# Common Ground Journal

*Perspectives on the Church in the 21st Century*

## Issues in Global Mission

e-Printed in the United States of America

**Mission Statement**
*An Online, Open-Access, International Journal*

*Common Ground Journal* (*CGJ*) is a publication of the CanDoSpirit Network, Inc. and is published twice annually as a resource for Christian congregations seeking to understand and faithfully live out their calling as the people of God in the world. The primary audience for CGJ is thoughtful Christians in congregations who are catalysts for growth within their own churches.

*CGJ* is devoted to the development of strong, faithful churches whose life and ministry grow out of the church's nature as the people of God. They are organized and led in a manner consistent with their nature and mission. They continually ask, "What does it mean to be a sign of the Kingdom of God in the world today?"

*CGJ* is a resource for congregational development. We invite scholars and thoughtful Christians in congregations around the world to stimulate inquiry, reflection and action around issues central to the life and ministry of the gathered community of faith. We invite those who serve as leaders in congregations, mission agencies, parachurch organizations, relief and development work, higher education, and non-traditional leadership development to apply their scholarship and expertise in these fields to the context of the local church. We encourage members of congregations to address the broader church with insights grounded in a thoughtful examination of Scripture, and in their own experiences as part of communities of faith in the world.

*CGJ* is international in scope. We draw on the rich resources of the church around the world to provide a variety of voices and perspectives on issues facing the church. Writers are encouraged to be specific to their own culture and context. In order to contribute to the development of indigenous literature, articles may be submitted in a language other than English.

*CGJ* is an electronic journal freely available to anyone with access to the worldwide web. The electronic format allows distribution to a wide and diverse audience, and enables the journal to be interactive in nature. Readers may engage in ongoing conversations about the topics and articles we print, and find links to other resources on the web.

4. Reprints of works first published in the CGJ should include a statement that the article first appeared in the CGJ.

5. Reprinted works appear in the CGJ by permission of the original copyright holder. These articles are subject to the original copyright and may not be reproduced without permission of the original copyright holder.

6. Articles first published in the CGJ, excluding reprinted articles, may be reproduced for ministry use in the local church, higher education classroom, etc., provided that copies are distributed at no charge or media fee. All copies must include the author's name, the date of publication, and a notice that the article first appeared in the *Common Ground Journal.* Articles may not be published commercially, edited, or otherwise altered without the permission of the author.

7. The articles in CGJ may be read online, downloaded for personal use, or linked to from other web interfaces.

**Submissions to the Journal**
The *Common Ground Journal* welcomes articles from scholars and discerning Christians. Each issue will feature invited articles around a theme, as well as articles received through open submissions. Open submission articles are reviewed by members of the Editorial Review Committee who make recommendations to the editor regarding their publication.

*General Guidelines*
*Common Ground Journal* seeks to stimulate Christian Churches to thoughtful action around their calling to be the people of God in the world. All articles should be grounded both in theology and the life of the church. Writers are encouraged to write to and about their own cultures and contexts. CGJ invites submissions in the following categories:

- Articles that stimulate thinking and reflection on the nature of the Church

- Articles that link the nature of the Church to its life and work in the world

- Articles that explore the integration of theology and social sciences in relation to life and work of the Church

- Essays on truths gleaned from the interplay of theory and practice, theology and experience in the active life of faith

- Articles that present insights from congregations attempting to live out their identity as the people of God in world

- Articles based on responsible qualitative research designed to inform a local congregation's understanding of its life and ministry

- Articles that raise questions that the Christian community needs to explore in becoming the people of God in the world

- Reviews of books, journals, programs, web sites and related resources

### Submission Guidelines
*Common Ground Journal* submission guidelines and protocols are based on the need of meeting web design standards that are compatible across multiple versions of both current and legacy web browsers. Please follow the standards carefully when submitting documents for consideration for online publication in the *Common Ground Journal.* Documents to be considered for publication should be e-mailed to the editor at: editor@commongroundjournal.org.

### Article Length
Articles should be approximately 2500 to 3500 words in length. Book reviews and essays should be shorter.

### Language and Foreign Languages
Articles should be written in clear narrative prose. Readers can be expected to be familiar with the language of the Bible and theology, but will not necessarily have formal education in these fields. Please avoid academic language and discipline specific terms. Provide clear definitions and examples of important terms not familiar to a general audience. Use explanatory footnotes sparingly; explanations and examples in the text of articles are preferred.

The best articles are clear and focused, developing a single thesis with examples and application. The successful writer translates complex ideas into everyday language without talking down to the readers. All articles should use inclusive language.

Biblical language terms and words in foreign languages should be transliterated into English. If foreign language fonts are used in lieu of transliteration, you must embed the fonts in the document so the text can be reproduced accurately. Instructions for how to embed fonts can usually be found under the *Help* menu of most word processors (keywords: embed font).

### Style and Format
In matters of style and format, please follow the *Chicago Manual of Style.* You must include proper documentation for all source material and quotations using footnotes.

A "Bibliography" of works cited should be included at the end of the article. A "Recommended Reading" list or "For Further Study" list may also be included.

Documents to be considered for publication should be submitted according to the following style protocols:

- Times New Roman font 12 point (important: you must embed any other font used in the document)

- Single-line space throughout

- Use only one space after any punctuation

- Indent paragraphs with only one tab—please do not use multiple spaces for any form of indentation

- Indent block quotations using the indent feature in your word processor instead of tabs or extra spaces to indent text

- Do not underline text, as underlining is reserved for documenting hyperlinks—use bold or italic for emphasis

- Do not use auto-hyphenation

- Charts, graphs, images etc. appearing anywhere in the document should be submitted in BMP, GIF, JPG, or WMF format—images should be as clear as possible

- Copyrighted displays, images or previously published works must be accompanied by a letter of permission from the copyright owner to reproduce the displays or images in the online *Common Ground Journal*

The preferred format is Microsoft Word. WordPerfect, Rich Text Format (RTF), or ASCII formatted documents are also acceptable. Articles will be published in converted to Word format and published online in Adobe PDF format.

*Author Information*
The credibility of an article is enhanced by a brief bio of the writer's credentials and/or professional experience. Writers must therefore include the following information with their articles:

- A narrative biography of three or four sentences identifying your name as you wish it to appear, the institution you work for or the relationship you have with the topic, your position, and other information relevant identifying your qualifications in writing the article

- A color (preferred) or black and white photograph of you (portrait style) in BMP, GIF, JPG, or WMF format

- The URL of your personal home page (if any), and/or the URL of you reorganization, academic institution, or business as appropriate

*Copyright Ownership*
The copyright of works first published in the *Common Ground Journal* is retained by the author. Authors are free to publish their articles in other journals if they so choose. Authors reprinting their works first published in the CGJ should include a statement that the article first appeared in the CGJ.

Reprinted works appear in the CGJ by permission of the original copyright holder. These articles are subject to the original copyright and may not be reproduced without permission of the original copyright holder.

Articles first published in the CGJ, excluding reprinted articles, may be reproduced for ministry use in the local church, higher education classroom, etc., provided that copies are distributed at no charge or media fee. All copies must include the author's name, the date of publication, and a notice that the article first appeared in the *Common Ground Journal.* Articles may not be published commercially, edited, or otherwise altered without the permission of the author.

The articles in CGJ may be read online, downloaded for personal use, or linked to from other web interfaces.

*Reader Response and Contact Information*
Readers are encouraged to respond to articles published in the *Common Ground Journal*. This can be done in two ways. Formal responses to articles and themes or editorial matters may be submitted to the editor via e-mail or postal mail (see *Contact Information* below). Responses may be edited for length.

The following contacts can be used for any questions or recommendations for the *Common Ground Journal:*

Journal Editor:          editor@commongroundjournal.org

Webmaster:          webmaster@commongroundjournal.org

Mailing Address:          Common Ground Journal
                              c/o Laurie D. Bailey, Editor
                              303 Vine Avenue
                              Park Ridge, IL 60068-4143 USA

# From the Editor
**By Laurie D. Bailey**

The church is often unaware of the issues that missionaries, mission agencies, and mission scholars wrestle with as they seek to be effective stewards of the gospel across nations and cultures. We pray, we provide financial support, we read their newsletters; yet we are much less likely to engage the questions of theology, anthropology and sociology at the heart of efforts to make disciples of all nations. Even so, advances in communication and transportation have made the world smaller, allowing us—if we choose—greater understanding of and direct participation in the work of missions. CGJ asked leaders in the study and practice of missions to identify and discuss contemporary issues in global mission. The resulting articles provide a window into the realities of inter-cultural ministry today.

This issue would not be complete without a look at short-term missions. There was a time when short-term missions were maligned as a dalliance of the uncommitted. Today they play an important role in the larger ministry of the church. Jenny Collins' article explores the challenges and benefits of short-term missions and offers a set of standards for evaluating the quality of short-term missions programs. Marcus Dean's article on cross-cultural friendship discusses the centrality of relationships in cross-cultural ministry. You will learn how friendship varies across cultures, making culture learning essential to the pursuit of personal relationships across cultures. Igor Petrov brings a critical eye to the role of evangelicals in traditionally Orthodox Russia. His article examines both the challenges and opportunities for Western and Russian evangelicals to have a positive role in the spiritual reformation of Russia. What do you think of when you hear the words "urban mission?" Do you visualize ministry among poor, Black or Hispanic Americans in the inner-city of a large American city? Think again. Randy White discredits this limited perspective on urban mission in his article on the new global city. Learn the realities of mission in the context of global urbanization as White take you on a journey to global cities from Beijing to Bangkok and Mexico City to Mumbai. Finally, Charlie Davis' article on ministry among Muslims shows how working

in this challenging context has reshaped the fundamental focus and approach of missionaries in powerful ways.

## About the Editor



Laurie D. Bailey is editor of *Common Ground Journal.* She has over 25 years experience in Christian education and congregational development. She is involved in theological education and leadership development internationally through CanDoSpirit Network, Inc.

# Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission
**By Jenny Collins**

"I went overseas and it changed my life!" exclaimed Lisa. "I will never forget the people I met and the things God taught me." We are thrilled to hear upbeat reports like this from those who go on short-term mission projects, yet many have raised concerns about the long-term effectiveness of such projects as short-term opportunities increase. Short-term mission involvement from the United States is booming and has become one of America's major contributions to world missions in recent years. In 1979 an estimated 22,000 Americans were involved in cross-cultural or international ministries ranging from a week to four years in length. Today more than one million short-termers of all ages are sent out by an estimated 40,000 U.S. short-term sending organizations: 35,000 churches, 3,700 agencies, and 1,000 schools.

## Challenges and Benefits of Short-Term Missions

In light of this, one has to wonder if short-term missions has simply become "the thing to do" with little concern for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the efforts. Criticisms of short-term missions have often kept pace with the growth—judging that short-term participants have been ill-prepared, culturally insensitive, and focused solely on their own growth experience with minimal long-term impact. For example, the ease of travel and the number of agencies eager to accept short-termers has made it possible for almost anyone to go on a trip. This is positive, but makes it possible for "experience junkies" seeking an adventure to participate, even though they may not be truly interested in selfless cross-cultural service. This can leave the nationals or long-term missionaries embittered, feeling as if they have been used to host a glorified vacation that used up valuable time, energy, and finances.

One national host reported to me that he hosted a group that viewed their mission project as a summer retreat for church kids, which focused on their own bonding and growth, with minimal supervision by the leaders and only token interest in the needs of the nationals. This leaves hosts feeling like they have been designated as "camp director,"

exhausted by serving the needs of the visiting group. Other teams may arrive with proper motives but inadequate preparation. They may be sincere but lack the cohesiveness that develops through team preparation and are therefore prone to interpersonal difficulties and lack of focus. They may also lack cultural sensitivity and an awareness of their own ethnocentrism—which can cause offense, giving negative impressions of Christianity-- and have a diminished capacity to understand the people and their needs. These groups might also spend large amounts of money on souvenirs without any thought to how this appears to nationals who struggle under incredible economic difficulties. It is possible that such teams, though sincere, may cause more harm than good.

Other criticisms concentrate on issues of project selection, dependency, and a quick-fix mentality. Michael J. Anthony (1994), editor of *The Short-Term Missions Boom*, points out that not all service projects are created equal. He describes one ten-day trip where his team did nothing but work long hours digging a trench on a Caribbean island. They did not experience the culture nor meet any nationals. Worse yet, he found out later that the trench was filled in and never used. His point is that each project should be evaluated carefully. Some are not necessary. Some do not expose the team to the culture and people. Some are better left to nationals. In the case of the trench, a national worker could have been paid a few dollars a day to dig the ditch enabling him to feed his family for months (pp. 53-54). In other cases short-termers introduce methods and technology that create dependency. Well meaning groups may bring equipment and techniques that are not locally sustainable, leaving nationals dependent on ongoing assistance rather than empowered and confident to do things for themselves when the group leaves. Also, some nationals discover quickly that many short-termers would rather give five dollars than five minutes to assist them, and get great satisfaction from giving away clothes and other supplies, creating an expectation of receiving material support.

While it can be true that a poorly selected, prepared or directed team can be worse than no team at all, this does not have to be so. Short-term missions can make a significant contribution to God's global purposes with long-term results. Quality short-term outreaches allow people to get involved in missions and get close enough to God to hear his call into long-term missions. I have seen college students not originally interested in mission careers be so deeply influenced by a short-term experience that they are now serving as long-term missionaries. There is simply nothing else that ignites

mission participation like experience. There are numerous other benefits of sound short-term mission programs, such as assistance and encouragement to fatigued missionaries, when short-term efforts are well-coordinated with field priorities providing a fresh infusion of help. Other benefits include ongoing financial and prayer support for the host ministry by participants after they return home, and increased mission vision and spiritual renewal in sending churches. Short-termers often return with vivid memories of what God taught them, inspiring stories of faith, a focus on service, an expanded understanding of Christian community, and a broadened concept of God.

A coalition of short-term mission leaders concluded that the benefits of short-term missions outweigh their weaknesses—weaknesses which can be minimized with careful preparation and planning. This group launched an initiative in October 2003 to call U.S. short-term mission facilitators and participants to pursue excellence in all short-term mission efforts. For the first time in history, a nationally-derived Standards of Excellence (SOE) in Short-Term Mission code of best practices has been established.

## Developing Standards

The concept of a set of standards developed over several years. The Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission (U.S. version) unofficially began in 1999, thanks to colleagues in Canada who were developing the [Canadian Code of Best Practice for Short-Term Mission](), which came on the heels of a similar code in the U.K. In January 2001, the board of the Fellowship of Short-Term Mission Leaders (FSTML), which included personnel from mission agencies, churches, and Christian colleges, sensed God was leading them to develop a similar set of standards for U.S. organizations.

From October 2001 to September 2002, FSTML gathered initial input from around the U.S. by collecting suggestions and brain-storming ideas for a voluntary code of best practices from short-term mission leaders and agencies who attended forums in Colorado Springs, Minneapolis, Phoenix, and Atlanta (twice). These forums included national gatherings of FSTML, Short-Term Evangelical Missions (STEM), the Antioch Network (AN), Advancing Churches in Missions Commitment (ACMC), and the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies (EFMA). Those thousands of input items were summarized into a first draft of the standards. During October 2002, attendees at the FSTML annual conference worked in small groups to refine the first draft and created six

versions of a second draft. Those six versions went to the newly established standards committee who met in Chicago for two days in December 2002 to generate a third draft containing seven principles that emerged as fundamental values for any short-term mission. For the next 10 months, the third draft underwent further revision at several gatherings of short-term mission leaders until the final set of standards was launched in October 2003 and a means of adopting the standards was established.

In sum, the resulting standards were developed over two years by more than 400 short-term mission leaders from across the U.S. and were a product of thousands of hours of work, discussion, and prayer. Members of the standards committee came from Adventures in Missions, Campus Crusade for Christ, Delta Ministries, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, The National Network of Youth Ministries, Northwestern College (Iowa), Perimeter Church (Atlanta), Reign Ministries, STEM Int'l, Taylor University, Teenmania, and several other groups.

## Standards of Excellence

Seven principles emerged as fundamental values or priorities for any short-term mission (STM) experience:

**God-Centeredness.** An excellent short-term mission seeks first God's glory and his kingdom. It is centered on God's redemptive purposes and love for all nations and modeled after Christ's mission to the world. Those involved are people of godliness in actions, words, and thoughts who function out of doctrinally-sound, prayer-dependent methods which are wise, biblical, and culturally-appropriate.

**Empowering Partnerships.** An excellent short-term mission establishes healthy, interdependent relationships between sending and receiving partners sustained by a willingness to learn and grow together in obedience to God while serving Him. These relationships are characterized by a primary focus on the needs of the receiving partners, open communication, humility, mutual trust, and accountability resulting in plans which benefit all participants and the kingdom of God.

**Mutual Design.** In an excellent short-term mission, sending and receiving partners collaboratively plan each outreach to include specific service activities which both partners believe to be aligned with their long-term strategies. They seek to involve short-termers in ministry activities that do not create unhealthy dependency and are within the capabilities of participants to accomplish. Those who go are screened, selected, and trained based on the mutual design so that they will place themselves in humble, servant, teachable positions in submission to the leadership of both partners.

**Comprehensive Administration.** An excellent short-term mission exhibits integrity through reliable set-up and thorough administration for all participants in order to glorify God and be good stewards of time, talents, and funds. Honesty is foremost in all publicity, management of finances, and reporting of results. Appropriate risk management is implemented to remove unnecessary danger and keep risks within a mutually-determined acceptable level in light of our call to minister Christ's love courageously but wisely. Mutually designed projects are well-organized with proper support logistics while remaining receptive to the Holy Spirit's direction and changing circumstances.

**Qualified Leadership.** An excellent short-term mission screens, trains, and develops capable leaders for all participants who possess the character, skills, and values needed for the particular outreach. Leaders are well-prepared, exhibit spiritually mature servant leadership, possess organizational skills, are competent and accountable. They also value empowering and equipping others and are committed to an interdependent, team approach to ministry.

**Appropriate Training.** An excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants to be effective in the mutually designed outreach. Training is biblical, suitable for the planned service and culture, and timely. It is ongoing throughout all phases of the project (pre-field, on-field, post-field) and is performed by qualified trainers. Relevant training benefits all participants, fostering understanding, growth, and spiritual fruit while helping to prevent offense, damage, and poor stewardship.

**Thorough Follow-Up.** An excellent short-term mission assures debriefing and appropriate follow-up for all participants as these are crucial aspects of any short-term mission to help participants invest and multiply the STM experience. Debriefing begins with on-field re-entry preparation and includes post field follow-up to apply lessons learned and promote continued growth and commitment to Christ and His world. All participants including hosts are asked to evaluate the experience and those responses are reviewed and used to identify and amend unresolved issues (if any) and improve future STM efforts.

## Benefits of Standards

Churches, mission agencies, and schools can use these standards as a training and assessment tool to enhance the quality and impact of their programs. They can also choose to formally adopt the standards as a way of demonstrating a commitment to excellence in their outreaches. According to Roger Peterson, national committee chairman for the standards, "adopting the standards provides reassurance that an organization is committed to pursuing the highest ethical standards for everyone involved—the senders, the goers, and the receivers." Other benefits of adopting the standards include that they:

- Help assure thorough planning for your entire mission outreach

- Assist you in applying appropriate risk management and crisis planning to optimize safety

- Help you become a better steward by avoiding costly mistakes

- Allow you to be networked with similar groups who are also striving for excellence in their short-term mission programs

- Let donors, prayer partners, host receivers, and all other participants know that your program is applying nationally-derived measures of excellence

- Bring professionally structured guidance for achieving goals and an impressive network of organizations offering opportunities for resource sharing, improved training, minimized risk, and mentoring

## The Next Step

For many reasons this is a significant time in global history and people of other nations want to know if the Christian faith makes a difference. At the same time God is raising up significant numbers of American laborers for the harvest through short-term missions. The Standards of Excellence will help short-term mission efforts reach the goal of sharing Christ courageously while following his advice in Matthew 10:16 "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" and Paul's admonition in 2 Timothy 1:7 "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

For more information on the U.S. Standards of Excellence (SOE) in Short-Term Mission please visit www.stmstandards.org. For a list of SOE endorsed STM resources, see www.stmstandards.org/resources_soe.php. Here you will find brief reviews of several helpful books and videos. For example, *Foreign to Familiar* by Sarah Lanier and *Ministering Cross-Culturally* by Lingenfelter and Mayers give excellent guidelines on cross-cultural preparation. Tim Dearborn's *Short-Term Mission Workbook* explains how to prepare for and get the most out of an STM by taking a biblical and cross-cultural perspective, while *Before You Pack Your Bag, Prepare Your Heart* by Cindy Judge and *Walk as He Walked* by Howard & Bonnie Lisech are popular devotionals/journals for spiritual preparation. Those responsible for setting up short-term mission outreaches should consult *Vacations with a Purpose* by Eaton and Hurst, *Maximum Impact Short-Term*

*Mission* by Peterson, Aeschliman, and Sneed, *The Next Mile* from Authentic Publishing, or *The Essential Guide to the Short-Term Mission Trip* by David Forward. The Web site lists many other resources to assist with support raising, re-entry, country research, etc.

## Reference List

Anthony, Michael J., ed. 1994. *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement.* Grand Rapids: Baker.

## About the Author

Jenny Collins is the Director of Lighthouse Short-Term Missions and an Assistant Professor of Intercultural Studies at Taylor University, Upland, Indiana. She has been involved in short-term missions for 14 years and is a member of the national committee that developed the Standards of Excellence for Short-term Missions (www.stmstandards,org). She authored "Short-Term Missions: Maximizing for Long-Term Impact" in *Overcoming the World Missions Crisis* (Kregel Publications, 2001) and frequently presents workshops on maximizing short-term missions at mission conferences. Jenny and her husband J.D. live in Hartford City, IN.

# Becoming a True Cross-Cultural Friend
**By Marcus Dean**

## Relationships: A Key to Cross-Cultural Ministry

The church has been called to be involved in the world and to share the Gospel across cultures. When we do so, we tend to function in our cultural default mode. This becomes a problem when our cultural patterns conflict with the culture in which we are serving. One of our default modes is that in the US we are a task oriented culture. Perhaps that is one reason we are so eager to engage in missions trips. We are out to accomplish a task—even USA Today has reported this phenomenon (MacDonald 2006).

Undoubtedly God has used this drive to further His Kingdom. However, Elmer reminds us that many cultures place a greater emphasis on relationships than tasks (2002, 125-134). Along with our emphasis on tasks we also have a concern for control which comes with, "a stress on tasks and performances, rather than on people and relationships" (Hiebert 1994, 140). Our focus on tasks, control and performance over people can erect barriers to ministry. Our cultural tendencies place us at odds with other cultures that place a primary emphasis on relationships.

In order to become true cross-cultural friends we need to make sure that our cultural orientation does not become a barrier. Placing relationships before tasks, control and performance is no easy task for us. Hiebert also states that "No task is more important in the first years of ministry in a new culture than the building of trusting relationships with the people. Without these, the people will not listen to the gospel, nor will we ever be accepted into their lives and communities" (1985, 85).

My own research has indicated that the ability to develop friendships in a host culture is a part of longevity in that culture (Dean 2001, 59-75). On the negative side, other research has indicated that the lack of good working relationships with nationals is a factor for missionaries leaving the field (Brierley 1994, 85-103). Effective cross-cultural ministry requires building positive intercultural relationships.

What do we need to know in order to build these relationships? Personal relationships function differently in different cultures. Without an understanding of how

friendship differs across cultures, we may try to relate to others by what works in our culture rather than in the host culture, and thereby fail at establishing a trusting relationship. Before looking at the ways that friendships are different across cultures, we can acknowledge some commonalities.  From that base we can move on to develop an intercultural friendship.

## Similarities in the Nature of Friendship across Cultures

Parekh, in "An Indian View of Friendship," expresses ideas about friends that could be held by members of most cultures. He indicates that friendship is a nonbiological, voluntary, mutual relationship between two individuals (1994, 95-96). Changing from being acquaintances to friends commonly takes place by self-disclosure. Self-disclosure is simply the idea of revealing something about yourself that the acquaintance could not know otherwise. The process of revealing self requires that trust be developed as self-disclosure increases.

Self-disclosure begins with knowing what to share about one's self. Unfortunately each culture determines what can be shared with others by differentiating between the public self and the private self. "The term **public self**[1] refers to those facets of the person that are readily available and are easily shared with others: the term **private self**, on the other hand, refers to those facets of the person that are potentially communicable but are not usually shared with others" (Ting-Toomey and Chung 2005, 185). The goal for building a successful intercultural relationship is to understand what others consider appropriate for sharing. Whether or not one can ask about the other's spouse, how much money one makes, or views on politics can range from acceptable to taboo depending on the culture (Lustig and Koester 2006, 260).

Beyond knowing what to share, other ideas about self-disclosure need to be kept in mind. Valence refers to how positive or negative the receptor perceives the information shared. For example, in the U.S. we do not talk much about our relatives with acquaintances. So if I meet someone who expects me to want to know that information and gives it to me, I will likely perceive this as unnecessary and boring, which will not enhance our relationship.  Proper timing is an important aspect of self-disclosure. How

---

[1]Emphasis is the author's.

soon should key information be shared? Finally, I need to understand the target of self-disclosure; with whom am I expected to share? (Lustig and Koester 2006, 280-282). The expectation is that these steps toward self-disclosure will build friendships in another culture. However, while the principles are the same across cultures, the details can vary greatly.

Another element of building friendships is that two people have to be mutually attracted to each other. Again, while we all build friendships based on these commonalities there are differences behind them as we look for friends. In building friendships, African Americans stress "*acceptance, problem-solving,* and *life-time support*"[2]*;* European Americans "emphasize *confiding in each other* and *being free to be myself*"; while Mexican Americans emphasize "*mutual sharing* and *mutual understanding*" (Ting-Toomey and Chung 2005, 299).

Physical attraction is also a universal in building friendships that again varies by cultures and reflects cultural values. For example in the U.S. a smiling face is perceived as more "attractive, intelligent, and sociable than neutral faces" (Ting-Toomey and Chung 2005, 296). Japanese consider smiling faces as more sociable but neutral faces as more intelligent. We will be drawn to others that we perceive as credible as well as attractive. So while a smile may be attractive it may not be as credible, adding to difficulties in building friendships (Ting-Toomey and Chung 2005, 296).

These ideas show that friendships do have commonalities across cultures. At the same time it is recognized that there are significant differences in friendships within other cultures. Identifying and learning these differences will greatly help us get beyond our cultural default modes.

### Differences in the Nature of Friendship across Cultures

One well studied difference that influences the way cultures are understood is that of the individualistic—collectivistic continuum. Made popular by Geert Hofstede, this concept opens the door for understanding friendships as well. The basic difference is that in an individualistic culture one structures life around "me" while a person in a collectivistic culture structures life around "others." More precisely, a collectivist lives in

---

[2]Italics are the author's.

a society "…in which the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual" (Hofstede 1991, 50).

Friendships for the collectivist are not made simply on the basis of what one desires. The culture expects this person to consider those with whom he or she already associates when making new friends. This circle of preexisting potential friends is known as an "in-group." This is more than a junior high clique. An in-group is the collection of individuals with which one expects to have consistent and regular contact (Gudykunst and Kim 2003, 56).

There are two key differences in how individualistic and collectivistic cultures deal with in-groups. First, members of a collectivistic society will tend to have a limited number of in-groups, which tend to consist of coworkers or schoolmates from elementary to the university (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 188). In-groups are more important for the collectivist than for the individualist and tend to have stronger interpersonal bonds. On the other hand, individualistic culture members tend to belong to more in-groups and be more loosely bonded to the group members. Individualists are allowed to be more flexible in their friendships and easily move between groups and friends (Lustig and Koester, 2006 283). Thus the in-groups have less influence on their lives than for collectivists (Gudykunst and Kim 2003, 56).

Individualists are likely to pick friends based on activities rather than choosing from a preexisting in-group. This allows them to be friends with someone even though there are dissimilarities in interests or even personality differences. This is something collectivists would not do. Furthermore, since collectivists are more likely to see friendship as long lasting, they will only invest in those with whom they can expect long term relationships (Condon and Yousef 1975, 83).

A difference in communication styles that parallels the individualistic—collectivistic differences and impacts relationship building is that of the low-context—high-context continuum. "Although individualists often use a low-context, direct verbal approach in initiating, maintaining, and ending a close relationship, collectivists often use a high-context, indirect approach in dealing with relationship formation and development issues" (Ting-Toomey and Chung 2005, 295).

The low-context approach is very word oriented while in the high-context approach the partners are expected to understand what the other is trying to communicate.

Cultures that communicate in a high context or implicit manner tend to be more "cautious in initial interactions with strangers" (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 193). An example from the romantic side of relationships helps to explain the differences:

> In an individualistic culture, it is … expected that relational partners would engage in active verbal self-disclosure phrases such as 'I love you' and 'I miss you.' …For collectivists, love is in the details of paying attention to the other person's needs, desires, and wishes and the fact that you are also ready to sacrifice yourself on your relational partner's behalf. (Ting-Toomey and Chung 2005, 295)

The sum of these differences helps to explain why making friends with members of a collectivistic culture can be difficult.

> In the United States, for instance, the social walls that are erected between strangers may not be as thick and impenetrable as they are in some collectivistic cultures. European Americans, who are often fiercely individualistic as a cultural group, may not have developed the strong in-group bonds that would promote separation from outsiders. Among the Greeks, however, who hold collectivistic values, the word for "non-Greek" translates as "stranger." (Lustig and Koester 2006, 259)

Another difference that impacts interpersonal relationships is the concept of hierarchy. This also comes from Hofstede's research which he defines as power distance. The basic concept is how much inequality between members is acceptable in society. In a culture that has high power distance, hierarchy and preferential treatment is not only OK, but expected (Hofstede 1991, 25-29). Perhaps because words about equality are a part of the U.S. Constitution this concept is difficult for us to grasp. Simply put, in a high power distance culture, all people are not born equal and some will have a higher standing in society and receive better treatment. Likewise, the norm is that interpersonal relationships are asymmetric (Lustig and Koester 2006, 269-270). This makes it more difficult to build an intimate relationship when one of the individuals is seen as superior to the other (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 188). Since it is common for a person from the outside to be given more power, the result is a natural hindrance to building relationships in place.

Edward and Mildred Hall point out two additional factors of interpersonal relationships that influence how people interact. The first has to do with what is considered fast and slow messages. The difference refers to the "speed with which a

particular message can be decoded and acted upon" (1990, 4). While this is true of all communication, the authors highlight that

> [in]essence a person is a slow message; it takes time to get to know someone well. The message is of course slower in some cultures than in others. In the United States it is not too difficult to get to know people quickly in a relatively superficial way, which is all most Americans want. (Hall and Hall 1990, 5)

The resulting problem when relating interculturally is that others see Americans as "capable of forming only one kind of friendship—the informal, superficial kind that does not involve an exchange of deep confidences" (Hall and Hall 1990, 5).

The reason for this perceived superficiality in U.S. interpersonal relationships is that others act upon different values in their friendships. For example,

> In Europe personal relationship and friendships are highly valued and tend to take a long time to solidify. This is largely a function of the long-lasting, well-established network of friends and relationships—particularly among the French—that one finds in Europe. Although there are exceptions, as a rule it will take Americans longer than they expect to really get to know Europeans. It is difficult, and at times may even be impossible, for a foreigner to break into these networks. (Hall and Hall 1990, 5-6)

A second cultural difference that Hall and Hall mention has to do with the use of space and how it relates to proximity. The amount of space that is allocated for conversation and intimacy varies by cultures. Thus, what may be a conversational distance for one culture infringes on the intimate space of another. Therefore, when "a foreigner appears aggressive and pushy, or remote and cold, it may mean only that her or his personal distance is different than yours" (Hall and Hall 1990, 12).

In the U.S. the use of space expands to include more than one's immediate personal physical space. The result is a broad spectrum of how we relate to others.

> Americans have strong feelings about proximity and the attendant rights, responsibilities, and obligations associated with being a neighbor. Neighbors should be friendly and agreeable, cut their lawns, keep their places up, and do their bit for the neighborhood. By contrast, in France and Germany, simply sharing adjacent houses does not necessarily mean that people will interact with each other, particularly if they have not met socially. Proximity requires different behavior in other cultures. (Hall and Hall 1990, 12)

Another factor in developing friendships is mutuality, or doing for each other. This is the idea of social reciprocity. "Social reciprocity refers to the process of give-and-take in interpersonal communication, both formally and informally" (Condon and Yousef

1975, 81). Reciprocity takes on different forms depending on cultural dynamics. It can range from the desire to avoid reciprocity commitments to a sense of being forever obligated to another. Thus, a simple request can tie one into long term reciprocity expectations (Condon and Yousef 1975, 81-82).

Differences in reciprocity can be seen along the individualist—collectivist continuum. Members of individualist cultures tend to see reciprocity as a voluntary action while collectivists see them as obligatory. By being obligatory, the collectivist is once again tied to her in-groups. The individualist is free to change reciprocity partners, but the collectivist is expected to maintain reciprocity for the long term (Gudykunst and Kim 2003, 176).

Who has ever had a friendship without conflict? We in the U.S. are, as a rule, open with conflict. It is important for us to resolve problems quickly, even if it takes a lot of effort to patch things up. Should we react the same way when we face a potential conflict in our intercultural relationships? Conflict in collectivistic cultures is likely to be seen as more personal because tasks and people are merged. In an individualistic culture they are kept separate. Thus in a collectivistic culture confrontation tends to be avoided; but it can be explosive yet non-damaging to the individualist (Lustig and Koester 2006, 284).

## Cultural Friendship Styles: Three Examples

All of these differences together create significant variations in how friendships take shape across cultures. Three different cultural friendship styles will be looked at to give examples of the variations that occur.

### *American*

As a member of U.S. society, I will use my own culture as the starting point. What is considered important for friendship varies by culture depending on what values are considered important. Thus, in the U.S. friends are formed around activity, because doing is vital. It is not uncommon for an individual to have different friends for different activities. Likewise, we are not as concerned with the depth of the friendship as with similar interests (Stewart 1972, 54). This makes it easier for us compared to other

cultures to have friends with whom we are not in total agreement regarding values or opinions (Lustig and Koester 2006, 261).

Because we tend to compartmentalize friends, we are freer to have a wider variety of friends. In comparison to other cultures we are able to have friends from the other gender, include our parents as friends, and are freer to share our friends, since having multiple friends does not diminish their significance (Stewart 1972, 55).

Those of us from the West have to understand these differences to successfully interact and develop relationships with our cultural others. While we make friends easily, others may not. While we make friends based on personal interests, others do so primarily from within their in-groups. While we can easily share our friends, others closely guard theirs. While we can change friends, others tend to hang on to theirs for life. The problem for us is that others can view our friendships as being superficial. The positive side is that we are able to develop a wide range of friends (Condon and Yousef 1975, 84-85).

## *Confucian*

A look at some basic concepts from the Confucian worldview shows that friendship is different than in the West. According to Hall and Ames, the basis for understanding friendship from the Confucian perspective is hierarchy. Therefore, "a Confucian 'friend' - a *yu* - who is not better than oneself is not properly a friend" (1994, 84). Furthermore, friendship is not based on activity but rather friends are sought as a means for character development, reinforcing the idea of hierarchy as a friend needs to be better than self (Hall and Ames 1994, 84). Thus friendship is not bestowed upon acquaintances but has a much deeper meaning.

## *Indian*

Looking at friendship from the Indian perspective reveals that there are considerable differences once the friendship is formed. Friends in India focus on sharing feelings and the self. The idea that a friend should know what the other is thinking and feeling is common to high-context cultures. Parekh states that "friendship at its highest involves as close a merger between two individuals as is possible without losing their separate identities" (1994, 100).

The Indian concept of friendship also is strongly based on the concept of reciprocity to the degree of personal sacrifice for the friend (Parekh 1994, 101). Not only is this friendship costly, it is also permanent. "Friendship is supposed to entail lifelong commitments, and while it may be loosened, suspended, or even ended, it can never be 'broken' and it obligations violated" (Parekh 1994, 102).

Friendship in Indian culture not only touches the lives of the two friends but their families. Close friends are considered to be brothers to the point of referring to the other's family using familial terms. In essence friends become a part of the other's family including the sharing of food, shelter, and family life (Parekh 1994, 103). These bonds are seen as so strong that a friend may be expected to help even when it is morally or legally wrong (Parekh 1994, 104). The downside of this bond can lead one to see friendships as a way of building networks to increase one's personal and/or political power (Parekh 1994, 110).

## Conclusion

Becoming a true cross-cultural friend is a challenge for those of us from the US. If we are not able to make the necessary adjustments, cultural variations in friendship may become insurmountable barriers. We have to learn to work with these differences as we attempt to become friends with individuals from other cultures whether down the street, around the globe, or with an international student in the classroom.

## Reference List

Brierley, Peter W. 1997. Missionary attrition: The ReMap research project. In *Too valuable to lose: Exploring the causes and cures of missionary attrition*, ed. William D. Taylor. Pasadena: William Carey Library.

Condon, John C., and Fathi S. Yousef. 1975. *An introduction to intercultural communication*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Dean, Marcus W. 2001. A study of retention factors among career missionaries of the Wesleyan Church. Ph.D. diss., Trinity International University.

Elmer, Duane. 2002. *Cross-Cultural connections: Stepping out and fitting in around the globe*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press.

Gudykunst, William B., and Stella Ting-Toomey. 1988. *Culture and interpersonal communication*. Sage Series in Interpersonal Communication 8, ed. Mark L. Knapp. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Gudykunst, William B., and Young Yun Kim. 2003. *Communicating with strangers*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education.

Hall, David L., and Robert T. Ames. 1994. Confucian friendship: The road to religiousness. In *The changing face of friendship*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

Hall, Edward T., and Mildred Reed Hall. 1990. *Understanding cultural differences*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Hiebert, Paul G. 1985. *Anthropological insights for missionaries.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books.

_____. 1994. *Anthropological reflections on missiological issues*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books.

Hill, Harriet. 1993. Lifting the fog on incarnational ministry. *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 3: 262-269.

Hofstede, Geert. 1991. *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. Berkshire, England: McGraw-Hill Book Company Europe.

Lustig, Myron W., and Jolene Koester. 2006. *Intercultural competence:  Interpersonal communication across cultures.* 5th ed. New York: Pearson Education, Inc.

MacDonald, G. Jeffrey. 2006. On a mission—a short-term mission. *USA Today* (June 1, 2006) http://usatoday.com/news/religion/2006-06-18-mission-vacations_x.htm (accessed June 19, 2006).

Parekh, Bhikhu. 1994. An Indian view of friendship. In *The changing face of friendship*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

Stewart, Edward C. 1972. *American cultural patterns: A cross-cultural perspective*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Ting-Toomey, Stella, and Leeva C. Chung. 2005. *Understanding intercultural communication*. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company.

## About the Author



Marcus W. Dean is a professor at Houghton College, Houghton, New York. He is part of the newly formed Intercultural Studies Department. Before coming to Houghton College he and his family served for 15 years with the Wesleyan Church as missionaries in Colombia and Puerto Rico. An essential part of their ministry was relationship building. He and his wife Dixie have 3 sons. He is a Ph.D. graduate of Trinity International University.

# Spiritual Reformation in Russia: The Roles of Domestic and Foreign Evangelicals
**By Igor Petrov**

Imagine a modern-day tale; a United States development agency serving third-world countries assigns an agronomist to a remote Latin American location. His mission: to teach impoverished farmers improved corn growing methods. The agronomist—well equipped and funded for the project—arrives at the nation's capitol and inquires of the Ministry of Agriculture where he might be needed the most. The government official suggests, "Go to about any remote community. All the corn farmers there use the ancient methods."

The well meaning American agronomist hires an interpreter and sets out for a backcountry destination. Upon arrival at a suitable village the enthused agronomist meets the local corn farmers through one-on-one contacts, small group meetings and seminars. He makes valiant attempts at explaining that their corn cultivation methods are outdated. Soon the community elders determine a meeting with the new *Gringo* is needed. They ask, "What are your intentions?"

"I'm here to teach your people how to increase their corn yields. Your methods are inferior and unscientific. I want to help you."

"How long have you been raising corn?"

"Fifteen years. I have two university degrees in agronomy. My success in America is well recognized."

"Are you aware of the fact that our ancestors were the first men to cultivate corn? We have grown corn for about four thousand years. We seriously doubt there is anything about corn you can teach us that we do not already know."

Though discouraged, the foreign agronomist cannot leave—he's got a plan, a budget, monthly reports to file, a job description he's expected to fulfill. So, he moves into a small house on the village outskirts and considers how he might possibly convince these people to accept his expertise and proven agronomic practices. He has never before

encountered a people who take such deep pride in their cultural heritage, have their own highly developed social structure and exhibit such a distinct prejudice against *Gringos*. Can't they understand that his motives are pure? He simply wants to improve their incomes and lives.

The older farmers—as is usually the case with adults—avoid wasting their precious time on idle chatter with a foreigner, so in a very short time the agronomist befriends those who will talk to him—children and teenagers. As time passes one of the local young men learns enough English to serve as the agronomist's interpreter. The young man's efforts are duly remunerated with chewing gum, candy and other foreign goodies.

One day the agronomist and his new interpreter buddy manage to get an appointment with the mayor. He attempts explaining how corn yields can be multiplied fourfold. The governor allows the agronomist to finish his well reasoned and scientific arguments, but dismisses the modern approach as one that could very well disturb the community's spiritual and cultural base. Such changes might negatively impact ancient traditions, disrupt the existing economic structure, and, in addition, call for the considerable investment of scarce financial resources. The mayor clearly considered the foreigner a threat to his power and authority, but there was nothing the mayor could say to prompt the annoying American to leave the community.

Overwhelmed with a complete lack of progress, it took the agronomist some time to develop a new strategy. With the arrival of a new planting season the agronomist sowed and cultivated a small plot in a prominent location, owned by the family of his young interpreter friend. The agronomist tested the soil, fertilized it appropriately, planted superior hybrid corn varieties and controlled all weeds. At harvest the American's crop not only looked much better, the yields were vastly superior to adjoining fields.

One night a young man—a respected member of the village council—came to the agronomist's home and wanted to learn the secrets of growing corn like in the American's plot. Through an interpreter the American described the modern technological process. The council member agreed on certain points, but disagreed on others. But, the young councilman did ask the agronomist for samples of the new hybrid corn varieties, which the American gladly provided.

With the next planting season, through the respected council member, others in the community also decided to introduce various new elements of technology brought by the American. The benefits were obvious to all. With each passing planting season the local farmers introduced additional improved agronomic practices. Over time the area economy and standards of living were improved considerably.

Who held primary responsibility for the changes? Was it the foreign agronomist? No, he introduced but did not bring about the changes. Was it his English-speaking friend? No, he was required to facilitate communication, and a portion of his family's land was used as a model, but his role ended there. Was it the village councilman? Yes, he took the initiative to adopt new practices and possessed the influence necessary to make the changes both acceptable and widespread.

Consider how this parable might apply as an example for evangelical ministry efforts in the cultural environment of Russia. The Latin American corn growers represent modern Russia. The community cornfields could represent the spiritual fields (realm) of historic Russia—a land rooted in Eastern Orthodoxy. The agronomist represents foreign—primarily American—missionaries. The agronomist's English-speaking friend and assistant could represent Russian evangelical believers. The small, demonstration corn plot is symbolic of evangelical churches, schools and ministries. The more open-minded council member leader represents the progressive element of the Russian Orthodox Church leadership.

The story serves as a parable on how we might build a Russian foundation for biblical Christianity. From the fifteen years of experience since the collapse of the Soviet Union it is evident foreign missionaries cannot achieve this goal. Their efforts have been important and much needed. However, in many circles they lack credibility and, too often, cultural competence. Foreign missionaries are feared as rivals and have made many mistakes—chief among the mistakes is the application of a neo-colonial approach.

Can "interpreters" among the Russians—evangelical believers and their leaders—construct biblical Christianity in Russia? Not in their current state. This task requires more power and authority than evangelicals have in Russia. Evangelical Christians had an historic opportunity of achieving notable spiritual influence in the early 1990s—an era when, supported by Western mission agencies, Russian evangelicals stepped out of church buildings to more fully participate in community affairs. And they were rather

active and successful in taking various social initiatives. However, by the beginning of the third millennium the evangelical influence had markedly decreased. The practices, beliefs and lifestyles of evangelical Christians remained foreign to the vast majority of Russian society, who in turn began rejecting the tenants of evangelicalism to a greater degree.

This rejection happened for a number of reasons. First, certain aspects and characteristics of Russian evangelicalism must be acknowledged and dealt with:

- A considerable number of evangelical Christians remain set in their Soviet era methodology and mindset.

- A lack of biblical knowledge and vision.

- Deeply ingrained legalism, pertinent to many of traditional evangelical Christians, virtually prohibits new believers (wholly unfamiliar with church subculture) from assimilating into evangelical churches.

- On the other hand, a number of national traditional evangelical churches have remained unwilling to re-explore deeply-rooted national customs and consider the positive foundations found in ancient Russian culture. Instead, Russian evangelical leaders introduced Western cultural elements without taking into account a Russian worldview.

- The authoritarian mindset and behavior of some old style church leaders, and opportunistic actions of volunteer members too, often negate the fruit of otherwise effective evangelism.

Second, while Western missionaries have been of obvious benefit to Russian evangelicalism, a careful analysis of Western missionary activity might also identify a regrettable problem; some foreign mission boards have employed a neo-colonial approach and methodology. Key detrimental results of the neo-colonial model include a hindrance to long-term church growth, and the lack of empowered and effective partnerships. Neo-colonial missionary efforts can be recognized through certain characteristics such as: self-indulgent paternalism, top-down leadership, one-way accountability, lack of trust toward national church leaders, and a projected air of superiority. When neo-colonialism is modeled the following symptoms arise:

- An apparent lack of knowledge and understanding of Russian historical development and culture. A study revealed that the inability or unwillingness to respect a target culture, combined with attempts to introduce Western cultural

patterns, without a regard for proper contextualization, is perceived by Russians as severe disrespect.

- An ignorance of the deep roots, traditions and spiritual heritage of Russian Orthodoxy. This ignorance results in unthinking criticism.

Finally, the Russian perception of US foreign policy has resulted in the Russian populace's lack of trust toward Western missionaries. This general perception of the United States has further led to a cold attitude and disillusionment toward Americans, and an indifference to or criticism against the perceived dominant religion of America—Protestantism. The following events, as portrayed in the Russian media, provoked and reinforced such negative reactions:

- The bombings in the Balkans (Kosovo, etc.). As reported in the Russian press, after NATO forces halted the Serbs, over 200 ancient Eastern Orthodox churches were blown up by Kosovar Muslims, despite supposed KFOR military peacekeeper protection. One of these churches was constructed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Kosovo is considered a motherland of Christianity among Slavic nations. Russians feel very deep connections with Serbs. American led NATO intervention and bombing is viewed as an insult to Russian national pride.

- Military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq are viewed by many Russians as ample evidence of American's pursuit of power and world domination "for democracy's sake." From the Russian point of view the U.S. often resorts to dubious methods and double standards—methods that seem increasingly more akin to those used by the Soviet Union to achieve world domination.

- From the perspective of the average Russian citizen, such political actions outlined above negated the right of Protestant missionaries to teach the people of Russia concerning moral goodness.

The three points outlined above have contributed significantly to the growing tendency of Russians to disapprove of both domestic and foreign evangelical missionary efforts, regardless of any beneficial contributions to societal conditions. At present most Russians will resist evangelical teachings and doctrines advocated by either Russians or Westerners. The current situation leaves little hope for a significant increase in the number of evangelical believers. It is likely that evangelical churches and schools will attract or be primarily comprised of believer's children, some God-seeking youth without prior religious affiliation, and a relatively small group of persons who traditionally oppose any official ideology.

So, is there any hope for the revival of Russian Christian spiritually? Yes. The progressive element of the Russian Orthodox Church leadership—that open-minded leader in our opening parable—are introducing a number of notable changes in Russia's religious "cornfield." But will this be enough? What about the role of the "Western agronomists" (missionaries) and their translating friends (Russian evangelicals)? Perhaps the role God has given them is as a model, to reform and stir up the Russian Orthodox.

Keep in mind, evangelicals only comprise one percent of Russia's population. Therefore, evangelical Christians should continue cultivating their "demonstration plots." Such cultivation would include planting and strengthening churches, schools and other ministries, which could serve as model examples for the vast religious fields of Russia— Orthodoxy. Taking into account the prevalent Russian attitude toward Protestants, such "model" churches, schools and ministries will most likely be quite limited, yet attract a disproportionate visibility. It is becoming evident that Protestant believers will not be able to convert (bring to faith in Christ) large sectors of the Russian populace and thus expand. Russia's long history of distrust toward the West and attempts of Western religious expansion—or other Western ways, for that matter—amplifies the groundlessness of a massive shift of the Russian people toward Protestantism.

Conversely, attempts to reform Eastern Orthodoxy by enriching it with certain progressive ideas and approaches (borrowed from the West) have repeatedly borne good fruit. The following points are illustrative examples:

- Evangelical Christians initiated and have been actively developing Christian summer camp ministries. There are now also a significant number of Orthodox summer camps. For example Kursk area authorities have given the Kursk Orthodox Eparchy (for free) well developed summer camp facility. The Kursk area Government Social Fund covers most of the camp expenses.

- Following the example of evangelicals, some Orthodox churches now arrange a few pews for those parishioners who cannot stand through the whole worship service. Even Korennaya Pustyn', one of the most venerated ancient Orthodox monasteries has such pews in its main church!

- Upon the request of congregation members, some Orthodox ministers now spend more time preaching, explaining Scripture and teaching about the Christian life and church structure. The Moscow Patriarchate and its Missionary Department pays close attention to increasing preaching and evangelism. Using a number of TV programs broadcasted nation wide, they introduce new ways of sharing the

Gospel via contemporary music concerts and youth congresses followed by well prepared preaching.

- Since the 1990s evangelical Christians have been employing mass media—radio, television, printed literature and the internet. The Orthodox are now utilizing mass media more extensively, at times even forcing Protestants out of the market. For example, in 1998 an Orthodox radio program took the place of the weekly evangelical program, which we had been doing on a Kursk area government station since 1990. Moreover, Orthodox believers have largely adopted the format of Protestant radio and television programs, as well as in the design of Orthodox websites.

- Reflecting the model of evangelically produced television programs, nowadays Orthodox television programs not only offer worship services, but also interesting sermons, topical programs and discussions produced by Orthodox believers. These programs are now tending to focus more on Christ and salvation by his grace, and less on Orthodox traditions. The present head of the Kursk Orthodox Eparchy Mission Department is a former charismatic believer. During his five years in a fiery charismatic church he learned many good things. Now his preaching and weekly Sunday morning TV programs are focused on Christ, salvation by grace, genuine faith, and true Christian life.

- Additional ideas originating in Protestantism but now often borrowed by Orthodoxy include Sunday schools, adult small groups and youth ministry. The Moscow Patriarchy strongly encourages all parishes to establish and develop a Sunday school in each church and to cultivate community life within each church. A number of Orthodox youth organizations and youth groups were established. Their format and even music clearly resemble evangelical youth work practices.

- There are an increasing number of books and educational materials for Orthodox readers and schools. It is not uncommon to find Protestant resources revised and rewritten by Orthodox writers, then published under an Orthodox "cover." For example the Orthodox biology school textbook, developed for Orthodox schools as well as for regular schools, utilizes many materials borrowed from Western Christianity. Orthodox priest Sergiy Rasskazovsky developed *Systematic Theology* for use in 36 Orthodox seminaries and many colleges in Russia. This is notable because for almost 20 centuries Orthodoxy did not produce such work, as systematizing theology was felt as improper approach to "mystery of God".

- Since the beginning of *Perestroika*, evangelical believers have focused their greatest evangelistic efforts on targeting schools, army bases, prisons, public transportation and other public places, and producing evangelistic literature. Such practices are gaining wider popularity within the Orthodox community. They have launched special programs in secondary schools, opened new departments in colleges, and arranged army, prison and highway travelers' chapels. The Orthodox have also developed and broadened networks for literature distribution.

- Orthodox believers employ Protestant methodology in ministering to drug addicts and alcoholics (Twelve Step programs), and women considering abortion. They do not necessarily do it better than Protestants, but they generally tend to be more effective due to familiarity and the culturally ingrained trust Russians place in the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox are no strangers to the Russian people, while Protestants remain perceived as foreign and therefore untrustworthy.

Evangelical Christians are called to put aside personal preferences and ambitions and diligently strive for greater effectiveness in leading unbelievers to the saving faith in Christ, regardless of the church context. At the same time, evangelicals rightly desire and seek intensive methods for expanding the presence of evangelical Christianity in Russia. Perhaps this should be viewed first as a deepening, rather than a widening of evangelicalism—striving for excellence in quality rather than for numbers. For this reason it is crucial that all models or "demonstration corn plots" are of top quality. Such models should represent examples of highly effective forms and methods of church ministry and evangelism. Of equal importance is a profound and sound theological and doctrinal foundation for the practical work. If all of this is in place, certain progressive Orthodox leaders will undoubtedly become interested in borrowing elements of evangelical worship style and even theology.

Despite their small numbers, evangelical Christians play an important role in Russia's spiritual life. Therefore, evangelical churches and ministries must be viewed as more than a place where people hear the Good News of Jesus, receive salvation and grow spiritually. Of greater significance is their function as a channel of new ideas, experiences, methods and forms of ministry, originating in Western Christianity. This is a gift and blessing which Russian Orthodoxy may find beneficial as they seek to develop and further expand the Kingdom of God in Russia.

## About the Author

Igor Petrov was born in the Soviet Union to the family of an evangelical pastor and district superintendent. He has been actively involved in church ministries since the late 1970s. After the fall of communism, he led churches and mission groups in evangelism through campaigns, radio programs, newspapers, publishing and church planting. Igor is Director of Distance Learning for the Trinity Equipping Centers of Eurasia, EFCA-IM. He teaches at Kursk Trinity Bible College in Kursk, Russia (www.kursk

trinitybiblecollege.org/index_eng.html), and further serves the church through Kursk Ministries ([www.kurskministries.org](www.kurskministries.org)). He is a Ph.D. Candidate at Trinity International University, Deerfield, IL, USA.

# The Road to Urban Mission in the New Global City
**By Randy White**

Fourteen years from now, as today's eight year olds graduate from college, the population of Asia's cities will have doubled to 2.5 billion (Smith 2005). Since China is already buying a *quarter* of the world's crude steel *each year* and nearly *half* all the concrete on the planet (Starke 2005), our ears should perk up. What are the implications for a church seeking to demonstrate its relevance? What would help prepare those young, graduating leaders, who are the best hope for providing next generation leadership for Missio Dei in the context of rapid global urbanization? The starting place for an answer may be as basic as applying the average road sign to the mission training process, especially the one that says "road work ahead." It might help alert us to the ways the status quo has changed, cause us to slow down and take a cautionary look – perhaps, even to ask questions about alternate roads. What does it mean to be the church in a migrant stream? Given the expanding gap between the rich and poor, where do we focus our energies? What issues *within* the urban church and *between* churches in the city will most influence its development? What is the Spirit of God up to as churches formulate creative responses to these challenges? These are global questions, and for some of our answers we'll look to what's happening in the cities of two nations, India and China, representing a not-so-modest 40% of the earth's population, as well as a few others. Having spent the last few years observing churches and missional agencies in several of the world's largest cities, I have had a ground level view of the massive new construction that is taking place on the gospel road, the new roadblocks being presented, and even some new vistas around the corner. Here are some of the road signs I have seen.

## Road Sign: Congestion Ahead

Cities worldwide are now growing by more than one million people per week (Swingle 2002). How does one apply the principles of the wise builder preparing for the future (Luke 14:28-30) or the parable of the faithful steward preparing for the return of the master (Luke 12:42-48) in the swirling cauldron of life in a migrant stream? For

example, this year, and each year for the last several, 30 million people will move from the Chinese countryside to its exploding cities. News of this amazing transition is unavoidable, the talk of the global town. As some have pointed out, that's like the equivalent of Canada moving in, every year (Bakke, pers. comm.). As one Chinese official commented, China must build 20 new cities a year of one million or more people just to accommodate the migration. And this growth will happen next year, and the next, and the next for at least two decades. When China joined the World Trade Organization, its leaders actually committed to *increase* the rate of urbanization. Their recent phenomenal economic growth is in many ways a byproduct of this move. That amounts to more than half a billion new urban dwellers in one nation alone, all coming with expectations for a better life. During a recent visit to Beijing with urbanologist Ray Bakke, this amazing migration provoked a reflection on the message of an old book, Cramer's *Anatomy of Revolution*, which makes the point that revolutions happen *not* when things get as bad as they can be, but when *expectations outpace reality*. Over the next 20 years 700-900 million migrants will increase consumption to unsustainable levels in cities, according to China scholar CK Thong (Thong, pers. comm.). Expectations for a better life will meet a severe reality check. If China can't deliver on people's expectations, what next? In this context of migration, urbanization and globalization, the church is having to discern its ever evolving role. Neither the rhythms of its past nor the remarkable growth of its house churches has prepared it for what's ahead.

Churches in China have their own issues in the context of rapid urbanization. Official Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) churches, already stretched to the limits, struggle to accommodate newcomers. Beijing, with more than 12 million people has only seven approved churches, Guanzhou, a city of 10 million has only eight. Each of these have fashioned more than 200 "meeting points" a sort of a modified house church format, a mainstay of unregistered churches, to deal with the numbers. But this has generated a leadership crisis, the church not being able to train new, informal leaders fast enough. Unregistered churches struggle with the same phenomenon, making leadership development the paramount issue for the identity of the church in the city. As a recent Lausanne document concluded, leaders must create new combinations of formal, informal and non-formal leadership development, featuring not only classroom learning but experiential education and mentoring as its cornerstone (Smith 2005, 32). At one

official church I visited in Beijing more than 5,000 worshipers crowded five services, stretching leadership to the breaking point; and late at night I observed a separate room full of seekers wishing to gain an introduction to the Christian faith. Soon after, in Xian, a city of 8 million, I talked with the leader of an unregistered church that has grown dramatically and is actually seeking formal status because they cannot train enough leaders for smaller groups fast enough. They want the freedom to gather their people and approach it systematically on a larger scale.

## Road Sign: Merge – Road Narrows

The problems of urbanization in China have their own flavor, but are not utterly unique. I have seen the same phenomenon in Calcutta, Mexico City and Hong Kong. Migration is by definition dynamic and complex, and its complexities often catch the church off guard and unprepared. Migrants represent specific and distinct kinds of people, ranging from permanent economic migrants, to transients, to contract workers to clandestine workers, to refugees, to those coerced into the sex trade (Patil and Trivedi 2000, 8), all merging onto the same road.

Today, more than 150 million people live in a country they were not born in. About 13 million of those are refugees; the rest voluntarily left their homeland to seek a better life (Myers 2003, 37). But whether voluntary or involuntary, they are often vulnerable. The explosive growth of the church in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where more than half the population are immigrants, is due largely to its readiness to reach out in practical love to these people when they most need it, offering economic help, childcare and friendship.

In Hong Kong, I recently stood in the middle of Statue Park, surrounded by 1,400 Filipina maids who gather every Sunday to support one another, to share resources and even to organize. They are part of a group of more than 150,000 who had to leave their men behind in the Philippines to secure employment, because Hong Kong would not sanction the influx of male competition for local jobs. They have no voice, are often exploited on the job, and even there in the Park, on their one day off, they were surrounded by sharks and con-men ready to take advantage of them. Only one church in the city had taken even the most tentative steps to befriend and advocate on their behalf. The predominant type of migrant is a young, unmarried woman (Patil and Trivedi 2000,

178). The transitions in the lives of the displaced, whether through the push factors of war, famine or land reform, or the pull factors of a hope for employment or better health services in a city, etc. take their toll in reduced health of the migrants as immune systems are challenged, and as women endure physically debilitating working conditions, etc. (Patil and Trivedi 2000, 180). But these realities are often invisible to many in urban churches in a more comfortable social strata.

In Calcutta, migration is especially hard on the body. A city of over 17 million, including millions of sidewalk dwellers, each day, the infrastructure of the city is stretched beyond an already unbelievable breaking point as it breathes in 3 million additional day workers, and in Bakke's poetic language, "exhales them at night to just beyond the borders." Philip Jenkins has raised the strategic question of whether the church could position itself in the flow of the migrant stream in such a way as to offer help and hope in the most targeted ways (Jenkins 2002).

In Calcutta, a good example of this is Jeevan Joyti ("light of life."), a church that meets in the YWCA. The pastor, Vijayan Pavamani, led the church in forming the core of a larger nonprofit work called Emmanuel Ministries. This ministry works with over 300 street kids (literally sidewalk dwellers) who come for a weekly program. In addition, they run a school for slum children, as well as vocational training for teenagers from the slums. The leadership of the church has been taken from the ranks of former drug addicts. Currently 44% of the church staff comes from conversions out of that population. Emanuel also runs a housing ministry, a rehabilitation ministry, a counseling ministry, a fellowship for rickshaw pullers (some 2000 of them), a suicide prevention hotline, a support group for people living with AIDS, a night shelter for the children of commercial sex workers, as well as community development projects. These activities have earned them credibility in a religiously pluralistic environment. They are now recognized as one of India's top eight NGOs. For many, this holistic format is the very definition of urban mission, one that only small segments of the church have embraced, and which evangelicals have slowly warmed to in the last two decades.

But as the road narrows, migrants are merging onto roads used by the middle and upper class, mixing in cities in ways that make for some interesting traffic. Not only do the middle and upper-class populations of cities normally travel different roads than do the poor, in some cities they don't travel roads at all. In Sao Paulo, Brazil the upper class

has the *second-largest* fleet of privately owned helicopters in the world, the transportation of choice for those who fear carjacking. They also have the world's *largest* fleet of privately owned armored cars (Swingle 2002). In some cities there are rare connecting points between those two roads. Some sections of the new metro system in Mexico City will find both rich and poor riding together into the city center, but this is rare. Sadly, churches also segregate by class and travel by different roads as well, and so have not developed the expertise necessary to direct traffic as the road narrows.

Rapid urbanization and migration forces the church's hand to demonstrate its relevance among the newly urban poor, and puts divergent social classes on the same road. But does urban ministry always mean ministry among the poor? Clearly not.

## Road Sign: Bridge under Construction

While most of those migrating to cities are poor, it would be a mistake to think that's the whole story. The expanding middle-class in megacities represent opportunities and challenges all their own. New movements are being birthed which address the challenges of urbanization from a multitude of angles. These include ministries focusing on building bridges in human relationships, as older migrants often resent newer migrants. They include ministries bridging people of influence with one another in dealing with the city infrastructures of water, sanitation, and housing, which are being stretched to beyond capacity and putting an unmanageable burden and strain on the family. They include ministries building bridges to overcome ethnic and class tensions, which increase with density. As urban despair increases, so does social upheaval and moral chaos, two realities that deeply concern the Chinese government. Insiders report that officials are newly open to any institution, including the church, that can address family, moral and ethical issues and a host of urban social issues. A good example of this is found in S. Lee, a Hong Kong-based businessman who had for the last decade been given unprecedented latitude to minister in prisons on the Chinese mainland. He has now accepted a position with a secular company in Beijing, and on the side has founded a new nonprofit focused on building a bridge between Peter Drucker's business ethics and Christian-based principles and what he considers to be an ethical vacuum in the life of the average Chinese Corporation. These are all exciting and promising developments.

Yet still, in the minds of many in the West, urban mission or ministry simply means working one road, the one on which the poor tread. Mention Calcutta and it's hard for Western Christians to think of anyone else but Mother Teresa. But some Indian intellectuals complain that Mother Teresa has forever associated the city with only "the poorest of the poor," in the mind of the world, as if they didn't exist before she pointed it out. But India has the most rapidly expanding middle class in the world, and the challenge will be to work simultaneously and strategically at the level of systemic change in a city as well as in direct acts of compassion, to not only serve the poor of the city but to build a bridge to those who influence the fate of the poor in the city, i.e. the influencers.

New Life Ministries in Mumbai is doing church planting among the educated middle-class. Their work involves addressing a creative mix of middle class specific issues, including concern over the infiltration of Bollywood culture, but also involvement in housing issues and other social concerns. Denominational ministries have taken up similar strategies in New Delhi, doing church planting among the middle-class. In the Indian context of religious pluralism and suspicion it is clearly the demonstration of a holistic and transformational gospel that is attracting people of multiple classes into the kingdom.

But the question arises, will the church in India, which has been mission-based and historically focused on the poor, know how to broadly reach the expanding middle class, and help them leverage their privileges on behalf of the poor? As their wealth expands, will they be willing to relate with the poor? What are the lessons being learned in real time in India as it deals with the reality of ministry in migrant streams, the realities of proclaiming Christ in a context of religious pluralism and enmity, and the realities of political drama and economic transition? How might the church leverage the expansion of technology and the increasing participation of India's youth in global youth culture, and what will happen to youth who are marginalized from this process? As India's cities grow, what is the church learning about building collaborative networks (especially in cities so large that leaders hardly know each other), about achieving an overall strategic plan for ministry in the city, about the relationship between evangelism and social action that churches in other megacities could learn from? And what might participating in the drama of God's work in the megacities of Calcutta or Mumbai or Chennai accomplish for

development of a new generation of global urban leaders? For those of us in the West, to watch India is to get a glimpse of our global future. From a leadership development perspective, this is a strategic time.

But that fact may be lost on churches that are locked into methodologies framed in a rural setting, or limited by denominational restrictions, or untrained in cross-class/ interethnic relationships. Churches that are unprepared for the leadership challenges presented by rapid growth, or unwilling to become involved in the social needs of new arrivals or unaware of how to help the middle-class leverage their privileges will be ignored by a humanity newly set in motion, from forces more vast and all-encompassing than anyone has anticipated.

The Committee on Transformation of City Regions at the Lausanne World Congress in Bangkok underscored the importance of working at systemic levels among the urban influential in rapidly urbanizing contexts in order to establish shalom, noting:

> Cities include middle and upper class persons who have influence over decisions that affect all people of the city and especially the poor and powerless. However, the middle and upper classes are not often empowered by the church to influence the city and their privileges and power are often not leveraged by the church for its welfare. (Smith 2005, 31)

After helping to draft that sentence, at the close the Congress, I traveled by taxi to a particularly disturbing slum in Bangkok. Permsup is a squatter community built of scraps of wood and metal over brackish waters. A combination of migration, drugs, police corruption, an underground economy and government inaction have formed this settlement. I visited David, an alumnus of InterVarsity's urban and global projects (www.intervarsity.org) who was living and working there. A graduate of MIT, he gave up a potentially lucrative career as an engineer to pursue holistic ministry among the urban poor. I assumed this most certainly would mean evangelism and church planting and education, with perhaps some micro enterprise development effort as well. And I was correct. But I was also amazed to see him organizing the residents of the slum in a proactive response to the government's plan to raze the settlement in preparation for a new freeway. And David was working with influential government officers to find alternate land, to help residents begin meager savings toward new housing, and to find ways to leverage their savings. Many in the community have come to faith, as there is for the first time a glimmer of hope for their future. Squatters are learning to participate in a

legal process. People of influence and government officials are learning that it is in their interest to find solutions for Bangkok's poorest residents in an environment where social upheaval is common.

## Road Sign: Detour – Alternate Route

The massive and rapid urbanization taking place in China and India has encouraged a climate of innovation, alternate routes that break with mission tradition. So-called "Kingdom companies" or "great commission companies" are springing up, founded and led by Christians, operating even in restrictive environments for the glory of God. Some of these have spawned factory churches, the CEO effectively acting as priest, leading China scholar CK Tong to muse that if the Apostle Paul were writing today, it would not be to the church at Corinth or the church at Philippi, but to *the church at Motorola or the church at Mary Kay.*

A colleague of mine visited just such a church at a toy factory in a major city in southern China, a city that has grown in just two quick decades from a fishing village of 30,000 to an ultra modern, "Jetsons"-like metropolis of 7 million. On his first visit the factory church had grown to 700 members. He returned the following year to find a smaller church. He asked the CEO/pastor what had happened. He smiled and responded, "The police came. They said, 'we know you are operating an unregistered church here because crime has gone down in this part of city. But could you disburse across the city? You are creating a parking problem and people in the neighborhood of the factory are complaining.'" The pastor said that they had done that, temporarily reducing their numbers. My friend checked in again with them recently and they are back up to 700 people even after launching churches across the city.

I visited another company that has grown to be one of the largest electronics manufacturing firms in China. The CEO is an ethnically Chinese, former vice president of a large American manufacturing company, recruited by the Chinese government to begin a high-tech firm in five Chinese cities. The CEO said, "OK, but I will run my company for the glory of God." He was open about his Christian agenda. He says, "The Lord called us to China to build companies, build schools, and preach the gospel. We reflect a commitment to a complete gospel." The government responded that he could do as he wanted if everything was done openly. The company exploded, and now employs

9,000 workers at the plant I visited. Those workers funded and planted a registered church where 1000 people now worship. They are reproducing the same pattern at the four other sites across the country. The company has provided housing for all employees ranging from dormitory style for the many migrant workers who have come to the city, to apartments for middle managers, and even villas for international high-tech executives recruited from across the globe. They have created a community where all levels of housing and workers are in proximity to each other. The effect is such that the lives of Christians are fully open for all to see, and it has become a mentoring environment. The CEO reports that 2000 young migrant women are working as operators in the company, and of those 1000 have come to Christ. A vice president of the company routinely leads classes and character development based on Christian principles. The company has begun an elementary school for employees and others from the city. It was of such high-quality that residents from the surrounding community requested the privilege of sending their children. Now, 70% of those enrolled are community, not company kids. Their greatest challenge is recruiting highly trained, like-minded Christians to work at the company. The director of financial reporting recently asked about the possibility of the company exhibiting at the Urbana '06 student mission's convention.

Missional agencies in Beijing and Shanghai are focusing on serving young, upwardly mobile professionals who are frequenting the Internet bars and alternative art galleries. The so-called *third way* church (neither TSPM nor house church) caters to new and not- yet Christians who are too young to remember the Cultural Revolution, too disconnected to get embroiled in the controversies between unregistered and registered churches, and too educated and tech savvy to relate to the migrant class flooding the cities. It remains to be seen if the fellowships planted among this emerging group will be willing to relate to, serve, or advocate for the rapidly expanding migrant population forming churches in their shadow. But young, educated, world-aware legions of people entering the middle class for the first time, whether in Shanghai or Bangalore, illustrate the ways in which globalization is shaping the way mission is done.

The forces that drive this phenomenon increasingly affect every aspect of human existence, including those in the church. International economic relationships, the creation of international youth culture through television, movies and the Internet, increased mobility across cultures and national boundaries, access to information, the

dominance of English, but even more so, of a cultural technical language, are all creating a voluntary, participatory and international culture that would have been unthinkable just 25 years ago. It is a process, which, at its core, represents "shifting forms of human contact" (Steger 2003). This contact means they experience "globality" which is essentially a movement toward "greater independence and integration" (Steger 2003). Contrasted with this reality is the stark experience of millions upon millions of young people, who, by virtue of their class or race or the choices of their government, have not been included in the opportunities brought on by globalizing forces. Many have experienced the harsh side of these forces which, when unchecked, can trample cultures, pollute ecosystems, manipulate political processes, and increase the gap between rich and poor.

Front and center in the midst of this complex phenomenon of a growing, global youth culture is what Sam George calls "TechnoCulture" (Tiplady 2003), a reality that has immense relevance for training urban leaders who are ready for ministry in this new environment. TechnoCulture knows no boundaries. It is tech savvy, linked in real time to the world, and using the latest technologies not only for business but also as an essential tool in life (Tiplady 2003). Today's youth in advanced countries take technology for granted. They access information, entertainment, relationships, jobs, news, and virtually everything they count as important through technology. Increasingly they participate in a global youth community, which gives them important cues about their own identity.

This culture is shaped by spirituality, and spirituality is itself shaped by technology, in a reciprocal relationship that mission practitioners and emerging leaders must take note of. It has been noted that it reflects the deeper realities of "being young and searching for God and meaning" (Tiplady 2003, 46). It delivers meaning to today's youth.

One example of a ministry strategy in Chennai, India, holds promise for the harnessing of one aspect of TechnoCulture in service of the kingdom. Tim Svoboda of Youth With A Mission has founded a digital university, which has as its goal helping develop the creative capacities of Indian youth using technology. In the same way that Bangalore has become synonymous with programming and outsourcing, he hopes Chennai will become synonymous with Burbank, California, what some might call the center of the universe for digital animation. His mission is to train youth in the

appropriate technologies, help them develop digital portfolios that they can market, providing them with opportunities for work, and providing him with a relevant platform from which he can share the love of God. Tim's work will shape life in corporate America as well. In the year 2000, Indian and Chinese entrepreneurs alone "headed 29% of Silicon Valley's technology businesses, collectively accounting for $19.5 billion in sales and more than 77,000 jobs" (Pierce 2004, F1). Indian youth, reached with the gospel through a digital university in Chennai, may end up sharing Christ with secular entrepreneurs in San Jose, California.

## Road Sign: Carpool Lane

This December some 25,000 young, emerging leaders will converge from all corners of the world and cram themselves, like only college students can do, into the vehicle of Urbana '06 (www.urbana.org). This mission training event, the influence of which spans six decades, has been re-crafted to reflect mission in the context of urbanization, and has been relocated from a campus setting to the city of St. Louis. Its newly designed "seminar majors" address each of these road signs in depth. Given this event, a host of new training resources that act as a map, a younger global church newly paying attention, and we have ourselves a road trip.

While the challenges of mission in the context of rapid urbanization, and the challenges of empowering the new urban middle class church while not forgetting those who are too poor to benefit from globalization, might have some current leaders looking for the "next exit" sign, just over the horizon a new day for mission is dawning.

## Reference List

Bakke, Raymond. 2006. Informal comments. April. Beijing.

Jenkins, Philip. 2002. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Myers, Bryant L. 2003. *Exploring World Mission: Context and Challenges*. Monrovia, CA: World Vision International.

Patil, V.T. and P.R. Trivedi. 2000. *Migration, Refugees and Security in 21$^{st}$ Century.* Delhi, India: Authorspress.

Peirce, Neal. 2004. Immigrants Wanted: Stalled Cities Beg for Vitality. *Fresno Bee*, May 14.

Smith, Glenn B., ed. 2005. *Toward the Transformation of our Large City-Regions.* Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 37. Montreal: Christian Direction Inc.

Starke, Linda, ed. 2005. *State of the World 2006: A World Watch Institute Report on Progress Toward a Sustainable Society*. New York: WW Norton and Co.

Steger, Manfred B. 2003. *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Swingle, Erla. 2002. Cities. *National Geographic*, November.

Thong, C. K. 2006. Consultation on Urbanization and Church Growth. April. Beijing.

Tiplady, Richard. 2003. *One World or Many? The Impact of Globalization on Mission*. Pasadena: William Carey Library/World Evangelical Alliance.

## About the Author

Dr. Randy White is National Coordinator for Urban Projects with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and helps to mobilize thousands of college students each year for mission in urban centers in the U.S. and across the globe. He is the author of the book *Encounter God in the City: Onramps to Personal and Community Transformation* (IVP, 2006), as well as other books and articles on urban mission.

# God's Ways are not Our Ways
**By Charlie Davis**

I was five years old when the knock came on the courtyard gate. Our small white-washed house had four rooms all in a row, with doors between, and a porch along the front. During the winter we kept one room warm with a kerosene heater. The Himalaya Mountains grew up behind our house and soared into the blue hazy distance. On a clear day we could see the snow packed peaks.

Our house had the advantage of a small space in front, closed in with a stone wall. I liked the wall, because at night we had to cross the cold dark courtyard to reach the small bathroom. That night, Dad got up and went to the gate, and he stayed there for a long time. When he came back he gathered us together and said, "Ahmet just came by. As you know, we've been studying the Bible together. His father found out that he was studying the Bible, and is trying to find him to shoot him with his rifle. He is going to have to run away to one of the big cities where his father won't be able to find him." We prayed for Ahmet that night, and I don't think we ever heard from him again. I came face-to-face with the cost of committing one's life to Christ that night, and I never forgot it.

In 1968, after 21 years of working in Pakistan, the number of people who my dad knew had turned to Christ from the majority religion, Islam, was less than 10. Ahmet was one. Less than half of those were still known to be walking with the Lord. Was that a waste of my dad's life? Did he somehow throw his life away tilting a windmill like Don Quixote? Did the churches who sent him lose their investment? Or was some bigger plan at work, of which my dad's was one small, crucial part?

Often we commiserate with those who work in Muslim countries because the work is so hard, and the results have seemingly been so meager. Only recently have I realized that the Muslim world creates a context where we are forced to do mission in the best and most powerful ways.

First, working in a Muslim context forces us to recognize the potency of the nuclear form of the church. For Christians to gather in large buildings in the Muslim context is simply untenable. When we examine the history of the church, however, it has always grown most powerfully when it was forced into a nuclear mode. The vast country of China saw the church of Jesus Christ explode from less than half a million in 1950, to somewhere around 100 million by the end of the century. They relied on the potent combination of small groups of believers gathering wherever they could, sharing their faith, encouraging one another, sharing the Lord's Supper and teaching the Word. This should not surprise us if we recall the mushrooming of the church during the first three centuries as they met in the homes of the believers. This is happening right now, all across the Muslim world, including places where Islam had its roots!

Second, working in a Muslim context forces us to recognize the potency of training others and developing leaders in order to accomplish anything. The very presence of a Christian Westerner in a small, nuclear gathering of believers can often put the lives of the others at risk. But when the missionary disciples the new believer to use his or her spiritual gifts for the benefit and spiritual growth of the others with whom he is in contact, then the group never becomes dependent of the outsider.

Not long ago, Dave, Faith, John and Cathleen visited one of these small nuclear churches in a Muslim country torn apart from more than 30 years of war. After a delicious meal of curry and rice, John invited the young father whose apartment they were visiting to lead the group in sharing the Lord's Supper together. As the young father ripped the bread in two, reciting the well known passage from I Corinthians 11, no one had any doubt of what it meant to put our lives on the line to follow Jesus! Nor did anyone have any doubt that the meaning of the event was even greater because the young father had led rather than the trained Westerner. The Muslim context had forced us to train and entrust the sacred truth to the leader of a small family group, and that means that these groups can multiply as fast as new leaders can learn the same truths.

Third, the Muslim context forces us to abandon many of the tools which are so helpful in the beginning, but in the end often become a roadblock. If the new believers think that they must have a building in order to have a church, then the church can only grow as fast as they can buy or build new buildings. Inevitably, the walls of the new building become the limit for how far or fast the church can grow. If the church must

have a seminary-trained pastor, then the church can only grow as fast as the seminary-trained pastors that are available. If the church must have an elaborate sound system in order to worship, then the church can only grow as fast as sound systems become available. But when the church understands, as they do in the Muslim context, that it is composed of believers who are committed to learning about and obeying the Lord together ("teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you"), then it has the potential for shaking off obstacles, and growing far beyond our imagination. When Bakht Singh returned to India in the 1930s, this is precisely what he intended to do. Today the "churchless" believers in India may number now more than 30 million!

Fourth, the Muslim context demonstrates the potency of faith growing in the crucible of persecution and trials. One young man, upon returning to his country in Central Asia, was arrested and thrown into prison because of his contact with Christians. He, and the Christians with whom he had developed a relationship, were concerned that he might not even be released. God intervened, however, and after a short time in prison he was set free. When he met with the person who had shared his faith with him, that person felt badly because the young man had suffered on account of what he had shared. The young man looked puzzled and said, "But I thought that was supposed to happen when you followed Jesus!" These people know that God has not promised to eliminate evil, danger, or trouble, but he has promised to redeem it by his love.

Fifth, the Muslim context forces us towards the potency of simplicity. The more complicated we make Christianity, and the more complicated we make the gatherings of the church, the more we limit the number of people who can be trained to handle the Word, and the slower the message spreads. The simpler the message, the simpler the forms, the more powerfully and faster the gospel can spread.

The parable of the leaven and the parable of the mustard seed both make the same point. The dough becomes leavened not by some mastermind chemist who needs equipment and training, but because the leaven quietly and simply multiplies, over and over again. The mustard seed become a large bush the same way. The number of believers around the globe is multiplying in an ever increasing manner—and even though the population of the world has risen by 5 billion in the last 115 years, the number of believers continues to multiply and not only keep pace, but increase in percentage! As

Daniel's dream indicated, the little rock, cut out of the mountain, will grow until it fills the whole earth.

We are indeed living in a time when God is transforming the world, one "living stone" at a time, and we are not only part of the world, we are invited to be part of the transformation:

> *I can not tell, how all the lands shall worship;*
> *When at his bidding, every storm is stilled;*
> *Or who can say, how great the jubilation,*
> *When all the hearts of men with love are filled.*
> *But this I know, the skies will fill with rapture,*
> *And countless voices then will join to sign,*
> *And earth to heaven, and heaven to earth will answer,*
> *At last the Savior, Savior of the world is King!*
>
> <div align="right">(William Younger Fullerton)</div>

TEAM (www.teamworld.org) believes in being where God is at work, bringing about that social, spiritual transformation; sharing the good news, developing leaders, adapting to the context, facing persecution with joy, and starting those small, simple, but powerful, nuclear groups which have the capacity to multiply far beyond our imagination. When the churches have multiplied so fast and so far that they have forgotten that we were even there to begin with, then we have truly succeeded.

The church in China, is one of those stories that demonstrates the same principles. No matter how hard the political powers have tried, they have been powerless to stop the growth of these churches--which may develop into one of the most powerful missionary-sending churches of all time.

The churches in post-modern Europe are breaking the mold as well. Europe has been the poster child for large church edifices, which today often attract more tourists than believers. If cathedrals were the key to healthy churches, Europe would be the world center of Christianity. Unfortunately, Europe is not only post-modern, it is also post-Christian. Two of the most secular states in the world, Sweden and Czech Republic, are in Europe. But God is doing a new thing in Europe. Workers are using methods which

draw people together in small groups where they can share their spiritual lives with one another and learn to obey and follow Jesus. One woman in Sweden said, "I was on a spiritual search for three years, and went to church after church, but all I saw were the backs of people's heads! Then someone invited me to a meal where we could talk around the table, and for the first time I heard the good news explained to me in a way I could understand."

My dad invested his life well. Something bigger was going on. God was at work, laying the seed in for a harvest that he will reap someday. Those who work among Muslims may be at the cutting edge of some of the most powerful growth of the church in history.

## About the Author

Charlie Davis was raised in Pakistan, where his parents were missionaries. He and his wife, Kris, have served as missionaries with TEAM since 1978. They worked as church-planters in Venezuela for more than 15 years before returning to the States where Charlie assumed duties as director of field ministries for TEAM. He is currently executive director of TEAM.