

SETTING YOUR SIGHTS

~ Part Two in the "Window to the World" Resource Series ~



1600 North Brown Road • Lawrenceville, GA • 30043
678-823-0004 / 678-823-0027 fax / www.mtw.org

© 2005 Mission to the World

SETTING YOUR SIGHTS

The material in *Setting Your Sights* is intended for churches that are mobilizing their members for missions while the ultimate goal of their mobilization may not be quite clear or consistent. Churches in this position may find themselves supporting a wide diversity of ministries that have little in common. Or they may be sending out members on short-term projects, who return with a great love for the people they encountered, but are uncertain about the project's lasting impact. The premise of these articles is that there is indeed a goal for missions, and the most fruitful missions ministries will be oriented in that direction.

THE GOAL OF MISSIONS

Simply stated, the goal of world missions is the Church of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are clear that Christ intends to build His kingdom by establishing His Church—not a physical building or an institution, but His bride, His body, His people. By definition, a Christian is a member of a larger body, of which Christ is the head. The Christian life is meant to be lived out in community with other believers. The Bible calls that community the Church. Thus, effective Christian ministry contributes to the expansion and building up of this new community of faith. Consider encouraging your world missions leaders to grow in their understanding of the Church, or *ecclesiology*. The articles in *Setting Your Sights* and similar materials would be a good starting point.

Given that the goal of missions is the Church, a natural conclusion is that church planting is the primary method of expansion. And if so, that expansion should multiply, such that churches are starting churches, which in turn have a vision for further church planting. And if that is to happen, these churches will need a growing number of trained indigenous leaders, who understand how to apply ministry principles to their context. And given the need for so many national leaders, the role of the expatriate missionary begins to shift towards facilitation of the overall ministry. These conclusions are what is meant by the term *national church-planting movement*.

The New Testament is full of examples and principles for beginning new churches, and missions leaders should be aware of key concepts and issues. The articles in this series will introduce missions leaders to these topics so that they may consider how to elevate the goal of their own ministry towards the expansion of the Church. As they do so, they will need to ask several critical questions.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Do the ministries we support have a biblical view of the local church?

Virtually all Christians would agree that the Church universal is the entire body of Christ, of which all genuine Christians are members. We are all committed to that. The challenge for ministry, though, primarily comes in determining its local expressions. For example, a missionary in Asia knows a man who claims to plant three churches a week. That's 150 every year. If so, this ministry would seem to be worthy of celebration and support. But what does this church planter mean by "church"? When you ask about his ministry, he says he goes to a

house and asks if he can pray for the family. Wanting to be hospitable, they typically invite him in and he prays. He then asks if he can return the following week, and they again agree. Who would refuse? The next week he asks if he can come back, and bring another family to pray for. If they say yes, he claims to have planted a church.

Are such accounts the best investment for your missions ministry? That depends on whether you conclude these are biblical churches. Missions leaders will need to develop their own conclusions on what is meant by the local church, and then ask probing questions about what the missionary has in mind.

2. How directly do the ministries we support grow the Church?

Establishing the Church involves many elements, such as training, evangelism, and mercy ministry. When these facets occur apart from the ministry of the Church, individual lives may be deeply touched, but the Church may only be indirectly built up—if at all. That’s not to say such expressions are wrong. However, the more such ministries are connected to the Church, the more effectively they contribute to the ultimate goal of missions: bringing people into a lasting Christian community where they can serve and grow.

The missionaries and ministries you support should be able to tell you how directly they are connected to church planting. Is ministry an expression of a local body? How will people be followed-up with? Is the real goal the perpetuation of an outside ministry or the establishment of the local church?

3. How do we re-orient our ministry towards church planting?

Perhaps the greatest challenge for a missions ministry that wants to emphasize church planting is making the transition. Long-term commitments have been made and relationships deepened. The article on transitioning to a church-focused ministry draws from the lessons of other churches that have faced a similar challenge.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Under each of the titles, the “theme” of the article refers to one of the essential elements of successful missions ministries listed in *Window to the World* and included here at the end of these articles. A fruitful exercise for your missions committee would be to evaluate your ministry according to each of the twenty themes and begin to strengthen undeveloped areas. You may also want to refer to the articles in the rest of the *Window to the World* series:

Laying the Foundation encourages churches to focus on the essentials: developing their missions leadership, creating a vision for the ministry, and developing a missions conference to mobilize their members.

Setting the Pace offers practical help on how to mobilize your church for world missions.

Reaching the Summit helps more established ministries integrate their efforts with the entire church and with key principles for maximizing long-term impact.

A GOOD DAY FOR THE CHURCH

Theme: Ecclesiology

REV. SCOTT SEATON

- *“Our missions ministry is a mile wide and an inch deep.”*
- *“There’s little or no coherence to our support decisions.”*
- *“We don’t feel we’re making a lasting impact.”*

These descriptions are actual comments from church leaders. Perhaps some of them describe your missions ministry. How did we get here? In many churches, members who long to see the gospel spread throughout the world form or join the missions committee. Perhaps they have missions experience themselves or know people who have served cross-culturally. Serving on the missions team seems like a good way to participate in the Great Commission. But once on the team, they find themselves bombarded with support requests for a seemingly infinite variety of ministries. Each proposal is appealing in its own way. To respond to the numerous requests, the team listens to each presentation and looks at their limited budget. With nothing to guide them other than the winsomeness of the missionary, the appeal of the proposal, and the availability of funds, the missions team allocates support to some missionaries and pass others by. As one PCA pastor frankly admitted, “Our support goes to good missionaries who give a good presentation on a good day for the church.”

The Priority in Missions

It’s clear in these cases that the missions ministry lacks a unifying purpose to guide its decisions. With no established priorities, every ministry opportunity has equal value and importance. To bring clarity, the church must actively determine priorities rather than passively respond to requests. What, then, is the most biblical and effective approach to spreading the gospel? Throughout the history of Christendom, theologians have answered that question with striking clarity: the primary instrument ordained by God to extend His kingdom is the Church.

Cyprian: “You cannot have God for your Father unless you have the church for your Mother.”

Augustine: “Without [the church] there is no forgiveness of sins.”

Calvin: “God’s fatherly favor and the especial witness of spiritual life are limited to his flock, so that it is always disastrous to leave the church.”

Westminster Confession of Faith (25:2): “out of [the church] there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”

To modern ears, these words may appear to be antiquated commitments to institutional religion or a restrictive emphasis on one of many ministry options. A closer look at Scripture, however, reveals God’s affectionate commitment to the priority of the Church. Many passages speak of the centrality of the Church, but perhaps none so clearly as the

16th chapter of the gospel of Matthew. Jesus and his disciples are in Caesarea Philippi, a site for worship of the Greek god Pan. Against this backdrop, where people came to proclaim the deity of Pan, Jesus put forward two questions. The first question was a safe one. The second, far more penetrating:

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it.”

Christians have debated whether the rock Jesus refers to is the foundation of the apostles, the confession of believers, or Christ himself—or all three. But among the riches of this passage, Christ teaches many things about His mission in the key passage, *I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it*:

1. First, *Christ* is the one who is building, not us.
2. He is building the *church*, not a Christian organization or individual converts.
3. It is *His* church, not ours.
4. It is a *prevailing* church.
5. The church is *on the offensive*, such that the gates of hell cannot withstand the blows of the church.

An Organic Community

The Bible describes the church as the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the people, family and flock of God. Even God’s temple is described as made of living stones. Each of these images is organic and connected, emphasizing the living, loving relationship we have with Christ and each other. We see the key place of the church in God’s plan when we read “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). It is the church that both experiences and expresses the life of Christ, with all the power of the resurrection working to grow this body.

Each of the biblical pictures of the Church has something in common: unity. There is both a unity with Christ and a unity with other members that is not simply a lofty, unattainable goal. Rather, unity speaks to the essence of what it means to be a Christian. By definition, to be a Christian means to live in community. The “communion of saints” is nothing less than a “union with” with the Lord and His people.

And when the world sees this unity that Christ prayed for, it will know that we are indeed His followers (John 13:35) and that the Father sent His Son (John 17:21). In other words, Christian unity has profound missional implications. In places where the gospel has yet to penetrate, genuine Christian community may be the most significant witness in that culture.

The Centrality of the Church

Indeed, Christ loves His church, and it is central in the mind and mission of our Savior. The establishment of the universal Church and the multiplication of local churches is how God will accomplish His purpose of bringing glory to Himself, by uniting all things under Christ. Put another way, it could be said that the church is God's plan A; there is no plan B. He has always intended to create a people for His own possession (1 Peter 2:9). This has been God's plan from all eternity, first expressed in the Garden of Eden, through the people of Israel, and into the New Testament church. From the opening pages of Scripture, we see that God had in mind more than the mere conversion of individuals. Rather, He intended that those who had been alienated from God and others would now be enfolded into a new community. And in that community, or church, Christ would dwell in fullness and give life to His new creation. Therefore, fulfillment of the Great Commission must reflect God's emphasis: the establishment of new churches committed to following Christ. The Westminster Confession is unambiguous about the centrality of the church:

The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, and of their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation (WCF, chapter XXV).

If missions is about the expansion of God's kingdom, then the priority of missions must be to establish churches where none exist (Romans 15:20). Because it is God's plan that all peoples will worship Him (Revelation 7), the church must cross cultural barriers to establish communities of believers among every people group. Cross-cultural church planting, then, must be the biblical priority and unifying purpose for our missions ministries.

If cross-cultural church planting is the priority of missions, how do local missions leaders focus on the expansion of the Church? Three key questions will help.

1. Are we committed to the church planting as the primary means of extending God's kingdom?

An honest and consistent answer to this question is absolutely essential, and it must be answered before further evaluation or planning. When challenged by the biblical priority of the Church, though, a typical response arises: if God has called the missionaries to a particular ministry, who are we to say otherwise? Some missions committees explicitly talk about their obligation to support whoever comes their way, should funds exist.

One way to respond is to compare a purpose for your ministry with the calling of a missionary. Most missions committees look for a strong sense of God's leading to a particular people, location and strategy—and would be unenthusiastic about a missionary having no direction. Why should it be any different for a missions ministry? Further, establishing a priority does not de-legitimize God's calling people in other ways. The

Church of Jesus Christ has many parts and is far bigger than any one of us. But as you determine what part God has for your missions ministry, consider the following:

- Church planting is the primary means of extending the Church.
- Church planting is both a biblical imperative and example.
- Church planting is the most effective means of evangelism.
- New believers need a community to belong to, for care and support.
- New churches are the best way to reach new people groups.
- New churches help to renew existing churches.

2. Do the ministries we support have a biblical view of the local church?

Many ministries talk about their emphasis on church planting; in fact, it's almost in vogue now. But experience shows that they mean many different things. The term *church* has been used to describe all of the following:

- Any gathering of believers, no matter how briefly they meet
- A missionary praying with non-Christians
- Bible studies that meet for a few weeks
- A fellowship that includes worship and teaching, yet targets only students
- An individual believer who listens to a Christian radio broadcast

All of these could be valid and fruitful ministries, but it is questionable whether they are what the Bible means by a church. In God's wisdom, the Bible does not specify the exact forms of a church, as we would likely focus on the institutional structure rather than the organic nature of His body. To make it more confusing, the common elements of a church— worship, teaching, evangelism, discipleship, service, fellowship, the sacraments, etc.—are found in a variety of ministries. So when is a church a church? It's not always easy to discern, but in addition to the elements of the church just mentioned, here are a few critical questions to ask the missionaries or agency:

1. Do the church members have an ongoing commitment to each other?

Sometimes we hear of incredible numbers of churches planted in an area. This is cause for rejoicing! But it is also cause for discernment. A church is more than an event or a short-term gathering of believers. It is a community of people living out their Christian lives together. Find out how many of the churches started in the last year or two still exist. How healthy are they? And most importantly, how will you know?

2. Does the church have recognized leadership?

The Scriptures call for believers to submit to their church leaders and look to them for pastoral care (Hebrews 13:17; James 5:14; Matthew 18:17). Thus, it must be clear to the members who these leaders are and how they are to relate to them.

3. Does the church have recognized membership?

Church elders are exhorted in the Scriptures to shepherd the people God has put under their care (1 Peter 5:1-3; Acts 20:28). In order to do so, the leaders must have some way to know who their flock is. Without adopting Western forms, churches should have a culturally appropriate means of determining their membership. Belonging to this new community will help foster committed relationships.

Mission to the World affirms that local expressions of the church will take on a variety of forms appropriate to their context. Thus, a simple definition or description of a local church will always elude us. However, we also recognize that certain principles transcend all contexts. Further, planning for our missionaries and accountability to our supporters require that we have some mutually agreeable understanding of what we mean by 'local church.' Thus, MTW has adopted the following definition of a church-planting project:

Church-planting projects must have at least 10 non-missionary adults gathering regularly for worship and an identified church planter who is committed to seeing a self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating church established.

3. How directly do the ministries we support grow the church?

Establishing the church involves many elements, such as training, evangelism, Bible translation and mercy ministry. When these facets occur apart from the ministry of the church, individual lives may be deeply touched, but the church may only be indirectly built up—if at all. That's not to say such expressions are wrong. However, the more such ministries are connected to the church, the more effectively they contribute to the ultimate goal of missions: bringing people into a lasting Christian community where they can serve and grow.

The missionaries and ministries you support should be able to demonstrate how directly they are connected to church planting. Is ministry an integral expression of a local body, or is the local church essentially unnecessary? Will people in the community become connected to the church, to a separate ministry, or nothing at all? Is the real goal the perpetuation of an outside ministry or the establishment of the local church?

Insight and experience will help missions leaders navigate the waters of cross-cultural church planting. But establishing and following biblical priorities is well worth it. As your church becomes more focused on church planting, your missions ministry will develop a clear and cohesive purpose resulting in a lasting impact for God's kingdom. And that will truly be a good day for the church.

Rev. Scott Seaton is MTW's former International Director of Enterprise for Christian-Muslim Relations. He is currently helping MTW to resource and equip church missions ministries while becoming a church planter with the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA).

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS: A BIBLICAL STUDY

In describing the identity and mission of the Church, the Bible uses various analogies to help us understand its fullness. Among these are the Church as a *building*, a *body*, a *bride*, and a *people*. Discuss these images and how they relate to the Great Commission.

1) Building

- a. Read Ephesians 2:19-22, I Timothy 3:14-15, and 1 Peter 2:4-6. What does the picture of a building say about the nature and mission of the Church?
- b. What does Paul mean when he says the Church is the “pillar and foundation” of truth?
- c. Based on these passages, what does Jesus think of the Church?

2) Body

- a. Read Ephesians 4:3-6 and I Corinthians 12:12-31. What does the picture of a body say about the nature and mission of the Church?
- b. When Paul uses the picture of a body to talk about the Church, one of the points he makes is the importance of unity in the Church. This was so important to Jesus that He specifically prayed about it (John 17:20-23). What would this unity look like? Do you think there is unity in the Church today? What can and should be done to promote unity in the Church?
- c. Based on these passages, what does Jesus think of the Church?

3) Bride

- a. Read Ephesians 5:25-33 and Revelation 19:6-8. What does this picture of the Church as the Bride of Christ tell us about the nature and mission of the Church?
- b. The picture of the Church as the body of Christ confronts us with many concepts about the nature and mission of the Church. What are some of these?
- c. Based on these passages, what does Jesus think of the Church?

4) People

- a. Read I Peter 2:9, Ephesians 3:14-19, and I Timothy 3:15. What do these pictures of the Church as God’s people, priesthood, and family tell us about the nature and mission of the Church?
- b. How can the Church function as a priesthood?
- c. Based on these passages, what does Jesus think of the Church?

5) God is committed to bringing glory to Himself through the establishment of His Church. What implications do you see for your missions ministry?

KEY POINTS FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

1) Building

- a. It is staggering to consider that the God of the universe has determined that He will make his earthly home not in a physical temple, but in the hearts and minds of His people.
- b. The temple mount is the Church, not a place in Jerusalem.
- c. As the “pillar of truth,” the Church protects the truth of God. Truth has no stability apart from the Church; you cannot find truth apart from the Church.
- d. You cannot fully understand the Bible apart from the community of God’s people, the Church.
- e. Stones rub up against and press on each other, but even this “messy building” is being created as a glorious edifice.

2) Body

- a. God desires His body to be unified.
- b. Each part has a vital role to be celebrated.
- c. Each part functions only when attached to others.
- d. Christ is the Head of His body.
- e. Unity means not shopping around for your own preference.
- f. Unity is not opposed to diversity; unity actually requires it.
- g. Parts of the body either contribute to its unity or its dismemberment.

3) Bride

- a. Jesus loves us with a perfect and intense affection—more deeply than the greatest love a human bridegroom has for his bride.
- b. He will never forsake his bride.
- c. He desires a living relationship with us.

4) People

- a. Jesus sees his followers as members of one people or family.
- b. We have brothers and sisters around the world and must be mindful of them.
- c. A priesthood is a community of people set apart as intermediaries between God and other people, bringing them to a deeper knowledge of God. The Church fulfills its priestly function when it is similarly concerned for a needy world.

5) Implications

- a. The primary application of this study is that because God so dearly loves his Church, we should also be committed to its growth and health.

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF CHURCH-PLANTING MOVEMENTS

Theme: Multiplication

DR. PAUL KOOISTRA

Much has been written and discussed in recent years about church-planting movements. There is also significant debate about just what it is. It has proven an elusive subject to describe with precision or finality.

What follows is not intended to be definitive, but rather is an attempt to move us toward a more complete and accurate understanding regarding the key characteristics of a church-planting movement. I hope that it deepens our understanding and agreement, and as a result spurs us to further dialogue and action.

A DEFINITION

A church-planting movement (CPM) is a God-glorifying, God-centered work of His grace whereby the Holy Spirit energizes indigenous leaders to plant a cluster of churches with a common vision and purpose to reproduce themselves often by means of evangelizing and discipling a specific region or people group.

Such movements balance orthodoxy, unity, and liberty and are built upon indigenous structures and institutions as well as local funding and, especially, native worship. The focus of these movements is the transformation of all of life by encouraging the fulfillment of a culture's highest good through the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

COMMENTARY

Church-Planting Movement: Donald McGavran coined the concept of “people movements” to Christ in his landmark book *The Bridges of God* first published in the United Kingdom by World Dominion press, 1955. Basic to his argument was the opinion that Western Christianity, because of its dominant individualistic world and life view, is blinded to how most people come to Christ. Historically, the vast majority of converts have come in groups, tribes, villages, ethnic groups, as a single unit. Chuo Wee Hiar writes, the Western self-conscious states, “I think, therefore I am.” For most of the rest of the world it is, “I participate, therefore I am.”¹

People Movements: Don McGavran argued that people movements have five considerable advantages. First, they create permanent churches in many places through the movement of God's Spirit. Second, they are naturally indigenous. Third, they are a spontaneous and natural expansion of the church. Fourth, they have enormous possibility for growth. The fifth advantage is that these movements provide a sound pattern of becoming a Christian. People and their environment change through the gospel from the inside out.

¹ Chuo Wee Hiar, “Evangelization of Whole Families,” *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven G. Hawthorne, 1999, p. 615

God-glorifying/God-centered: A CPM cannot be built on the foundation of missiology, church-planting methodology, cultural anthropology, or any other important discipline. As David Garrison writes, "...a church-planting movement is not an end in itself. The end of all of our efforts is for God to be glorified."² I would further argue that any kingdom work that is not totally dependent on God with a single purpose of magnifying Christ will, in the end, be found hollow and with little enduring existence.

Holy Spirit: Gary Waldecker has written a very excellent book entitled *Toward a Theology of Movements: Missiology from a Kingdom Perspective*. This is a fine work which I believe could be widely useful. He develops a theology of movements around seven subordinate movements. The third, the outward movement, is a work of God's Spirit whereby we drink of Christ, and one small sip produces whole rivers which flow out of us to bless those around us. Gary states,

The task before us is not difficult—it is impossible. However, the Lord will do the impossible through us. As the Lord commanded the man with the withered hand to stretch it out, as He commanded the paralytic to stand and walk, and as He commanded Peter to walk to Him on the water, so we must attempt the impossible, trusting only in the supernatural power of Christ, refusing dependence on "safer" methods. This is the work that can only be accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit.³

Indigenous: One of the most important, if not the most important element of a CPM, is that it is mainly indigenous. For a church to impact a culture, it must be of that culture. This seems from the beginning to be built into God's design for His body on earth—the Church. Modern students of New Testament manuscripts first thought that the Greek, which was much corrupted from Classical Greek, was the consequence of human errors caused by many years of copying error. Not until Egyptian papyrus manuscripts were studied, did scholars realize that New Testament Greek was simply the common marketplace language of the day. In other words, God's holy and inspired Word was written in the common "indigenous" Greek of the marketplace. A church movement must be no less indigenous.

First, in the development of leadership, God does not work outside of people, and He always raises up leaders within any people He is working. It is for this reason that a biblical pattern for ministerial training is best served when it is an integral part of real ministry. To take men out of a certain sub-culture and train them in an academic seminary so removes them from the people they came from that they often cannot reach these same people when they return. Secondly, the church must have indigenous direction. A culture is transformed by those who understand, love, and can critique that culture. Culture is so much a part of who we are and what we think that, like language, those who develop within its bounds will better understand its nuances. Finally, for a church to last, it must be indigenously supported. History is full of examples of unhelpful dependence. This does not mean that there is not a place for outside financial assistance. Chapters eight and nine of II Corinthians are all about the churches of Macedonia giving to help the church in Jerusalem. Outside

² byhisgrace.com/wortega/CPM.htm, William Ortega

³ Gary Waldecker, *Toward a Theology of Movements: Missiology from a Kingdom Perspective* (summary version), p. 14

giving must be strategic giving, and cannot replace or supercede indigenous giving. If it does, then when that funding no longer exists, the structures of the church will also cease.

A cluster of churches within a specific people or region with a common vision: Some have criticized any emphasis such as this as unbiblical. It is no doubt true that to be the body of Christ, an exclusionary goal for a church cannot be tolerated. If, on the other hand, the singleness of focus is for outreach to a people that need evangelization and discipling, then it makes a lot of sense. Things usually don't happen until someone gives his or her full attention to the matter. In the same manner, a people is usually not reached until someone says, "This is my passion. I will give my life to reach these people."

Reproducing: George Patterson, who has specialized in church multiplication, teaches that healthy churches are "born to reproduce."⁴ Such churches emphasize obedience to Christ and the training of leaders who believe that ministry is always reaching out. The Spirit-led church focuses on those outside, not inside, the church. It is not an accident that the Great Commission reveals the last words of Christ to His Church. This is the purpose of the Church. To rivet the energy of the Church inward can only lead to spiritual constipation.

Balance: A church must be structured exclusively according to God's word. The church belongs to Him, and He alone has the authority to call it into existence and to shape it for the purpose of reflecting His holy character. When churches add either the best notions or desires of men to biblical orthodoxy, they soon reflect the earthly culture they are a part of and little of the heavenly ethos for which they were created. At the same time, orthodoxy must not kill biblical unity and love. Christ says that a new law or command will rule His kingdom: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34-35). Doctrine and unity cannot trump one another. They must serve one another, and a church with no love is no more a biblical church than is a church that ignores scriptural teaching to embrace the philosophies of men. Finally, a church must possess liberty. Church-planting movements have always had elements of surprise in them. As we have already stated, we cannot dictate to the Holy Spirit how He will proceed. Worship, fellowship, and structures must reflect Scripture, but in the eternal wisdom of the Holy Spirit they will also reflect the culture. God, whose nature cannot be fully measured, is also the God of variety.

Fulfillment of a culture: Here the choice of words reflects the debate over how culture and faith intersect and even overlap. This is never an easy question. In the Jerusalem Council Paul uses the argument, in opposition to the Judaizers, that not even Titus, who was with Paul, was compelled by the apostles to be circumcised (Galatians 2:3). Paul claims Titus has become a living example that the gospel and the culture were in conflict. Nevertheless, earlier in Paul's ministry, he had Timothy, his other son in Christ, circumcised in order to enhance the gospel within the culture (Acts 16:3). When does one take a prophetic posture, challenging the culture for the sake of the gospel, and when does one accommodate the culture for the sake of the gospel? Obviously, this is not always an easy decision, and one needs all the wisdom of God's Word and the guidance of His Holy Spirit. We must acknowledge that the question of culture is a very sensitive issue today within the world of missions. In the past I have used the phrase, "change culture," but this suggests a lack of appreciation for a culture in which the gospel is preached. Such an emphasis can also have

⁴ George Patterson, "The Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches," Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, Edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven Hawthorne, p. 604

the effect of making the gospel look foreign and hostile to the customs and history of an indigenous people. Phrases such as “penetrate” or “impact” have seemed to me to be more acceptable, but they also contain a somewhat “in your face” connotation as one considers the dynamics of faith and culture. The phrase “fulfillment of a culture” may help us to get closer to a biblical perspective on this issue. Obviously if the gospel is God’s redeeming work within His fallen creation, then all of life, including culture, must be somehow altered by this mighty act of God. I am suggesting that when God calls His creation back to Himself, He intends not to destroy that creation, but to restore it to its original glory. Therefore, when the gospel affects a culture, that culture is moved toward all that it was intended to be. Life is elevated, liberty is heartened, government serves, integrity is valued; even the environment is more universally enjoyed and protected. Human cultures, all of them, were affected by the fall. The gospel reverses that decay.

Dr. Paul Kooistra served as president of Covenant Theological Seminary from 1983 – 1994, and since that time has served the PCA as Coordinator of Mission to the World.

UNDER THE MANGO TREE: CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

Theme: Church Planting

REV. PAUL TAYLOR

“All important decisions are made under the mango tree.” So goes the old Filipino saying. On a Sunday afternoon in May of 1993, three missionaries, six Filipino men, and one Filipino woman met under a mango tree to study the Bible. This tree was in Kuya Benji’s yard, in the peaceful country village of Talang. Floating like an island in a sea of bright green rice fields, under the watchful eye of Mount Arayat, Talang embodies all that is typical of the Filipino country village—strong family relationships, peaceful rural setting, hard-working people and strong (albeit misled) religious convictions.

This Bible study under the mango tree was the first gathering in the initial church-planting work of MTW-Philippines. Kuya Rap sat next to me with his huge Catholic Bible opened in his lap, continually interrupting with good questions that helped all to think more deeply about the gospel message that was being told. Rap, Benji, and the others present invited friends for the next week. By the third week about 20 were gathered, and following the invitation that day, six made commitments to follow Christ. These were the first believers in what was to become Talang Bible Christian Church. That church became the first of many in what we trust will eventually become a strong Reformed and covenantal church planting movement. It all began under the mango tree.

In the nine years since those first meetings under Benji’s mango tree, more than fifty church planting projects have begun. The vast majority of churches have survived and become part of the Presbyterian Church of the Philippines.

A VISION IS BORN

On a Sunday in 1990, Sarah and I were quietly sitting in worship at Parkview PCA in Lilburn, Georgia, when the Lord spoke to each of us separately urging us to commit to foreign missions. At that time Sarah was enjoying life serving on the staff of Intown Community Church (PCA), and I was serving as Coordinator of Church Planting for Mission to North America. We were both very content in our work, and would have enjoyed staying there forever. After the service, however, we compared notes and concluded that indeed the Lord was calling to us pursue opportunities overseas. So we began discussions with MTW leadership about our future.

As we were meeting with John Kyle one day, he suggested that Manila, Philippines, might be a good spot for us. Soon we found ourselves in a plane that was landing in Manila for a two-week exploratory trip that was to change the course of our entire future ministry. During those two weeks Filipino church leaders and mission leaders unanimously expressed that the greatest need was not more schools, not more evangelistic meetings, but more churches. Given our twenty-three years of experience in church planting, we felt confirmed in our decision to move to Manila.

June 1992 was the month we arrived. Immediately we started fifteen months of language and cultural acquisition. It was eleven months into that study that the mango tree Bible study was held, resulting in the first church. During language study we also committed to working with Pastor Bob Enoya to develop churches around Taal Lake, two hours south of Manila. And Pastor Dado Fonacier asked us to be his consultant in a new church-planting work on the campus of the University of the Philippines in Los Banos.

But all of these works—Talang, Taal, and Los Banos—were in rural or small-town settings, and we knew that our main focus should be on Manila’s 12 million people—now estimated at 13.6 million. So in January of 1994, we moved into the city, knowing it was God’s plan, but not knowing the strategy.

A VISION FOR THE CITY

Pastor Dado asked me to preach at Los Banos on Sunday, February 6, 1994. Arriving there the night before, I stayed with a member family overnight. In the morning while having devotions and preparing to speak, the strategy for the future suddenly became clear. It was almost as if the Lord had spoken out loud:

- Thrust to the City—starting 25 churches in Metro Manila, with each starting a daughter church within four years from its first public worship service.
- Thrust to the Province—starting 25 churches in the provincial areas, with each starting a daughter church within four years from its first public worship service.
- Thrust to the World—sending out 20 Filipino missionaries to cross-cultural or overseas places of service before the work became 10 years old.

As I shared this with the team at the next team meeting, this strategy was adopted.

During our language study time we had spent much time networking with Filipino church leaders and mission leaders. And since some Korean missionaries were forming the Presbyterian Church of the Philippines, we built bridges to and developed relationships with the leaders of this young denomination. In addition we had asked four key Filipino leaders to be an advisory board for us. As we made our strategy known, those leaders we had befriended referred some potential Filipino church-planting pastors to us.

To guide our recruiting, we developed several key commitments:

- We would start Reformed and covenantal churches, and thus needed pastors with those commitments.
- Every new church would be started with a Filipino senior pastor from day one.
- The target audience was the professional and business community of Manila.
- We would seek the best church-planting pastors possible.
- In order us to recruit the best pastors, for them to be free of care and able to focus on their work, they would be well-supported.
- Our financial support would be short-term, reducing each year, and for three years only.
- We would develop careful and intensive training and supervision.

- Each church planter would pass some level of presbytery exams before becoming an MTW church planter.

Those early days were heady and exciting ones. February 22, 1994 was the first of the monthly pastors' fellowship meetings that have continued until this day. These monthly meetings have become the heart of the work—times of fellowship, prayer, instruction, building “esprit de corps,” and planning.

A COMMITMENT TO EVANGELISM

The first two urban church-planting pastors were placed and began their work in April. We had learned through networking that developing Evangelistic Bible Studies (EBS) was the most effective means of finding people to start a new church. The church planter would find people for the studies through referral or his own door-to-door work.

Pastor Edwin Roxas was the first of the urban church planters. Edwin made a commitment to himself and the Lord that he would spend three hours each day out on the streets “finding people.” After the first day he called me and said, “This is such hard work!” To encourage him, I spent the next few days doing it with him. As he discovered that he was more effective than I was, his commitment strengthened. Within two weeks he was leading twelve Evangelistic Bible Studies each week. This became typical of the future church planters as well.

Our plan was for each EBS to run about ten to twelve weeks, after which the converts participated in what we called a “Foundational Bible Study.” The initial EBS was discontinued and the process would begin again with more door-to-door work and referrals, resulting in new Evangelistic Bible Studies. The Foundational Bible Study was given that name because it was the foundation for the new church which would begin to hold worship in due time.

In time, we discovered that most who made genuine professions of faith (people whose lives were obviously changed) never found their way into our churches. That told us that if we wanted one hundred members in a new church, approximately 400 to 500 would have to come to Christ before those one hundred would find our church. Consistent, persistent, ongoing, never-ending evangelism became the byword of the church-planting work.

Constant encouragement and close supervision were crucial to the effectiveness of the work. We found with experience that each missionary supervisor could only adequately oversee four or five works. In our weekly time with each church-planting pastor we would spend three or four hours doing what was most needed in that project—making new contacts, meeting with and developing leaders in the church, consultation with the pastor, etc.

Typically it would take 12 months of this sort of work for each new congregation to be ready for its first public worship service. These first public services became great landmarks for each church.

A HALLMARK OF TRAINING

In addition to extensive evangelism, intensive training soon became a hallmark of the work. Some was formal training. Pastors who came to us from outside the Presbyterian Church of the Philippines were required to take 24 units of study at Presbyterian Theological Seminary. And the few who hadn't yet completed at least a Bachelor of Theology degree were required to do so.

Some training was informal training. This took the form of church-planting seminars at the beginning and after each six months of a pastor's service. Informal training also took place through instruction at the monthly pastors' fellowship and occasional special seminars. And lots of one-on-one training occurred in interviews with potential church planters and in weekly consultative meetings.

Three ministries have been emphasized since they are crucial to the Filipino situation:

- **Mercy:** About 50% of Filipinos live in poverty and have great medical, nutritional, and other basic needs. We have come to realize that in a country where poverty abounds, mercy ministry must also abound in the church. A church that is not involved in mercy ministry is marginalized, viewed as a church concerned only for itself—a church without a heart. So our churches have been encouraged to develop nutritional ministries, ministry to street children and medical ministries, all accompanied, of course, with biblical instruction and evangelism. All of these mercy activities are expanding into effective programs with many churches involved in each.
- **Missions:** Filipinos are very adaptable people, easily learn languages, can live frugally, and understand Asian, Latin, and Western culture. They make great missionaries. This sending aspect will be a great part of the future of the work.
- **Multiplication:** Bob Logan, the church growth guru, tells us that if a church hasn't planted its first daughter church within three years, it probably never will. We have amended that standard a bit, encouraging the new churches to start a daughter church within four years of its first public worship service. Of the first 50 churches, 36 were mother churches, 11 were daughter churches and three were granddaughter churches.

A LOOK AHEAD

After the initial four years of work, more and more Filipinos were placed in leadership. Five church-planting pastors were given the role of supervisor, so that these men are now doing most of the supervision. Many have become moderators, chairmen, and members of General Assembly and presbytery committees.

What will the future hold? Will this work really become a Reformed and covenantal church-planting movement, fully led and moved along by Filipino leadership? Will a great number of new Filipino Christians be mobilized for world missions? Will the Presbyterian Church in the Philippines become a dynamic church, molding the thinking of Filipino society? But

above all, will the Lord's name be honored and glorified in the minds and hearts of more and more Filipino people? This is our prayer—that the Church may grow out from under the mango tree, and on to the ends of the earth for the honor and glory of our King.

***Rev. Paul Taylor** is MTW's International Director for Asia. He was formerly Church Planting Director for Mission to North America, and he and his wife, Sarah, are missionaries to the Philippines.*

GOD'S LOVE OF CULTURES

Theme: Contextualization

Lesslie Newbigin, a missionary to India for 40 years, struggled to describe Jesus accurately to a culture that did not know him. What word does one use for the eternal Son of God who for our sakes became fully human? If he uses *swamy*, he may inadvertently suggest that Jesus is just one more lord among the other 330 million gods in Hindu religion. If he chooses *avatar*, he will refer to God descending in the form of a creature, but in a cyclical worldview that has no climax to creation. If he simply tells the story of Jesus' life, he may unintentionally suggest that Jesus is merely part of the illusory world we live in, one that is devoid of meaning and purpose. The missionary would proceed through the list of possibilities, only to find that all of them proved problematic.

The challenge of contextualization, then, is determining how to communicate the gospel in biblically valid and culturally indigenous forms, so that it is both faithful to the Scriptures and understandable to the audience. Usually the topic of contextualization is framed in this way, with the discussion focused on finding practical and proper expressions of biblical truth. After all, it is the task of the missionary to seek means and methods that will result in the broader acceptance of the gospel. But the answer to 'why contextualize' ultimately is not simply a pragmatic one.

GOD'S HANDIWORK IN CULTURE

Instead, the motivation for encouraging cultural diversity of religious forms is a theological one: God is a God of creativity and diversity. Just as he takes pleasure in the variety of flowers he has made, so does he positively delight in the assortment of cultures he has created. God celebrates biblically valid, ethnic expressions of worship and ministry. Following are a few of the many verses where the variety of people groups are called to praise the one true God:

Praise the Lord, *all you nations*; extol him, *all you peoples*. (Psalm 117:1)

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and *all the families of the nations* will bow down before him. (Psalm 22:7)

In that day you will say, "Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name; make known among the *nations* what he has done, and proclaim that His name is exalted." (Isaiah 12:4)

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from *every nation, tribe, people, and language*, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9-10)

Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All *nations* will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed. (Revelation 15:4)

CONTEXTUALIZATION IN MINISTRY

The missionary's role, then, is to encourage nationals to express God's work in them in ways that reflect their heart language and culture. Traveling this road is a difficult task, one that requires humility, patience, and great wisdom. Biblically contextualized ministry will be expressed in culturally understandable forms while remaining faithful to the timeless truths of the gospel. The challenge, though, is avoiding the perilous ditches on either side of this road: irrelevancy and syncretism.

For example, ministry that takes no consideration of the local culture will remain an outside and irrelevant force. Religious material, including worship elements, may be in forms completely unfamiliar to the ethnic context. This can easily happen, for example, when a Western church wants to translate material that has been well-received in the home church. However, many phrases or illustrations make little sense to a person from another culture. More subtly, the author's thought patterns may be hard to follow. In such cases, the material reinforces the idea that Christianity is a foreign religion, and God is foreign as well. The influence of Western churches tends to err towards this ditch.

On the other side of the road, a ministry may be so frustrated after years of fruitless service that it looks for radical new ways to identify the gospel in the local culture. The danger here is that universal Christian truths and distinctions may get watered down. For example, the deity of Christ may be de-emphasized in an Islamic culture, as Muslims find the Sonship of Jesus a major stumbling block. Or the exclusiveness of Christ may be minimized in a Hindu context. Either way, the ministry begins to take on syncretistic forms.

Supporting churches should be aware of these issues and gauge their involvement between these extremes. The emphasis, though, should be on identifying forms of worship and ministry that flow out of the heart language of the local culture, thereby celebrating the richness of the Creator of all mankind. All such efforts to contextualize ministry must begin with a deepening understanding of the culture, and church partners would do well to become students of the culture they seek to serve.

NATIONAL CHURCH PLANTERS

Westerners are in a poor position to determine the best cultural expressions of ministry. Our efforts, then, must be to encourage the contextualization of ministry according to indigenous, ethnic expressions, through serving and facilitating national believers. In that, we also affirm the universal truths of Scripture, which has authority over all cultures and peoples and must never be compromised. Some of the compelling reasons to focus efforts on identifying and equipping national church planters include the following:

- Nationals understand cultural issues better than expatriates.
- Nationals already know the language and customs of the culture.
- Indigenous leaders are more accepted than outsiders.
- Only nationals can fulfill the nearly limitless need for more pastors.
- Indigenous leaders need less financial support.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE MISSIONARY

Theme: Facilitation

“Should we still send missionaries?”

That’s a fairly common question today. The background of that question may be a pragmatic concern that sending missionaries costs more than supporting nationals. Or it may be a missiologial concern over Western paternalism. Regardless, this is a legitimate question for churches and agencies to be asking. But a first and better question may be, “What is the most significant thing we can do to further national church planting in other cultures?”

ROLES OF THE MISSIONARY

Traditional Role

If the greatest good of missions is the development of an indigenous, multiplying church led by nationals, then it follows that all involvement must be evaluated by how well it contributes to that end. That involvement especially includes the role of the missionary in his relationship to nationals. Until fairly recently, most missionaries involved in church planting have adopted a *traditional* role. This strategy put the missionary in the role of church planter, who would develop a core group through evangelism and discipleship and then serve as the senior pastor of the church for several years. This approach is exemplified by one talented missionary who is pastoring a cross-cultural church. When asked about his own development of church planters, he said, “God has called me to preach. If I can’t do that here, I will do it in the U.S.”

Theoretically, the traditional missionary is developing leaders and will turn over the reins at “the appropriate time.” While this will eventually occur either through planned transition or reluctant retirement, the church has been given a model of *replacing*, but not *reproducing*, leaders. Very few of the churches planted in this fashion will ever multiply themselves. Further, the missionary inevitably shapes the church in patterns and values drawn from his own culture, despite attempts at contextualization. A church that began with the strong leadership of the “foreign” missionary will have a difficult time replacing him and creating an independent identity.

Facilitative Role

Recent decades have seen the emphasis on a different role for the missionary. This could be termed the *facilitative* role. In this approach, the entire outlook is on supporting and serving national leaders in their development of a multiplying church. Certainly, the religious landscape of the culture will dictate different priorities, but in all such cases, the facilitative role is to be favored.

For example, in *pioneering* work where a national church has yet to be established, the missionary must necessarily be directly involved in evangelism and discipleship. His goal at this stage will be to identify and develop emerging leaders. Leading Bible studies and classes would be appropriate, but starting a worship service and preaching should be discouraged—

until national leaders can assume a public role.

In *developing* fields, the missionary's focus should be on training, mentoring, and networking. Local churches will have begun, but the facilitative missionary's role will be to advise and counsel, not to dictate. The goal here is to encourage the nationals to think biblically and independently. The focus should be on presenting principles rather than techniques. However, in the name of avoiding paternalism, it is essential not to run to opposite extreme of offering too little advice. The new church should not be isolated from 2,000 years of theological and missiological formation. Instead, it should be taught to draw from the broader, historical Church to which it is connected. Practically, this will mean the missionary should present options, as well as encourage the church to develop fresh cultural expressions of worship and ministry.

Finally, in *maturing* fields, the missionary can act as a peer to help the national church explore new fields. From the outset, the new church must be encouraged to develop a missions vision. Further, it can be a vision that is pursued together. In today's world of rapid communication and transportation, new models for cooperative cross-cultural missions work are emerging, and will play an increasingly important role in the years to come.

The facilitative role of the missionary can be summed up in a famous adage, with a twist:

**Give a man a fish, and he is fed for a day.
Teach a man to fish, and he is fed for a lifetime.
Teach a man to teach others to fish,
and you have started a fishing movement.**

The Church of Jesus Christ around the world is growing fastest where it is least resourced. If these new churches are to become biblical faithful, healthy, and reproducing ministries, we must help supply what they are asking for: resources. Some of this help may be in financial form, but their greatest need is in theological and ministry training, in the context of supportive relationships and collaboration. In this way, missionaries who understand the local context and need provide a vital and continuing role as they help to build up the body of Christ.

LATERAL LEADERSHIP: THE CASE FOR FACILITATION AS AN EMERGING CHURCH-PLANTING MODEL IN MISSIONS

Theme: Facilitation

BILL RIBOCHAUK

When I think of church-planting facilitation, several pictures come to mind. They are mental pictures of three potential church-planting movement leaders who have blessed me with their friendship. One is Western European; the other two are Middle Eastern. They are men whom I want to facilitate. And I'm not sure I know how.

While there are many facets of church-planting movement leadership, there is one overall criterion that is, without a doubt, critical to movement leadership: vision. Roger Foster, in a book on managing conflict, tells of a story in Italian folklore about three stonecutters.¹ When asked what they were doing, the first replied, "Cutting these stones to the exact size necessary." The second replied, "Earning my wages." The third replied, "Building a cathedral."

If by facilitation we mean empowerment, then I would suggest that stonecutters number one and number two are not ready for facilitation. Thomas Graham, in a paper on empowering leadership,² proposes that models of leadership need to be matched to the competency and commitment level of those being led. He suggests that people lacking competency and commitment should be led using direct supervisory models. Only those with high competency and commitment levels should be led with empowering models of supervision.

The whole idea of supervision, however, seems antithetical to facilitation. Or is it? Might we more appropriately ask, "Can we lead when we are not in charge?" A critical aspect of directing others is job knowledge. Knowing what people are supposed to do, make, produce, etc., and the methods required are crucial to management. That kind of management is essential in direct supervisory models.

However, because of the dynamics of social interaction in cross-cultural situations, it is hard to adapt patterns of thought and behavior (even simple tourist-like thought and behavior) to new cultures. The necessary translation is more than just learning a new vocabulary. Even direct supervisory management becomes difficult in these situations.³ For example, while studying at the Goethe Institute in Atlanta we had a teacher who worked in marketing for Mercedes-Benz, USA. He said that German managers would get extremely frustrated when they incorrectly used the English false cognate "may" for the German word "mag." What they wanted to imply was compulsory action rather than voluntary action; instead American

¹ Roger Foster, *Beyond Machiavelli: Tools For Coping With Conflict*, Penguin Books, New York, N.Y., 1994, p. 67

² Thomas Graham, "Empowering Leadership," Center for Organizational & Ministry Development, 1995

³ Roger Fisher & Alan Sharp, *Getting It Done: How to Lead When You're Not in Charge*, Harper Collins, New York, N.Y., 1995, p. 16

employees heard that they had permission to do or not to do a specific thing. In such cases, how can empowering facilitation be effective?

Several years ago I heard PCA pastor, Mark Gornik, speak about his work in Sandtown, an inner city, African-American neighborhood in Baltimore, Maryland. His approach to entering that community—in the posture of a learner—followed by loving service based on what he had learned, allowed him to eventually lead from a “lateral” or “side-by-side” position rather than a “top-down” position.

In a book entitled *Getting It Done: How to Lead When You're Not in Charge* by Roger Fisher and Alan Sharp, the authors outline problems encountered when leaders “talk down” to their followers.⁴ They have observed, “Telling others what to do implies that they have lower status. All of us are concerned with ourselves. Whatever you say, your words will be heard in terms of what they imply about the listener, and the relationship between you.”⁵ This is especially true in cross-cultural relationships.

North Americans are often viewed by people in host cultures as “talking down” to others. Whether the accusation is just or not is beside the point, if you are the one who is trying to communicate your ideas. In a facilitative approach to leadership, great discipline and commitment are required to keep others in positions of superiority where they are willing to accept ideas and suggestions.

ONE-ANOTHERING

A model of relationship building that our teams have begun to use in our facilitation of national pastors in Europe and Asia follows the principles of the “one another commands” of Scripture. We put a great deal of emphasis on the first level: greet one another well. We base this first level on the scriptural injunction to “greet one another with a holy kiss.”

When we lived in a small village in the Middle East, our boys used to meet an older man coming up our street every day from the mosque. They would be going out of the house just about the time that Mr. Abdul was coming by. The boys would take his proffered hand in theirs, raise the back of it to their mouths and give it a kiss. Then they would place the clasped hands—his and theirs—to their foreheads, hold them still for a minute and then place them finally over their hearts before letting go.

In essence they were taking this gentleman’s greeting, making it holy with their kiss, and then placing his greeting in their minds and hearts. They were signifying that they were ready to sit at his feet and learn from him. If we are going to facilitate national pastors and church-planting movement leaders, we can do no less. Our attitude needs to be one of humble learning.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ The first three areas of proficiency were suggested to me by Steve Childers in a conversation about church-planting movements

The second level of the one-another commands that we emphasize is serving one another well. By greeting well we earn the right to serve well. In fact, our service is apt because it has been informed by our greeting process.

In serving well, we will be invited by those whom we serve to enter the third level of the one-another relationship—loving well. Mark Gornik points out that the service that he and his wife had given to the residents in Sandtown was based on information they had gleaned over months and months of listening. They listened to the oral histories of the families in the neighborhood. It was no surprise then that their African-American neighbors expressed how loved they felt by the Gornik's service.

It is only after loving well that we ever earn the right to enter the fourth level of one-another relationship—exhorting one another well. Perhaps because we value directness in our culture, Americans are perceived in an unjust light. But we do like to exhort others, don't we? It comes so naturally. Right away. Often before we have greeted or served or loved the recipient of our exhortations.

LEARNING TOGETHER

Facilitation is easier to talk about than to practice. As a relatively new ministry region in Mission to the World, we are still learning the hard way—the school of experience. In 1996 our stated purpose was to:

- 1) Identify, recruit, train, and facilitate Reformed and covenantal national church-planting movement leaders and national church-planting pastors.
- 2) Identify, recruit, train, and deploy teams of expatriate facilitators to work with the national movement leaders and national pastors.
- 3) Assemble networks of international Reformed and covenantal churches to support and assist in this process.

We are presently working with a number of potential church-planting movement leaders. We have learned much from each of them. Early in 2003 the men we have identified as potential church-planting movement leaders will meet to help us identify what it is that makes them who they are. Mission to the World's Global Training and Development Team has already produced an initial study on what it means to be a church-planting facilitator. The potential movement leaders will also interact with us on how well we have defined that process.

Since 1997 we have also deployed a host of expatriate teams. Each year we have conducted training in Muslim-immigrant enclaves in Europe, preparing new team members for facilitative church planting. We have developed an approach that encompasses five areas of proficiency:

- 1) evangelism/discipleship
- 2) preaching/teaching the Word
- 3) church-planting facilitation
- 4) cross-cultural adaptation
- 5) high-performance teaming

In many ways these areas overlap, like Olympic rings. In some areas, like cross-cultural adaptation and high-performance teaming, the circle might envelop almost all we do in other areas.

As we continue to listen carefully to those we serve about their backgrounds, contexts, hopes, and dreams we are developing new and better ways to serve. We are adding new competencies to our list of work practices. We are more committed than ever to facilitative leadership. Lately we think we are really starting to love our church-planting partners and they are starting to love us.

In terms of our third goal, the establishment of support and assistance networks, we are just beginning. We have had a number of PCA churches work with us as we have deployed teams. An exchange of short-term workers and visitors has occurred in both directions. We have formed partnerships to formalize relationships between the churches serving and the churches being served. Facilitative leadership at this level is the most important.

We hope that in the final analysis, a level of interdependence between churches planted and churches planting will occur. We hope that the level of empowerment, the spirit of cooperation, and the love that grows out of mutual service will be so compelling to those around that the church will multiply in the areas of both the host and guest churches at an increasing rate.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Joseph E. Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize winner for his work in analyzing the imperfections of financial markets, wrote a book entitled *Globalization And Its Discontents*.⁶ In it he compares the heavy-handedness of the International Monetary Fund in relation to emerging two-thirds world economies, with domino-theory politics of the 50s and 60s. Essentially he says, “The big guy is making the little guy comply to quick-fix remedies that the big guy has dreamed up.”

This analysis is over-simplistic in both cases—financially and militarily. I think we can learn something in terms of missiology, however, from his analysis. We could cite many historical cases where do-gooders have gone into totally unfamiliar areas, thinking that they knew exactly how to make things better: financially, socially, politically, etc.—and with disastrous results.

This is not the way of the cross. Our calling is to a more complicated, yet loving service. Lateral leadership. Empowerment. Real partnership. Facilitation. And perhaps we help the most when we recognize that we “don’t know how.”

Mr. Bill Ribochauk is a consultant for MTW’s work in Europe and Asia.

⁶ Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization And Its Discontents*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, N.Y. 2000

RE-ORIENTING A MISSIONS MINISTRY—WITHOUT CAUSING A REBELLION

Theme: Vision

One of the greatest challenges for established missions ministries is re-orienting their direction. Their church may have supported faithful missionaries for years. Many of these people have been in the homes of church members, some of whom have visited them on the field. Long-term relationships and commitments have been made, in part as a response to the urging of church leaders to support various ministries. Given the context of a missions ministry, how can leaders successfully manage a transition towards a greater focus on church planting? The following suggestions are drawn from the experience of churches who have re-oriented their ministry:

- 1. Confirm your ministry vision**

It is impossible to build a straight wall without a plumb line. Similarly, missions leaders cannot align their ministry without a clear direction. The first step in making a transition is clarifying your vision. *Laying The Foundation* includes an article on how to create a vision statement for your ministry that your leaders will share. Both the ministry direction and leader buy-in are essential.

- 2. Evaluate your current commitments**

The next step is to get an accurate picture of where you are. Devise some method to assess which ministries are committed to church planting according to your biblical convictions. You may want to rate each missionary on a three-point scale (e.g. directly connected to church planting, somewhat connected, indirectly/not connected) and total the amount of support for each category.

Your missions ministry may have other commitments to evaluate, such as short-term projects, educational opportunities in the church, or the personal emphasis of a leader. Consider all these elements in evaluating your current commitments.

- 3. Determine a goal and timetable**

Beginning with your starting point, establish a goal of how much support you would like to be giving towards each category, and assign a timetable. You may want to have one, three and five year goals. Similarly, establish goals for ministry involvement, such as directing short-term projects to sites connected to church planting.

- 4. Promote ministry most connected to your vision**

Look for ways to highlight missionaries and ministries related to your vision. Those who do not should get less visibility or promotion. If you send members on short-term projects, try to include a site where participants will be connected to a church-planting ministry.

5. **Direct growth in your budget to ministries that most fit with your vision**
In a moment of candor, one pastor said their missions support typically goes to “good missionaries who give a good presentation on a good day for the church.” This is where a vision will help you—but it must be clear enough to help you actually make decisions. By saying “yes” to something, it is far easier to say “no” to others. Directing new support according to your strategic emphasis will help you make significant progress toward your goal.

6. **Create ranges of support**
Several missions ministries develop a grid for determining support levels, with a range of support for each category. Doing so provides a framework for directing more funds towards areas they consider the most strategic. Possible ministry categories include church planting, church-planting support ministry, ministry (other), and focus site. Further refinement can be developed by creating a matrix that factors in personnel categories such as member family, member single, non-member family, non-member single, and national leader.

7. **Review significant ministry changes for possible re-allocation**
You likely won’t want to make abrupt changes to missionary support. Doing so will not only impact the missionaries you’ve helped to send out, but such changes may affect the motivation of your members. Instead, look for appropriate windows to consider re-allocating current support. For example, when missionaries who do not contact you or who are not connected to your vision complete their terms, consider whether their support can be re-directed to your missions focus. Other missionaries will change fields or have a significant change in purpose. This may be a time for re-evaluation, as part of your reason for beginning support has changed, at the missionary’s initiative. If you decide to re-direct or reduce support, be sure to give the missionary at least six months notice, and/or wait until they return to the States where they can better raise support.

8. **Take a long view**
Your ministry didn’t get to where it is overnight, so your transition doesn’t have to either. Create a plan to get to your goal, be very selective about new commitments, be patient, and trust that God will lead you over time.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL MISSIONS MINISTRIES

1. **Missions Committee:** An active, organized committee that coordinates the missions ministry is absolutely essential. The committee should not see themselves as the ministry, but rather as a leader that involves the entire congregation and all its ministries.
2. **Ecclesiology:** The Bible teaches us that God loves His Church, and has commissioned it to be His primary means and end for advancing the kingdom. Missions leaders need to develop a biblical understanding of the Church and emphasize efforts that help establish churches around the world. In so doing, it is important to discern the difference between a lasting church and a temporary gathering of believers, as many ministries claim to be committed to church planting.
3. **Short Term:** One of the most effective ways of mobilizing members for missions is to send them on local and global missions projects. All participants will return with a greater heart for God's world, and some will begin to pursue missionary service. Select projects that best fit with your church's long-term vision.
4. **Prayer:** The need for more laborers was Christ's only prayer request. Churches should reflect our Lord's heart for a needy world by meaningfully and regularly including prayer throughout the ministries of the church.
5. **Sustainability:** While churches in the West should give generously to missions, they should consider how to avoid national churches' becoming overly dependent on outside resources. Dependency can stifle growth and innovation.
6. **Theology:** It is both stimulating and challenging to engage godly Christians who have developed different convictions or expressions. While encouraging the interdependence of the global body of Christ, missions ministries can also affirm a natural emphasis on planting churches that share their theological convictions.
7. **Vision:** A seemingly limitless number of opportunities will come before the missions committee. Determining which ones to pursue requires a clear sense of direction. The vision of the ministry should be carefully developed, written, and embraced by church leaders.
8. **Contextualization:** No church ministry will be more exposed to the diversity of the larger body of Christ than the missions ministry. This is cause for celebration of God's love for all peoples and affirmation that the ministry of churches in other cultures can be expressed in biblically valid and culturally indigenous forms. Missions leaders need wisdom and experience as they encounter these different expressions.
9. **Giving:** Compared to the rest of the world, churches in the West have been blessed with tremendous resources. The message of Genesis 12:3 and elsewhere is that God blesses His people *so that* they will be a blessing to others. To that end, churches should be sacrificial in their support of world missions.
10. **Partnership:** When churches collaborate with other sending churches towards shared ministry goals, far more can be accomplished. More importantly, such partnership expresses the interconnectedness that Christ desires for His body. Churches should consider how they can contribute their experience and resources to other churches, as well as grow from the relationship.

11. **Word and Deed:** As missions ministries determine which efforts to support, they should have in mind the kind of churches that are being developed. A biblical church necessarily requires a commitment to both ministries of the Word (e.g. evangelism, preaching, teaching) and deed (e.g. mercy and justice).

12. **Multiplication:** Churches should actively be involved in planting new churches. Multiplication refers to the process of beginning new churches not simply by the occasional addition of a church, but through a movement of churches planting churches, that in turn reproduce. Effective missions ministries should look to support ministries in other cultures that share this commitment.

13. **Participation:** Christ has laid the task of world evangelization in front of every believer. Thus, missions ministries should not be seen as a separate department but as leaders of the entire congregation. Church members should see the Great Commission as their personal responsibility and have some relationship with someone serving in cross-cultural missions. Mobilized churches will be identifying members to consider missionary service, who would be sent out and supported in prayer and finances by the congregation.

14. **Emphasis:** In order to maximize the impact of the missions ministry, churches should identify special areas of emphasis for long-term participation and concentrated support. Churches with such focus sites typically continue to support other missionaries. However, a higher level of promotion, recruiting and funding will go toward these emphases, as well as repeat site visits and short-term projects.

15. **Church Planting:** If the Church is God's Plan A for establishing His kingdom—and there is no Plan B—then church planting is the means of expanding that kingdom. Moreover, studies have shown that church planting is by far the most effective method of evangelism. Therefore, a majority of missions resources should be directed towards church-planting efforts.

16. **Facilitation:** Increasingly, missionaries are being sent not as primary evangelists and pastors but as facilitators to indigenous leaders. Many such leaders are looking for a peer to come alongside them for counsel, resources and connection to the global Church. Although their ministry may not be as visible as other missionaries or the nationals they serve, these new missionaries can have enormous impact and deserve to be strongly supported.

17. **Church Leadership:** A significant factor in determining the success of a missions ministry is the support of church leaders, and in particular the senior pastor. The strongest ministries describe their church leadership as champions of missions, through their personal participation and public commitment.

18. **National Leadership:** No matter how long missionaries live in another culture, they will never understand the context as well as a national. Practically, church multiplication requires the development of indigenous leaders and their primary role in the local church. Missions ministries should look to support efforts that emphasize national leadership.

19. **Education:** While an annual missions conference may be the most visible event to promote missions, churches that are the most mobilized create opportunities to educate their members about missions throughout the year. The congregation should be regularly learning about missions through such means as sermons, presentations and missions courses.

20. **Commission of Church:** God has called the Church to be His primary instrument to evangelize people, extend mercy, and transform the culture around it. Missions ministries should consider whether the efforts they support are primarily based in the local church or are separate ministries.