It transforms not only the performance features and contexts of the genre, but also the lived experience of Christian communities in Taiwan and among their diaspora in the US.

Connecting missionally through sacred ritual?

Becky Robertson (Becky_Robertson@diu.edu)

Becky Robertson grew up in West Africa and lived in the Horn of Africa and Israel for fourteen years. She now works in Dallas to encourage and equip ethno-arts and

ethnodoxology enthusiasts around the world. She teaches at the Center for Excellence in World Arts (CEWA) at Dallas International University DIU.

Abstract

Fifty days after Yom Kippur, Ethiopian Jews in Israel continue the annual celebration of a covenant renewal holiday called Sigd, meaning prostration or worship, modeled after the sacred gathering in Nehemiah 9-11. The ceremony itself contains sung and chanted Torah and Psalms passages calling for covenant faithfulness and declaring praise for the God of Israel. Pre-Talmudic priests deliver the decorated content in the ancient language of Ge'ez and layered liturgical symbolism. Following the liturgy, priests bless and break holy bread, shifting the somber fast to a communal celebratory Ethiopian feast with music and dancing. Ethiopian Jewish leaders work to keep Sigd alive among the more casual, Hebrew-speaking generation which does not connect easily with ornate, ancient musical style and language. Ethiopian Jewish priests and rabbis fight for Sigd's future as a symbol of cultural distinctiveness and heritage, struggling to relay Sigd's essence from within its ornate and exotic past into the literate, Hebrew-speaking fabric of Israeli Jewish diversity. Meanwhile, believers in Ethiopian Messianic congregations look for ways to reach back to their families who feel betrayed by their worship of Yeshua (Jesus) as Messiah, to counter the message that they have rejected their Jewish heritage. In which ways might participation in Sigd connect Ethiopian Messianic Jews to their Ethiopian Jewish community? How might Sigd declare the New Covenant in Yeshua? What is at stake in this situation? What light do Ethiopian Evangelical ecclesiology and Messianic Jewish practice shed on the process of critical contextualization in scenarios like this?

Diverse Multicultural Worship in Metropolitan Church Planting

Laura Roberts (laura_roberts@diu.edu)

Laura Roberts is a PhD student and Adjunct Faculty at the Center for Excellence in World Arts at Dallas International University. Additionally, she serves as the Global Coordinator for Arts for a Better Future workshops and board member for the Global Ethnodoxology Network. Prior to her current role, Laura worked in community development and church planting in South Asia, where she facilitated workshops on South Asian art forms. She also served as a worship team leader at a multicultural church plant in Virginia and is currently a leader in a new multiethnic church plant in Texas.

Abstract

"Churches in metropolitan areas are surrounded by diverse communities with people of many ethnicities. These communities encompass different languages and cultural styles of art and music. Why then do most churches continue to practice monocultural forms of worship, particularly in dominant language and cultural styles? All churches, even those in areas not as diverse, can benefit from introducing multicultural practices in order to identify with the global body of Christ, and provide a vision of all nations worshipping at God's throne in heaven. Churches employing artistic cultural practices contribute to the mission of the church in making Christ known among the nations, communicating across cultural boundaries through art and music.

This presentation explains the "Steps to Multicultural Maturity in Worship," a process applied to a multiethnic church plant in a metro area of the United States. I illustrate the movement from monocultural to multicultural worship through a process helpful for churches new to the idea of multicultural or intercultural worship. This process demonstrates a six-step progressive approach incorporating best practices and models from current scholarship in multicultural worship (Davis and Lerner 2015, Collinge 2013 and 2023, Van Opstal 2022, Roberts 2024, Schrag 2025). The gradual application of this process works well for small and newer church plants with limited resources and an openness to reaching diverse communities. As churches take steps away from monocultural music and art, they begin to experience the richness of intercultural worship as they slowly integrate multiple cultural styles and artistic forms in the life of the church.

Building Intercultural Church Through Co-Creation

Joy Kim (joy@proskuneo.info)

Joy Kim studied piano, church music, and music education before graduating from Dallas International University with a master's degree in World Arts. She currently works as an ethnodoxologist in Clarkston, Georgia, with Proskuneo Ministries and designs and directs arts programs for youth and adults which encourage multimodal co-creation, build community, and encourage artists in creative leadership. Joy works with diaspora artists from diverse backgrounds to engage in global mission through building intercultural and intergenerational worshipping communities.

Abstract

Joy will share intergenerational and intercultural practices of co-creation in the life of her multicultural community, cultivating a culture of creative collaboration, mutual contribution and reciprocity. She will present how her intercultural and intergenerational community has practiced co-creation through story sharing and

creating diverse arts together. She will lead participants to look deeper into principles and practices of co-creation and how this communion of creating arts together has become a way of life and a way of worship for her community.

CREATE! The New Testament mandate to the church for creating local, culturally-appropriate arts for use in worship and witness

James R. Krabill (jameskrabill@gmail.com)

James R. Krabill served as a and church history teacher for nearly two decades among African-initiated churches in West Africa. During that time, he worked with the Harrist Church movement to collect and publish over 500 locally composed hymns used by the church. Half of these songs were later analyzed in Krabill's PhD dissertation and published by Peter Lang (1995). Since 2003, he has served in leadership roles for the Global Ethnodoxology Network, lecturing, writing, participating in board membership, and co-editing GEN's journal, *Ethnodoxology*, and the ministry's handbook, *Worship and Mission for the Global Church* (William Carey, 2013).

Abstract

The Hebrew – referred to by most Christians as the Old Testament – is replete with artistic forms designed to assist God's people in their life, worship and witness. Emily R. Brink categorizes these aesthetic norms of beauty and excellence in three ways: what we hear (singing, music, and proclamation), what we see (architecture, furnishings, dress, and decorum), and when we move (pageantry, drama, and dance). Abundant detail is dedicated in the Old Testament text to the designing, creating, equipping, and maintaining of worship spaces, furnishings, times, feasts, rituals, garments, instruments, artists, composers, songs, and liturgy. The New Testament, however – with its incarnationally-grounded, outwardly-directed focus – appears to radically redefine the relationship between arts and the church's life and mission. This seminar will examine the church's mandate to encourage and create local, culturally appropriate arts, based on the premise that God has given to every culture all that its needs in music and other arts expression for the life, worship, and witness of the church. Opportunities will be given during the seminar for participants to share in what ways their local faith communities are living into the New Testament missional mandate to identify, mentor, and train the creatives in their churches for this divine calling.

Orality

Telling the Story of the Forgiving Father: Intergenerational Drama in Chinese Diaspora Churches

Jessie Weili Yin (jessie.yin@westernseminary.edu)

Jessie Weili Yin is a Ph.D. student in Intercultural Education at Western Seminary. Her research focuses on faith education among second-generation Chinese American adolescents through relational and intercultural approaches. She has been actively involved in youth ministry and intergenerational projects in diaspora Chinese churches across North America.

Abstract

This paper examines how drama, as an oral medium, fosters transformational growth within intergenerational and intercultural contexts of Chinese diaspora churches in North America. Employing a relational hermeneutics approach to reinterpret the biblical parable of the Prodigal Son, this study explores drama-based activities conducted in participating Chinese churches. Drawing from interviews and observational data collected during the collaborative creation and performance of intergenerational drama, the research suggests that storytelling through drama effectively bridges cultural and generational divides. Both adolescents and adults reported deeper relational engagement and renewed spiritual reflection. The study highlights drama's unique potential as a relationally rich, oral practice for cultivating dialogue, understanding, and transformational growth in Chinese churches navigating the complexities of diaspora life.

Moving Beyond Intercultural Competency Through the Intercultural Relational Quotient: Orality-Aligned Theory, Training, and Practice for Intercultural Interactions

Hannah Kappler (hannah.kappler@westernseminary.edu)

Hannah serves as a missionary with One Mission Society in the Asia Pacific region, equipping leaders who minister in intercultural contexts. Based in Seoul, she has lived across East and Central Asia. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Intercultural Education from Western Seminary, focusing on relational approaches to intercultural interactions.

Abstract

Intercultural competence has been the primary focus for mission practitioners desiring to relate to others across cultural divides. However, this framework inherently emphasizes values which are counter to many cultures, including oral cultures. This paper will present an alternative to intercultural competency which aligns with the values of oral cultures, highlighting the need for relationally oriented interactions. One specific alternative, intercultural relational quotient, will be introduced and examined to identify key areas of convergence with orality in terms of communication, relational interactions, and cultural values. This paradigm shift will be discussed for mission practitioners in terms of its theoretical framework, implications for missions training, and application of practice.

Watching for a Glimpse into Eternity: A Case for Relational Hermeneutics in Secular, Fictional Narratives Through the Lens of Silence

Heesun Nam (heesun.nam@westernseminary.edu)

Abstract

“The migrant people, scuttling for work, scrabbling to live, looked always for pleasure, dug for pleasure, manufactured pleasure, and they were hungry for amusement. Sometimes amusement lay in speech, and they climbed up their lives with jokes. And it came about in the camps along the roads, on the ditch banks beside the streams, under the sycamores, that the story teller grew into being, so that the people gathered in the low firelight to hear the gifted ones. And they listened while the tales were told, and their participation made the stories great.” - John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*

When one hears of the term orality, one is likely to imagine situations in which the printed text cannot be utilized for various reasons. One may think of Sunday school services for pre-reading children, where pictures instead of words would fill up the PowerPoint slides of the well-intentioned pastor. One may also think of individuals who face literacy issues, including those with intellectual disabilities or learning differences. One may even be tempted to imagine an uncivilized society or unreached parts of the world where communities live without having the “privilege” of reading words on paper. However, in making such assumptions, we fail to recognize the fact that even literate individuals and communities may prefer visual ways of learning, whether it be through watching videos on certain topics or watching a film instead of reading a book that the film is based on. Even books are at times written to reflect the human voice and mimic the process of a dialogue. Therefore, understanding, studying, and applying the concept of orality is not simply a matter for those who wish to minister to a community of people in an oral society; it is a matter of adapting to a different, unique way of learning.

When one focuses on teaching and learning about fictional narratives, the approach of orality allows both the educator and the student to highlight key aspects of the stories that hermeneutics of literature might perhaps miss. The plot thickens, as it were, once we begin to see stories as a vehicle of communicating truths. What would happen if we took stories and allowed their oral nature to communicate these truths in a way that does not simply touch upon the cognitive? What would happen if we adopted this methodology of understanding, studying, and applying stories to our lives even if they were not strictly biblical stories? Finally, what would happen if we allowed relational hermeneutics as developed by Enoch Wan to develop a greater application of the film by studying the relationship between the filmmakers, the characters (as presented and implied), and the audience, knowing that the Triune God is present in and out of this story?

This paper is a practice of analyzing a film that presents layers of narratives through oral and relational hermeneutics. Specifically, its purpose is to take director Martin Scorsese's adaptation of the book *Silence* by Shūsaku Endō and focus on the relational dynamics as presented in its layers of narratives, symbolized, implied, and realized through its visual and oral telling of the story. It will demonstrate a process through which the audience will be able to engage with the story hermeneutically as well, charitably yet discerningly watching the story being told from a very specific perspective of a culturally Catholic director.

Implementing Orality Values at Calvary San Diego: A Case Study in Relational Discipleship

Phil Metzger (phillovesjoy@gmail.com)

Phil is the lead pastor of Calvary San Diego and holds a PhD from Western Seminary. He spent over 20 years serving in Eastern Europe, focusing on church planting and training pastors for ministry across the region. His work centers on intercultural mission, relational discipleship, and equipping the Church to engage meaningfully across cultural and generational boundaries.

Abstract

As digital media reshapes how people communicate, the Church faces both a challenge and an opportunity: how to engage with new forms of orality like podcasts and livestreams without losing the relational depth at the heart of Christian discipleship. This presentation explores how orality—both traditional and digital—can be used intentionally to strengthen community and spiritual formation.

Using Calvary San Diego as both a model and a mirror, this case study looks at how oral practices such as storytelling, group discussion, and shared testimony are already present but often unrecognized. Through analysis of sermons and children's curriculum,

the study highlights both strengths and areas for growth, especially the need to move from unintentional use of orality to a more thoughtful, relational approach.

Drawing on the work of Enoch Wan (relational theology) and Tom Steffen (oral pedagogy), the presentation offers practical strategies for churches to deepen discipleship by recovering oral values in preaching, children's ministry, and digital outreach. By doing so, churches can move beyond program-driven models and foster communities shaped by story, relationship, and shared experience.

Listening to Ourselves: Reading the Bible as We Proclaim It

Nick Acker (nick@graceventura.org)

Nick (PhD Old Testament, B. H. Carroll Theological Seminary) is a pastor and scholar whose academic work centers on orality, biblical interpretation, and the ways oral-traditional cultures shape the transmission and meaning of Scripture. He is the author of *Exegeting Orality: Interpreting the Inspired Words of Scripture in Light of Their Oral Traditional Origins* and serves as copastor of Grace Church Ventura in California. His teaching and writing draw together pastoral experience and academic research, helping the church engage Scripture with both reverence and relevance. He finds his greatest purpose and joy in his wife and three children.

Abstract

This paper argues that the insights gained through the Orality Movement in missions—particularly the use of oral-visual communication to reach oral learners—should also inform how we interpret the Bible itself. Since Scripture emerged from oral-traditional cultures, it should be approached not merely as written text but as the imprint of performed tradition. By looking both forward in mission and backward in interpretation, we become stewards of oral performances preserved in written form—requiring a shift in how we exegete and apply Scripture today.

Missiology and the Black Experience

Learning from the Margins: Abolishing Western Missiological Praxis: Reformed Theology and Majority World Wisdom in Case Study Perspective

Morgan Davis (morgan.davis@ciu.edu)

Morgan Davis serves as a full-time missionary with unfoldingWord, a Church-centric Bible translation organization equipping and empowering church networks and disciple-making movements worldwide. Assigned to projects in the Sahel region of Africa and Southeast Asia, she specializes in oral Bible translation processes and theological formation, developing resources and facilitating workshops that strengthen church-led translation efforts. She has served in more than a dozen countries with extensive cross-cultural experience in predominantly Muslim contexts. Morgan also serves as Senior Resource & Engagement Manager with the National African American Missions Council and is pursuing her Master of Divinity in Muslim-Christian Relations at Columbia International University.

Abstract

Western missions have been marked by both profound contributions and enduring colonial legacies. This paper argues that the abolition, rather than reform, of Western missiological praxis is necessary for faithful global witness. Drawing on biblical foundations such as the imago Dei, the missio Dei, and Christ's abolition of dividing walls (Eph. 2; Acts 10), alongside Reformed theological insights from Calvin and Kuyper, the study critiques the persistence of paternalism, cultural supremacy, and epistemological dominance in mission structures.

A case study of contemporary mission agency leadership highlights ongoing imbalances in representation. Leadership remains overwhelmingly Western, often predominantly white and male, signaling whose voices are most visible

while others remain underrepresented. This is not presented as a condemnation of individual leaders, many of whom serve faithfully, but as evidence of structural patterns that limit the full expression of the global church. Addressing these realities requires more than reformist gestures; it calls for an abolitionist reorientation that makes space for Majority World leadership to shape mission at every level.

Engaging African Ubuntu, Asian harmony, and Latin American liberation theologies, the paper demonstrates how Majority World wisdom provides necessary corrections to Western individualism and pragmatism. The conclusion calls for a polycentric, abolitionist missiology characterized by mutuality, humility, and shared leadership, so that the global church may embody the unity for which Christ prayed (John 17:21).

Title

Phyllis Johnson (ezekiel_22_30@yahoo.com)

Abstract

Best practices for thriving as a doctoral student: From Coursework to Completion: Doctoral Students Share Strategies for Success

Jamie Sanchez and panel (jamie.sanchez@biola.edu)

Jamie N. Sanchez (PhD, Virginia Tech) serves as Chair of the Doctoral Programs and tenured Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies in Talbot School of Theology at Biola University where she has been on faculty since 2016. Much of her research focuses on issues concerning refugees. She has been awarded various research grants including three from the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. Prior to her career in higher education, Jamie worked in Asia for ten years.

Abstract

This roundtable brings together a panel of doctoral students, at different phases of their academic journey, from different programs, to share practical insights for navigating the challenges of graduate school successfully. Panelists will address key areas including how to publish as a student, how to network in professional guilds, how to develop relationships with students and faculty in an online program, and insights of how to manage doctoral work alongside other demands.

This roundtable is designed for current and prospective doctoral students. Yet faculty may glean understanding to apply to their own students.

I'll Take You There: The Missiology of Soul Music and African American Preaching in the Post-Soul Era

Edward Williams (edward.williams@ciu.edu)

Dr. Edward Williams serves as Pastor of Global Engagement at One Community Church in Plano, Texas. He obtained a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (with concentrations in K-6 Reading and 7-12 grade English) from Jackson State University and a Master of Arts in Christian Studies from Wesley Biblical Seminary. He completed the Doctor of Philosophy in Intercultural Studies from Columbia International University. Edward is currently pursuing a Master of Theology in Ministry at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. His research examines the intersections of African American preaching, homiletics, music, and the Black Church Experience in the American South.

Abstract

This interdisciplinary study examines the missiological development of African American preaching and soul music in Black ecclesiological spaces. Soul music, as a progeny of slave spirituals, uniquely reflects the nature of the griot and folk preacher in the African Diaspora. Both the soul singer and the African American preacher functioned as urban missiologists in

predominantly underserved communities. Through biblical imagination, musicality, and storytelling, African American preaching and soul formed an ethos that transformed intercultural missions in North America.

Title

Kurtran Wright (kurtran@visitonecc.com)

Abstract

Title

Lisa Christian (lpctheprof@gmail.com)

Abstract

Publications Panel

William Carey Press “publications discussion”

Abeneazer Urga, Larry Caldwell, Vivian Doub, Ken Nehrbass, WK Cheong

Abstract

EMS Authors who have recently released a book with WCP discuss their books with publisher Vivian Doub. We will especially focus on the annual compendiums for EMS.

Publishing Missiological Research: A Roundtable Discussion with Editors of Mission Journals

David R. Dunaetz, Evelyn Hibbert, Andy Bettencourt, Will Green, Anthony Casey

Abstract

Several editors of academic journals focused on mission will discuss the unique mission of each journal, current hot topics in missiology, as well as presently neglected topics.