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## Church Planting MOVEMENTS:

Rapidly Multiplying Faith Communities



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Rapidly Multiplying Faith Communities

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# EDITORIAL COMMENT



## Rapidly Multiplying Churches: Are We Willing to Change to See them Happen?

Rick Wood, Editor, *Mission Frontiers*

If I asked you, “Should every person on earth have the opportunity to understand the gospel and follow Jesus regardless of his language, culture and location?” You would likely say “Of course, but how? We have never been able to accomplish such a huge task thus far.” But should that stop us? The worthiness of a task is what counts, not its difficulty.

In order to provide every person with access to the gospel, we would need to have enough churches within every people group so that each person would have access to a fellowship of Jesus followers. Is it possible to see the kind of rapid multiplication of communities of faith within every people that would make it possible for every person to have access to the gospel? There is growing evidence that it is.

This kind of rapid multiplication of believers and churches has actually been happening in dozens of places all over the world within every major sphere of unreached peoples: Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Chinese, Tribal, etc. They have been referred to as Church Planting Movements or CPMs. So why don't we see this happening in more places, both here in the West where the church has stagnated and among unreached peoples where the gospel has not yet taken hold? Are these Church Planting Movements an aberration within God's sovereignty, like a storm that suddenly rolls through and is gone? Or is there something we can do to cooperate with God's desire that all should come to a knowledge of the Truth? Can we learn from what God has been doing in these various peoples around the world so we can see more of these Church Planting

Movements take place, perhaps even within every people? That is what this issue of *MF* is all about.

For the last couple decades David Garrison and his colleagues at the Southern Baptist International Mission Board have been studying these amazing movements to see what we can learn from them and then apply the lessons learned to the many peoples that still need a church planting breakthrough. While there are many common elements that are present in all CPMs that can be applied in various contexts, we must be careful to realize that every situation is different and many factors can affect the results. In every situation we must depend on God's Spirit to work through the messiness of human relationships. But perhaps what has been learned from studying CPMs can help us all increase the likelihood of CPMs taking place and avoid the unnecessary mistakes that have kept us from making greater progress in reaching all peoples. While many organizations have been involved in CPMs, no organization has studied CPMs and what makes them tick as thoroughly as the Southern Baptists. We have enlisted their help with this issue so that the entire Body of Christ can benefit from their decades of intense study and analysis of these incredible movements of God.

Some have questioned the numbers for CPMs reported in this issue as “too good to be true.” Accurate statistics on CPMs are exceedingly difficult to ascertain since by their nature these movements have an indigenous life of their own beyond the gaze of outsiders. We applaud the great pains taken by the IMB to provide accurate numbers and reduce the risk of over-reporting. (see

p.14) At the same time, the overall mission community needs to join with the IMB in wrestling with the assessment and reporting process for these emerging movements. Until substantial studies prove otherwise the numbers presented here by the IMB, represent the best information available at this time.

Further research work is needed in the area of Church Planting Movements, and the Southern Baptists are looking for greater collaboration among agencies of many Evangelical backgrounds. They invite the participation of those ministry leaders that want to understand CPM principles and apply them for the greater benefit of the wider Body of Christ. You may contact David Garrison through his website at [www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com](http://www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com) for more information on how you can be involved.

### **Are We Willing to Change?**

It is one thing to learn the principles and practices of ministry that God is using to bring people to himself in large numbers with rapidly multiplying churches. It is another thing to make the necessary changes that will make CPMs possible. Perhaps much of the Church and its mission is locked into models of ministry and ways of thinking that prevent CPMs from taking place.

B.D.B. Moses illustrates this point in his article on page 19, “Sometimes existing Christian leaders negatively impact the movement.... Pastors who want to see growth in their own congregations often resist forming new house churches. These traditional church leaders see church buildings as essential, and even new believers may share this view, thus stunting the growth of the CPM.”

A favorite saying of CPM trainers is that: "You Will Keep Getting What You Have Been Getting If You Keep Doing What You Have Been Doing." In order to get better results, we have to open ourselves up to changing the way we have always done things. This must be the way we approach every aspect of ministry, not just CPMs.

In the West especially, we seldom see churches planting other churches. Most churches want to grow bigger where they are and seldom think about rapid-multiplication church planting.

### If We Continue to Insist...

If we continue to insist that we must have a church building in order to have a church, then we will not see CPMs multiply and grow. We must understand that a church is people, not brick and mortar. A home or apartment or a tree with shade can house a church, too. If

we have to wait to build a special church building in order to establish a new church, we will never be able to move fast enough to provide access to the gospel for every person, tribe and tongue.

If we continue to insist that every church be led by professional, seminary-trained, full-time clergy, then we will never have enough pastors to lead the millions of new churches that are needed. We must release and equip all believers for the work of the ministry and empower them to start and lead new churches. It is the only way to fully disciple each people group.

If we continue to insist on supporting emerging movements with foreign funding, then we have employed the surest way to sap them of their indigenous momentum and destroy any hopes of a Church Planting Movement. The best role of the missionary—whether

Western or non-Western—is that of a catalyst, a model and initiator for a multiplying movement that will continue long after he or she has returned home.

If we continue to violate every aspect of ministry that has characterized CPMs over the last two decades of research and study, then we should not be surprised when we do not see Church Planting Movements developing in our midst. It is for us to decide how much we want the Church to grow and expand and how much we are willing to give up in order to see it happen.

### What Is It Going To Take?

Ten years ago Wycliffe Bible Translators realized that at the current rate that they were translating Scripture, it would take over 150 years for them to begin a translation project in all of the language groups that needed a translation. They decided that this was not acceptable. They went about the task of evaluating everything they did in order to see how they could get a translation project started within every people that needed one by 2025. They revolutionized their processes, procedures and relationships with other translation organizations all over the world. They are now on target to reach their goal by 2038, cutting 112 years off their timetable.

Likewise, the Church as a whole needs to become dissatisfied with our current rate of progress and embark on a similar process of evaluation to see how we can hasten the day when every person from every tribe and tongue has access to the gospel. The study and evaluation of CPM strategies and other best practices in missionary outreach is part of that process of determining what it is going to take to get the job done. We will then need the courage and commitment to implement the needed changes to reach every people. The glory of God in all the Earth is worthy of the sacrifices we will have to make. †

### Late-Breaking News

- More FREE books, 120 of 4 titles related to CPMs. Get them before the book you want is gone. See [missionfrontiers.org/marchpromo](http://missionfrontiers.org/marchpromo).
- Bible scholar responds to Christianity Today article on Muslim-focused Bible translations. See the MF website for more information.

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# Church Planting MOVEMENTS:



## What Have We Learned?

Neill Mims and Bill Smith

Note by Rick Wood: In the April 2000 issue of *Mission Frontiers* we reprinted the booklet, *Church Planting Movements* by David Garrison because of the key insights it held for the rapid multiplication of church fellowships in diverse regions of the world. You can read this booklet by going to [missionfrontiers.org](http://missionfrontiers.org). David Garrison and his colleagues have had an additional 10 years to study and learn what makes these Church Planting Movements possible. We present the fruits of their research and experience in this issue in the hope that missionaries all over the world can apply these principles of rapid church multiplication so that every person on earth may have the opportunity to follow Jesus through a biblical fellowship of believers near his home. I want to express my thanks to David Garrison for his help in gathering the articles for this issue from his extensive network of experienced CPM practitioners.

### Introduction by David Garrison

**I**YKDWYBDYKGWYBG – If You Keep Doing What You’ve Been Doing, You’ll Keep Getting What You’ve Been Getting. *These are the words on a poster that greets many missionaries as they commence Church Planting Movements training. It has become something of a mantra that renowned CPM trainers, Bill Smith and Neill Mims, have used to jolt frustrated missionaries out of their fruitless patterns and into new ways of looking at their community and ministry.*

*Bill Smith, the veteran of CPM trainers, is famous for telling people what they don’t want to hear, but need to hear. Someone described Smith as the rock that others break*

*themselves on, but it is a happy breaking that has left in its wake thousands of new churches among the world’s least-reached peoples.*

*Smith and Mims are unapologetic about their view that God does want to see untold millions come to faith in Jesus Christ, and that business as usual is simply not an option. As much as we may wish that God would bend to our methods or that the lost would leap up and demand, “What must I do to be saved?” more often than not, it is we – rather than God or the lost – who need to change.*

*I asked Smith and Mims to share with us what they have learned in their study and training of CPM practitioners over the past two decades.*

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*Neill Mims is a missionary and CPM trainer in Southeast Asia with the International Mission Board. Bill Smith serves as Vice President for Church Planting for East-West Ministries. Mims and Smith have assimilated CPM wisdom from around the world.*

*Contributions to this article come from IMB missionaries Mike Shipman, Nathan and Kari Shank, e3 Partners Vice President Curtis Sergeant, and others.*



Over the years we have seen dozens of church-planting movements in a variety of contexts all around the world. There are consistent patterns and themes that we see in these movements.

### Five elements.

In every CPM we continue to see five reproducing elements:

- Effective, reproducing bridges that lead to massive gospel witness
- Effective, reproducing gospel presentations
- Reproducing discipleship that turns new believers into CPM partners
- Rapidly reproducing churches
- Reproducing leadership development



multiplication. The gates of hell may prevail against every other ministry and institution, but not against the Church. The Church must be viewed as people, not facilities, organization or a place of worship.

**There is more to life than the Spirit.** Material and social needs are a part of life. If you ignore the felt needs of the people, don't expect a warm reception for the gospel. At the same time, it is imperative that ministries to widows, orphans, the poor and those who are in need be intimately tied to the church and church planting.

### Evangelism

**Very large numbers of lost hear the gospel from believers.** CPMs always have a massive number of ordinary believers personally sharing the gospel, what we call M2E – *Mouth to Ear*.

**Rapid conversion of new believers to partners.** Fear that people are not ready is a lack of trust in God's ability. CPM practitioners quickly incorporate new believers into the movement through baptism, training in such doctrines as "the priesthood of the believer," and accountability-based discipleship such as the T4T 1/3 x 1/3 x 1/3 meetings.<sup>1</sup>

**Incredible boldness.** In CPMs local believers die to self and become bold witnesses, especially in the face of persecution.

### Church, Church, Church

**Planting churches is top priority.** Whatever ministry or witness generated must lead to church formation and

### Leaders, Leaders, Leaders

**Build reproducing leaders.** Build and empower local leaders. Everyday think about this: What if I have to leave? Who will take over? At the same time, don't over-train. Find nationals with apostolic gifting and put them to work. Trust God and expect to find anointed people who will rise up and far exceed you in giftedness. Use them!

SO, WHAT IS A CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT? A SIMPLE, CONCISE DEFINITION OF A CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT (CPM) IS A RAPID AND EXPONENTIAL INCREASE OF INDIGENOUS CHURCHES PLANTING CHURCHES WITHIN A GIVEN PEOPLE GROUP OR POPULATION SEGMENT.

**Intentional personal and intensive leadership training.** CPM practitioners offer frequent and intense training events, pouring lots of Bible and practical training into the emerging leaders of movements. Never go anywhere without taking young leaders with you. Teach by example and make them do the work. If you don't have a lot of foreign workers to help you, rejoice! Train locals for the work.

<sup>1</sup> See Steve Smith's "T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution" in the January-February 2011 edition of *Mission Frontiers*, p. 13.

**Vision casting with accountability.** In most CPMs the role of the expat is not the out-front leader, but the one who models, encourages, challenges, mentors, equips and holds national partners accountable to implement the CPM vision.

**Provide inspired leadership!** Celebrate the victories! Make sure you recognize and reward behavior you want repeated. Build a system of leadership that puts those who have performed well into positions of authority.

### Counter-Intuitives

**Restore others' discards.** It is worth remembering that national CPM leaders don't drop down out of heaven, they climb up out of hell. People who make mistakes, commit sins, and are sometimes branded as "no good" may be the instruments of a movement. Don't be afraid to take a chance on them. Sure, you will get "burned," but you will also find some gems.

**More important than contextualization.** Foreigners will remain foreign no matter how contextualized they become. Contextualization has an important role to play, but there are even more important things that you can do such as loving the people, training the people, and faithfully casting a passionate vision for seeing them come to Christ.

**Don't let the critics get you down.** The more successful you are, the more Satan will send detractors against you. Don't let it distract you from the main thing. Learn from the legitimate complaints and forget the "sour grapes."

### Personal Disciplines

**Pray! Pray! Pray!** CPM practitioners are persons of prayer, but remember that Spirit-led action is simply prayer in motion. Keep moving!

**Remember who you are.** Remember how vulnerable, prone to mistakes, easily deceived, and sinful you are, and will continue to be. Grace is the only hope for your people, and it is the only hope for sinners like yourself (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

**Servant leadership.** Avoid the superiority complex that sometimes besets missionaries. Insist upon and model servant leadership as the Christian norm.

**Avoid the glory.** When you do succeed, people will want to celebrate you and make more of you than you are. There comes a time when you just have to say, "No." Like your salvation, your opportunity to be part of a movement is a gift from God. Be thankful!

**Be desperate for God and for His kingdom!** Expect God to be your source, and proceed with that in mind. Never let lack of resources limit you. The resources are in the harvest.

**At the end of the day, it is the man and woman of God and not the method that God blesses.** The final two items in this list describe the life of one of the most prolific and effective CPM practitioners we have known.

**He is significantly different from most other**

**missionaries.** He stays narrowly focused on those activities that lead to more new believers, more trainers, and more new groups. On the flip side of this, he rarely does many of the traditional things that "normal" missionaries fill their time with: email, surfing the internet, prayer letters, newsletters, administration and bureaucratic reports. He avoids email and says no to a massive number of

invitations and requests that would divert his energy to low-priority meetings or activities. He even shies away from spiritual and staff development retreats, family life conferences, and the myriad other good things that suck away time and impose themselves on missionaries.

**Pray, witness, train.** He and his wife are persons of prayer and consequently those he trains are also. He witnesses incessantly to the majority of lost people he meets and so do his trainees. He trains several times a day and many times a week and insists that new believers immediately witness and begin training their newer believers to do the same. He has a very simple set of materials, but the secret is not the materials, it is the process. He is high-energy; low-energy people simply do not see these kinds of movements. Vacations, days off, margin and balance are not part of his vocabulary.<sup>f</sup>





# 10 Church Planting MOVEMENT FAQs

David Garrison

## 1. What is a CPM?

A definition for Church Planting Movements (CPMs) that has held sway for more than a decade is: “a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment.”<sup>1</sup>

No one recalls who first coined the term “Church Planting Movements,” though it appears to be a modification of Donald McGavran’s landmark “People Movements” adapted to emphasize the distinctiveness of generating multiplying indigenous churches.

## 2. What are you calling a church?

With more than 40,000 Christian denominations in the world today, it’s not surprising that there is no consensus on what constitutes a church. Some mission agencies and denominations have very precise definitions for a church while others have no definition whatsoever.<sup>2</sup> Church Planting Movements exhibit a wide range of sizes and types of church, varying with the cultural context in which they emerge. For this reason, what some may call a church, others might classify as simply a gathering, home fellowship or ‘new work.’

But this FAQ is what do you call a church? In my 2004 publication, *Church Planting Movements*, I allowed significant latitude in church identification by accepting self-designation. In other words, if those involved in the movement see themselves as a community of believers or church, I am unwilling to contradict them. This is not to say all churches are of equal quality. Churches can be more or less healthy.

At its core, a church is a community of believers seeking to obediently follow Jesus Christ. From God’s perspective, church is a continuation of what Jesus began 2,000 years ago. This is why Paul and Luke frequently refer to the church as “the body of Christ.”

In CPMs we have seen churches range in size from an average of 11.3 baptized members in Ying Kai’s Asian T4T movement to 85 in the Bhojpuri movement of

Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to 35 members assessed in 2002 in the average *Isa Jamaat* of Bangladesh.

Though size and expression may vary, good ecclesiology is vital to healthy CPMs. More than one rapidly growing movement has evaporated as a result of inadequate church formation. Church matters.

In South Asia, we developed a CPM ecclesiology teaching tool called “A Handy Guide to Healthy Churches” as an orality-friendly way of teaching new believers how to develop healthy reproducing churches.<sup>3</sup> In northeast India, CPM missionaries Jeff Sundell along with Nathan and Kari Shank have developed a simple and ingenious “Church Health Mapping” tool for tracking and developing churches from inception to maturity.<sup>4</sup>

## 3. What are CPM Best Practices?

Because there are better and worse examples of CPMs and CPM churches, why not learn from and emulate the best? The problem is that our work often occurs in isolation, particularly when we labor in restricted access fields where everyone communicates in a very guarded manner. Our knowledge exists in silos that do not allow for interchange with the broader community of learning.

Nowhere is this more true than in the world of CPMs. A CPM breaks out in one corner of the world with dramatic speed and vitality, but with weak doctrine and orthodoxy. In another corner of the world, a movement exhibits tremendous fidelity to Scripture but struggles in community transformation. Someone has said, “If the body of Christ only knew what the body of Christ knows, the body of Christ would know all it needs to know to do the work of Christ in the world.”

CPM Best Practicing is about the body of Christ learning from the body of Christ the most effective practices in being, doing, and multiplying churches among every nation tribe and tongue. How do we do this? If you’re reading this article, you’re off to a good start.



## 4. When did CPMs start?

Undoubtedly Church Planting Movements have been around since the first century of the Christian era. You only have to read between the lines to see Church Planting Movements as the back-story for the rise of Christianity from Christ to Constantine. In his Book of Acts, Luke reported that: “all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10) and Paul commended the Thessalonians through whom “the Lord’s message... has become known everywhere” (1 Thess. 1:8), and then near the end of his life could declare that “there is no more place for me to work in these regions” (Romans 15:23), because of his desire “to preach the gospel where Christ was not known” (Romans 15:20).

Pliny, the governor of the *distant* province of Bithynia writing to the emperor Trajan about 50 years later warned that

“...many persons of every age, every rank, and also of both sexes are and will be endangered. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. [Pliny to Trajan ca. AD 111]”<sup>5</sup>

Later that century, Tertullian spoke confidently to his Roman persecutors of the remarkable spread of the still fledgling church:

We are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled all the places that belong to you — cities, islands, forts, towns, exchanges, the military camps themselves, tribes, town councils, the palace, the senate, the market-place; we have left you nothing but your temples. (Tertullian’s *Plea for Allegiance*, A.2)<sup>6</sup>

K.S. Latourette’s *History of the Expansion of Christianity*<sup>7</sup> chronicles scores of movements to Christ through the Church’s 20-century history. But by the 19th and 20th centuries, the belief in movements was on the wane in Western missions.

A prophetic voice to the contrary was sounded by Anglican missionary Roland Allen whose 1927 *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*<sup>8</sup> envisioned churches multiplying exponentially throughout the world. A generation later, Donald McGavran showed how such a movement would occur with his 1954 *Bridges of God*.<sup>9</sup> A generation later, missionaries saw the realization of these insights with the appearance of *Church Planting Movements*.<sup>10</sup>

## 5. How many CPMs are there?

Dr. Jim Haney, director of the IMB’s Global Research Department, regularly tracks several thousand people groups and cities. Reports come through the IMB’s

more than 5,000 missionaries serving in 185 countries as well as a partnering network of evangelical sources called *HIS*, the Harvest Information System.<sup>11</sup>

The Global Research Department monitors key result areas in evangelism and church planting. When a population meets three key result criteria, they automatically register on what the Global Research Department calls its “CPM Watch List.” The three criteria are:

- A 25% Annual Growth Rate in Total Churches for the past two years
- A 50% Annual Growth Rate in New Churches for the past two years
- Field-based affirmation that a CPM is emerging.

Based upon these three criteria, as of the end of the 2008 calendar year, **there are 201 people groups or population segments that have risen to the CPM Watch List.**

## 6. What is the fastest growing CPM?

The fastest growing CPM assessed to date is occurring today in a restricted access country in Asia. The movement which began with a new missionary assignment in November 2000 has exceeded any other movement we’ve seen with more than 1.7 million baptisms and more than 150,000 new church starts. The missionary God has used to catalyze this movement is a Chinese-American named Ying Kai. Kai calls his work “Training for Trainers” or T4T.<sup>12</sup>

## 7. How long do CPMs last?

This varies from place to place. We have instances of CPMs that began more than a decade ago and continue to grow at an annual growth rate that would qualify as an ongoing movement. We also know of movements that surged rapidly, only to halt and even implode after just a few years. This points to the importance of learning and implementing best practices.

## 8. How do you assess CPMs?

Great question! Rather than answer that question briefly here, we will direct you to Jim Slack’s longer article on the topic in this same publication (p. 12). Jim has years of missionary experience as the Southern Baptist International Mission Board’s Church Growth Analyst.

## 9. Have you ever been duped?

In short, yes. Jesus warned us to be “wise as serpents.” In both formal and informal CPM assessments we

continue to be surprised by what we uncover. Consider these five of many that could be described:

- a. In Western Europe, a missionary reported an emerging CPM in great detail for more than a year before his fabrications were unearthed, and he was dismissed from his organization.
- b. On the other hand, a missionary in India reported at least 50,000 baptisms only to have a thorough (and skeptical) CPM assessment determine that there were at least 200,000 baptisms and perhaps as many as 400,000.
- c. An Internet charlatan claiming to be a CPM catalyst in China and associated with the website [www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com](http://www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com) was exposed when he solicited donations from a Finnish Pentecostal missions organization. The Finnish agency discovered the truth when they sought a reference from the [www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com](http://www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com) webmaster who exposed the deception.
- d. A missionary serving in Nepal reported thousands of house church plants. An assessment a few years later revealed that the house churches had been assimilated into 32 mega-cell churches that had formed in the wake of the CPM.
- e. The missionary reporting the fastest growing CPM in the world with 1.7 million baptisms and 150,000 church plants in less than a decade, was found to be *under-reporting* his numbers by nearly 40 percent, in order to avoid any charges of inflation, duplication or exaggeration.

In addition to the occasional bogus movement are the aborted movements. In several locations, well-intentioned foreign dependency has intersected a promising movement, sapping it of its vitality.<sup>13</sup> In other places, it has simply been impossible to ascertain whether a movement is underway or not. When this is the case, it is always best to simply say, "We don't know." The cause of Christ is never advanced by wild speculations or hype.

## 10. Where can I learn more about CPMs?

CPM understanding is more of a journey than a destination. As such, the call to CPMs is a call to learn, and the learning curve remains steep. One of the great challenges to CPM understanding is that so many of them are occurring in countries that are hostile to Christian witness, prompting the necessity of pseudonyms and obscured reporting. This, in turn, has led to some falsified reports by individuals seeking to benefit from riding the CPM bandwagon, resulting

in legitimate doubts about CPMs by skeptics.

We do no favors to the kingdom of God when we inflate or trumpet unrealistic reports of kingdom growth. Nor do we advance the Kingdom when we refuse to believe, despite the evidence, the existence of movements that are nothing less than our birthright as New Testament people.

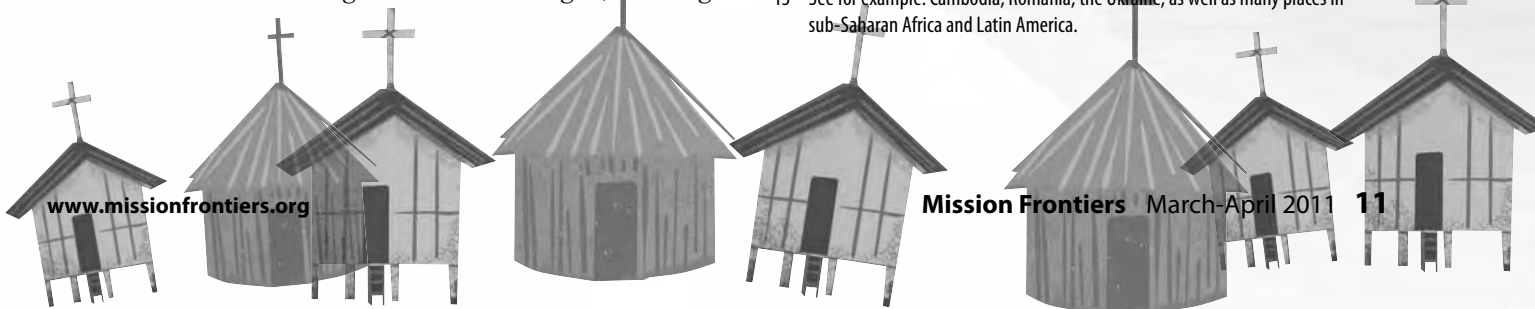
In May 2010, missionary innovator and CPM trainer, Wilson Geisler, launched a new website: [www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com](http://www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com) as a clearing-house for all things related to Church Planting Movement best practices. The site is just getting underway, but already has more than two-dozen contributors, nearly 100 articles, PowerPoints, case studies and resources, and has been tapped by more than 38,000 viewers.

Geisler has constructed the site to allow iron-on-iron interaction between CPM aspirants and practitioners the world over. As a forum for participation in the growing CPM learning community, [www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com](http://www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com) is unparalleled.<sup>f</sup>

*Edited by David Garrison with contributions by Bill Smith, Jim Haney and Wilson Geisler.*

## Endnotes

- 1 David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Midlothian: WIGTake Resources, 2004), p. 21.
- 2 The Southern Baptist International Mission Board, for example, has a very clear definition that can be viewed here.
- 3 See "Handy Guide" article and PowerPoint on the Church Planting Movements website at: [http://www.churchplantingmovements.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=116:a-handy-guide-to-healthy-churches-part-one&catid=36:the-big-picture&Itemid=78](http://www.churchplantingmovements.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=116:a-handy-guide-to-healthy-churches-part-one&catid=36:the-big-picture&Itemid=78)
- 4 This guide can be viewed in Steve Smith with Ying Kai's, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (Richmond: WIGTake Resources, 2011), pp. 253-255.
- 5 In Steve Smith with Ying Kai's, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (Richmond: WIGTake Resources, 2011), p. 27.
- 6 Smith and Kai, p. 28.
- 7 Kenneth Scott Latourette, *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Seven Vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971)
- 8 Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, and the causes that hinder it (London: The World Dominion Press, 1927).
- 9 Donald McGavran, *The Bridges of God* (New York: Friendship Press, 1954).
- 10 David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Midlothian: WIGTake Resources, 2004).
- 11 *HIS* includes, but is not limited to, Campus Crusade for Christ, the JESUS Film Project, the Joshua Project, Global Recordings Network, COMIBAM, Summer Institute of Linguistics, International Forum of Bible Agencies. View their website at: <https://extranet.imb.org/sites/HIS/default.aspx>
- 12 See Steve Smith with Ying Kai's *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (Richmond: WIGTake Resources, 2011), 350 pp.
- 13 See for example: Cambodia, Romania, the Ukraine, as well as many places in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.



# How Many Church Planting MOVEMENTS Are There?

Jim Slack

**T**oday, “Church Planting Movements” (“CPMs”) continue to be a hot topic among church planting practitioners and missiologists. Numerous articles and books have debated CPMs and pondered unbelievable reports of CPM breakthroughs among people groups. The articles in this edition speak to the continuing interest in CPMs.

Eventually, someone wants to know if anyone has “looked inside” a CPM. Others ask, “If they exist, how many are there in the world today?” This article provides an answer to this question.

ASSESSED CPMS REVEAL THAT CHURCH LEADERSHIP ARISES FROM WITHIN NEW CHURCHES AND IS NOT DEPENDENT ON HIRED CHURCH PLANTERS AND MISSIONARIES, EVEN IF CHRISTIAN WORKERS FROM THE OUTSIDE PROVIDE THE INITIAL TRAINING.

In order to answer the question before us, let us focus on our definition—“a CPM is a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment.” I repeat the definition here because some have altered this definition over the past few years.



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When generations of local church members multiply churches to the extent that the total number of churches doubles every four to six years, a CPM likely exists. Multiplication of new churches results in new “streams” of a CPM within a people group, and this multiplication corresponds to the presence of key CPM universals. For example, assessed CPMs reveal that church leadership arises from within new churches and is not dependent on hired church planters and missionaries, even if Christian workers from the outside provide the initial training. If church multiplication is going to sweep through people groups, helpers must avoid methodologies contrary to universals that are commonly found in CPMs.

In the early 1990s, David Garrison and other missionaries began to observe streams of multiplying churches within ethnolinguistic people groups. They also realized that existing missiological and church growth terms, such as “Church Growth Movement,” “Great Awakening”, and “Revival of Christians and Christianity” did not adequately describe them. After examining some of these streams, “Church Planting Movements” seemed to describe the phenomenon of multiplication of indigenous churches within a people group or population segment. These CPMs resemble Mark’s description of Christ’s Parable of the Sower, Seeds and Soils that resulted in thirty-fold, sixty-fold and one-hundred-fold multiplication. (Mark 4:1-20)

In 2000, I became Consultant for Field Services and Assessments in IMB’s Global Research and tasked with assessing CPMs. Concisely, my responsibilities included the examination of reported CPMs around the world.

Since 2000, IMB teams have completed nineteen on-site CPM assessments. Thirteen of these have proven to be CPMs; six have not. Six did not show evidence of generational multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches. Without revealing the identity of specific people groups, the following chart provides a

19 Completed Assessments

Church Planting Movement	Churches by Year											
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
West African (Islamic)	85	122	153	186	298	390	450					
North African (Islamic)	11	11	16	18	20	32	35	36	40	50	80	
East African (Animist)*	101	170	160	167	137	192	192	192	290	309		
Latin American (Animist/Catholic)	279	279	1,369	1,430	1,669	2,283	2,608	2,531	2,790	3,115	3,120	
Latin American (Animist)	81	81	108	108	189	189	189	324	324	324	324	370
South American (Animist)*	170	180	206	240	267	283	343	367	358	355	359	375
Asian (Atheist)	1	1	20	70	85	100						
Asian (Atheist)	550	620	700	1,757	5,564	14,891	20,018	32,556	47,753	66,095	85,312	102,526
Asian (Atheist)*	1	35	60	120	1,250	80	161	241	332	313	339	364
Asian (Atheist)	21	47	90	140	202	205						
Asian (Atheist)	10	15	37	64	72	157	211	231	150			
Asian (Atheist)*	1	5	2	2	6	54	108	153	189	234		
Asian (Atheist)*	34	46	71	96	172	200	203					
Asian (Hindu/Buddhist)*	10	12	1	2	150	400	750	1,377				
Asian (Hindu/Animist)	239	820	1,865	3,590								
Asian (Hindu/Animist)	1	6	15	30	35	40	45	49				
Asian (Islamic)	53	133	311	533	1,333	2,667	4,222					
Asian (Animist)	74	74	194	194	475	1,100	1,100	1,215	1,585	1,754	2,017	
Asian (Hindu)	62	123	184	549	792	1,644	2,616	3,651	4,138			

\*Not a CPM

longitudinal view of total churches reported by year within each of the CPM assessments conducted.<sup>1</sup>

Bountiful notes back each of the CPM assessments, and many include results from interviews recorded on thousands of spreadsheets. The spreadsheets provide details about amazing CPM dynamics through the year of the CPM interviews for each assessment. Beyond the numbers, each interview provides fine points of lives changed by Jesus Christ and the dynamics of powerful breakthroughs in difficult places.

The reader will likely ask, “Beyond the thirteen confirmed CPMs assessed by IMB, how many additional CPMs exist today?” An attempt to provide a “ballpark answer” follows.

Since 1845, IMB personnel on the field have completed an Annual Statistical Report (ASR). In any given year, team strategy leaders among people groups and population segments around the world submit more than 2,000 of these reports. Field personnel submit additional information about Evangelical congregations and believers among people groups. These reports help to identify emerging CPMs.

Five years ago, IMB’s Global Research identified 42 emerging CPMs. As a rule, we look for 50% annual

growth rate in new churches; 25% annual growth rate in total churches and/or other field support for an emerging CPM. Four years ago, the number grew to 72. Last year, we identified just over 200 possible CPMs.

Obviously, we cannot assess all of the possible CPMs ourselves. We need to train new assessment teams using lessons learned from existing CPMs. As such, IMB is willing to include non-IMB experts on CPM assessment teams and to provide CPM assessment

MULTIPLICATION OF NEW CHURCHES RESULTS IN NEW “STREAMS” OF A CPM WITHIN A PEOPLE GROUP, AND THIS MULTIPLICATION CORRESPONDS TO THE PRESENCE OF KEY CPM UNIVERSALS.

training for organizations committed to seeing CPM-oriented church planting among people groups.

We have learned much about practices and methodologies common to CPM practitioners. These practices enhance the possibility of seeing a CPM. On the other hand, we have learned that there are practices and methodologies common to those who are not likely to experience a CPM. God is moving in amazing ways today for His glory, and as we learn from what he is doing, we urge church planters to implement CPM-oriented strategies.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Total churches reported reflects findings of CPM assessment teams; not initial reports. Additionally, as a CPM grows and expands our ability to describe accurately the size and scope of the movement decreases. Since we do not report numbers of churches that cannot be verified in a CPM assessment, numbers reported may appear to plateau, but this is more a product of verification methodology than a reflection of a stalling CPM. Other methodologies for understanding the expansion of CPMs depend on strategic markers or “genomes.” For example, if interviews reveal that a certain sequence of Bible verses, Bible stories, and training methodologies were used to train the first generation of church planters and interviews in other parts of the country reveal this same sequence in the testimonies of believers, we can predict that they are a continuation of the original generation.

# Assessing Church Planting MOVEMENTS



Jim Haney

**W**hile waiting on a car repair one day, I had an interesting discussion with a man sitting next to me. As we talked, we discovered that we had a couple of things in common. First, both of us were believers and involved in Christian ministry. Second, both of us lived a number of years in Africa. My new friend's name was John, and John came to a point in our discussion that he remarked: "You know, Jim, if it were not for the churches in Africa, our denomination would be exhausted and spent. In Europe and increasingly in America, it seems many churches are burnt out, but in Africa, things are 'buzzing.'"

Perhaps you have heard appraisals such as this. As I talk to people about the state of churches around the world, I think many would agree with my friend John. There are many churches in your world and mine, particularly traditional ones, which appear to observers as the "chosen frozen." Members of these churches have a fond nostalgia for days gone by, a distant hope "In the Sweet By and By," and a maintenance plan approach for the here and now.

Sadly, some churches are a lot like fading stars—many burn themselves out and reach a point when their core eventually cools and they become a dim remnant no longer characterized by bright radiant light.

By contrast, churches in church planting movements (CPMs) emanate bright radiant light, like new stars born under the pressure and heat of a dark universe. CPMs swell with bold and obedient disciples abiding in Christ. CPM practitioners focus on Christ, and those in darkness see the Light of Christ in them. The Light attracts new disciples to Christ, and these, like new stars, turn on and shine forth.

CPM assessments position assessors in proximity to new believers within people groups characterized by multiplying new churches. It is a great privilege to

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see the Light of the world burning brightly where formerly there was only darkness.

## Putting Together an Assessment Team

When I receive word that an emerging church planting movement is likely among a people group, I discuss the news with the Global Research team I direct at IMB, beginning with Dr. Jim Slack, IMB's Consultant for Field Services and Assessments. Jim and I examine the new information and compare it with growth patterns in previous statistical and narrative reports from IMB teams and other Evangelical partners. After this, we talk with field leadership and other partners to see if they feel a CPM may be underway. If multiple reports provide evidence of a CPM, I hold further discussions with the Global Research team and field leadership to put plans for a CPM assessment into motion.

Global Research and field leadership determine assessment team composition. Normally, two team members come from the Global Research staff, one of which is the team leader. Next, field leadership chooses three field practitioners who have personal experience in CPM-oriented church planting within their affinity group or people cluster but who are not part of the team engaging the people group. Next, we invite additional guests as needed according to their expertise and experience. Finally, we add logistical folks, such as translators and drivers, as needed.

## Pre-Assessment Meetings

After team members agree to serve on the team, the team leader begins to prepare them for the assessment. First, the team leader distributes the "Church Planting Movement Assessment Guide," prepared by Global Research, IMB. This guide provides structure for the CPM assessment team and helps them anticipate the basics of a CPM assessment.

Next, the team leader distributes copies of existing reports about the CPM. Team members study these

reports to understand how they speak to the various parts of the assessment guide. After this, the team leader challenges team members to go beyond the existing reports to discover any other documentation helpful for understanding the context of the CPM.

As team members share insights and analysis from existing reports and new information they discover, a document library emerges providing facets of information that may have direct or indirect bearing on the CPM. As team members become aware of the context of the CPM, the team leader moves them to consensus about the best way to go about the CPM assessment as outlined in the sections of the “Church Planting Movement Assessment Guide”—purpose, research methodology, information sources, security, and other important details.

First, the team must know the purpose of a CPM assessment. The purpose of a CPM assessment is fourfold:

- To accurately describe the history, nature, and extent of the movement;
- To describe and evaluate the faith and practice of churches within the movement;
- To identify effective strategies and practices that may benefit other work; and,
- To suggest interventions needed to address current issues or to avert future ones.

Second, the team must agree on an appropriate research approach. The assessment team should consider both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies appropriate to the people group under consideration and to the information sources available. The assessment team should consult with field-based researchers regarding the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches. Suggestions for approaches are contained in the appendix of the guide. The final report of the assessment team must include a description of the methodology employed, the rationale underlying that choice, and a brief discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach.

Third, the team should carefully consider the reliability of the many and varied information sources it utilizes in the course of its work. The final report must include a brief discussion of sources used by the team and an evaluation of their reliability.

Fourth, security issues must be addressed. The assessment team must thoroughly discuss its plans with field leadership prior to conducting the assessment to ensure that the team’s presence, organizational identity, and activities do not jeopardize the movement, other work, or field personnel and their partners.

Although it is impossible to foresee every obstacle the team will face, pre-assessment meetings provide preparation that seeks to mitigate risks while providing the greatest potential for understanding what God is doing within a people group. Finally, the team does not move to the field to begin their work until field leadership agrees to all aspects of the plan.

### **On-field Orientation**

If the CPM assessment team has successfully prepared for the CPM assessment during the pre-assessment phase, two or three days of on-field orientation will be enough. The on-field orientation is important in that it brings the team face-to-face for the first time, at least concerning the assessment.

After a meal and a good night’s rest, on-field orientation should begin with introductions and a generous season of prayer. After all, the team has gathered in anticipation of the amazing opportunity to see God at work!

Another of the team leader’s goals is to provide time for team members to know each other, and this includes the field logistical support staff involved in the effort. Field personnel involved with engaging the people group may be involved in some of the on-field orientation tasks, but they should not provide information that would “front-load” or hint assessors as to what they might find. Information provided by them could prejudice the assessment team.

Another of the team leader’s goals is to help the team understand how the research methodology will be applied as the assessment begins. Team members do not carry the “Church Planting Movement Assessment Guide” into interviews and use it to question people. During the on-field orientation, team members “massage” the guide and their approach so that when the CPM assessment is over, they will be able to speak to the fourfold purpose of the CPM assessment and determine if a CPM is truly underway. For example, the team will want to consider how it goes about documenting interviews. Some may want to use recording devices; some may want to take notes, and some may not want to use anything until the interviews are over for the day.

Finally, the assessment team may decide to split into smaller teams of two to three assessors, a driver, and a translator. Smaller teams can focus on a particular region or stream of the CPM, and this is particularly helpful in comparing various parts of the CPM as the teams come back together at the end of the assessment.

## The Assessment

Each team normally spends two days on the road for each venue selected for interviews. Upon arrival at a selected venue, the team meets with their local host. This usually involves a regional or district leader involved in the movement. The team may decide to interview this person first or they may decide to interview him at the end of their time.

If the number coming for interviews is small, the team may interview them together, but I recommend breaking the groups into smaller units. One team member may interview the women, another can take the men, and another can take the children. Each cohort will have their own version of what God is doing in their lives.

Finally, the moment comes for the first interviews. Most assessors have a burning desire to burst forth with an array of questions. However, the best interviews are personal and not rushed. Normally, I share a little about myself. My new friend shares a little about himself. We share about our lives. If God is truly moving, he is likely to tell me about it. If he has no awareness of God's movement, he is unlikely to share about it. If he shares a little about what God is doing, we go down that road together. If there are one or two questions that the assessment team has agreed to ask everyone, I make sure I ask those questions. After the conversation is over, we shake hands, and the interview is over. One final thing: be prepared to spend plenty of time and to drink plenty of tea.

After all the interviews have been conducted and the first day is over, the team meets with the host and asks the host to arrange follow up visits, if possible. Teams spend the second day visiting in the homes of some of those interviewed on the first day, and this may be several miles from the first day venue. I like the follow up visits because they usually involve home cooking, and we get a chance to see the person interviewed on the first day from another angle. We also get to meet some believers that could not come to interviews on the first day.

At the end of each day, I take some progress notes, and each team has time to share what they learned during the day. This time helps the team to make adjustments along the way in order to meet the challenges of the assessment and to come to some agreement of what God has shown them.

The CPM assessment continues accordingly until each team has completed their interviews or until such time that new interviews contain few new surprises. All teams return to base for CPM assessment team debriefing.

## CPM Assessment Team Debriefing

The debriefing is always an exciting time that begins with prayer. Prayers go up to the Lord for a new awareness of what He is doing in the world and among a people group. We thank God for new friends, new needs, new disciples and a new understanding of what God is doing in His world.

During the team debriefing, the team leader facilitates reports from each of the teams. It does not take much to get the ball rolling:

"Who did you talk to?"

"What did you hear?"

"What was amazing?"

"What was disappointing?"

"What did you learn about the history, nature, and extent of the movement?"

"Is church planting going on? Is it sustainable and indigenous?"

"Are churches rapidly multiplying?"

"Is the faith and practice of people in the movement biblical?"

"Are there elements of syncretism within the movement?"

"What were the key elements that contributed to the growth of this movement?"

"What challenges has the movement encountered thus far and how has it addressed them?"

"What interventions might help the movement grow?"

"Is this a church planting movement?"

## The Final Report

After the debriefing, the CPM assessment team returns home, and produces a final confidential report within six weeks of the CPM Assessment Team Debriefing. I receive the final report and review it with the team leader. The final report usually goes through a couple of edits before it is finalized; it is then shared with the CPM assessment team, IMB leadership and the team on the field. A "sanitized" executive summary assures that those not privy to the confidential report hear the findings of the CPM assessment team.

Final reports have had a great impact on IMB strategy. Most of all they have taught us that God is doing some amazing things among His peoples, and He is moving mightily in church planting movements. Additionally, we rejoice that we serve with you and other partners who are witnessing the amazing acts of new brothers and sisters in the harvest force. f

# Someone Has to Be First

## THE POWER of PRECEDENT and PROMISE

Steve Smith

### Precedent and Promise

**A**s a CPM trainer, I often get requests from missionaries to send them CPM case studies. Their preference is for a study that exactly matches their situation. I get requests like this:

Do you have an example of a CPM among educated, post-modern Middle-Eastern Arabs living in Western Europe?

I check my files. Nope. No case study for such a group. Their response seems to say:

Well, that proves it! A CPM can't happen in my people group!

Their logic makes no sense. The absence of a case study only proves that we don't yet have a CPM among that people group!

So, I send them a few case studies from China. To which they respond: "Don't send me these. Of course CPMs can occur there; that's *China!*"

What they don't realize is that CPM pioneers in China in the late 1990s were told: "It takes an average of four years to win a Chinese atheist to the Lord."

So, I send them a case study from India, of what is perhaps the longest-lived and largest CPM in the world, along with several other Indian case studies. They look at them and reply: "Don't send me these case studies. Of course CPMs can happen there. That's India. So many people speak English there!"

They don't know that the area where this large CPM emerged was historically called the "Graveyard of Missionaries" because of its unresponsiveness.

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*To discuss this article with T4T practitioners and me, join us at the new interactive MF website, at [MissionFrontiers.org](http://MissionFrontiers.org)—Steve*

So I send them case studies from several urban CPMs. And they reply: "Don't send these. Of course CPMs can happen in cities. There's so much anonymity there! You can get away with anything."

They don't realize that just a few years ago, mission leaders were searching for ways to reach cities and lamenting the absence of CPMs in these spiritual deserts!

As I'm beginning to get frustrated, they say what they really want are good case studies for reaching Muslims. So I send them a case study of the largest Muslim-background CPM in the world. But their response is: "Don't give me this. That's in South Asia. It's easy there!"

They don't understand that national believers in that movement gather offerings to rebuild burned down homes of persecuted Christians and assist Christian women who have been raped by their persecutors.

Finally, I send them a confidential case study of a Muslim-background CPM in one of the most restricted countries in the Middle East. The response I finally get on this one is: "Impossible. They must be lying!" (I've actually been told this several times.)

At this point I can see that for some people no amount of case studies will convince them. There is a basic disconnect in their faith in the very nature of God and His heart to reach the nations.

### Someone has to be first

There are indeed places where we have no CPMs – yet. The number and diversity of places for which we DO have CPMs increases each year. Just a few years ago, I could count 10-15 CPMs. This past year I felt pretty confident about 30-35. But interactions with other CPM trainers and mission leaders indicate that the number is much, much higher. What we know of is just a fraction of what God is doing.

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written. (John 21:25, NASB)



You must live with an assumption that God is doing more than you are aware of even when your heart doubts.

Today, we prepare new missionaries going to Asia to expect *that CPMs will develop*. It's not hard to create this expectation because we have good examples of CPMs in this area. We have precedent.

But there was a time when there were no CPMs in those places.

There was a time when there were no CPMs in China: *someone had to be first*.

There was a time when there were no CPMs in India: *someone had to be first*.

There was a time when there were no CPMs in Southeast Asia: *someone had to be first*.

There may be no CPM where you live — yet. Someone has to be first. Be that first one! In the beginning, when there is no *precedent*, *someone* has to be *first*.

## Precedent

Fortunately, in some places in the world, we *do* have precedent for CPMs. These precedents are a great encouragement to believe that a CPM is possible and to provide a model for what it can look like. This is illustrated well in 2 Samuel.

15 Now when the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David went down and his servants with him; and as they fought against the Philistines, David became weary. 16 Then Ishbi-benob, who was among the descendants of the giant, the weight of whose spear was three hundred shekels of bronze in weight, was girded with a new sword, and he intended to kill David. 17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah helped him, and struck the Philistine and killed him. . . . 18. . . after this that there was war again with the Philistines at Gob; then Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Saph, who was among the descendants of the giant.

19 There was war with the Philistines again at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

20 There was war at Gath again, where there was a man of great stature who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; and he also had been born to the giant. 21 When he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimei, David's brother, struck him down.

22 These four were born to the giant in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants. (2 Sam. 21:15-22, NASB, emphasis added)

This is a remarkable record: four giants killed by the hand of David's followers. Imagine the situation with the first one Ishbi-benob. The text says he was a descendant of "the giant" — most likely Goliath. David is

in battle against one of Goliath's sons. The giant has payback in mind. He spots David in the battle and rushes toward him with a new sword, intending to kill David and avenge his father's death.

But David is not the one who slays him. Instead, Abishai, one of the army commanders does.

Shortly thereafter, another descendant of Goliath, Saph, fights against the Philistines. David doesn't slay him either. Sibbecai does.

Later, a descendant of Goliath, bearing Goliath's name, fights Israel. David doesn't slay him either. Elhanan, son of Jaare-oregim does.

Finally, the greatest of the descendants who remains nameless fights against Israel. But David doesn't slay him. His nephew Jonathan does.

What's happening here? How can four men in succession slay vengeful giants when, less than a generation earlier, the entire nation of Israel cowered in fear?

How did they learn to slay giants?

They had precedent.

David showed them how to slay giants; now they had a model and the faith to reproduce it. They knew how to beat giants! One after another, these men slew giants that only a generation before stopped an entire army.

That's the power of precedent. When you have precedent, you know how to find victory. The precedent gives you a model and the courage to attempt the same thing.

What seems radical today will be commonplace tomorrow. There was a time when CPMs were unusual. Now it seems like everyone is talking about them. That's the power of precedent.

*But what do you do when you have no precedent?*

## Promise

There was a time in Israel when there was no precedent for killing giants. Less than a generation earlier, Israel was paralyzed at the very thought of approaching a giant in hand-to-hand combat. 1 Samuel 17 describes Goliath as a giant of a man who stood over nine feet tall (v.4)!

Saul stood head and shoulders above the men of Israel (1 Sam. 9:2), yet in his own strength he cowered in fear. For weeks, the Israelites camping in the Valley of Elah followed Saul's example, frozen with fear (1 Sam 17:10-11, 23-24). Each day Goliath taunted them. Each day they fled from the battle. They lived a *lifestyle* of fear and lack of faith.

When David saw this scene unfold he was appalled. David believed the promise that God would overcome

this giant because he understood the heart of God. God had promised to give His people the land and to give them victory over their enemies. In David's mind, it was Goliath against God. Goliath didn't stand a chance.

What do you do when you have no precedent? All you have is a promise. The promise is enough!

What's going through David's mind? We are not told, but he begins to shout the promise out loud to the enemy:

"You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts..." (1 Sam. 17:45, NASB)

Whether fear was creeping in to David's heart or not, we don't know. But his heart meditated on the promise of God in the face of the enemy.

### The promise is enough

At the end of the day, if you have no precedent for a church-planting movement, and all you have is a promise, it is enough. David acted on the promise and became a giant killer. His example served as a precedent (model) for others to follow. What's radical today is commonplace tomorrow.

Fifteen years ago, CPMs were only a dream. Today, CPMs are almost taken for granted in many places around the world. Why? That's the power of precedent.

But when you don't yet have a precedent, the promise of Scripture is still clear. God will harvest a great multitude from every people group and He will launch discipleship revolutions that will rock the world (e.g. Matt. 24:14, Rev. 7:9, John 4:35, Matt. 9:37-38, Mark 1:15-17, Matt. 13:23, Matt. 13:31-32, Mark 4:26-29; Acts 19:10). Live your life based on His promise. He wants to fulfill it in your place, at this time, through you!

### Epilogue: Forgotten Precedent

Sometimes there *is* precedent from history but we have forgotten it. CPMs are not simply a modern-day phenomenon. Throughout church history, there have been CPM-like movements.

Sometimes, there *is* precedent from history but we have forgotten it. Such was the case with the story of David and Goliath.

According to Joshua 15:14, 400 years earlier, Caleb, at the age of 85, drove out three giants from the mountain God had promised him. The ancient record indicates the race of giants Caleb defeated were even larger than those that David and his men encountered.

Forty years before that, Moses and his army defeated Og of Bashan (Num. 21:33-35). According to Scripture, Og was even bigger still. The Bible says Og slept in a 13-foot bed (Deut. 3:11); remember Goliath was *only* nine feet tall! Og was so frightening that God appeared to Moses personally to promise his deliverance, announcing:

Do not fear him, for I have given him into your hand, and all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon. (Num. 21:34, NASB)

AT THE END OF THE DAY, IF YOU HAVE NO PRECEDENT FOR A CHURCH-PLANTING MOVEMENT, AND ALL YOU HAVE IS A PROMISE, IT IS ENOUGH. DAVID ACTED ON THE PROMISE AND BECAME A GIANT KILLER. HIS EXAMPLE SERVED AS A PRECEDENT (MODEL) FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW. WHAT'S RADICAL TODAY IS COMMONPLACE TOMORROW.

Moses had a promise from God. And he had personal precedent on a smaller scale (Sihon). It was enough.

Did the army of Israel, camped in the Valley of Elah, taunted by the giant Goliath remember these stories?

If they did, they apparently dismissed them as irrelevant:

- That can't happen here. *Our situation is different.*
- That can't happen through us. *Moses and Caleb were special.*
- That can't happen today. *It's ancient history; God no longer works that way.*

If they had forgotten them, it was their loss. It was a precedent they could have used.

Did David know those stories? We don't know. If so, then perhaps they inspired him as he ran toward the battle line. He had precedent.

If they were forgotten stories, stored in musty scrolls in a tabernacle, unavailable to a common shepherd boy, it didn't matter. He knew his God. The promise was enough.

This article is adapted from the final chapter of Steve Smith with Ying Kai's new book *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (Richmond: WIGTake Resources, 2011), the inside story of the world's fastest growing church-planting movement. Steve Smith is a veteran CPM trainer living in Asia; Ying Kai is at the forefront of a CPM in Asia that has seen more than 1.7 million baptisms and 150,000 new church starts in less than a decade.†

# Church Planting Movements: Among Hindu Peoples

B.D.B. Moses

## The challenge of reaching Hindus

A survey in India of the 15 most widely spoken languages revealed that six out of 10 Hindus would like a Christian to tell them more about Jesus. When Hindus hear the story of Jesus and are confronted with the gospel they often understand and respond. There is openness to the gospel among Hindus, though challenges remain intense. With nearly a billion Hindus speaking more than 300 languages among myriad castes and people groups, it is imperative that we sow the gospel among Hindus abundantly, knowing that whoever sows generously will also reap generously (2 Corinthians 9:6).

The Lord's commission is to go and make disciples (Mathew 28:19). Even when we instill abundant evangelism in a movement where the gospel is spreading person-to-person and new believers are sharing their faith in Christ, there is another major challenge of discipling the new believers who come to faith in large numbers in a church-planting movement. There is also the challenge of developing new leaders for the movement. Even using discipleship chains based on 2 Timothy 2:2 pattern, "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others," leadership development that can permeate the entire movement remains a challenge. Healthy church-planting movements (CPMs) require nothing less than instilling them with biblical principles, so that every believer is sharing Christ, discipling new believers, and raising up new leaders for indigenous churches that are reproducing throughout the community.

## Overview of CPMs among Hindus

With the world's second largest population, it is not surprising that India is seeing so many church-planting movements. David Garrison's 2004 book *Church Plant-*

*B.D.B. Moses is the pseudonym of a missionary who has been serving the Lord in India for 15 years. View his website at: <http://mosesonmissions.wordpress.com/>*

*ing Movements* documented CPMs among the Bhojpuri in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states, among the Khui peoples of Orissa state, and among tribals in Madhya Pradesh.<sup>1</sup> Various evangelical groups report additional movements from every corner of the subcontinent. I have personally been involved with four movements that are not addressed in Garrison's book, and will discuss lessons learned from these four. Due to widespread persecution in India over the past decade, I will obscure the actual name of some of these movements.

## The K-State Movement

In the case study "K-State: Church Planting in a Responsive State" published in the *Best Practices Institute Manual*<sup>2</sup> we find a CPM where over 600 house churches were started among Hindus in four years. The author worked closely with the leaders of this movement for this entire four-year period 2003-2007. The church planters used CPM methodologies because they saw them as consistent with New Testament patterns for church planting and because they found them to be effective in the Indian context particularly among Hindu peoples.

## Garage-Church Movement

In 2004 a group of missionaries formed an urban house church to model house church for the nationals they were training. The watchman who lived in the garage of the house church was watching. He was a devoted Hindu, but came to Christ and was baptized at the house church. He was disciplined by the missionaries and a local national leader and soon he was leading his friends to Christ and they were regularly baptizing Hindus. These new believers began to meet in what

1 David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements, How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), pp. 35-48.

2 See B.D.B. Moses and Neill Mims, eds., *Best Practices Institute Manual*, p. 141. Available on the Internet as a pdf download at: [http://www.churchplantingmovements.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=42&Itemid=90](http://www.churchplantingmovements.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=42&Itemid=90)

was commonly referred to as the Garage Church. This group of men who met in the Garage Church then started churches among their families and dozens of new churches were planted.<sup>3</sup>

### **Tribal CPM in Middle India**

In one of India's largest and most resistant tribal communities, this CPM saw more than 3,000 new house churches started in the four years between 2002 and 2005.<sup>4</sup> The religion of these tribals is animism influenced by Hinduism. In this CPM new believers shared their faith almost immediately after coming to Christ. Sharing Christ with others was one of the first discipleship lessons they were taught. Church planting went hand in hand with evangelism. It was a common pattern in this movement to identify and mentor the first believers in the village to serve as leaders of their own house churches.

### **Lingayat CPM.<sup>5</sup>**

With a population of nearly 10 million, the Lingayats are the largest Hindu community of India's Karnataka state. Following a 12th century reformation of Hinduism, Lingayats rejected the caste system. Until recently Lingayats were regarded as highly resistant to the gospel, and for this reason few Christians tried to reach them. However, beginning in the early years of the 21st century, a focused effort to reach the Lingayats that emphasized working through Lingayat family relationships and retention of Lingayat ethnic identity began to bear fruit. Recently, a Lingayat Christian leader visited 30 villages where Lingayat believers are spreading the gospel. In these villages he found some 200 families from a Lingayat background who have come to faith in Christ; all of them came as entire families. Today, the gospel is spreading at a rapid pace through the Lingayat community.

### **An inside look at CPMs**

As we examine these CPMs up close, we can identify some common patterns. In each of the movements, we are typically finding a leader with a vision to reach his entire people with churches. This God-sized vision leads them to a methodology that results in a multiplication of new believers and churches: spiritual multiplication and making disciples who make disciples becomes their emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> "Unlikely Places" (Video 4:01 min.) – A church born in a garage leads to a church-planting movement. <http://www.imb.org/main/downloads/flashvideos.asp?filename=/files/38/3835/3835-20587.flv>

<sup>4</sup> Tribal CPM in Middle India, see [http://www.churchplantingmovements.com/images/stories/CPM\\_Profiles/tribal-cpm1.pdf](http://www.churchplantingmovements.com/images/stories/CPM_Profiles/tribal-cpm1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Gospel multiplies among India's Lingayat people, see <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=22192>

In John 14:12 Jesus said, "Greater things will you do," and this is what we find in these movements. Miracles, signs, wonders, and dramatic answers to prayer fuel further evangelism and church formation. The basics of the faith are strongly emphasized: abiding in Christ, evangelism, discipleship, raising up new spiritual leaders and starting new churches that are easily reproduced.

A common thread that we have seen in these four Hindu-background CPMs is a shift in vision from addition to exponential increase in every aspect of ministry. In these CPMs we are seeing the evangelists immediately train new believers to share their story (testimony) of how they came to Christ. The new believers are challenged to share Christ with five family members right away; this infuses the movement with a powerful momentum of joyful evangelism that becomes normative and contagious.

What is emphasized is for the new believer to understand that God wants to save their family members through them. Citing three Old Testament examples, Noah, Lot and Rahab and four New Testament examples of the Gerasene demoniac, Cornelius, Lydia and the Philippian jailer, the new Hindu-background believer is strongly encouraged to stay in his family and win his family to Christ.

We train new believers in basic follow-up lessons that they can use with those they lead to Christ. As a part of this training, we use New Testament examples (e.g. Romans 16:5, I Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15 and Philemon 2) to encourage the new Hindu-background believer to start a new house church with his own family members (*oikos*) as they become believers.

Meeting in their own homes, these new believers experience a faster spiritual maturation process, as: 1) each believer is called upon to use his spiritual gifts right away, and 2) participative Bible study invites active involvement from every believer. In participative Bible study, rather than teaching a lesson, the leader typically asks open questions such as, "What does the passage say? What does the passage mean? What should I do?" Meeting together in small groups encourages accountability for an obedience-based faith.

### **Lessons we can learn from these movements**

With so many new believers coming to Christ from Hindu backgrounds at such a rapid rate the question is how solid are these new believers in their faith? I have been involved in an analysis among high caste Hindu new believers where hundreds were turning to Christ rapidly. The interviews we conducted showed that these new believers in Christ held solid evangelical and theological understanding with a strong commitment to the authority of the Bible. The first step in

this transformation begins with good follow up after the Hindu turns to Christ. Learning and quickly teaching other new believers basic follow-up lessons is a foundational building block for the new believer.

All night prayer meetings are common among new believers from a Hindu background. National leaders are men with a great burden for the lost and often suffer persecution. We have found them eager for all kinds of church-planting training that will make them more effective in their witness and ministry.

The engine driving Hindu-background CPMs is evangelism. There is a shift from the

pastor doing the evangelism to every believer doing evangelism. Getting these believers to share within their sphere of influence of family and friends is much more effective than outsiders sharing with them. They are able to share their faith right away, telling a very simple version without complicated jargon in their testimony.

A widespread pattern used in these movements is: Model, Assist, Watch and Leave. The missionary or church planter first models healthy church practice with the new believer. He then assists him in forming and leading a church himself. Then, after watching to see that the new believer is on the right track, he leaves him to go and start the process all over again. In this way, CPM multiplication is built into the very framework of the movement. Every aspect of ministry is kept deliberately simple; evangelism, follow-up, discipleship and the starting of new churches so that they can be put into practice by every new believer and reproduced. These CPM methodologies have proven suitable for both literate and non-literate, educated and uneducated Hindus. In some instances, to aid oral learners, we have adapted CPM training into a storying format.<sup>6</sup>

### Challenges for the future

In Acts chapters 13–21 we see how Paul’s missionary journeys resulted in multiple church-planting movements. These nine chapters give us a glimpse into

<sup>6</sup> Using biblical stories in effective evangelism and reproducing church planting <http://storyingt4tning.com/>

how first-century church-planting movements were initiated and sustained. We have the New Testament Epistles to a large degree because these young churches had major problems about which Paul and other New Testament writers wrote to them for correction.

The New Testament churches are our ideal yet even those new churches had problems. But despite the problems we know that the rapid movements of the first century produced healthy, reproducing churches.

Lay house church leaders in the context of traditional churches has posed a significant challenge to CPMs. Pastors and leaders of traditional

churches often view rising numbers of lay leaders as a threat if they do not have a kingdom vision beyond their own ministry. Authority for a house church lay pastor to baptize has been a key issue that we have faced. Without encouragement, a new house church leader may be reluctant to exercise his authority to baptize new believers. Hindus are only familiar with the priest performing special functions in the temple. It has been helpful to expose these emerging leaders to others who have effectively put CPM principles into practice.

Sometimes existing Christian leaders negatively impact the movement. For example, a traditional pastor who disciples new believers and then assimilates them into a large church rather than starting multiple home groups undermines a movement. Pastors who want to see growth in their own congregations often resist forming new house churches. These traditional church leaders see church buildings as essential and even new believers may share this view thus stunting the growth of the CPM.

Our challenge is to get pastors and evangelists in the CPM to think of themselves as master-trainers, leaders of movements, rather than leaders or planters of single churches. They need to raise-up other leaders who will raise-up still more leaders, each planting multiplying house churches. Only as thousands upon thousands of new churches multiply exponentially among Hindu-background believers will the vision be realized: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.” (Habakkuk 2:14) <sup>f</sup>

OUR CHALLENGE IS TO GET PASTORS AND EVANGELISTS IN THE CPM TO THINK OF THEMSELVES AS MASTER-TRAINERS, LEADERS OF MOVEMENTS, RATHER THAN LEADERS OR PLANTERS OF SINGLE CHURCHES. THEY NEED TO RAISE-UP OTHER LEADERS WHO WILL RAISE-UP STILL MORE LEADERS, EACH PLANTING MULTIPLYING HOUSE CHURCHES. ONLY AS THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF NEW CHURCHES MULTIPLY EXPONENTIALLY AMONG HINDU-BACKGROUND BELIEVERS WILL THE VISION BE REALIZED



# Church Planting movements

## AMONG MUSLIM PEOPLES

Kevin Greeson

**S**ome historians have described the spread of the gospel as if it were a divinely driven wind that has swept through history. They contend that what began in Jerusalem blew westward across Europe until it reached the Atlantic and then continued to the Americas. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the gospel wind crossed the Pacific, and last century swirled through the cities and provinces of China. China's recent "Back to Jerusalem" (B2J) house-church movement anticipated the next direction the gospel wind would blow as they followed it into the Muslim world. Today, a growing number of Christians are riding this wind across the Muslim world.

When I began working among Muslims in 1997, I knew of only two church-planting movements (CPMs) among Muslim people groups. By 2010, we could identify at least 25 Muslim populations that had seen at least 1,000 baptisms and/or 100 churches planted over the previous decade. Of those 25 movements, a dozen reported more than 3,000 baptized former Muslims, some as many as 300,000 converts from Islam. At least 16 of these movements appear to be church planting movements in the fullest sense of the word.

Why the sudden increase in Muslims coming to faith in Christ and new church-planting movements? Of the 25 movements mentioned above, I have been personally involved, primarily as a "player coach," with six of them. In this article, I will share insights and lessons from these six movements.

Between December 1999 and May 2002, these six emerging church-planting movements saw approximately 4,500 Muslims come to faith in Christ and baptism and 315 new house churches formed. By 2009, each of these six movements has surpassed 2,000 baptisms.

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*Kevin Greeson, a veteran missionary church-planter among Muslims, is author of **The Camel: How Muslims Are Coming to Faith in Christ!** Greeson currently serves as the Southern Baptist International Mission Board's strategist for South Asian diaspora people groups.*

The largest of the six movements has seen 7,290 baptisms with 545 new house churches. Prior to the outbreak of the movement, missionaries had worked among Muslims in this country for 30 years. Though they experimented with some contextualized approaches for engaging Muslims, their efforts yielded little fruit, with only a handful of Muslim-background converts. What were the changes that brought about a movement?

No one can say that God is at work more now than he was 20-30 years ago. Nevertheless, stories of Muslims having dreams that lead them to pursue Jesus are more prevalent today than what was being reported years earlier. The attacks of 9/11, as Muslims saw themselves portrayed as members of a terrorist religion, also rattled the conscience of the Muslim society.

Other key factors were the 1998 publication of a contextualized Muslim-friendly Bible, followed soon after by a contextualized Jesus Film. Both used terminology that was more intelligible to Muslims rather than the earlier translations that reflected non-Muslim worldviews and vocabulary. In 1999, the contextualized Jesus Film played on national television during the Christmas season, prompting 22,000 responses to Campus Crusade. Evangelists soon began using contextualized gospel presentations to Muslims. All these factors ushered in a new season of harvest that greatly exceeded what missionaries experienced in the previous three decades.

Another crucial influence on the emergence of the movement came as my colleagues and I were exposed to evangelism and church planting unfolding in another region of the country that was reporting 20,000 Muslim baptisms. The methods used by these indigenous MBBs differed from those that had characterized traditional missionary efforts over the past two to three decades.

### **Breakthrough Lessons Along the Way**

We learned many lessons along the way. In February 1999, a national Baptist pastor and I began work

in a remote district where no known previous mission work among Muslims had been attempted. The first baptisms took place in December of that same year, and we disciplined new believers in an abandoned fish-processing factory. We placed one of the new believers who showed leadership abilities over the emerging movement. By 2006 the movement saw over 1,200 baptisms in 47 house churches. As early as 2005, though, signs of stagnation were visible, and by the end of 2007 growth had stopped. Growth to this point had been dependent on the leader's abilities and he had reached his limits. It was then that we realized that we did not have a reproducible discipleship plan.

In 2007, I introduced the Muslim-background leader to a fellow missionary who had adapted a T4T<sup>1</sup> type of training program that incorporated high accountability and immediately trained new believers to tell their story of how they came to faith in Christ. This missionary had already seen several thousand Hindus come to faith and continue their training to several generations of new believers. The leader knew this was what the Muslim-background CPM needed as well.

My national Baptist partner approached the 47 churches in his association with an offer of CPM training, but only three churches agreed to do it. In 2008, my partner made a bold move to disassociate himself from the other 44 churches and run the training with the three cooperating churches. In 2009 alone, they saw 2,680 new MBB baptisms with multiple streams of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation house churches.



The combination of the bold move to distance himself from the 44 unwilling churches and the addition of the high accountability T4T training was like pouring kerosene on a fire. The CPM today has doubled its

size since 2009 and is spreading its training program all over the country.

The issue of legal identity for new Muslim-background believers (MBBs) was the second lesson for us to learn. The answer to this crisis was the formation of government-registered societies. One such society is called, "Way of Life." In their legal rules of incorporation, to be a member of "Way of Life" one must believe that Jesus is the only Savior and that the Bible is the true Word of God. These societies provide new believers with an identity that distinguishes them from "Western Christianity." Becoming a member of "Way of Life" minimizes the confusion associated with the title, "Christian<sup>2</sup>." In addition, not every Muslim is immediately ready to drop their Muslim identity and identify as "Christian." Though persecution is not eliminated with this strategy, everyone in the six CPMs continues daily to face insults, rejection, physical beatings, and isolation, but becoming a member of "Way of Life" has diminished persecution, providing MBBs an easier way to explain their new belief to their Muslim friends and family members. Rather than explaining who they are NOT, they begin with who they have become.

Finally, I did not realize beforehand how much I would struggle with my own fear and security. Consuming the mission community for decades was the notion that if a missionary's work was too visible, it would result in his expulsion by the government. We decided to take the risk. For a year and a half, we led a large number of high profile volunteer teams from the U.S. into a new area. We systematically distributed tracts and Bibles along every highway; we rode bicycles down village roads, and even paddled down small rivers. One of these outings resulted in a late night knock on the door of the place where we were staying. Under the cover of darkness, a Muslim seeker was seeking us out. Three months later, this *Person of Peace* along with 18 others were baptized. Within one year, this emerging movement experienced explosive growth with three hundred baptisms from the Muslim community.

In a village less than an hour's drive away, our volunteer team walking from village to village encountered a young Muslim man who gladly received our witness and a Bible. Later, this young man came to faith in Jesus and started 24 churches in that area among his family and friends over a two-year period of time. Today, this Church Planting Movement has close to 4,000 baptized Muslim-background believers with 560 house churches and is reaching into distant

1 T4T stands for Training for Trainers. See Steve Smith's *T4T: A Discipleship Revolution*, or visit the website: [www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com/t4t](http://www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com/t4t).

2 For many Muslims the title "Christian" is not a positive designation. For years the name "Christian" has been linked to "American," and identified with immoral Western culture as an indication of what Christianity is about.

countries with their own missionaries. During this high visibility period of time I did not face any visa problems with the government as previously feared.

An overly cautious security level that goes unchallenged for years can be costly to the goal of finding Muslim seekers who have the potential of starting movements. We may have access to highways and waterways, but there remains a roadway that we will never be allowed to travel. This young Muslim man traveled down his own *oikos*<sup>3</sup> roadway and saw incredible fruit. The risk of losing my visa was worth it to gain access to this young MBB. I learned that, in a sense, the Person of Peace is looking for us as much as we are looking for him. If we are hidden beneath a platform or covered with fear of losing our visas, we may miss meeting that *Person of Peace*. Without that meeting, movements never begin.

New believers typically imitate the security level of those who win them. Even if we do win a *Person of Peace*, if he adopts the extremely high security level of the foreign missionary he will not lead to a movement.

The level of security floating around the mission community for several decades, and that I was indoctrinated into when I first entered the country, was built on a foundation of exaggerated stories. Granted, security concerns and platform issues are real, and my intention is not to belittle this serious matter. The lesson for me, though, came down to the fact that I had been asking the wrong question. I was asking, "What's it going to take to stay in the country?" instead of asking, "What's it going to take to find *Persons of Peace* who can start movements?" Both questions are legitimate, but for me the second question transformed our ministry and our results.

### What future breakthroughs await us?

God is full of surprises and continues to reveal effective strategies that he is willing to bless. From my perspective, we are in urgent need of breakthroughs in three main areas. First, the number of secret believers<sup>4</sup> among Muslims appears to be staggering. One CPM I worked with maintains very careful record keeping of secret believers they encounter. They reported 53,890 secret believers over the past nine years. Most of these secret believers are waiting for a critical mass of believers to form within their community before they are willing to come out of hiding. Missionaries need new strategies that will reach behind closed doors to disciple these secret believers.

3 *Oikos* is the Greek New Testament word translated "household;" it refers to an individual's network of relationships, friends and family. The gospel typically flows through *oikos* relationships of shared language, culture and worldview.

4 "Secret believers" are Muslims who believe in Jesus as Savior but are not yet baptized, remaining hidden within Muslim communities.

Second, we are seeing an unprecedented emergence of Internet and satellite TV ministries that are opening new avenues to Muslims who were previously inaccessible to the gospel. Internet ministries are seeing remarkable numbers of professions of faith. Global Media Outreach, for example, reports some "22,000 indicate receiving Christ every day - one every<sup>6</sup> seconds."<sup>5</sup> In the Arabic-speaking world, no one has had a greater impact with Muslims than the Coptic priest Zakaria Boutros who has seen thousands of Muslims respond to his gospel and apologetic message.<sup>6</sup> Other media ministries such as Sat/7<sup>7</sup> and Arabic language *al-Hayat*<sup>8</sup> are also seeing a growing number of Muslims come to faith.

Finally, with the emergence of Muslim-background church-planting movements, we must find creative ways to mobilize these movements to send out their own missionaries. Recently, I helped a Muslim-background CPM leader visit five members of his movement who were working as migrant laborers in a distant country. During his visit, he challenged these laborers to see themselves not as secular migrant workers, but rather as missionaries. He commissioned them to start new churches. Within two weeks they had baptized eight Muslims and formed a church; another seven Muslim converts await baptism. These diaspora MBBs may represent the next direction that the gospel wind is blowing.<sup>f</sup>



5 Primarily Hindu and Muslim respondents. See their website, [http://www.nayajeevan.org/resources/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=73&Itemid=93](http://www.nayajeevan.org/resources/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=73&Itemid=93)

6 See <http://www.fatherzakaria.net/>

7 See their website: [www.sat7.org](http://www.sat7.org)

8 See their website: [www.hayatv.tv](http://www.hayatv.tv)



# ★ A Church Planting MOVEMENT in Cuba?

Kurt Nelson and Bob Garrett

**A**mong the movements we have witnessed around the world in the latter half of the twentieth-century, none is more dynamic than the one that nearly escaped our attention in our own American backyard. For 20 years Protestant churches in Communist Cuba have been multiplying at an unprecedented pace. The movement or movements bear significance, in part, because they break many precedents.

While the Cuban movements conform to universal characteristics that we have come to associate with CPMs throughout the world<sup>1</sup> their distinctives are found in the socio-political environment in which they have emerged. Unlike many of the movements we are monitoring around the world, Cuba's population enjoys a life expectancy rate of nearly 79 years and boasts a literacy rate approaching 100%.<sup>2</sup> By all measures Cuba is a *modern* developed Western society, albeit an impoverished one. Despite isolation from the U.S., Cuban society is engaged with the broader modern and post-modern culture of Western nations. Church-planting movements have been all too rare in this type of setting.

Factors such as socialized education, economy and health care that have so eroded the role of the church in Western Europe have done nothing to diminish the spread of the gospel in contemporary Cuba. The church planting movement in Cuba is by no means perfect, but given their vitality perhaps their experience holds lessons and insights that can be instructive for other Western nations that face an increasingly hostile and secular future.

What follows is an excerpt from the "Mission of God in Cuba" authored by Dr. Kurt Nelson, president of East-West Ministries, and Dr. Bob Garrett, missions professor at Dallas Baptist University. Their chapter will appear in the forthcoming book: *Discovering*

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*Dr. Kurt Nelson is president of East-West Ministries based in Plano, Texas. Dr. Bob Garrett is professor of Christian Missions at Dallas Baptist University.*

*the Mission of God*, edited by Columbia International University missions professor, Dr. Michael Barnett.

"The most dramatic church growth in all of Latin America in the 1990s occurred among the Protestant churches of Cuba. The human agency for this Protestant revival may have unwittingly been Communist Cuban government leaders at the highest level.<sup>3</sup> When evangelical church leaders approached the Office of Religious Affairs in the early 1990s, the Castro dictatorship authorized the believers to conduct meetings in their homes since they could no longer fit in their authorized buildings and the crisis in gasoline importation curtailed all but essential travel.<sup>4</sup> This government directive resulted in an estimated 10,000 house churches springing up throughout Cuba over the next ten years.<sup>5</sup>

The growth of Protestant churches in Cuba began in 1990 and was evidenced across denominational lines. Between 1990 and 1994, Methodist church membership increased almost 50 percent, while overall attendance increased over 400 percent.<sup>6</sup> The Nazarene church in Cuba grew 115 percent between 1991 and 1992, adding 18 new churches and 61 new house churches.<sup>7</sup> A local Alliance church grew from 6 to 140 members in 1996.<sup>8</sup> The Western Baptist Convention described the 1990s as "the one with the most growth in our history" accomplished "without strategy," "without temples," and "without equipment."<sup>9</sup>

This massive response to Christ is estimated to have resulted in 10 percent of the Cuban population, over 1,000,000 people, becoming active evangelical believers during the last decade of the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> This represents a rate of unparalleled church growth in Cuban history. The Southern Baptist International Mission Board has identified at least two church-planting movements in Cuba during this decade. One is between the Eastern and Western Baptist Conventions, and the other is among the Assemblies of God churches in Cuba.<sup>11</sup>

These church-planting movements can be attributed to the shift towards house church meetings as a more

reproducible method for harvesting the many interested seekers, coinciding with a dramatic increase in church growth, which “freed the church from physical limitations and thrust the gospel witness into the community.”<sup>12</sup> Also, ironically a positive result of persecution in Cuba was that ‘persecution weeded out those who were not serious followers of Christ.’<sup>13</sup> *Operation World* summarizes this spectacular growth of the evangelical churches in Cuba during the 1990s:

Evangelicals now outnumber church-going Catholics. The 1,250 evangelical congregations in 1990 has increased to possibly 4,500 congregations and a further 10,000 house groups in 54 denominations. A high proportion of the new Christians are young people.<sup>14</sup>

### God on Mission in Twenty-first Century Cuba

In an attempt to curb the movement, the Communist regime has targeted house churches since 2000. In September 2005, the government began enforcing restrictive new regulations aimed at curbing the growth of house churches.<sup>15</sup> The regulations require all house churches to be officially registered or risk closure or confiscation.<sup>16</sup> As a result, some churches have been closed, and house church leaders have been harassed.<sup>17</sup>

The new regulations, though unevenly applied in practice, restrict the locations, times, and frequency of house church meetings; forbid foreigners from attending these meetings; and require information on attendees to be provided. If complaints are filed against a house church meeting, the church can be disbanded and the members arrested and imprisoned.<sup>18</sup>

Other tactics include the destruction of church buildings, baseless accusations, arrests, interrogations, and imprisonment of church leaders and other forms of harassment and intimidation.<sup>19</sup> In 2003, prison authorities in Camaguey, Cuba, banned the Bible from being distributed to prisoners.<sup>20</sup> Family members (including children) of pastors continue to be harassed and intimidated.<sup>21</sup>

Despite continued Communist efforts to repress Christianity in Cuba, the Church continues to proliferate. Although comprehensive statistical reports are largely unavailable, indications are that since 2000 Protestant churches in Cuba are growing at an annual rate of over six percent.<sup>22</sup> The 2006 annual report of the Western Baptist Convention indicates that the total ‘Baptist community’ (church attendance) has doubled between 2000 and 2006!<sup>23</sup>

Evangelical churches regularly engage in aggressive evangelism and outreach with prayer being

foundational to their efforts. For example, one church used ‘Operation Andrew’ where each believer makes a list of ten friends and prays for them to become Christians, and then commits to invite them to church. The church implemented the program for one month, inviting all the friends to church on the fifth Sunday. So many new friends came to the church that morning that the pastor asked ALL of the members to get up and leave their seats to the newcomers. The church members went outside and lined up all around the external wall of the sanctuary, placed their hands on the wall, and prayed for their friends inside while the pastor explained the gospel. Scores came to faith that morning.

The incredible influx of seekers has meant that many new home Bible studies have been started. These are held in every imaginable venue: a public garage,



a flimsy tent lean-to, a living room with boards for benches, etc. Churches often fill to capacity with some now experimenting with multiple services. Churches are equipping ‘lay missionaries’ to become the leaders of these cell groups.”

Nelson and Garrett have much more to say about how God is at work in Cuba. Unfortunately, this is all that can be excerpted in this brief article. You may obtain a copy of the book (with the working title: *On Mission With God*) when it is published later this year. Clearly God is at work in Cuba, revealing what happens when the spiritual hunger of a godless society is met with an obedient church that is willing to pay the price to live and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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- 2 Jason Mandryk, ed., *Operation World, 7th edition* (Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2010), p. 291.
- 3 Jim Slack, "What Have We Found," a paper presented during MIS 9400: Facilitating Church Planting Movements, at Columbia International University, Columbia, SC., January 2007. Slack is Church Growth Consultant for the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.
- 4 Open Doors International, *Christianity in Cuba*, 2007, p. 3. [website]; available from [http://sb.od.org/index.php?supp\\_page=cuba\\_2](http://sb.od.org/index.php?supp_page=cuba_2); Internet; accessed 12 March 2007.
- 5 Nina Shea, *Into the Lion's Den: A Shocking Account of Persecution and Martyrdom of Christians Today and How We Should Respond* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997), p. 81.
- 6 Douglas Wingeier, "Supervision and Training for Ministry in Cuba" in *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry in Cuba: Creative Adaptation During a 'Special Period'*, 1994, no. 15:107.
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- 9 Leonicio Veguilla, *A Hundred Years of Work: Baptists of Western Cuba, 1882-1996*. Translated by Michael Jon Colucci (Havana: Office of Publications-Seminario Teologico Bautista, 1997), p. 57.
- 10 Paul Marshall, "Present Day Persecution of Christians," in *Evangelical Review of Theology*. Vol. 24, no. 1, p. 115; Open Doors, *Cuba for Christ*, p. 3; Richard Reichert, *A Systemic Model of Leadership: Development for the Church in Cuba*. 2003 D.Min. dissertation for Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary., p. 16.
- 11 Slack, *What Have We Found*, 10-13.
- 12 Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 15.
- 13 *Ibid.* 16.
- 14 Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster USA Publishing), p. 215.
- 15 Compass Direct News, "Cuba: Christian Home Seized," p. 1. Available from <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php?page=news&idelement=3998&lang=en&length=short&backpage=archives&critere=cuba&countryname=&rowcur=0>. Internet; accessed 15 February 2007.
- 16 "Cuba: Fidel Implodes, The Gospel Explodes" in *Voice of the Martyrs*, (October 2002), p. 13.
- 17 Open Doors International, *Christianity in Cuba*, 2.
- 18 Michael Cromartie, *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2006*, pp. 222-223. Available from the Internet at <http://www.uscirf.gov/countries/publications/currentreport/2006annualRpt.pdf#page=1>; Internet; accessed 14 January 2007.
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# An American Adaptation of **Church Planting** **MOVEMENT** Principles

Jeff Sundell

**A**fter several years as a CPM trainer in South Asia, I found myself back in the buckle of the Bible Belt near Shelby, North Carolina where people also needed the gospel. As I sought to implement CPM Training for Trainers (T4T) principles that had been so effective in South Asia, I found it necessary to make some adjustments.

The first adjustment was to move away from terms like “house church,” “simple church” and “organic church,” and we ended up calling the process Discipleship Cycle.

Every week, we would meet using the T4T pattern of 1/3rd, 1/3rd, 1/3rd for our meetings<sup>1</sup> with the content being what every believer needs to know, with whom to share his story in the community, what to say, how to share his story and the Gospel, and if the person with whom he shared believed, how he would disciple them.

We used the Seven Commands of Christ for the discipleship content based around an inductive Bible. The first six weeks went by looking more like a Bible study than a T4T group. We had prayed weekly for our lost friends in our *oikos* and consistently held everyone accountable to share their stories, but, for the most part, no one was sharing his story.

We had many tell us they did not know any lost people. The reason for this was that people could remember 40 years ago when little Johnny walked the aisle in a church, even though now Johnny was living like anyone else in the world. So, we quit using the term “lost” and began to ask people if they knew 10 people who were “far from God.” Now everyone had friends who were far from God and so could

write down many names. This was a huge breakthrough for all of the groups.

Next, based on the House of Peace model, we asked them which person of the 10 on their list had God working in their life right now so that they could share their story with them that week. All of a sudden, everyone understood with whom to share, and so began to grasp the concept of a house of peace.

We do not discourage people from going to church, but we do encourage our disciplers to keep discipling these people in small T4T groups. The Great Commission commands us to make disciples; that means the buck stops with us! This is still an ongoing struggle, but we are making great progress.

We were brainstorming one day for new ways to get into people’s homes to do evangelistic Bible studies. We decided to reverse the food pantry, so the guys from the group distributed flyers in the community asking people to donate food if they had extra, but if a person needed food, they would call the phone number and it would be delivered to them.

We decided to go into the homes and listen to their stories, then share our stories of how Jesus changed our lives, then share Jesus’ story. In the first home there was a young couple who shared that they had been addicted to drugs but were clean at the time because she was pregnant. But, she also shared that DSS (Dept. of Social Services) had taken her other two kids and she wanted to get her life together and not lose this baby and eventually get her kids back from DSS. We prayed with her and her need for a job, crib, baby clothes and food. The following week, we shared this need in our T4T groups, and one of the men in the group said that he and his wife wanted to meet these personal needs of this young lady. They took a crib to her and took her shopping at Wal-Mart.

Soon a healthy baby came, and this couple moved out of the house they were sharing with other people and into their own house, but had no power because she had a huge unpaid electric bill (\$450) that needed

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<sup>1</sup> See Steve Smith’s “T4T: A Discipleship Revolution in the January issue of *Mission Frontiers*, p. 13.

to be paid to get back into the house. We began to pray again. The couple went to DSS and local charities looking for help to pay the bill; in the end, the couple in the T4T group gave the last \$40 to get their electricity back on. The young husband shared with the T4T couple that in the past he would have gotten the money one way or another, legally or illegally, but he wanted to change and have a new life.

Four months later, the husband gave his life to Jesus and is being discipled, working to overcome many

difficulties, but the young lady in this story is still struggling as we continue to pray and reach out to her. He is now sharing his story and learning how to reach his friends by sharing his story and Jesus' story.

In the 12 months, since starting the first T4T Discipleship Cycle in small-town North Carolina, I and my fellow trainers have seen nearly 40 discipleship groups started and seen many who were "far from God" draw close to him once more.<sup>f</sup>

## Some Great Articles are Waiting for You at [WWW.MISSIONFRONTIERS.ORG](http://WWW.MISSIONFRONTIERS.ORG)

We had so much great material for this issue that we just could not fit it all into the 36 pages available to us. But we did not want you to miss these important articles from the people who know Church Planting Movements the best. Take a look at the following titles and introductions and go to the MF website to read them in their entirety. Happy reading.

### **Are There Church Planting Movements in North America? *Neil Cole***

David Watson has mentioned that it takes longer in contexts with traditional church presence for CPMs to get started. He also states that it takes about four years in developing nations for a CPM to go from initial missionary contact to a rapid movement, so perhaps in the US we are looking at a decade or longer to see the same type of exponential growth and transformation of society. Well, we are a decade in and all the major news outlets are beginning to notice something, so perhaps we are indeed at the beginning of a North American CPM.

### **A CPM Unfolding in Uganda Today, *David Garrison and Bill Smith***

A glance at the religious demographics of Africa attests to scores of untold church-planting movements. In 1900, the African continent's Christian population stood at only 9 million adherents. By 2010, the number had risen to more than 470 million.<sup>1</sup> What began a century ago as a colonial byproduct has emerged today as arguably the most vibrant expression of Christianity on earth,<sup>2</sup> a truly indigenous and exponentially spread-

ing contagion of churches planting churches touching every country and nearly every tribal community of sub-Saharan Africa.

### **The Bible on Church Planting Movements, *Steve Smith and Steve Addison***

A common criticism of church-planting movements (CPMs) is that fairly new believers become leaders of churches. This seems to contradict what Paul says about the qualifications of overseers: "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil." (1 Tim. 3:6, NIV) However, this is not Paul's only list of qualifications for overseers. We must apply biblical expectations for leaders appropriate to their stage of responsibility and development.

### **Messy Mangers, Misunderstandings and Movements by *Wilson Geisler***

Anyone who has been involved in church-planting movements knows these two truths: Church Planting Movements are messy, and they can be easily misunderstood and thereby missed altogether. The first of these truths the church planter can do very little to prevent, but can take comfort in when his or her ministry proves to be a messy one. Proverbs 14:4 makes it clear that, "Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much revenue comes by the strength of the ox" (NASB). When training church planting partners (kingdom oxen) to produce exponentially reproducing healthy churches (kingdom revenue), you can count on a messy manger.

<sup>1</sup> David B. Barrett and Todd Johnson, "World Religious Statistics," in the January 29, 2010 International Bulletin of Missionary Research.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 270 pp.



## 2010 Statements and the Whereabouts of Satan

Dave Datema, General Director, Frontier Mission Fellowship

**M**F readers are well aware that 2010 was the year of four global mission conferences, all commemorating the Edinburgh 1910 meeting ([www.tokyo2010.org](http://www.tokyo2010.org); [www.edinburgh2010.org](http://www.edinburgh2010.org); [www.lausanne.org/cape-town-2010](http://www.lausanne.org/cape-town-2010); [www.2010boston.org](http://www.2010boston.org)). With the recent release of the full version of the “Cape Town Commitment”, the official statement of the Lausanne a Movement’s Cape Town Congress (last October), we are now able to take stock of the three statements that came out of 2010’s unprecedented conferences. Tokyo 2010 was the first conference (last May) and produced the “Tokyo 2010 Declaration”. Edinburgh 2010 was the second conference (last June) and released the “Edinburgh 2010 Common Call”. The fourth conference, 2010 Boston (last November), did not write an official statement.

I am for the writing of statements! Yes, they are idealistic and our thinking is light years ahead of our practice. Yes, it is laborious and those involved probably have no desire to ever do it again. BUT, these statements are of great value historically. They give future generations an idea of what evangelicals (and other believers) were thinking about in 2010. They also give each of us an opportunity to match our personal beliefs with these statements, which is a good practice for our own good. Here are some of my thoughts related to the statements.

First, I believe the statements successfully achieved their respective purposes. No doubt the meeting with the broadest diversity was at Edinburgh. Their statement is an encouraging document when you realize that it has been ratified by representatives of the Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal/Charismatic streams. I was especially

### IS IT SOME GREAT LEAP OF FAITH TO BELIEVE IN AN EVIL SPIRITUAL BEING?

impressed by the emphasis on the Holy Spirit in the document. Similarly, the Tokyo 2010 Declaration is representative of the focus of that meeting on unreached peoples. It gives a clarion call for continued emphasis on frontier mission, addressing the breadth of the unfinished task (all peoples) as well as its depth (discipleship). The Cape Town Commitment, again representative of its constituency and purpose, is by far the longest statement and has a broader scope than the others, which are only a few pages. While some think the Lausanne Covenant cannot be improved upon, I am very impressed with the Cape Town Commitment. The statement has a great perspective on dealing with “insider movements” that will serve the mission community well if lived out. As a whole, it represents my own beliefs and convictions, and I’m grateful for the great effort that obviously went into its formation (including that of our own Greg Parsons, who was the US representative on the statement committee). I fully and wholeheartedly endorse it and trust that it will help evangelicals navigate the troubled waters of mission we are presently treading.

Second, whatever happened to Satan? He doesn’t appear in the Common Call statement in any way, shape or form. The Tokyo Declaration elicits only one reference to “spiritual warfare”, which at least implies Satan’s existence. The Cape Town Commitment has eighteen references to “evil” or “evil powers”, only three references to “Satan”, two references to “spiritual warfare”, and one reference each to “powers of darkness” and “satanic rebellion”. Keep in mind that this is a

much longer document and one would expect more and better coverage on a wider variety of topics. While the Cape Town statement does mention Satan by name, which is encouraging, I wonder if we evangelicals are more comfortable describing Satan and his works (thus the prevalence of “evil” in the statement) than we are naming him.

While belief in God is still credible in America today, belief in Satan represents lunacy to some. Is it some great leap of faith to believe in an evil spiritual being? If so, what is the point in believing in a good spiritual being? I wonder if the cumulative effect of the enlightenment, materialism and rampant secularization has so influenced us that Satan seems no longer plausible, even to believers. If indeed Satan is real and represents God’s arch-enemy, if he is the root cause of the “evils” we see in our world, if he is intimately connected to the fall and sin and the need for forgiveness, if he is constantly tempting believers to fall and preventing others from coming to faith, if he is destroying individuals, marriages, families, whole societies and nations – then one would think he would figure a bit more prominently in our statements representing organizations devoted to advancing the Kingdom among all the inhabitants of this earth.

Of course, we all believe in Satan and his works, but we need to do more to address and resist him. Without a theology that includes him in a prominent way, we easily end up blaming God for evil and shifting the identity of our enemy onto human beings.<sup>f</sup>



# RAISING LOCAL RESOURCES

## LOCALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION

Glenn Schwartz, Executive Director, World Mission Associates

Signs of globalization can be found in many places. I have a friend in Zambia who is a retired pastor, now living in a rural village with no running water or electricity. However, he has a cell phone that can be charged at a nearby school. Fifty years ago when I first went to Africa, there were only land lines with twelve or fifteen parties sharing the same line. We learned to take turns using the phone! Thanks to globalization, we now have access to a global communication network, which allows me to phone my friend in his rural village using a cell phone, in good weather or bad.

This is only one small example of the change that globalization has brought. Is it possible, however, that we are taking for granted the good parts of globalization without considering some of the negative effects? Consider, for example, the million or more short-term missionaries from Europe or North America who go out across the world each year in search of a meaningful cross-cultural experience. They can get from anywhere to anywhere quickly but often without time to adjust to language or culture. They go with little or no understanding of the local community they are visiting. One result is that the local community has a first-hand encounter with the global community, showing the disparity between the two communities.

One of the unintended consequences of this encounter is that the local community can get the impression that they have little, if anything, to give to the wider world. Along with feeling deprived, they begin to “feel poor”, even though prior to that time they may not have seen themselves that way. This feeling of being poor sows the seeds of unhealthy dependency and results in a local community feeling like second class citizens in the world

around them. Sometimes the visitors try to compensate through the distribution of used clothing and other things which can arrive in boxes as large as shipping containers! The feeling of being dependent is further enhanced when the clothing is given away free of charge.

This scenario reflects the downside of globalization. Surely there must be an alternative to this two-class system as globalization marches across the world. On the positive side, imagine what could happen if the global community shifted their emphasis from being providers to becoming encouragers, investors or employers. Sometimes without even leaving their homes, “globalizers” can devise ways to help local communities find ways of contributing to the global community, rather than simply receiving from it. This can be done if, instead of spending thousands of dollars on each short-term, individuals and churches would invest their funds in a reputable microfinance project, and then do cross-cultural service in a North American inner-city closer to home.

Suppose again that the emphasis shifted from “charity” to “investment” and local communities became producers of some service or product that the global community needs. Were that to happen, local communities would get legitimate help (in the form of payment for products or services) from the global community, thereby preserving both dignity and self-esteem. Imagine the positive impact as local communities find their rightful place within the global community.

This shift from charity to investment is what both globalization and localization need. If it doesn't happen, the global community will continue to make local communities more and more dependent on outside resources.

Little wonder that some of them feel like second class citizens in an increasingly globalized world.

One more observation is in order. Preserving the integrity of those in local communities means dealing with more than just money or other material resources. It means adding to localization and globalization the concept of contextualization. The global community, often on compressed time schedules, has little time to take context seriously. And, if they do not take the time and effort to know the context, how can they be expected to speak clearly into it? What they know about their own faith experience might have little relevance to a local community on the other side of the world. If one does not know the “questions” people are asking in their hearts, chances are that the “answers” will not bring about transformation at a deep level. The alternative is to take the context seriously enough to answer the questions that the local community is asking.

So here is the challenge: How can we find a way to benefit from globalization without doing harm to the local context and, at the same time, introduce the Good News of Jesus Christ without creating unhealthy dependency? Many culturally sensitive missionaries have shown that it can be done, and the Christian movement has spread in many places because of it. The challenge is for all of us to take enough time to understand the local context well enough so that the Gospel truly is “Good News” on the local scene. f

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# FURTHER REFLECTIONS



## How Is Missions Working Out For You? Part 1

Greg H. Parsons, Global Director, U.S. Center for World Mission

“So,” Dr. Phil often asks, “How is that working out for you?”

Our answer to that question in relation to global mission is influenced by our background and experiences. My experience goes back to 1976. I was a college student with a strong global interest. A friend and I were so serious about it, that we took a couple dozen from our college group up to a Student Conference on World Evangelization, where Ralph Winter was to speak.

As we sat there listening to him—less than one month before the USCWM was founded—we were shocked. Why hadn’t we heard this before? We were the “on-fire” ones—even promoting missions and prayer for the world in our church.

I now know that what he shared was based on what he had presented at the Lausanne Congress in 1974. He had been refining it for the years. At that point, 2,387,000,000 of the world’s population were categorized as non-Christians, beyond existing church outreach and needed a special kind of evangelism, which he called “cross-cultural evangelism.” The major blocs were: Muslim, Hindu and Chinese worlds. (Later, Chinese was changed to Buddhists.) He noted that this represented 87% of all those needing evangelism.

A few issues back, I quoted Todd Johnson that as of 2007 or so: “Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims have relatively little contact with Christians. In each case, over 86% of all these religionists do not personally know a Christian.”<sup>1</sup>

So, how is it working out? Turns out, not so good.

I am excited about the progress we have made on a number of fronts. Certainly, amazing things have been happening. And, to be fair, those two numbers, (86% and 87%) while parallel, are not based on the same data or perspective. So we ask: what is wrong? Why not more?

BUT THE FACT THAT 86% OF THE MUSLIMS, HINDUS AND BUDDHISTS OF THE WORLD DO NOT EVEN KNOW A CHRISTIAN, SIMPLY MUST CHANGE.

We could blame training. We could blame global tensions or religious conflict. We could blame churches or missions or seminaries or...

The talk Ralph Winter gave in 1974 was called: “The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism.” While he was expecting disagreements on some points, he did not consider the title itself would be a problem. Some people were upset about it.

The reason for the reaction was that it seemed to be saying that this, special, uniquely missionary task was more important than any other. The 2,700 people at the Congress were involved in many different kinds of ministry. While the main, unifying factor was their desire to see evangelism progress, only a few worked with Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists.

As usual, Winter was looking at it from an engineering perspective. If you have cultures (or people groups) where almost no believers or churches are reaching them, then what needs to happen *first*—

meaning the “prior” thing—is cross-cultural evangelism. It is not the most important, but it needs to happen first, before other things can happen.

Today, my fear is that many of the things we call “missions” are simply inter-church aid. We talk about “serving the national believers” or sending our money to them to “do it.”

But what do you do when there are no believers there? Send money? That doesn’t work, as John Piper said in a tribute video for Ralph Winter, “We all know that the unreached people groups have nobody in them to send your money *to*.”

Thus, “priority!” So, as a first step, we need to get there, where this “prior” step has not been taken. We can’t ignore training or experience and spiritual growth. Nor should that take 4 years post-college.

How many of your church’s global workers are serving with Muslims? Hindus? Buddhists? I don’t mean working, say, in the Middle East with Arab Christians, or working in India with tribal people groups or Dalits. Those can be good things. There is lots of other work that needs to be done everywhere.

But the fact that 86% of the Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists of the world do not even know a Christian, simply must change.

What are you doing to help that change?

Next Issue: I’ll talk about other things we can do to be more effective in efforts on the ground. f

<sup>1</sup> *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 43:4, Oct. 2007, p. 495