ASIA MISSIONS ASSOCIATION
14th Convention and 50th Anniversary Celebration

Damples Dulcero-Baclagon

The Asia Missions Association is now 50 years old and it was celebrated in Jakarta, Indonesia, in the 14th AMA Convention. It was an assembly of missionaries, servant-leaders, partners and friends from all over Asia and beyond. Held from May 22 to 26, 2023 at the GBI Mawar Saron Church in Jakarta which hosted the AMA Convention with true and warm Indonesian hospitality. We are thankful to our brothers and sisters from GBI Mawar Saron Church under the pastorship of Rev. Yohannes Nahuway. The theme for the AMA 14th Convention was Missions in the Post Pandemic Era: Challenges and Opportunities in the New Normal World. The Lord for 50 years have strengthened the chains that bind the AMA members and its partners.

The 14th AMA Convention brought 120 delegates from S. Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, India, Singapore, Hong Kong, Israel, Papua New Guinea, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Taiwan, Cambodia, Laos, Uzbekistan, Kyrgystan, Mongolia, Nepal, Canada and the United States together with around 140 participants from Indonesia. For the four-day convention, all of these participants shared, listened, and learned from each other from the plenary to small groups, there was a non-stop exchange of prayers, ideas, concepts, and programs that forge partnerships and collaborations to reach the mission fields and present the Gospel, make disciples and teach the Word of God effectively. The pandemic indeed gave us time for the much-needed respite to observe and evaluate what we have been doing in missions. And the post-pandemic time allowed us to go forward and look with a keen eye at the challenges and the opportunities that the pandemic made available for us.

During the plenary sessions, the speakers shared with the delegates eye opening realizations of what can be done best for the ministry and the locals. The morning Exegesis by Dr. Prabhu Singh Vedhamanickan discussed about the many sufferings we face as Christian believers and mission leaders. The Plenary Session speakers like Dr. Chansamone Saiyasak (Asian Learning Mode and Style in the context of Asian Learning), Dr. H. Daniel Kim (ministry among people with disabilities), Dr. Daniel J. Kim (theater and arts ministry), Dr. Jay Matenga (Toward Framing a New Era of Missions), Dr. Nelson Jennings (Encouragement and Lessons from Asian Christian Witnesses), Dr. Alex Smith (Things that do not Change in Christian Missions) and Rev. Ken Choe (going back to basics among churches) shared

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and dicussed the many challenges and opportunities we are facing now after the pandemic. There is so much to do and we know by the Holy Spirit we can accomplish much. The National Reports presented by our delegates from Bhutan, Maldives, Laos, Vietnam, Kazakhstan and Mongolia truly revealed that the work of the Lord is amazing! No man, government or laws can stop the Holy Spirit to mobilize the saints in planting churches and reaching the lost. The reports from Global links, (WEA, Missio Nexus, Lausanne Movement, SEANet, Frontier Ventures and COMIBAM) informed us of the many re-directions in strategies, and new trends in missions and churches in the post-pandemic world. In the afternoon, everyone enjoyed the Workshops which had a friendlier atmosphere that created time to interact with one another and learn from the facilitators how to involve more effectively in the missionfields with churches and people in need. The evening sessions were nights of the Pentecostal celebrations that shared true and meaningful testimonies of God's greatness and goodness to those who believe. Rev. Yohannes Nahuway truly prepared a feast for our spirits to celebrate and rejoice! The delegates and participants huddled together in prayers, in conversations and in meetings even if the convention's daily schedule was so tight. And in these times many hearts were placed together to pursue the one effective way to serve the Master better.

This 14th AMA Convention created a much more intimate mood for delegates to bond and fellowship in unity. This is what the post pandemic did to us: to be closer as brothers and sisters in the faith, to love and to serve Him together. In the closing program, the AMA 14th Convention Declaration was read. And delegates and participants agreed to do these things for the glory of God and for the furtherance of the Gospel to the end of the earth!

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DECLARATION OF
THE 14TH JAKARTA TRIENNIAL CONVENTION OF
ASIA MISSIONS ASSOCIATION

May 26, 2023

We at the Asia Missions Association 14th Convention reached a consensus on the essence of mission on our 50th anniversary and identified new challenges and opportunities for the church and mission in the changing contexts.

1. We reaffirm that mission was initiated and is being realized by the cooperative activity of the triune God. Therefore, mission is all Christian churches' responsibility for the expansion of the kingdom of God by participation in God's mission, relying on the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, collaborating in partnerships among the bodies of Christ in Asia and beyond, and equipping national churches to be engaged in missions.

2. We acknowledge that there are challenges as follows:

   a. A decline in physical presence
   b. A decrease in financial capacity and mission funding
   c. The sustained persecution against the Christian faith
   d. Uncertainty of future mission engagement
   e. Social disconnectedness and loneliness
   f. Missions in a digitalized world
   g. Increasing anxiety, depression, and psychological distress about the future.

3. We recognize the following as opportunities:

    a. We observe churches and missions that have innovated their approaches as they respond to the needs of the people in their contexts and have increased their participation.
    b. We witness the vivid growth and self-reliance of Christian churches and missions in Asia in the absence of outside financial support.
    c. Through organic and digital means, Christian churches and missions connect, come alongside, support, and advocate for our persecuted Asian fellow believers.
    d. We perceive uncertainty as opportunities open to develop agility in our mission strategies and outreaches.
    e. We recognize the importance of interpersonal relationships where the people who are socially disconnected and lonely are brought into a setting where they are ministered to and received healing and restoration.
    f. We see diverse ministry plausibility in digitized platforms, enabling us to access across generations and borders, beyond restrictions.
    g. We realize the need to increase in different types of ministry that provide counseling to people with anxiety, depression, and psychological distress.
    h. We value Christian churches and missions in solidarity engaged in local communities.

4. We, in recognition of the challenges and opportunities, resolve the following:

    a. We resolve to hold fast the belief in Jesus Christ as the unshakable unique anchor in times of uncertainty, proclaiming the gospel of salvation in the contexts and situations where we are, and committing to the expansion of the kingdom of God and the fulfillment of the will of God on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10; 28:19-20).
    b. We resolve to be innovative and agile in building up effective mission strategies, creating digital platforms, and strengthening global networks beyond the boundaries of Asia.
    c. We resolve to collaborate among Christian churches and missions by meeting the felt-needs in society, remembering the poor, the marginalized, and vulnerable groups of people, and come alongside and advocate for our persecuted Asian fellow believers (Lk 4:6-20).
    d. We resolve to equip all Asian churches to participate in cross-cultural missions by continuous education, missionary training, the provision of ministry opportunities abroad, and to establish missionary churches. (Gal. 2:7-8).
    e. We resolve to encourage local Christian churches to be self-reliant in ministries and to continue engaging in local communities.
    f. We resolve to give support to developing ministries to people in social disconnection and loneliness, and depression, recognizing the necessity of relationships.

We, therefore, declare that as God's missionary people we are called to live out and proclaim the Gospel of salvation to fulfill the Kingdom of God through the guidance of the triune God.

Amen.

THE STATE OF WORLD MISSIONS TODAY
(& THE UNFINISHED TASK)

Marvin J. Newell

The two Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua are centered on the island of New Guinea, 2000 miles east of Jakarta where we are meeting for the AMA 14th Convention. With vast area of cultural and biological diversity, these province's rainforests and mountains are inhabited by indigenous Melanesian tribes. Since the end of WWII, concerted pioneering efforts have been made to engage and evangelize the more than 250 interior tribes, the majority of which were previously untouched by the outside world.

Because roads to the island's rugged interior were non-existent (and mostly remain so today) the principle means of reaching the tribes was by small single-engine planes. Today, as back then, it is imperative that each plane be equipped with state-of-the-art navigational instruments because of the quickly changing weather conditions that can in an instant dangerously hinder visibility and flight stability. Even when "the weather closes in," trained pilots, relying on these instruments, can calculate where they are and safely navigate the terrain to either a remote outstation destination, or back to their home base.

So too we, when considering the state of missions today, can understand where we are and have confident in navigating the mission terrain, by looking at indicators available to us. There is no time in this presentation to look at all prevailing factors, but the following are the most important to understanding where the global Church presently is, and to understanding the unfinished task that remains ahead.

WORLD CHRISTIANITY IS UNDERGOING A SEISMIC SHIFT

The Church is more global and more diverse than ever before. As recent as 1970, seventy percent (70%) of Christians in the world lived in the West. As such, it was a Church identified as "west, white, and rich." Fast-forward to today and we see the Church comprised of 70% non-western peoples. As such it is generally characterized as south, of color, and generally poor. The most accurate portrait of a Christian today is that of an African female living in subsistence living conditions. Today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa, Asia and Latin America. And the largest churches in Europe consist of recently migrated majority-world believers from those areas.

The Church's trajectory took a dramatic turn in the 1970's, with the statistical center gravitating to the African nation of Mali, with projections of it continuing to slide to southeastward toward northwestern Nigeria by 2100. Accordingly, Christianity is on its first-ever southeastern trajectory.[1]

What does the seismic shift in Christianity's statistical center mean for the growing church in Asia? This reality presents Asians with increased opportunities in missions. Where the Church is firmly planted, Asian churches are larger and wealthier than ever before. God has strategically placed them close by to the majority of remaining unreached peoples. Where the church is not found in Asia, is precisely where the most unreached peoples are found as well. When it has the vision and the will, Asian churches have the unique opportunity to reach out to their unreached neighbors.

THE GLOBAL MISSIONS MOVEMENT IS LARGER AND BROADER THAN EVER BEFORE

Related to – and a logical outgrowth of the previous point – is the identity of the majority of today's missionaries. Forty years ago the majority of missionaries looked a lot like me. Two-thirds were from the North Atlantic region of the globe – Western Europe and North America. Today it's just the opposite. "Majority world missionaries" from all over the globe are dominant, making up two-thirds of the global missionary force.

Research conducted by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary reveals that many of the top missionary sending countries are now in the Global South. The United States still sends the largest number of missionaries, but per capita, several nations in the Global South are gaining quickly.

Globally, missionaries are marching forth from such countries as: Brazil, South Korea, India, South Africa, the Philippines, Mexico, China, Colombia, and Nigeria, to mention a few. And it is noteworthy that Southern missionaries go not only to other Southern countries but also to Northern countries, in a reverse direction of what was the case over much of the past two centuries.[2]

Many of these countries have initiated "back to" movements, taking the gospel back to the country from where it originally came. Modern transportation paths have opened the opportunity for this phenomenon. The once dominant Western colonizers are being re-evangelized by their former

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1. https://www.abwe.org/blog/world-christianity-undergoing-seismic-shift

2. Andrew Walls. Cited in: "Seeking God's shalom in South African cities through a new glocal togetherness," 2017.

colonies. Imagine this: Indonesians are taking the gospel back to Holland, Nigerians back to England, Brazilians back to Portugal, Filipinos back to the USA. As one missiologist has observed, the periphery of Christianity is evangelizing back to its former center.

According to theologian and missiologist Dr. Bong Rin Ro, the breakdown of cross-cultural missionaries from Asia in 2021 was:[3]

Country	Missionaries	Number of Agencies	
India	30,000	250	60% serving in India
Korea	28,039	273	
Singapore	2,000	60	
Chinese	3,000		1000 missionaries from mainland China
Philippines	600		
Japan	600		
Taiwan	560		
Hong Kong	500		
Thailand	60		

A common descriptive phrase used in recent years that you no doubt have heard is, "From everywhere to everywhere" or variations of it. And this phenomenon is true. A companion term that has gained traction is "poly-centric missions," (promoted strongly by the WEA Mission Commission) which is the reality that there are now multiple sending centers throughout the world, with missions happening from any location and going to all locations.

Being connected to one another is now seen as crucial if the remaining task is to be completed. Strategic partnerships and collaboration are now the norm. As a result, there has been an unprecedented upsurge in the formation of country-wide, regional, and global networks. "We serve the Lord better when we serve together" has become today's mantra in missions.

Accordingly, since the early twenty-first century, the profile of the average missionary has changed. Today it is not unusual to meet a missionary from Kenya sent by a church in Nairobi, funded by a mission organization in Colorado Springs (USA), who is serving in Canada within an ethnic Chinese church that speaks English. This is one example of the connections that are taking place in this new era of partnerships.

CHURCH AND MISSION ADVANCE HAS BEEN UNPRECEDENTED IN RECENT YEARS

There are cynics who are of the opinion that through the years mission societies/agencies along with missionaries haven't made that much of an impact. Seemingly, as the world population has exploded, the Church has been losing ground. Our strategies haven't worked that well, and much of our money has been wasted, it is asserted.

As an example, look at the Middle East. According to the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, the most alarming shrinking of Christianity is this West Asian region, which includes Iraq, Syria, Israel, Palestine, and Turkey. This region has experienced a precipitous

3. Bong Rin Ro. Missio Nexus webinar, 2022.

drop in Christian population, from 12.7 percent to 4.2 percent in 2020. In Iraq the Christian community has dwindled by 83 percent in less than twenty years, from around 1.5 million in 2003 to just 250,000 today. Turkey was 22 percent Christian in 1900 and is only 0.2 percent Christian today.

But before you succumb to pessimism and cynicism by allowing one world region color your missiological outlook, I encourage you to "lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest" (John 4:35). The growth of the global church is unbound! Consider what is happening in various continents:[4]

Africa: Numerically Africa is the most Christian continent today. The evangelical church has grown from 1.6 million in 1900 to 685 million in 2021. At the current rate of growth, by the year 2050 the church in Africa is expected to exceed an astonishing 1.3 billion believers. There will be more Christians in Africa then the next two continents combined![5]

Latin America: The evangelical church has grown from seven hundred thousand in 1900 to ninety-one million in 2010. Between 1960 and 2010, Peruvian evangelicals increased forty-fold in the midst of violence and social breakdown, despite 750 evangelical leaders being martyred and many others imprisoned. Over the same fifty years, the evangelical church in Brazil has grown from 3 percent of the population to an impressive 30 percent.

Asia: Christianity in Asia has experienced phenomenal growth over the past hundred years. In 1900 there were approximately 21 million Christians scattered across the continent/region, the most populous region in the world. By the year 2000 the number of Christians had increased to 280 million. More than half of the world's 8 billion people live in Asia, which is now home to some of the world's largest Evangelical mega churches. Here are a few examples:

The Calvary Temple in Hyderabad, India has a gathering space that is able to seat some 35,000 worshippers. The worship center is filled to capacity five times each Sunday beginning with a service at six o'clock in the morning. In Indonesia more than 140,000 worshippers attend Bethany Church of God in Surabaya each Sunday, while there are evangelical churches in Bali and in Jakarta with weekly attendances that exceed 8,000. Then there is the largest congregation in the world, the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, which has around 480,000 members.

Also consider North Korea. A Forbes article in 2016 estimated there were between 300,000 and 500,000 believers in that repressive country despite decades of massive, sustained persecution. Mainland China is the biggest story of all. The World Christianity Encyclopedia reported that there were about 80 million Christians in China in 2000 and estimated numbers will exceed 200 million by 2050.

4. Many of these statistics are from: "World Christianity and the Unfinished Task," by Lionel Young, 2021.

5. Yaw Perbe & Sam Ngugi Africa To The Rest, 2022.

Europe: Evangelicals are growing at an annual rate of 1.1 percent, matching the global population growth rate. Today, the three largest Protestant churches in Paris are Afro-Caribbean evangelical megachurches of a charismatic or Pentecostal bent. A study last year examined Chinese churches in Britain that were experiencing exponential growth, sometimes doubling or tripling in size in a few years. Last April, the Italian Chinese Theological Seminary opened in Rome to train Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking pastors. Some of the largest megachurches in metro London are led by Africans, including Kingsway International Christian Center, which is led by a Nigerian, Matthew Ashimolowo, and is most likely the largest church in Europe.[6]

Regardless of what is observed in any particular region of the world, overall God's global church is growing faster, both in terms of individual believers and diversity of people groups, than at any point in history. Jesus told his disciples the "gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations" (Matthew 24:14, ESV). Regardless of one's eschatology, we are witnessing the continued fulfillment of this prophecy by the on-going growth of the Church across the globe.

THERE REMAINS AN UNACCEPTABLE NUMBER OF UNENGAGED AND UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

The number of unreached peoples around the world is growing. There are now more than 3.2 billion people (more than one third of the world's population) who have little if any access to the gospel. Furthermore, many of those people are adherents to religions or worldviews that are hostile to the name of Jesus.

Steve Richardson in his book Is the Mission Still Great, states, "Our generation has access to a wealth of ethnographic information about the peoples of the world. Missions-minded Christians have built databases identifying whether each group has been engaged by a church planting team, if they have the Jesus film, if there are any known believers, how much Scripture they have in their language, and other important markers. Such tools are very helpful as we identify needs and send out workers."[7] However, let's be realistic about how far along we really are.

The country of Vietnam is a good example of a country that contains multiple people groups, many who remain unreached. Within that country of 98 million people, 118 distinct people groups our found. Sadly, of these, 79 remain unreached. This situation holds true of most countries across southeast and central Asia.

Worldwide, there are a total of 17,468 people groups. But of these 7,419 remain "unreached" (41%), containing 3.2 billion people. These are not only people who don't believe in Jesus, these are people that do not know there is a Jesus to believed in.

And then there are the completely unengaged, a subset of the unreached. These peoples are also labeled "Frontier Peoples." It is commendable that in recent years there has been an acceleration in giving gospel access to unengaged people groups. According to the Finishing the Task Coalition, between the years 2005 and 2020, 3,158 people groups were engaged for the first time by 5,159 missionary teams.

Of those that are still unengaged, according to the just completed research conducted by the Vision 5:9 Network, 1700 people groups remain unengaged. Breaking them down according to religious blocks, Vision 5:9 delineates the following: 600 are Tribal, 500 Hindu, 400 Muslim, 100 Buddhist, and 100 non-religious. Vision 5:9's aspiration is to see every unengaged group engaged by December 31, 2025.

In summary, the unreached need not remain unnoticed. Our passion should be to expose their gospel deprivation to gospel privileged communities, bringing awareness of those who still have no gospel access.

THERE REMAINS A DISPARITY IN BOTH THE MISSION FORCE AND MISSION FUNDING FOR ACCOMPLISHING THE REMAINING TASK

The responsibility of reaching the unreached was not lost on past generations. Samuel Mills, who was instrumental in propelling America into missions, at the famous "Haystack prayer meeting" in 1806, challenged a small band of fellow students with the now famous words, "We can do it, if we will."

Today, we have all the resources at our disposal to finish the remaining task. We have more and better-educated people, more financial resources, more material resources, more diverse global missionary force participating, and more advanced technology available to us than any previous generation. However, the one thing most lacking, the thing in which many today seem most deficient, is the will to act. Flipping Mill's statement: We can't do it if we don't have the will to do it!

Disparity in Mission Force

Although we have at our disposal all those resources noted above, there is a woeful disproportion of them not allocated to reaching the unreached. According to the newest edition of the World Christian Encyclopedia[8], the total number of missionary workers globally is estimated at 425,000 (this includes all traditions). Now, on the surface, that seems like a lot of message bearers crossing cultures with the Good News. But the deeper question is "What percentage of these workers are laboring among the unreached?" And that's where it gets sticky. Here is what the

6. Tish Harrison Warren. "The Global Transformation of Christianity Is Here." New York Times, March 26, 2023.

7. Steve Richardson, Is the Commission Still Great?: 8 Myths about Missions and What They Mean for the Church, Moody Publishers, 2022. Kindle location 2221.

8. Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zuro, World Christian Encyclopedia, 3rd edition, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019.

research tells us.

As mentioned, globally there are 425,000 missionaries. With the proliferation of the Majority World Church coupled with its sending, missionaries today are being sent from most any nation in the world. But the disparity of where they minister remains. Those who minister in places that have "full access" to the gospel is 326,060 or 77%. Those ministering in areas where there is "some access" is 87,000 or 20%. But inexcusably, those who are ministering in unreached, "no access" countries are a mere 11,940, or 3% of the total missionary force. Does that not sound like a disparity to you?

Disparity in Mission Funding

We can also consider the matter of mission funding. The amount of dollars that is given to all of missions annually is about US$45 billion. It is estimated that approximately $450 million of that is utilized to reach the unreached. That amounts to 1% of all mission giving. Given the vastness of the task of reaching the remaining unreached, that's a minuscule amount.

ADJUSTING TO A DE-GLOBALIZED WORLD

Finally, there is one more big-picture global trend that needs to be considered: it appears that the era of globalization has come to an end. Some posit that globalization is already dead (having died with the onslaught of COVID-19), and that we are presently living it its wake.[9]

Simply defined, globalization is the increased connectedness and interdependence of world cultures and economies on a worldwide basis. The past roughly 30 years – 1990 (fall of Soviet communism) to 2019 beginning of the COVID pandemic) – were the golden years of global interconnectedness. During that period more people rose out of poverty, especially in mainland China, than in any other era in human history.

Deglobalization, on the other hand, is the process of diminished interdependence and integration between world cultures and economies on a worldwide basis. One of the main indicators of deglobalization is the demographic implosion of major world populations. It is projected that this will most acutely be felt in Asia's two largest countries, China and India, but with most of Europe highly affected as well. The signs of deglobalization can be categorized in three areas:

- Reshoring: the transfer of a business operation that was moved overseas back to the country from which it was originally located.
- Strengthening of Regional Blocks: ASEAN, NAFTA, EU, AfCFTA, (African Continental Free Trade Areaz), MERCOSUR (Latin America).
- Shorter supply chains of goods between countries.

Implication for missions:

1. Globalization accelerated missions from 1990 to 2019. Mission workers were creatively able ("CAN") to access all parts of the world with very few restrictions. Will protective governmental restrictions now curtail that access?

2. Globalization allowed for the advancement of Business As Missions (BAM). Foreigners were welcomed to come and bring their money with them. Will there be a curtailment of BAM workers because of new protectionism by countries that no longer want foreign workers in their countries?

3. Globalization permitted world access for "majority world" missionaries. As already mentioned, missions "from everywhere to everywhere" became a heartening reality! The question now is: will deglobalization bring about a corresponding global deceleration of majority world missions because of prejudicial limited access? Especially concerning is the probable curtailment of visas of missionaries from the "global south."

CONCLUSION

Just as the mission planes in Papua are equipped with state-of-the-art navigational instruments so pilots can know how to navigate the treacherous terrain, so too we, when considering the state of missions today, can understand where we are and how to navigate the missional terrain by pondering the six mentioned indicators. Now that it is understood where the Church presently is, let's wisely ponder where we need to be heading as we step into the future while on mission with Christ.

As we do that, a good reminder comes from mission executive Steve Richardson who concludes his book with these words of wisdom:

Whether we find ourselves encouraged or discouraged by the present status and momentum of global missions, our bottom-line responsibility is to faithfully pursue the work that Jesus has given each of us. Our job is to be the best stewards of our lives and resources that we can be. Don't yield to cynicism or apathy."[10]

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10. Richardson, ibid. Kindle location 2374.

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9. Much of this information is a summary of Dr. Ted Esler's Missio Nexus webinar: "The End of Globalization," presented February 13, 2023.

CHALLENGES FROM CHANGES ARE OPPORTUNITIES: REDUCING GAPS IN RECOVERING

Irene Lee

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on our lives and has fundamentally changed the way we live, work, and interact with each other. Challenges are for everyone, regardless of class, learning, or wealth. However, there is a gap in the speed of recovering and seeking a way to the "normal world. This paper will examine the changes since the pandemic, the challenges since we entered the era, and the opportunities for current and future missions and ministries. By sharing where the gap exists, some practical suggestions for reducing the gap, which can be another meaning of our mission, will be presented.

INTRODUCTION

Things we only heard in words and only saw in movies happen in our lives every day since entering the pandemic era, and there were many trials and errors in the process of going through them. As unprecedented and unpredictable side effects arose, we were busy finding solutions on a case-by-case basis and are still solving problems. Recognizing there will be no chance to be virus-free, we admit our life will go with the situation rather than eliminating the issue. Even as the saying goes, "living together with Covid, we are attempting to return to "normal life by changing our attitude toward problems from escape to acceptance.

The world has changed more rapidly in less than five years than in the past. The change has a negative part but can also be positive, depending on the perspective. What we are currently experiencing is happening to anyone, regardless of class, learning, or wealth. However, there may be a gap between those who have the essence of this world and those who do not, at the speed of recovering from the impacts or finding exits from difficult situations caused by the impacts.

The following will look at changes since the pandemic, challenges in the present, and opportunities for the future and share a few things to support finding out what we can do to reduce the gap and putting it into practice, which can be another meaning of our mission.

CHANGES SINCE WE ENTERED IN THE PANDEMIC ERA

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the world. The impacts are representatively on public health, work and education, travel and tourism, the economy, and mental health.

Awareness of Public Health

As public health became compulsory, interest in individual health and the concept of public health were strengthened. COVID-19 has brought public health to the forefront of people's minds and has increased awareness of hygiene's importance.

The Concept of Home

In terms of the way of life, the perception of the home has changed from the primary purpose of eating, sleeping, and resting to a "hub or "total space. It is because more time is spent at home. People started making it a multi-purpose space by reducing outside entry and changing the environment so they could stay home as much as possible. Worship services are more "available at the place where we usually spend time, and worship at home becomes abundant and accessible because of publicly shared materials.

Educational Modality

Many schools were not ready to deliver teaching and learning channels when schools had to close due to the pandemic at the beginning. There was not enough time to restructure the curriculum or run a trial model by testing an existing learning tool. They were just busy adopting a new technology to seek to connect with learners. Luckily, countries that already began developing tools and technologies for online learning did not take much time to provide regular classes to students. However, the curriculum was not the same as face-to-face courses. Unfortunately, students in communities and countries where educational technology has lagged behind have lost their learning. A learning opportunity gap due to the lack of access to remote learning may be caused by the limited availability of electricity, connectivity, devices, and accessible technologies. The gap is more significant for children from low-income households, children with disabilities, and girls, especially in communities where discrimination and social and gender norms strongly exist.

Moreover, younger students experienced less access to remote learning, which resulted in more learning loss than older students. For kids in pre-K, as it is a pivotal age of development, such a change in learning modality impacted them more since remote learning was not accessible to them as much as older students. According to the report by World Bank, "The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery (Rogers et al., 2021), the data shows that 258 million

primary- and secondary-school age children and youth were out of school, which means the world was already experiencing a learning crisis even before the Pandemic. As pointed out above, learning losses were more significant for students of lower socioeconomic status in various countries, including Ghana, Mexico, and Pakistan (Ahlgren et al., 2022). In South Africa and Mexico, girls faced more considerable learning losses because the gendered impact of school closures on learning still emerged during the Pandemic.

CHALLENGES THAT WE ARE COPING WITH

We discussed the changes human beings have experienced since 2019, when the pandemic struck. Such changes challenged us because we dealt with unprecedented questions and cases, and such challenges are still around us.

Anxiety and fear
Due to the uncertainty of the situation, which applies to all areas of life, including work status, people feel anxious or fearful about returning to their regular routines and activities.

Economic recovery
The pandemic has severely impacted many businesses, and due to the loss of jobs, many families have gone through financial difficulties. Although back to normal status, it may take time for the economy to recover fully.

Adjusting to social interactions
People took time to adjust to social distance and distance relationships when the pandemic happened. Now, they need to adjust them back to social interactions. After a long period of social distancing, some people may feel awkward or uncomfortable when it comes to interacting with others in person.

The pandemic has shown that remote work is possible for many industries, which may lead to more flexible work arrangements. As we already saw it has been happening, the home became a multi-purpose space.

At the beginning of the pandemic, it seemed the rate of crimes in communities decreased, but it was mainly because people started staying at home rather than going outside. However, crimes and violence in hidden places increased. According to the report by the UN (2021), "Millions of women, children and men worldwide are out of work, out of school and without social support in the continuing COVID-19 crisis, leaving them at greater risk of human trafficking.

In addition, data and reports show that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, have intensified since the outbreak of Covid-19 (UN Women). While spending more time with families because of the lockdown was advantageous, the frequency of arguments and conflicts among family members has increased.

While shifts to remote work have somewhat improved the distribution of household responsibilities, women continue to take on more of the chores and shoulder more of the responsibility for overall household management. Such increased responsibilities negatively impact women's mental health, driving increased rates of anxiety and feelings of dissatisfaction (Yuko, 2022).

SEEKING OPPORTUNITIES

Although it seems the pandemic leaves us only with challenges and difficulties, such challenges can be opportunities for us.

Increased focus on public health
The Pandemic alerted the world about public health, which is not only for us but also for families and others. The emphasis on public health by the government and local community may lead to increased investment in healthcare and disease prevention, which can support our medical missions and ministries. We must be attentive to collaborative opportunities to support those we pray for.

Embracing new technologies
The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of new technologies. National and international organizations recognized the gap in learning opportunities in underdeveloped countries due to the limited electricity and technologies that became larger due to the pandemic. Such recognition can create more opportunities for us to reach out to more people faster and easier. For example, when doctors, nurses, or therapists do not need to see patients, we can connect a local medical team with professional doctors remotely to see patients virtually (Yuko, 2022).

More widely accepted teletherapy
Since there is an increased need for mental health, counseling, and therapy can be good resources for ministries. Virtual counseling or connection (not home visits) can be good sources for remote people who need someone to talk to and pray together (Yuko, 2022).

Flexible work arrangements
The pandemic has shown that remote work is possible for many industries, which may lead to more flexible work arrangements. As we already saw it has been happening, the home became a multi-purpose space. Home means more than before, with more functions as people spend more time at home. We

can encourage people to utilize their homes for cell or small group activities rather than only doing them at church.

Increased appreciation for social connections

The pandemic highlighted the importance of social connections. One of the great opportunities in the post-pandemic era is being more "acceptable. Generally, people resist changes because of fear of uncertainty and an unknown future; however, they had to confront the fear to continue their life. Since entering the pandemic, people have become more accepting and appreciative of social connections.

It is important to review changes and challenges because we can develop our missions and ministries based on what we learned through the changes and challenges that the world and communities are facing.

1. Women's Ministry

As shown earlier, the impact of Covid-19 happened more negatively for women and younger children. In some countries, resources and efforts have been diverted from violence against women's response to immediate COVID-19 relief (UN Women). As we learned that the impact on women's mental health drives increased rates of anxiety and feelings of dissatisfaction, we can empower women by supporting them spiritually and mentally. By building and cultivating a supportive community, we can support them to encourage one another in difficult situations. They can help one another stand firmly with God in their home and work positions by sharing information and resources. With realistic and topical sharing, we can help more effectively women who struggle due to limited information and awareness about available services and limited access to support services. Although opening is challenging in certain cultural contexts, we can encourage them to recognize that they have a supporting community in which they can share and be relaxed, by creating a "secure place to share.

2. Children and Youth Ministry

The times are particularly difficult for those growing into adulthood and finding their place in the world. There is no doubt that the pandemic fairly punched everyone; however, it could be varied in the speed of adjusting to the "new normal world that is different from the normal that we used to feel comfortable with. For older youth and young adults, marriages, dating, and jobs, some youth lost their celebration and milestones in their life, such as graduation, entering school, and leaving school. They might be confused about what is important and what is expected and common in their life. We can support our younger generations by attracting and including them via virtual meetings, emails, texts, letters, and advertisements. Tuning to their ongoing struggles, we can help them focus on their life with God and find and prioritize what is important. All contacts might

sound geng to them, but there can be a "click moment for some (Powell, 2020).

Whether faster or slower, the transition back to the normal world after COVID-19 will likely present both challenges and opportunities. With the recognition of challenges, we can maximize our opportunities in our mission and ministries. While doing so, it is important to remain adaptable and open-minded as we navigate this process.

The following are suggestions reported by an international organization (Britto, 2022), which we can take away some for our missions and ministries.

- Ensure parents understand the value of education and empower them to support their children's learning and development;
- Ensure all children return to school and are supported to catch-up on lost learning so that they can master foundational learning and numeracy skills and gain 21st century skills;
- Invest in teachers and promote opportunities for professional development and access to the adequate tools;
- Accelerate the digital transformation to promote inclusion, equality and quality education for all children.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on our lives and has fundamentally changed the way we live, work, and interact with each other. Each country experiences a different speed of going back to the normal world. Many people look forward to returning to normalcy in places where vaccines become more widely available. Whether faster or slower, the transition back to the normal world after COVID-19 will likely present both challenges and opportunities. With the recognition of challenges, we can maximize our opportunities in our mission and ministries. While doing so, it is important to remain adaptable and open-minded as we navigate this process.

We are experiencing an unprecedented case, Covid-19; however, there is already an example of how we can connect to share God's love, as shown in the Bible. The apostle Paul sent letters to people while he was in prison to get connected with them and encourage them to walk with God.

"Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. (Philippians 1:12 - 14, New International Version)

Paul's ministry was not limited by his "social distancing, but the limited situation somewhat greatly enhanced it. His positive acceptance and openness to the situation have been impacting people through his teaching, exhortation, warnings, and prayer in our hands for over 2000 years.

We can take a moment to think about effective ministries for distance and strategies not only for the immediate present but also for future plans. Being remindful of the opportunities given by the challenging era, we can propel sharing His love without excuse.

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MISSIONS IN THE "NETWORK SOCIETY"

Eldon Porter

One of the most significant challenges we face today, as a Global Church, is to know how to work together in unity in the face of difficult and complex situations. Christ said He would build His Church and He is doing just that. While we would all claim to be part of Christ's Church and that He is our Lord - yet so often each member is doing their own ministry in isolation. Is there a way that we can achieve greater unity? The good news is that today we can witness how Christ is leading His Global Church to work together in unity.

INTRODUCTION

We no longer live in the industrial or post-industrial age. Sociologists say we are now in a "network society". The term network society is an expression we began to hear in the late 1990s and was related to "the social, political, economic and cultural changes caused by the spread of networked, digital information and communications technologies". This definition is taken from Wikipedia.

The Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells published his landmark book, "The Rise of the Network Society" in 1996. Since then the secular world has aggressively wrestled with the question of how one's organization can best engage and thrive in this new reality. Unfortunately, the leadership of the Evangelical Church is only just now beginning to reflect on this challenge.

After completing a program at the University of Colorado on Network Theory and Network Leadership I have focused on studying how the different parts of the Global Church connect and collaborate around difficult and complex challenges and specifically the role networks can play in encouraging this. I currently track over 750 networks globally and mentor network leaders into more effective ministry.

For the purpose of this paper, I make a distinction between a network and a partnership. This distinction is best understood from the leadership perspective. A network is an open space where totally autonomous entities come together because of a shared passion or a common geographic context. In the pre-network society, individuals and organizations were associated with a network as a matter of identity. They were part of this group and not that group. But now, in our current reality, Individual parties are attracted to the space because of the information they can acquire and the connections they can make - which ultimately helps them function more effectively. They associate in various degrees with multiple networks.

On the other hand, a partnership is something that takes place between different parties that know each other and who share a common vision for something that they can accomplish together, something neither of them could accomplish on their own. Leading a partnership requires the constant clarification of the objective, the celebration of achievements toward the objective, and the constant building of trust between the members. Trust grows - encouraging the partnership relationship to grow from one of communication, to cooperation, and then finally to collaboration. Well-run networks are empowering and are constantly birthing partnerships.

The Evangelical Context:

While we live in a network society, our reality as evangelicals is further nuanced by three factors - each driving us into a new world that we must come to understand. The first of these drivers is the fact that there are believers today in every country of the world. Christ said He would build His Church and He is doing just that. These believers know their context and understand how God is working. It is incumbent on us to hear them if we ever expect to work together in unity. And the good news is that we can now hear those that usually are not heard.

The second driver is the technology that allows believers from almost anywhere in the world to connect with others around the world. This, perhaps more than anything else, is broadening the playing field of those involved in cross-cultural collaborative ministry to now include those who in the past could only support others who "were sent". Today we see individuals, ministries, and local churches getting involved in what God is doing without having to work through a traditional mission agency to be sent to where the unreached used to live. I am not at all suggesting that being sent to where they all used to live is no longer necessary but rather that being sent is no longer the only option. Technology-enabled collaborative ministries are now taking place between those who are sent and those who remain at home - as they work together with diaspora-rich unreached people groups.

And the third driver that is redefining our reality is what the United Nations calls the Global Diaspora Movement. We are told that there are over 350 million people who have moved or are in the process of moving from their historic context of origin to another part of the world. While in the past one needed to "be sent" to other parts of the world to share the Gospel with an unreached people group, today we learn that the vast majority of the unreached people groups have parts of their ethnic group now living as migrant workers or immigrants in locations in close proximity

to Christ followers. And while they are dispersed, they are in constant communication with family and friends back in their original geographic context.

This new global reality is requiring significant changes. Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric, is famously quoted as saying: "When the rate of change inside your organization is less than the rate of change outside your organization, the end is in sight". How we, as the individual parts of the Global Church, adapt to this new reality is fundamental for effectiveness in ministry. Working independently and in isolation is no longer acceptable. Perhaps the most challenging changes are being faced by those leading mission agencies that were developed pre-network society. These agencies find themselves trying to sustain organizational structures that were so relevant at one time but are now a financial burden.

Different Kinds of Evangelical Networks:

Networks are not organizations as such but rather spaces where different parts of the Body of Christ come together. We find different parts of the Global Church coming together in different kinds of networks.

There are both geographically defined as well as issue-focused networks. There are two categories of those networks defined by geography. First, we have the evangelical alliances representing the believers both at the country level as well as at the regional level. The second category of geographically defined networks is connected to the task of missions. These in turn are divided into two categories. The first of which represents a missions movement from a country or region where the church is fairly established. There are approximately 70 of these mission movement networks. The second category is what I refer to as mission focus networks - in countries or regions where the church is weak. There are 28 of these mission-focus networks.

The second broad category of networks is those we refer to as issue-focused. For the most part, these are global in nature and focus on a specific challenge or issue. These cover a broad spectrum such as working with refugees, reaching Buddhists or Muslims, pastoral training, orality, children and youth ministries, reaching Muslims, business as mission, orphans, working with those that have been trafficked, church planting, sports, media, education, discipleship, etc. There are hundreds of different issue focus networks - or spaces where those that share a common passion come together to learn from each other and to find potential partners for ministry

If God has placed in your heart a passion for a specific issue, then you can connect with others who share that same passion regardless of where they live around the world. These networks are beginning to fill the role of authentic leadership originating from ministry practitioners.

SOME KEY NETWORK PRINCIPLES

These are basic principles associated with the network society both in the secular as well as in the Evangelical world. Understanding these principles will help one know how best to engage and function in this new reality. Our world has radically changed.

Bounded Set & Centered Set:

One of the main principles associated with the discussion of network theory revolves around how one sees themself in relation to others. In the pre-network society, one saw himself as part of a closed entity. You were either a member or you were not a member. The collaboration that took place was between members of that entity and partners were those from the outside who supported the activities of those on the inside, those in the bounded set.

But today, individuals and ministries connect through technology with various groupings because of shared passions not because they belong to the same entity. This is referred to as functioning in a centered set perspective. They see themselves as highly interconnected with others both within and outside of their organization with whom they share something in common. When they speak of "we" they refer to themselves and others that they connect to and partner with - regardless of where they live around the world or what organization they are officially members of.

Network Leadership:

I want to be very clear on something. While I suggest that those leading networks would have much greater impact if they did so from a centered set perspective, I am not saying that what they currently do from a bounded set framework is bad. I'm just saying that they could have far greater influence if they understood how those they try to lead are in fact looking for leadership. People follow differently in the network society and so leaders must lead differently.

There are two primary global networks in Evangelical circles - the World Evangelical Alliance and the Lausanne Movement. Both of these tend to function as bounded sets with "their sub-networks" focused on regions and issues. The disconnect is seen when a leader of a particular issue focus network is given the title of "Director" when in fact no one engaging to any degree in that network space would consider the individual to be "their director".

Network leaders need to understand that those they seek to lead follow differently than they did pre-network society. Today followers seek to be influenced by those that create spaces where they can learn how God is working, where they can acquire good practitioner-sourced information, and where they can discover potential ministry partners. They are seeking what they think will help them be more effective in what they sense the Lord leading them to do. The effectiveness of a network leader is determined by the

degree to which they empower those they serve into more effective collaborative ministry relationships. While the secular world has tools to measure this, Evangelicals are seen as the only ones who still measure their "effectiveness" in leading a network by how many attend their events.

Multi-Level Networks:

My observation has led me to conclude that those global or regional networks, under which other networks are grouped, tend to function more in the bounded set leadership perspective. We see this with the regional evangelical alliances as well as regional missions networks which in theory serve or represent other networks at the country levels which in turn engage directly with practitioners. From the ministry practitioner's perspective, they are becoming less relevant.

Two Leadership Role Perspectives:

Those in Evangelical network leadership roles fall along a spectrum of how they perceive their role. On one end of that spectrum are those who hold to a "leader-centric" perspective. They feel the focus of leadership is on them, given their gifting and their experience. For them, they are key to influencing others. It is almost as if they see their network as a platform from which they perform. On the other end of the spectrum are those who hold to a "follower-centric" perspective. They see their primary role as that of creating a space where their primary constituents are empowered with an understanding of how God is working, with good information, and great connections. In the network society, these individuals have far more influence than leader-centric leaders even though they are not usually in the spotlight.

Network Platform:

The term network platform is used when describing the core identity of a particular network. The network platform for the Refugee Highway Partnership global network is "working with refugees". The core identity or platform for the European Freedom Network is "working with rescued trafficked people in Europe". Networks that understand themselves as functioning in the centered set reality build collaborative relationships with other networks connected in some way with their platform, in order to better empower their primary constituents. Those networks that still function in the bounded set world try to create other in-house networks for the different issues related to their platform.

Primary & Secondary Constituents:

Every network has both primary and secondary constituents. The primary constituents of the AMTB - the Brazilian missions network are the Brazilian churches, pastors, ministry leaders, and mission agency leaders that make up the "Brazilian missions movement". AMTB's secondary constituents would be those networks that would bring added value to their effort to serve and empower their primary constituents. Some of their secondary constituents would be the networks representing the believers and others serving in areas of the world where the Brazilian missions movement is focused. They would also be those focused on training pastors in newly planted churches, the networks representing media ministries, those working with refugees, etc.

A Network Engagement Strategy:

The number of networks and the degree to which they are engaged is unique to each ministry or organization. But the average small organization is intentionally engaging with about 35 different networks while large mission agencies are engaging with well over 120 different networks. Those living in the centered set world do not see themselves as joining an organization when they engage with a network. They engage to the degree to which they find what they are looking for.

There are four different degrees of network engagement, be that for geographically defined or issue-focused networks. The first degree is to watch a network's website, their Facebook page, and subscribe to any bulletins that they send out. One is seeking to learn how God is working, good information on the context, and the potential of finding good partners - so that one's ministry is empowered to be more effective. The second degree of engagement is to attend an event, either virtually or in person. Again, one is looking to learn how God is working, for information on the context, and connection that will empower one for more effective ministry. If the network is proving to be an outstanding space where one is empowered for more effective ministry, then you may decide to go deeper - moving to the third degree of engagement by connecting with those of the inner core who know the subject or region deeply and from whom one can learn and grow. And if the value of a network is such that the individual or ministry feels it is worth their strongest commitment, they then move to the fourth degree of engagement. This level of commitment is exercised by offering to join and support the network's leadership team in order to expand one's influence in that particular area.

Collaborative Ecosystems:

The term collaborative ecosystem describes a space where various networks, that intersect around a particular challenge come together - so that ministry practitioners can discover their unique role within a highly interconnected and complex situation. For example, the Ukraine crisis connects with individuals and ministries connected with at least twelve different networks. These networks include the Evangelical leaders of Ukraine, the WEA, the European Evangelical Alliance, Lausanne Europe, Refugee Highway Partnership Europe, European Freedom Network, Member Care Networks, as well as

the evangelical alliances from the different European countries in addition to those alliances from the countries receiving Ukrainian refugees.

There are a number of complex challenges requiring collaborative ecosystems in order for the challenge to be effectively addressed. These include the need to encourage effective collaboration between the different ministries serving the diaspora moving into large urban centers around the world. Another area we see today where collaborative ecosystems are needed is around the unreached people groups that are diaspora rich. We know for a fact that there are Rohingya Muslim background believers, believers who have ministered to the Rohingya people, and now believers in over 57 different countries of the world who are reaching out to serve the Rohingya refugees coming into their neighborhoods. Today we have the technology that allows us to create space for all of these folk to connect with each other, learn about resources that others have developed, and share what God is doing with the Rohingya in their area, pray together, and function in unity as the part of God's Church that He is using to build His Church among the Rohingya.

CONCLUSION

Never before in the history of mankind have we had a church in every country of the world, technology that enables us to interact with fellow believers from around the world, and where our local context reflects the global reality due primarily to the global diaspora movement. While the potential for collaboration between different parts of the Global Church exists, our current leaders are just now beginning to understand the need for radical change in how they lead or rather empower different parts of the global church to work "in unity" as part of what God is doing to build His Church. .

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Eldon Porter grew up as a missionary kid in Nigeria and then served for 27 years in Latin America with a large international Western mission agency. Recognizing the huge changes taking place around the world, he left the formal world of missions to do a program at the University of Colorado on Network Theory and Network Leadership. Sociologists say that we now live in the Network Society. For the last 13 yrs, Eldon has been researching how the different parts of the Global Church come together in collaborative spaces around difficult and complex challenges. He tracks about 750 networks globally and mentors network leaders as well as those serving in mission agency leadership roles as Chief Collaboration Officers. Understanding the part your network or ministry plays as part of the Global Church is foundational for effective collaborative ministry.

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SOLVING THE TRAINING PROBLEM: BEST PRACTICES IN ONLINE LEADERSHIP EDUCATION IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

John Edmiston

INTRODUCTION

COVID19 introduced hundreds of millions of people to online education. E-learning has become normal, especially for the in-service training and licensing of active professionals. Learners are now used to virtual meetings, uploading assignments and engaging with content without the personal presence of an instructor. The pandemic also led to a rapid development of the supporting software and pedagogy which we can now benefit from in the work of missions.

Learning in 2023 takes place in a digital ocean and we can decide to sink with traditional learning only, or swim by embracing e-learning as appropriate.

As the management guru W.E. Deming once said "Every system is perfectly designed to give you exactly what you are getting today". (https://www.azquotes.com/author/3858-W_Edwards_Deming)

The theological education we have today is the direct result of the systems of theological education we have today. If we want better results we will have to change the system.

W.E. Deming also said:

"The two basic rules of life are: 1) Change is inevitable 2) Everybody resists change"

and "It is not necessary to change; survival is not mandatory."

Theological education needs to change profoundly in a post-COVID world!

As we reimagine 21st century theological education post-COVID here are some questions that engineers designing advanced project technology use:

1. Using no jargon, describe what problem you are trying to solve.
2. How is it done today, and what are the limitations of the current approach?
3. What is new in your approach, and why do you think it will be successful?
4. If you are successful, what difference will it make?
5. What are the risks, and how will you mitigate them?
6. How much will it cost, and how long will it take?
7. What are the midterm and final "exams" to check for success?

(Questions taken from: https://www.gettingsmart.com/2023/04/11/embracing-the-darpa-model-for-edtech-innovation-charting-the-course-with-gpt-4-and-beyond/)

The *problem* (Q1. above) is: providing appropriate and useful theological education to apostolic practitioners of the gospel, especially in indigent and remote regions of the world, who will start multiplying movements of the gospel in their nations and people groups.

The way it is done today (Q2. above) is mainly via personal presence methods such as Bible colleges, seminars, visiting preachers and teachers and church-based training. The limitations are extraction, irrelevance, lack of access to world-class expertise, higher than feasible cost structures, and lack of adaptability to context.

Between 70% to 90% of the world's pastors have very little theological training. [90% of pastors lack proper theological training, major conference is told | Evangelicals Now (e-n.org.uk)] This urgent problem will not be solved by building thousands of million-dollar Bible college facilities. Also, the days of sending $5000 to sponsor a pastor training seminar in Africa are rapidly vanishing as various governments clamp down on organizations sending funds for charitable purposes. Online training and TEE (Theological Education by Extension) are going to be the main solutions for grass-roots theological education and most of this training is going to be delivered digitally, and in some places via mobile devices and Internet cafes.

The new approach (Q3. above) is the use of online leadership training as outlined in this paper. It will be successful in certain contexts such as:

1. Where the students are "digital natives" who prefer to interact by computer and who do not particularly want to meet with others in a classroom on a fixed schedule.
2. Training of scattered specialists who would otherwise have to fly in and pay hotel expenses.
3. Asynchronous learning where the participants are scattered across various time zones.
4. Short courses of four to six weeks duration, especially in-service training of people who already have some background knowledge of the topic.
5. Online resourcing of church-based training with PDF manuals, MP3 files and videos, this training may include some Zoom or WhatsApp calls.
6. Online training supplemented by in-house intensives. This model is used by many universities for their post-graduate courses.
7. Live-streaming of training events and seminars from a venue that has limited capacity.
8. When the educator wants a video or audio recording of the seminar available for student review after the training is over and desires discussion to take place in an online classroom.
9. If there is a high probability of student cheating on tests, then computer-based assessment can

randomize questions and check for plagiarism and even detect use of AI such as ChatGPT.

10. If mobile devices are the only technology available in a remote area then training can be sent to their phones/tablets via email or WhatsApp and a WhatsApp group can serve as a local online classroom.

11. In rural ministry contexts where extraction of students to a major city for long-term training is both financially formidable and often ineffective because the students tend to remain in the major city rather than returning to their rural parishes.

12. Where a large physical gathering of Christians would trigger surveillance or even direct persecution and the Internet is not yet under strict surveillance by the host nation.

If we are successful *what difference* (Q4. above) will this new approach (culturally adapted online learning) make? Millions will have access to culturally relevant Christian leadership training, on site, in their community of practice, at a cost they can afford.

The *risks* (Q5. above) are preoccupation with technology, government surveillance, power and Internet outages and a high student drop-out rate if the pedagogy is not done well.

How much will it *cost* (Q6. above)? About $10 per student per subject based on our experience in grass-roots training. It is certainly not free, even with the leverage of technology.

How long will it take? About eighteen months to two years to set up and do a high-quality trial run in most cases.

What are the mid-term and final exams (Q7. above)? Student engagement, course completion, and demonstrated acquisition of the required leadership skills and theological perspectives.

Considerable experimentation is necessary before you find your feet with a solution that works for all stakeholders: students, parents of students, faculty, administration, donors, institutions, accrediting agencies and denominational hierarchies. Tweaking is just part of growing.

THE APOSTLES WERE VERY SMART

The New Testament apostles knew first-century culture, because it was their culture and they knew Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew and Latin because these languages were their languages. They either had known Jesus personally or they knew other apostles personally. They could heal the sick, raise the dead and start Christian revivals. No theologian alive today knows what those original apostles knew. We reconstruct their world and exegete their Scriptures. They lived in their world and wrote their Scriptures.

The leaders in the early Church were trained in and from the Scriptures, through personal mentoring and by apprenticeship to leading active practitioners of the faith. The early church leaders were spiritually formed through a process similar to an educational process known as Action, Reflection, Action.

Action-reflection-action (ARA) is an educational process that involves taking action, reflecting on the results of that action, and then taking further action based on that reflection[1]. It is a cyclical process of learning that helps one become a better learner by reflecting, testing assumptions, and asking questions to resolve complex ministry problems[2]. The process is cyclical because as action leads to reflection, a new action develops, and the process repeats[3]. ARA is generally done in a small group with a team approach where members equally contribute and learn/teach each other[12]. [Source: Conversation with Bing, 4/4/2023(1) What is Action-reflection learning (ARL)? | TalentLyft. https://www.talentlyft.com/en/resources/what-is-action-reflection-learning-arl Accessed 4/4/2023.]

ARA can be complimented with digital resources. We do not need to lock ministry candidates in a brick building far from home for four years. We can put them alongside apostolic leadership, seeing faith in action, and learning as they go, with digital resources being available to assist them in the process of Action-Reflection-Action. So, we can have Holy Spirit impartation, theological education and personal refection working together in the life of the minister of the gospel. ARA also readily lends itself to deep contextualization.

THE APOSTOLIC SKILL SET IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Things have changed. The Book of Acts was at the beginning of the road of the gospel, now we are nearing the end of the road with the good news encountering almost every tribe, tongue and nation. Yet the apostolic skill set is not too different: proclamation, teaching, baptizing, and discipling along with the clear demonstration of spiritual power, the defense of the faith in the face of magicians and false gospels, the correction of error, the establishment of new communities of faith, dealing with local issues, maintaining order in the Church, and setting up competent and godly local church leadership. Each component of the apostolic skill set has different training requirements. The defense of the faith in the public square in the 21st century may well require a Ph.D. in Theology or Apologetics, while evangelizing and baptizing people may require little more than a good apprenticeship under a local evangelist. Also new offices have emerged that are not mentioned in the New Testament such as worship leader, youth minister and Christian counselor.

We find ourselves with the task of defining what each apostolic or five-fold ministry skill looks like in a particular culture and defining the educational foundation that must undergird the acquisition of that

skill. We are required to ask questions such as:

1. May this skill be acquired by local apprenticeship or personal discipleship alone?
2. Does it also require some theological input at an informal, non-formal or formal level?
3. Can the theological input be delivered remotely through some kind of distance education or online educational strategy?
4. What kind of professional ethics are required for this ministry skill and how are these professional ethics best imparted in this time, place and culture?
5. What kind of spiritual practices and competencies are required for person to have spiritual authority in that context? For instance, are they required to heal the sick, cast out demons or engage in spiritual warfare in order to be seen as a man/woman of God?
6. Which learning modalities (visual, auditory, reading/writing, kinesthetic) are best suited for imparting that particular ministry skill in its context? How do the trainees want to be taught?
7. What kind of workshop training is necessary for the formation of a skilled reflective practitioner and how much of this workshop training needs to be face-to-face as opposed to by some virtual means?
8. In an ideal situation, what would be the correct balance (for each skill) between: apprenticeship/discipleship, ARA workshops, lectures and personal research?
9. Is the skill rapidly evolving (such as the counseling of victims of trauma) so that constant in-service training and certification is required? Can this in-service training be adequately delivered online?
10. Is this skill a skill that the government of that nation will have some say about and require formal accreditation and licensing?

WHY INNOVATIVE COURSES SOMETIMES DON'T SUCCEED

There have been numerous attempts at innovative and transformational theological education that have run for a few years and then disappeared. Some of the reasons for this lack of success include:

1. They are marginal to the institution they are part of and are cut once funds get short
2. The "champion" of the innovative educational strategy leaves the institution.
3. Poor or absent recruiting where the value of the course is not explained well to prospective students and their main stakeholders (churches, parents etc.)
4. The course threatens traditional faculty members in some way.
5. Inflexible accreditation agencies in the host nation or religious denomination.
6. Lack of a clear discernible job outcome or job

title, the course designers cannot say: "this transformational course will enable you to become a X…" where X is a career of some sort.

7. The course designer is clearly anti-establishment and derides other modes of education in ways that create division and generate corrosive internal politics.
8. The course is just too expensive once the start-up costs are spread out over the relatively few initial students.

I am sure you can think of other reasons as well! Yet, we must get past these roadblocks if we are to train the vast number of Christians who need to be trained, with relevant, culturally adapted and apostolic theological and ministerial skills.

One possible approach is to take the innovative courses online at first. This greatly lowers the cost of adoption by the institution. Online education also allows specialized faculty in that area to lecture from around the world. Online courses are also generally less politically threatening to any existing traditional faculty.

SOLUTION-FOCUSED BRIEF COURSES WITH COMPETENCY-BASED ASSESSMENT

These are in-service courses that impart a certain set of solutions, and where students are assessed as either Competent or Not Competent. A course such as: "Effective Power Evangelism in Urban Slums" could be 8 weeks long with a practical component at the end where students use their phones to record six effective urban slum evangelism strategies that they are actually implementing. The student is then assessed around their competency at implementing the course content.

Such courses are not primarily conceptual in nature. They focus on mastering a set of skills that are solutions to actual defined problems in their community of practice, such as how to do evangelism in an urban slum. Experienced practitioners devise a set of solutions that they have seen work time-and-time again. These skills are then imparted, put into practice and assessed.

This can be done through ebooks and video-based training with highly-experienced practitioners sharing their own strategies in video clips, which the students then discuss online and learn from, contextualizing them in their own communities of practice and eventually uploading their own videos of themselves in action.

This style of training has a great deal of potential when a specific skill is suddenly in high demand because of some contingency and there is simply no time to come up with a textbook based solution. For instance, a course on Pastoral Counselling of Trauma Victims of Civil War in a certain nation, can be put together by ebooks and video quite readily, imparting the most necessary skills, in the language and culture of that nation, and with deep online discussion as the

various churches seek to provide an immediate and effective response.

Such in-service courses do not easily fit into a traditional degree structure however they do fit into the Kingdom of God and what the Lord may be doing through His Spirit at a particular place and time. Of course, there is still abundant room for traditional theological education such as the Greek exegesis of Romans. It is not an either/or situation.

Perfect practice requires good mentors, coaches and practitioners who can help Christian workers dig into their ministry skill set and so that real accomplishment occurs, yet without personal humiliation. This can even be done virtually where experts give coaching and reinforcement: (https://trainingindustry.com/magazine/may-jun-2020/practice-doesnt-make-perfect-perfect-practice-makes-perfect-an-in-depth-study-of-virtual-leadership-development/)

THE LAST MILE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

How do we deliver in-context, on-time, training to indigent Christian workers in the most remote parts of the world? What technologies do they possess, if any? Is the technology of choice available, scalable and affordable for the prospective students? Is it actually a viable training technology or is it just dumping a huge amount of digital resources on them and expecting them to figure out how to use them?

Basic mobile phones are giving way to cheap Chinese smartphones. Radio is often available but requires the digital program content to be sent to the radio station, for instance by WhatsApp. People can crowd around a TV screen and watch DVD-based training such as that developed by ISOM (the International School of Missions) or Third Millennium. Local Internet cafes can provide access to training websites and it is often easier for students to do online assessment at an Internet café rather than on a phone. Oral learning initiatives can deploy solar-powered MP3 players provided by groups such as Megavoice. Affordable tablets are now a popular means of training in many local church-based Bible colleges.

The selected technology then needs to be combined with the appropriate software, pedagogy and training methodology.

The main software you will require is known as a Learning Management System (see a Wikipedia list here https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_learning_management_systems) and selecting the right LMS for your particular training need can be quite a long process.

Avoid those with a small team of developers or with limited support options. You do not want to suddenly find yourself without an LMS if developers quit. The one Cybermissions uses is known as Moodle (https://moodle.org) because it is very adaptable to various languages and is well-supported and established, that said, it is a bit clunky. I am also wary of any Google products because they tend to suddenly cancel their projects.

It is best to think "mobile first" since many students will be accessing courses via their phones or tablets.

You will also require a means of face-to-face conferencing such as WhatsApp, Google Meet, Zoom, GoToMeeting, Facebook Messenger, Signal, or Telegram. The app you select will be based on your requirements for security, availability, technical capabilities and student familiarity with the app as well as the legal framework of the area you are operating in which may prohibit certain highly secure messaging systems.

IF THEY DON'T PAY THEY JUST DON'T STAY

In our experience when online education is free the drop-out rate is always greater than eighty percent. Cybermissions charges only $7 USD per subject for our two-year church-planting course. This amount is still a challenge for many students. Payment ensures commitment! The price point for your area is something you will have to think about very deeply as you balance ensuring commitment, paying your expenses and being affordable to the students you most want to be training.

Completely informal training such as sending out training material via WhatsApp can be free. However, if you intend to provide certification of any sort and do assessment then some nominal cost needs to be involved. It may be of benefit to survey your local church leaders as to what a fair and affordable price point is deemed to be.

THE SECURITY QUESTION

Online education is non-ideal if security is a major issue for your ministry. There is no known way to protect the ordinary, regular end users of digital technology from hostile, determined government-level surveillance. Cybermissions has an information security links web page at: https://cybermissions.org/infosec/ however we have chosen not to operate in the most challenging nations.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is in crisis. Artificial intelligence has killed the college essay. ChatGPT has passed essay-based board exams in Law and other fields. (https://www.businessinsider.com/list-here-are-the-exams-chatgpt-has-passed-so-far-2023-1?op=1#gre-4) This is a critical threat to the validity of online learning.

Our tests at the Harvestime International Institute (https://harvestimeinstitute.org) are randomized so a student gets 75 questions selected out of a possible 100, and the order of the questions is also randomized. Ideally, the computer-based testing should be proctored at an Internet café or computer study center and not done from home.

Plagiarism is common and, in some places, it is

considered normal, since "getting the right answer" trumps personal thought and reflection. Plagiarism detection solutions abound and some of the better ones are listed in this article: https://www.techradar.com/best/plagiarism-checkers

Again, competency-based assessment by personal video is slightly less open to plagiarism or other methods of cheating and may be applicable in a wider range of contexts than first imagined.

CONCLUSION

The problem is scale. As Great Commission activity expands, an enormous number of leaders need to be trained in missional skills and matured in their understanding of sound Christian doctrine. This can only be accomplished by deploying some form of technology.

Finding the appropriate technology and pedagogy involves first defining the apostolic skill set, deciding on how it should be imparted; then working from this understanding down into the minute of details involved in setting up an online delivery system.

Most educators arrive at some type of blended solution involving online delivery and assessment and church-based face-to-face instruction. Video may play an important role in imparting practical skills. Pedagogical approaches may include Action-Reflection-Action and solution focused brief courses with competency-based assessment.

Technology is both unimportant and vital. Unimportant in that the work of spiritual formation is essentially a work of God through the Holy Spirit which can happen through almost any means. Vital in the sense that if the essential technology does not work then the whole educational strategy tends to fail. Technology is the supportive skeleton of a living enterprise.

Expect two years of trial and error and tweaking of systems. Getting e-learning right is a giant jigsaw puzzle. Do not launch early, except for a soft launch on a small scale. Students and faculty do not cope well with disappointment, confusion or technical failure.

We are in a time of rapid transition for theological education. E-learning will be one part of the puzzle and "getting it right" will be difficult. This is a prayerful challenge for those seeking to train, develop and send out laborers into the Great Commission harvest.

APPENDIX 1 – TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Below is a question and answer format of technology tips that was compiled from an interview I did with Anthony D'Angelo, an evangelist from California, who frequently visits rural areas of Asia. I am including it here as an example of how to think about delivering resources via technology. In the areas that we work in WhatsApp is the messaging platform of choice.

You will require:
1. A touch-screen mobile phone or tablet for each student, even an old one will do.
2. The E-Reader Prestigio (also called Prestigio Book Reader) app or other E-reader apps such as Librera, or Foxit, that reads ebooks and PDF files. (install from Google Play store, try them and then use the app that works best on your phone, the first two will also do text to speech.)
3. WhatsApp for distributing resources (install from Google Play store)
4. Occasional access to WiFi
5. Calibre Ebook Management software - https://calibre-ebook.com/ (install on teacher's laptop)

Problem: It is very expensive to print out the teaching manuals for each student
Solution: Have the students install E-Reader Prestigio (or equivalent) on their phones and they will be able to freely read and study the various textbooks, audio files and so on in digital form With no need to print anything out. E-Reader Prestigio also has text-to-speech, so students can hear the book read aloud to them, instead of having to read it as a print book. Here is a video about E-Reader Prestigio: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdNCElSHJbE

Problem: Sending the digital files to the students.
Solution: Create a WhatsApp group for each class, then attach the files to a WhatsApp message. For instance, if the class is learning "Ministry of the Holy Spirit", you can send all the students the textbook in epub format (this format is very easy to read on a mobile phone) using WhatsApp. Here is how to create a WhatsApp group: https://faq.whatsapp.com/3242937609289432/?cms_platform=web

Problem: How to create an epub file (which has a much easier display on most phones)
Solution: The teacher uses Calibre ebook management software (above) to convert from PDF to epub. Here is a video about the Calibre software: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGzfYEeshl4

Problem: Messaging students about the class
Solution: Send the class notices to the class WhatsApp group.

Problem: Students do not have touch screen phones.
Solution: Ask people in the church to donate old touch screen phones. Have the teacher wipe the old phones that are given to the Bible college and reset them to the email address of the student. Install WhatsApp and E-Reader Prestigio once the phones are set up properly. You might want a friendly "techie" to help you with this bit.

How to wipe the old phone: https://www.theverge.com/21419919/delete-data-android-phone-sell-trade-how-to

How to set up an Android phone: https://www.tomsguide.com/us/how-to-set-up-android-phone,review-5603.html

Problem: We have many churches that want to learn but only a few good Bible college lecturers.

Solution: Use a mobile phone to video the class as it is being taught by the good Bible college lecturer. Use a mobile phone tripod to keep the phone steady. Have the phone close to the lecturer so that the picture is very clear and whiteboard notes can be seen. Send the video to the other churches using WhatsApp. You can then keep all the class videos as your own video library.

You will probably want to reduce the file size before you send it on WhatsApp so that it is less expensive for the students to download it. A useful free program for doing this is VLC which you can find at: https://www.videolan.org/vlc/ it can also be used to rip the audio from the video so you can turn the video into an MP3 file which is much easier to send. If you are sending compressed audio set it to 24 kpbs, the file will be small but the quality will be OK. http://www.mobileministryforum.org/best-practices

How to move files from internal storage to SD card on mobile: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4H0nSHAvFA

Problem: When we play back audio or video in class the volume is low

Solution: Affordable Bluetooth speakers are available in most electronic stores now, they can be paired with the teacher's phone or laptop and give out a good loud sound.

Problem: We often have no Internet to distribute files due to brownouts / loss of power in our area

Solutions: Get a Seagate Wireless Plus hard drive that works with no Internet at all. You can use it to serve files and play audio, video and much more. Put all the course materials on it and the students can access with their phones, they will see it as a wireless connection however it does not go out to the wider Internet. This review will tell you all about it: https://www.pcmag.com/reviews/seagate-wireless-plus (about $199).

If the teacher has a good phone it can also be used as a wireless hotspot, up to 5 students can access the teacher's device at the same time and download files, here is a video on how to do it: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fZG-HtoTbY your local techie will come in handy here as well to show you the first time. You can also share files between phones using Bluetooth: https://www.lifewire.com/bluetooth-file-transfer-4147725 More mobile technical tips can be found here: https://www.cybermissions.org/mobilemin/

Problem: The phones are old and have very little memory

Solution: Put the class files/ebooks/MP3 files on micro-SD cards, the ones you can put in Android phones, 4GB should be enough. One card per student will do for the entire course. You can charge them a little bit to cover the cost.

Problem: The phones are often low on charge when students come to class and we may not have electricity

Solution: Have some digital power banks and phone charger cables available. Charge the power banks when the electricity is on. You may ask your congregation to donate charger cables for different kinds of phones. Please use a surge protector when charging the power banks if the voltage in your area varies a lot. Plug the surge protector into the wall, and then connect the power banks to the surge protector.

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Mobile Ministry

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Cybermissions: https://cybermissions.org

Eurasia Media Distribution Conference: https://emdc.online/home

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MENTORING IN MISSIONS

Lisa Espineli Chinn

INTRODUCTION

In preparation for my anticipated departure as National Director of International Student Ministry (ISM) of InterVarsity/USA, I wrote down my Four Loves. They were my four passions that I had hoped to express and utilize after my 14-year stint as ISM Director (2000-2014) and a combined 45 years of missionary work in the Philippines and the USA up to that point. They are: Consultant in Missions, Coach/Mentor/Bless Others, Teacher/Trainer, and Speaker. For 2 years, these Four Loves became my guiding document as I prayed and imagined life after a career with InterVarsity/USA.

It was during a meal conversation with one of the young leaders in the organization that helped chart my specific future course. He said, *Don't leave, stay with InterVarsity as a coach and mentor. You have so much to offer. We can use your experience to help us with our work.* It was an encouraging conversation. The only catch was there was no department to house coaches and mentors. Also, there was no job description for such a person. In the end I remained in InterVarsity, working part-time as a Development Coach, for lack of a better title. I began to coach a Regional Director for a few years, other department heads and rising leaders in the movement. Four years later the Leadership Resource Team was formed under the Learning and Talent Department. It was the official group of InterVarsity mentors composed of 5 senior leaders, including the President Emeritus. Together with other mentors we mentored about 80 mid-managers.

I have 16 years of experience in mentoring. Seven of those years as a mentor with The Daniel Project, InterVarsity's elite Leadership Training Course. In the past 9 years I have mentored leaders in InterVarsity as well as leaders of other mission organizations, a church, and a non-profit group.

What about my 3 other loves? They all found expressions through various projects (in partnership with Leiton Chinn, my husband) and invitations that relate to missions at large and in reaching international students.

This article covers what I have learned as I mentored a group of women, men, ethnic minority leaders, Asian-Americans, Africans and Caucasians in their various call to carry the Gospel around the world.

MENTORING IN MISSIONS

One of my leadership mentees from Cameroon working among international students in the United States reminded me of an African proverb that goes:

Standing, a younger person cannot see what an older person sees, seated. There are limitations to what a young energetic leader sees compared to what an older person has seen over many years of experience. The young leader may be confident but without the insight of someone who has gone before, this leader will lack the perspective and wisdom that age and experience provide.

Another mentee puts it this way. *Learning can come from peers and those less experienced as well, so our hearts should always be open to that. But, having someone who has journeyed before us brings a type of wisdom unlike that of our peers and those less experienced. It provides a perspective that can sift through what often feels 'urgently important' and see beyond it to what truly is important.*

From that experience I define mentoring in missions as an intentional, voluntary, temporary and confidential relationship between someone more mature and experienced in life and cross-cultural ministry and someone who is younger or new in mission work for a specific and agreed goal and purpose.

MENTORING IS INTENTIONAL

I have discovered in my context (an Asian-American female leader in the United States mentoring leaders from various organizations, diverse cultural and ministry experiences) that the younger generation is very open to have mentors in their lives, in fact, they are looking for them. As I shared in the introduction, it was a younger leader who welcomed the idea of someone like me to speak into their lives.

When mentoring is mentee-driven it carries with it a seriousness of intent and an eagerness to grow. Mentees know that they need help, perhaps not always clear where or in what area, but they are humble enough to express that need. When mentees seek mentors, they are also owning their own growth and development.

One mentee intentionally looked for a mentor because *I was feeling isolated as a woman in ministry and do not have women in my church that have served long term in ministry. I wanted to spend time and receive insight from a woman who had experienced ministry but also who has thrived and enjoyed serving in the Kingdom in this way. I also was hitting big questions in my professional life and needed someone to talk them through with and receive wisdom and direction.*

Perhaps in some Asian setting, it may be too presumptuous for a younger person to approach an older and more mature leader for mentorship. In these cases, we will need the advocacy and sponsorship of

other older folks to open the way for them to access mentorship opportunities.

MENTORING IS VOLUNTARY

Because it is not required, the mentoring relationship takes on a natural and more relaxed atmosphere. No one is requiring it. No one is checking on it. Both mentor and mentee are free to explore what is best for the mentee.

Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship/USA where I served, is committed to mentorship. Our potential mentees were given the names and qualifications of available mentors and they had the opportunity to volunteer to be mentored.

MENTORING IS TEMPORARY

Mentoring is not for life. Although there are those who keep a mentoring relationship beyond the agreed time. It is understood that this mentoring relationship has an end point. This does not, however, take away the opportunity for this long- term relationship to continue, as appropriate.

My mentoring over zoom for sixty minutes seems short, but I was always impressed by what happened during that period. With helpful questions and focused listening, a lot can be covered.

MENTORING IS CONFIDENTIAL

Offering a confidential mentoring session frees the mentee to share honestly and openly. As a mentor, I feel this is a sacred trust. I keep their stories of victory and pain in confidence. Their supervisors know that our sessions are confidential. There is no expectation of a report from the mentor to the supervisor.

FOR AN AGREED GOAL AND PURPOSE

Usually, the mentee begins with a desire to grow in a particular area of leadership e.g. understanding the organizational culture, growing in self-awareness, gaining cross-cultural insights, increased confidence in decision making, or navigating diversity on the team.

It is helpful to begin with a common understanding of the goal or purpose of the mentoring relationship. At the outset, it is important to be honest about expectations. Mentors are not gods. They have their limitations and an initial conversation in a mentoring relationship should clear out what the mentor is able to offer and what the mentee desires.

I begin my mentoring session with an analogy of my mentees being in the driver's seat and I seated next to them. They tell me where they want to go and we pursue it, unless I see a different and better road along the way which I offer as an option. I remind them that the mentoring time is their hour, not mine. It reiterates their responsibility to own their own development. They have the choice to maximize it or to squander it.

Sometimes as a mentor, I act like a Tour Guide, creating excitement for what is ahead. Other times,

I am like a Mirror, reflecting back what I have heard from them. Often, I encourage my mentees to stay in the truth, to discern what narrative they are choosing to believe about who God is and who they are. This is especially true with the pandemic and the changing landscape of ministry.

My hope is that when they "drop me off" they would have seen something they had not considered before or they are more encouraged and equipped to tackle the tasks ahead.

Mentoring is not a one-way street. I want the mentees to also know that they teach and bless me as well.

MUTUALITY IN MENTORING

Both mentors and mentees have a lot to offer to one another

Mentors offer:	Mentees offer:
Their focused presence	Their presence- eagerness to listen and learn
Their ears to listen	Their questions
Their questions	Their doubts, struggles and fears
Their unfinished stories, mistakes, fears, insecurities	Their young, and unfinished stories
Their experience of God and His faithfulness,	Their courage and faith
Their expertise and wisdom	Creativity and innovation

Although drawn and initiated by a need of the mentee, I have discovered that as a mentor I also have needs that are met by the mentee.

Mentors need:	Mentees need:
To continue to learn from younger leaders	Companionship because "Leadership is lonely."
To be encouraged about the future of mission.	Encouragement and assurance
Their faith to grow as they entrust others to grow	People who believe in them
An opportunity to be "a friend on the journey."	Examples of honest and vulnerable leaders
Understand their place in this season of life and ministry	Acceptance
The opportunity to invest in others	Direction

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS, AND MORE QUESTIONS

Mentees often come with questions which some send ahead of time. Other mentees come with a case study, a situation that arouse between mentoring sessions that caused them to wonder about their confidence, their cross-cultural skills or their own call to mission. With sensitivity to the Spirit of God, sympathetic listening and incisive questions, the mentees often feel understood and able to see the way forward. Not every mentoring session, however, leads to an immediate solution, but at least the mentee has been heard and options have been offered for consideration.

Along the way, I ask my mentee how the mentoring is coming along. Is this what you are looking for?

How is this session helping reach your leadership goal? This way we can make any corrections or amendments as we proceed. Also, after a discussion on an issue, I ask, what leadership muscles were used in your recent experience? What did you learn about missions and your place in it? When a mentee reaches out for mentoring, I send him these preliminary questions to help me gauge where he is in his journey or call to mission.

1. What questions are you asking in this season of life and ministry?
2. What are your longings?
3. Where has God met you in recent years? Where and when are you most receptive to the voice of God?
4. What has been life-giving for you? Why? What drains your energy?
5. What gifts do you have which are waiting to be used and expressed? (Or, "if I had the time, space, money, structure, or permission, I would love to…")
6. Who are the best influencers in your organization? How did they get there? What can you learn from them?
7. How are decisions made in your organization? Who has a powerful voice in your organization?
8. Who are the other ethnic minority leaders in your organization? How are they stewarding their position?
9. What is political savviness? How have you experienced it?
10. Who has your back? How have you experienced support from your supervisor, peers or colleagues?

As the mentoring relationship progresses, the following additional questions may also be asked:

1. What decisions are you most proud of?
2. How are you growing in respect and appreciation of the local people?
3. When do you feel most successful, most satisfied, and fruitful?
4. Where has God shown up?
5. How are you taking care of yourself?
6. What baffles you about the people or culture? How are you navigating cultural differences?
7. Where are the places of frustration, distraction, confusion, barrenness, or lack of effectiveness?
8. What keeps you hopeful?

MENTORS TRUST GOD FOR WISDOM

God promises to give wisdom to those who ask for it (James 1:5) and from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 2:6)

What may wisdom look like in a mentoring relationship? Wisdom may come when the mentor's life and ministry experiences are harnessed to address a current situation, decision, or direction.

A MENTOR'S PRAYER

Preparing for a mentoring session may include prior time to think, pray, and study to address questions they may have sent ahead of time. I find this prayer, that came out of my sabbatical, helpful to set my attitude and expectation for the session.

I welcome you, Holy Spirit, to this mentoring space.
Listen with me.
Listen for me.
Speak through me.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

SOME QUALIFICATIONS OF A MENTOR IN MISSIONS

First is character. These qualities as mostly the same qualities one looks for in any mentor. Does the potential mentor have a deep and growing love for God, His word, work and His world? Is he grounded in God's unconditional and everlasting love? Is he a learner and a listener? Does he display dependence on God in prayer?

Cultural IQ   How has the mentor exhibited respect and appreciation of other cultures? Does he have a proven ability to navigate differences (cultures, values, perspectives)? Is he skilled or growing in reading between cultural lines? Is he comfortable in his own cultural skin? In what ways has he experienced the tension or conflict between cultural values and Kingdom values?

Competence Does he understand the privileges, benefits, and costs of missionary life and service? Has he lived and worked in another culture? Does he understand organizational culture and complexities? Does he understand spiritual warfare? Is he fluent in another language? Is he aware of his own gifts, challenges, and limitations?

Chemistry Not every mentor-mentee match is made in heaven. Personalities differ and if the mentoring relationship is not working, there should be some freedom to express it (directly or indirectly).

WHAT MENTEES SAY

Mentees are grateful people. They express their gratitude during and after the mentoring sessions. Some see the positive change in the attitude they started with compared to the feelings they had at the end of the mentoring time. Others come away with a new direction and much needed hope.

what others said:
My mentoring time was a spring of life and perspective.
Mentoring has shaped me into someone who leads with hope, patience, and grace.
I gained more confidence in myself and in the reality that God was on the move in my life and my ministry.
My mentoring relationship provided a sense of support and encouragement.
I am a better son, spouse, friend, sibling, and minister

because of mentorship.

You speak with honesty, even giving the most challenging admonition but you do so with such elegance and grace.

Your mentorship is helping to grow both grace and truth inside me.

## SOME ISSUES IN MENTORING IN A POST-COVID WORLD

A PORTAL

The Indian writer, Arundhati Roy captures the impact of Covid-19 and eloquently paints a way forward. She writes,

> Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to "normality", trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.[1]

LOOKING BACK

Below is the best attempt I have found at giving us a clear timeline[2]. It may be through a western lens but it still reflects what the past was like in other parts of the world. The pace and intensity may differ but the reality is the same.

OUR PANDEMIC YEAR—A COVID-19 TIMELINE
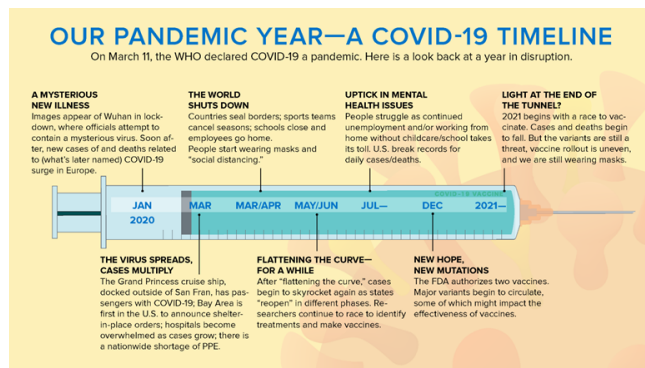
This may be a good exercise to work with a mentee in

1. Arundhati Roy, The Pandemic is a Portal, The Financial Times, April 3, 2020,

2. Written by Kathy Katella, Senior Clinical Writer Yale-Medicine. March 9, 2021. https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/covid-timeline

missions.

- What has the mentee learned?
- Where has the mentee grown?
- What lessons has the organization learned?
- What "dead carcasses" do you and/or the organization need to leave behind?
- What does traveling light into a post-Covid world look like?

LOSS, LAMENT AND GRIEF

One can plot the emotional responses and losses through the timeline and the corresponding impact on leaders and their organizations, Christian and secular alike. As one traces the impact, a wise mentor will help the mentee to visit or revisit their responses and gauge any lingering or unresolved issues which are carried into the post-Covid world. Lament, grief are natural responses to loss. What losses did the mentee experience? Has my mentee given himself enough time for healthy grieving? Is he experiencing a delayed grief? Was there time for corporate grief and lament? Is it necessary? Why?

Individuals grieve differently. Cultures have different ways to express grief. Those differences need to be respected.

Another diagram[3] that circulated in the internet during the pandemic shows where we may have been in the weeks and months of the pandemic.

The three zones may depict the past. But there may be continuing learning and growing happening to this day. What innovations and practices which were applicable then can be considered or utilized in a Post-Covid world?

RESILIENCE AND COMPASSION

What was it like to mentor leaders of various

3. Attributed to Dr. Monika Langeh and/or Ken Seidu, Godfrey Okumu from Nigeria and Dr. Anna Mwangi from Kenya

organization in the US, Asia, and Mexico who were trying to lead in a changing and unpredictable setting? What do you say when the rules keep changing? How do you help them navigate the balance between resilience and compassion and still move the mission forward? What does "good enough" look for the leaders and those they supervise? What happens when leaders realize that self-care should be a top priority for themselves and the people they lead?

There was no guidebook on how to lead during a pandemic. Neither was there a script for mentors to follow. However, I found myself reminding my mentees of the following:

1. Stay with the truth. God is still in control, that's true. The rules are changing, that's also true.
2. What is God calling you to be at this time?
3. Be content with "good enough" outcomes for this season.
4. Resilience is the ability to sway with the changes without losing your core values.
5. You are human and it is okay to be tired.
6. What is the compassionate thing to do? Your supervisor, staff and supervisees are human too. They need to be kind to themselves and to each other.
7. Rest and take care of yourself.

One of the strategic and compassionate moves InterVarsity/USA did during the pandemic was to grant the staff across the country additional paid leave days for rest and recovery. A department in another organization declared a common sabbatical day when staff were given time to rest and recuperate.

WHEN CHANGE IS OUT OF CONTROL

As we look back, we can see the future better. As we harness the lessons of Covid-19, we should be able to bring our best into the new normal of the post-Covid world. We will continue to be tested, individually and corporately. Our mission may continue to go through more sifting. As we look at Covid-19 through the rearview mirror, we face the present and future confident in the God who has called us and will continue to go before and with us.

In 2002, Margaret Wheatley wrote, *…there is a great paradox that points to the hopeful path ahead. It is possible to prepare for the future without knowing what it will be. The primary way to prepare for the unknown is to attend to the quality of our relationships, to how well we know and trust one another.*[4] (my underline)

Yes. Let us attend to the quality of our relationships. Mentoring in missions strengthen that bond. Mentoring in missions deepen that trust. Mentoring enhances the quality of our generational relationships.

CONCLUSION

Carolyn Carney, the National Director of Christian

Formation in InterVarsity/USA uses Kintsugi as a metaphor for our post-Covid world in her Post-Covid Reentry Retreat Guide5

Kintsugi also known as **kintsukuroi** ("golden repair"), is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by mending the areas of breakage with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. It traces its roots to the 15th century.

She says *not to think of Kintsugi as repairing something so it's 'as good as new' or returning it back to how it was, but rather, it is about making a different vessel altogether. We should never go back to "normal." We yearn for something different.*

Some people refer to Kintsugi as the Art of Breathing New Life, others call it the Art of Healing.

We have all been broken and impacted in one way or another because of the global pandemic. But God is in the business of repairing and healing. He wants to display His power through a vessel made new. The marks in the vessel are obvious but the vessel has been transformed to be usable and even more beautiful than the broken one.

Mentoring in missions is one place where the broken places can be repaired and healed. It is that relationship that brings the young and the older generation of missionaries together for the Kingdom's sake. Like a Master Potter, God is working in us so that we can be a beautiful, global display of Kintsugis for His glory among the nations.

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4. When Change is Out of Our Control by Margaret Wheatley©2002. Published in Human Resources for the 21st Century (Wiley, 2003)

EMBRACING CREATION CARE: A THEOLOGICAL CALL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Chuck Baclagon

In the face of the environmental crisis that plagues our world today, it is essential to examine the role of the church in addressing this pressing issue. While discussions on environmental preservation frequently dominate the news, they often remain absent from the pulpit and the practices of our churches. However, a strong theological foundation for creation care can be found within Scripture and church history, revealing a profound connection between God, humans, and the natural world. This article aims to shed light on the theological basis for environmental stewardship, emphasizing the need for its integration into the life and ministry of our churches.

GOD AS CREATOR

The biblical narrative begins with the powerful statement, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). This verse serves as more than a simple introduction to the creation story; it reveals God's nature and will. As the Creator, God not only initiated the act of creation but also assumes ownership over everything that exists. The book of Deuteronomy emphasizes this ownership, stating that "To the LORD your God belongs the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it" (Deuteronomy 10:14). Similarly, Psalm 24:1-2 testifies that "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters." These passages emphasize the inseparable connection between God and His creation, highlighting the responsibility we have to care for what belongs to Him.

GOD'S LOVE FOR CREATION

Throughout the Scripture, God's love for His creation is evident. The Psalmist declares that "the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD" and reveals that God is "loving toward all he has made." This love extends beyond mere origination; it encompasses the ongoing sustenance and care for all living things. God's wisdom is reflected in the intricate balance of ecosystems, where water, gas, and material exchange sustain life. The enactment of God's love for creation is seen in the established order of cycles and relationships among creatures in the natural world. Furthermore, God's love is fully realized in Jesus Christ, who sustains "all things by his powerful word" (Hebrews 1:3). Understanding God's love for creation helps us recognize the interconnectedness of all things and our role as stewards of this precious gift.

THE COSMIC SCOPE OF REDEMPTION

The redemptive work of Jesus Christ extends far beyond humanity, encompassing the entirety of creation. John 3:16, often referred to as the Gospel in a nutshell, speaks to the cosmic scope of God's redemptive work. God's love is directed toward the world, the entire created order. In the letter to the Colossians, we see the cosmic aspect of Christ's work, celebrating the intimate relationship between Christ and all of creation. Romans 8 reveals that salvation extends to the entirety of creation, as even nature longs for liberation. The agents of the Spirit, transformed by Christ, are called to bring justice, peace, and restoration to all of creation. Recognizing God as the Savior of all creation allows us to grasp the significance of Jesus Christ in reconciling all things to God, restoring broken relationships throughout the cosmos.

THE CHURCH'S MORAL AND SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITY:

The environmental crisis cannot be solely addressed through implementing sustainable lifestyle changes, resource management and pollution reduction policies. It requires a moral and ethical response from the Christian church. As the body of Christ, the church has a unique mandate to face the ecological crisis in its moral and spiritual dimensions.

The connection between theology and spirituality is crucial. We must reflect personally and as a community on how our beliefs shape our spiritual lives. It is important to adopt a worldview that acknowledges God as the creator with a purpose for the universe. This purpose has been revealed through Jesus Christ, whose life, death, resurrection, and return encompass not only God's story but also the story of the whole world.

Recognizing the interconnection of God, creation, and humanity is vital. Christians should take the lead in addressing the ecological crisis by moving away from self-centered perspectives and embrace an interconnected view where God, humans, and creation are closely linked. This shift in perspective can empower us to work towards restoring harmony with creation.

DEVELOPING ECOLOGICAL MINISTRIES

By integrating creation care into the life and work of the church, churches have the opportunity to effectively witness Christ and positively impact their communities. This can be achieved through establishing an ecological ministry that upholds the

holistic mission of the gospel centered on Jesus Christ.

Here we will explore practical steps that local churches can take to address environmental problems. This includes incorporating environmental issues into their preaching, managing resources, waste disposal, energy consumption, and advocating for environmental justice based on biblical principles.

BEARING WITNESS IN TEACHING AND PREACHING

With a wealth of biblical resources on God's intimate relationship with creation, it is now crucial for churches to incorporate themes of creation care in our preaching and teaching.

One way to do this is by celebrating Creation Sunday, which can be integrated into the annual preaching cycles and liturgical calendars of churches. Creation Sunday aims to cultivate an understanding among churches and individuals of the Christian joy and responsibility to care for Christ's creation.

Regarding teaching and other programs, we can learn valuable lessons from the Quaker concept of "bearing witness."

For Quakers, bearing witness means embodying the gospel through personal experience. It involves taking action according to one's conscience, whether it is to stop something wrong, expose it, or offer alternative solutions. Bearing witness can also be positive, showcasing the beauty of nature to inspire conviction and promote its protection.

Incorporating nature trips, educational excursions, and participating in environmental activities like cleanups can be utilized in ministry to foster a sense of conviction for creation care among believers. These experiences also offer glimpses of God's purpose for creation.

Traditionally, the church has used the environment for retreats, camps, and inspirational settings without truly seeing its significance. By bearing witness to creation, the church can rediscover God's work of renewal in Christ and catch a glimpse of the Shalom of God's renewed creation.

PRAYER AND DEVOTION

Non-Christians often notice a self-centered focus in Christian prayers and devotion, where God is seen as a mere fulfiller of our desires. This spirituality, disconnected from God's story in the Bible, tends to be legalistic, intellectually oriented, overly therapeutic, and rejects the world, making it inadequate for today's challenges like climate change.

To begin addressing this, let's revisit the congregational doxology known as Thomas Ken's "Praise God, from Whom all Blessings Flow."

"Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow..." First, we acknowledge that God is the source of all blessings. Our praise is directed towards Him, recognizing that we can never fully comprehend the true meaning of blessings.

"Praise Him, all creatures here below..." Next, we expand the scope of praise to include all creatures. It highlights that all creation should join in praising God as the Creator, as discussed earlier.

"Praise Him above, ye heavenly host..." Furthermore, we remember that even the heavenly beings participate in praising God. It emphasizes that God is not only the Creator and Sustainer of the Earth but of the entire cosmos.

"Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Lastly, we direct our praise to the revealed identity of God—the Blessed Trinity, consisting of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a loving unity.

Karl Barth once said, "To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world," suggesting that if we want to address the overwhelming issues of injustice, oppression, and the ecological crisis, our efforts alone will be ineffective unless we invite God into the situation. Before engaging with the world, we need to prioritize seeking victory through prayer. Similarly, we can shift our prayers from self-centeredness to recognizing God's magnificent work in creation, Allowing Us To Become Aware Of His Transformative Power Amidst The Crises We Face.

CONSUMPTION, WASTE, ENERGY AND MOBILITY

Ethical Consumption

Living simply as a church and as individuals can guide consumption choices. Rather than pursuing unnecessary consumption, simplicity is about focusing on what truly matters and seeking God's kingdom and righteousness.

In simple terms, ethical consumption emphasizes the role of consumers in preventing the exploitation of people and the environment. This framework can be embraced by the church, considering that it is also part of the consumer market. The church should be aware of ethical brands and make informed decisions about the business practices of the companies whose products it consumes.

Practically speaking, the church can integrate ethical consumption by:

a) Avoiding single-use materials and packaging, as they generate more waste and cost more in the long run.

b) Opting for recycled or reusable materials to reduce waste, energy consumption, air and water pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions by adopting reusable alternatives, such as cloth napkins, dishes, and utensils, instead of disposable options.

c) Encouraging sustainable lifestyles among church members, particularly addressing consumerism among youth and fostering lifestyle distinctions that reflect the gospel message.

As a starting point these practical steps can be

integrated into the procurement policies of the church therefore institutionalizing the practice into the communal life of the church.

Aiming For Zero-Waste

Integrating zero-waste practices in the church is an opportunity to demonstrate stewardship of the environment and align with principles of sustainability.

The church can start by raising awareness about the concept of zero-waste and its importance within the congregation, through workshops, or small group discussions. Providing information on the environmental impact of waste and the benefits of zero-waste living can inspire individuals to make changes in their own lives. Sharing practical tips, such as reducing single-use items, composting, and recycling properly, can empower church members to take action.

The church can lead by example through the implementation of zero-waste practices within its facilities and events by providing recycling and composting bins throughout the premises and ensuring proper waste segregation.

Practical measures for implementing zero-waste include setting up rotating dishwashing teams to clean reusable cups, mugs, and utensils after gatherings, as well as organizing regular drives to collect and sell recyclable materials like newspapers and water bottles to support church ministries.

Engaging with the wider community is essential in promoting zero-waste practices. The church can collaborate with local organizations, such as environmental groups or recycling centers, to organize zero-waste initiatives and events. This could involve hosting zero-waste workshops, organizing community clean-ups, or even starting a community garden to encourage composting and local food production.

By actively participating in environmental initiatives, the church can inspire others to embrace zero-waste living and foster a sense of collective responsibility for the planet.

Energy Efficiency And Renewable Energy

To reduce our contribution to climate change, we can take simple steps to minimize energy consumption, especially since the energy we use is often derived from non-renewable sources like coal. In the Philippines, where coal-fired power plants are the main source of electricity and a significant emitter of greenhouse gasses, consuming less energy means releasing less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Here are three practical actions individuals and churches can take:
a) Switch off appliances completely when they are not in use, as they continue to consume electricity even in standby mode.
b) Unplug devices that consume unnecessary energy even when switched off.
c) Opt for energy-efficient lighting options like

compact fluorescent bulbs (CFL) or light emitting diodes (LED), which not only reduce power consumption but also have longer lifespans compared to traditional incandescent bulbs. Additionally, remember to turn off lights in unoccupied rooms to further conserve energy.

If your church has the resources, integrating renewable energy is a step-up that can minimize your church's carbon footprint.

The Philippine Renewable Energy Law promotes the development and utilization of renewable energy sources in the country, providing incentives and support to different institutions including churches to adopt sustainable energy solutions, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and contribute to environmental sustainability.

One option is called net-metering which allows consumers who generate their own electricity from renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, to offset their electricity consumption by exporting excess power back to the grid. The excess electricity generated is credited to the consumer's account, reducing their overall electricity bill.

Another option that has a lesser capital outlay is the Green Energy Option (GEOP) that allows electricity consumers to choose renewable energy sources for their energy needs. It enables consumers to directly contract with renewable energy generators or suppliers. The minimum consumption required under the Philippine Renewable Energy Law to opt for the GEOP is 100 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per month.

It is recommended of course to research and explore these options, consult with relevant financial institutions, and engage with government agencies or industry associations specialized in renewable energy to find the most suitable scheme solution for your church's specific energy requirement.

Transportation And Mobility

Churches can promote walking, cycling, and the use of public transportation by providing information on routes, schedules, and available facilities. They can organize events like bike rides or walking groups to encourage active transportation and reduce car dependency.

A good place to start is to put in place basic infrastructure like bike racks or dedicate spaces for people to park their bicycles at the church compound.

Churches can help their members carpool by organizing programs that encourage sharing rides to reduce the number of vehicles on the road. Additionally, they can provide shuttle services to accommodate those with limited transportation options, ensuring that everyone can actively participate in church activities regardless of their mobility constraints.

They can also engage with local authorities and transportation agencies to advocate for better infrastructure, such as bike lanes, sidewalks, and accessible public transportation options.

By taking these actions, churches can play a vital role in promoting sustainable transportation practices and creating a more inclusive and accessible environment for all members of their community.

A CALL TO ACTION

This is a clarion call to urgently address the environmental problems we face as a witness to churches to be aware of the broken world, engage in the struggle for a new way of living, and reject ecological exploitation and greed.

In the face of such an impending ecological catastrophe, we are reminded that creation is the theater of God's grace, and as part of creation, we must likewise play our part in the exhibiting of this grace in our care for people and the planet.

Churches should integrate ecology in their ministries to fulfill their stewardship role, promote responsible care for God's creation, and address pressing environmental challenges.

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