

Innovation in Mission

Insights into Practical Innovations
Creating Kingdom Impact



Edited by

Jim Reapsome and Jon Hirst



The world is changing rapidly and this requires the church to examine the old ways and explore new ways of functioning to ensure we are relating effectively to a challenging situation. This book will help.

STUART BRISCOE
PASTOR AND AUTHOR

This is a timely book with an astonishingly wide range of current missions practices and concepts. It also has many helpful examples that can be used by missions pastors, agency leaders and missionaries. A must read for every missiologist and missions practitioner.

JIM TEBBE
URBANA DIRECTOR

Innovation in Mission excites me like no other missions book I've ever read; I came away energized and full of new ideas and possibilities. This is a must-read for mission leaders, strategic planners, and future cross-cultural kingdom workers. But let the reader beware: *Innovation in Mission* will challenge you to make significant changes in what you do and how you do it!

SCOTT MOREAU
EDITOR, EVANGELICAL MISSIONS QUARTERLY
PROFESSOR OF MISSIONS AND INTERCULTURAL STUDIES
WHEATON COLLEGE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Innovation in Mission addresses some of the most important strategic issues we face [in our rapidly changing world]. Because the global missionary movement needs to take stock of their practices, this book is important. Editors Reapsome and Hirst selected the contributors and the topics well. The chapters provide important insights for conversations that should be on the agenda of churches and missions alike. This is a book to share with others on your boards, in your Sunday school classes, and in the missions you support.

DOUG MCCONNELL
DEAN AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LEADERSHIP, FULLER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

As I read through these pages, I felt this is a book that I need to read myself. After 50 years in missions I still have much to learn.

GEORGE VERWER

FOUNDER OF OPERATION MOBILIZATION

While the standard definition of “innovation” is “The act of introducing a change or something new,” the root of “innovation/innovate” comes from the concept of renewing and/or altering something already existing. What I like about the outstanding essays in this excellent book is that these missions strategists and activists are ready to take us into new, uncharted waters while maintaining the Biblical/historical maps already tested in “missiological navigation.”

DR. GRANT MCCLUNG

CHURCH OF GOD WORLD MISSIONS

I’ve covered hundreds of missions organizations around the world. I’ve always wondered why someone hasn’t written a book to talk about all the innovations that are having an incredible impact on missions. *Innovation in Mission* does just that. It takes innovations and trends from the church, business, short-term mission, multi-media, and more to force the reader to think outside the box and become innovators themselves in evangelism, discipleship and church planting, while reminding us of the foundations that have enabled many organizations to see incredible success over the years.

GREG YODER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/ANCHOR, MISSION NETWORK NEWS

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Foreword

Change is exhilarating, terrifying, and unavoidable. Jim Reapsome and Jon Hirst provide valuable insights by bringing together experts to discuss significant innovations affecting global missions. These innovations are real and are influencing the practice of missions. Missionaries, mission executives, mission pastors, and mission committees need to stay current with global changes in order to adapt strategies effectively. Whether the innovations are a help or a hindrance, a fad or a long-term trend, we need to understand them and be ready to modify programs.

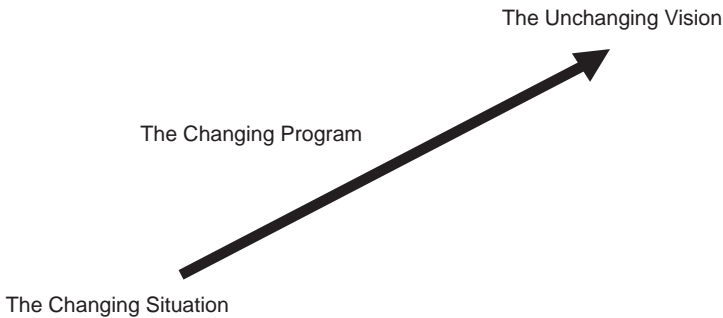
Innovations are often uncomfortable. As I was stepping down as international director of SIM (Serving in Mission), a veteran missionary asked me if my successor would make as many changes as I had. She went on to say that during my tenure I had made too many changes and hoped there wouldn't be more. Another missionary often quoted, "Change and decay in all around I see" from the hymn "Abide with Me." But if the world around us is changing, our methods also need to adapt in order to fulfill the unchanging vision. Not all innovations are helpful in promoting the global cause of Christ, yet most innovations provide outstanding opportunities in ministry. For example, the Internet

provides amazing opportunities for life-long learning, communication, and resources for pastors and theology students.

For ten years my wife and I traveled the SIM world, holding vision seminars. We talked about the need for programmatic change within the context of an unchanging vision. First, our leadership team solidified the SIM vision statement and core values, and then we began to reflect on massive global innovations and our need to adapt. During those ten years, the mission changed its name, merged with another mission, expanded into China, reworked the support system, and challenged sending offices to facilitate missions “from anywhere to anywhere.” While vision and core values don’t change, everything else is open for innovation.

As we evaluate innovation in the context of missions, it’s helpful to focus on three concepts:

1. **The Unchanging Vision.** Where are we going? We need our eyes fixed on the unchanging North Star, the changeless nature of God and the unchanging vision for world missions.
2. **The Changing Situation.** Where are we? We must understand the changing world, technologies, opportunities, and resources. What are the innovations that influence our opportunities in missions?
3. **The Changing Program.** How do we get there? Mission programs must always be open to evaluation and modification. If the situation changes the program must also change. Otherwise, we will not fulfill the vision.



The most important things in life never change. We can take great comfort in the changeless nature of God. In this fallen world, human beings will continue to fall short of the glory of God and will be in need of Jesus Christ as their Savior. Until the Lord returns, we will always need to live by faith with an unchanging hope of eternal life in the unfailing love of the Lord. Our vision for a lost world and for a holy church will not change until the end of the age. None of these foundational convictions are faded by developments in the digital revolution, the use of business visas, or the low cost of airfares for short-term missionaries. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

Once we rest secure in an unchanging God and an unchanging gospel, we can embrace innovation. We can seek unfolding opportunities to make whatever changes are necessary to better fulfill the vision.

I would hope that mission executives and church mission committees will reflect on *Innovation in Mission* chapter by chapter, asking if each of the innovations might be incorporated into the programs of their churches and missions. Each innovation is profound and cannot be ignored.

We don't worship innovation. So, if the innovation does not contribute to the vision, we simply move on. But neither do we worship programs. Mission institutions and church activities will be strengthened by the thoughtful application of innovative trends and solutions outlined in these pages.

JIM PLUEDDEMANN is chair of the Mission and Evangelism Department at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He has served as International Director of SIM and as a missionary to Nigeria. He has also served on the mission committee of his local church.

Preface

What Is Our Mandate?

With every great cause there is a mandate. Whether you join the army, become a doctor, or sit on the local school board, you must remain acutely aware of your purpose. Imagine if it weren't so and there were only rebellious soldiers, unethical doctors, and abusive public servants within a local community—the community would be greatly undermined. For a cause to succeed, its mandate must be followed.

Christianity is humanity's greatest and most noble cause, and it too has a mandate. God asks us, first, to give him glory, as stated in Psalm 106:47: "Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may **give** thanks to your holy name and **glory** in your praise." Second, God asks us to go out and share his glory with others, as expressed in Matthew 28:19: "Therefore go and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (emphasis added).

The mandate of a Christian is to recognize God's glory and then to obediently use personal talents to make him known to others. Missions is no more and no less. Therefore, missions is the mandate of the church and each Christ follower.

But there is little clarity around the concept of missions—and no wonder. Missions gets muddled in the waters of methodology. We are so anxious to dive into *this* strategy or *that* program that we clutter our vision and lose sight of the mandate. We also discount the methods of others because we cannot see past our own model to the greater mandate that designed both.

The great thing is that God’s mandate for us to “go” is not cluttered or complex. He simply takes our willing hearts and the creativity of our minds and weaves together innovations that can only be described as revolutionary.

This book is about that mandate. You can call it whatever you like—the Great Commission, incarnational ministry, business as missions, tentmaking, preevangelism, or mercy ministries—and the list goes on and on.

Each contributor to this book has a unique experience with missions, yet, more importantly, there is one common bond—simple obedience to the mandate. This mandate was restated and reaffirmed in the Lausanne Covenant of 1974.¹ In the first article of this covenant, *The Purpose of God*, we find this statement:

He has been calling out from the world a people for himself, and sending his people back into the world to be his servants and his witnesses, for the extension of his kingdom, the building up of Christ’s body, and the glory of his name. We confess with shame that we have often denied our calling and failed in our mission, by becoming conformed to the world or by withdrawing from it. Yet we rejoice that even when borne by earthen vessels, the gospel is still a precious treasure. To the task of making that treasure known in the power of the Holy Spirit we desire to dedicate ourselves anew.

Jim Reapsome and Jon Hirst

Introduction

Jon Hirst

“To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me” (Colossians 1:29).

“Disturb Us, Lord” (The Prayer of an Innovator)

Disturb us, Lord, when
we are too well pleased with ourselves,
when our dreams have come true
because we have dreamed too little,
when we arrive safely
because we have sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
with the abundance of things we possess,
we have lost our thirst for the waters of life;
having fallen in love with life,
we have ceased to dream of eternity;
and in our efforts to build a new earth,
we have allowed our vision
of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
to venture on wider seas
where storms will show your mastery;
where losing sight of land,
we shall find the stars.

We ask you to push back
the horizons of our hopes;
and to push into the future
in strength, courage, hope, and love.

Sir Frances Drake

As he looked out across the shimmering blue horizon, he saw a small fleet of cargo boats hugging the dusty Peruvian shore. You could see the gleam of victory in his eye as he tallied up the ships and imagined the riches that rested inside the hull of each Spanish ship. No men of war protected them. The Spanish never imagined that the English, or any other nation, could compete with its stranglehold on the Pacific coast of Latin America.

Sir Francis Drake had just made the boldest move against the Spanish Empire in the long history of their conflict with Great Britain. By understanding that Spain's strength came from its Andean gold, Drake crafted a plan to sail around the South American continent and attack the unprotected gold barges taking the precious cargo from Peru to Central America.

Drake took the knowledge gained from his exploits in the Caribbean, and he applied them creatively to a new situation. Throughout his career he continued to take current practices and concepts and apply them in new and creative ways. He is a great example of an innovator in naval combat.

But Drake is only one of many in a multitude of fields and domains of learning to bring about innovation. As we study progress throughout human history, we see example after example of people taking the accepted reality of the day and shoving it under a new lens. These battles, much like the battle between Jacob and the Angel of the Lord, were each a true test of character and obedience to a power greater than themselves. Many would not agree with this summary of their motivations, but, in the end, they would have to admit that all of their efforts to innovate and create came down to a yearning for a more perfect understanding of what is really true. As Christians, we know what drives that yearning in each of us.

Sir Francis Bacon in his essay “Of Innovation” clearly presents the stakes we must face. He wrote: “Surely every medicine is an innovation; and he that will not apply new remedies, must expect new evils; for time is the greatest innovator; and if time of course alter things to the worse, and wisdom and counsel shall not alter them to the better, what shall be the end?”

Without innovators who are challenging the realities of a rapidly changing world and bringing heavenly truths to the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century, we must ask the same question that Bacon asked: “What shall be the end?” Let us now set the stage for the discussions that we are about to present.

Three types of innovators have kept our modern world turning and expanding: the conceptual innovators, the pragmatic innovators, and the holistic innovators. The first type focuses on theories and concepts. You can read hundreds of doctoral dissertations in libraries around the world that showcase amazing research and conceptual innovations.

Pragmatic innovators create by applying a trusted concept in a new way in a real-life situation. These innovators do not focus their attention on writing papers and studying theories. They use experience as their main testing ground for their new ideas. Finally, holistic innovators value conceptual innovation but are steeped in the practical world of implementation. They have the capacity and patience to contemplate innovation in theory and also the position and perseverance to apply it pragmatically.

I graduated from Judson College during the rise of the dot-com years and an explosion in modern innovation. As I entered into the world of nonprofit technology, I was forced to make a decision about how I would approach my career. I could either base my decisions and actions on the trusted principles of my day or I could take the path of innovation. As I constantly reconsidered these two options, I became aware of two critical insights: (1) we cannot possibly exist in a world that does not have fundamental truths that are proven in our faith, industries, and trades; and (2) we cannot continue to develop unless those truths are being tested, molded, and contextualized for our changing world.

These two insights were not present in the dot-com exuberance that continued to produce innovations but did not have the supporting ropes of experience and truth to keep them in focus. On the other hand, many individuals and older organizations used the failure of these new-economy companies to strengthen their decision to ignore the need for innovation.

Consider the railroad companies in the United States as an example of the lack of innovation. During the 1800s the railroads represented the key travel and transportation infrastructure. They controlled most of the movement of people and goods throughout the North American continent. Then two key innovations in transportation began to occur. The first was the mass production of the automobile, which made transportation a personal and individual event instead of a corporate

or community process. The second was the airplane, which reduced natural boundaries, decreased travel time, and made long-distance destinations practical.

Both of these innovations needed champions and investors. If the railroads had seen their role as providers of transportation solutions instead of managers of a railroad infrastructure, we might have seen Union Pacific Airlines, and the SUV might have been developed by Burlington Northern Santa Fe. But they chose not to innovate in their transportation role, and, consequently, they are mostly relegated to coal, freight, and a slice of the consumer transportation market.

As I watched some nonprofit organizations dig in their heels, refusing to change, and others run blindly into the light of change, I began to see the wisdom in what we have defined here as holistic innovation. It is a rare thing in Western culture. We tend to be a people of extremes—fundamentalists and liberals, Calvinists and Armenians, academics and pragmatists—and the list could go on.

As I realized that holistic innovation was not a common characteristic in twenty-first-century global ministry, I began to evaluate my own decisions about how I work with ministries around the world and manage strategic opportunities. I began to realize that no one was celebrating the new generation of holistic innovators who combine fundamentals with practical advances. As I looked for these unique individuals, they began to pop up everywhere. I realized that they were flying under the radar screens of the ministry world and were increasingly becoming critical players in the future of global ministry.

This book is a celebration of holistic innovation and those responsible for implementing it in the ministry community around the world. We have divided this project into two critical sections. We did this because innovation really has two major domains to consider. The first focuses on innovations in trends and significant movements of thought. The second focuses on innovations in solutions and the practical applications necessary to jump the hurdles presented by our

greatest challenges. Holistic innovations must be grounded in both of these domains to have significant impact and see dynamic change. As you work through both of these sections, you will have the opportunity to differentiate between innovations in trends and innovations in solutions.

I hope that each chapter will cause you to step into new worlds and get a taste of both the theories and applications for which each of our contributors is sacrificing so much. My desire is to see these talented individuals inspire you to begin your own life of innovation that will dynamically alter your ministries forever. I pray that these innovations will breathe into each reader a new life of ingenuity, creativity, and reliance on the only One who can truly inspire our efforts.

This book is accompanied by an online tool that will allow you to continue interacting with the authors of these chapters and others about how to make innovation a reality in your organizations (see page 187).

JON HIRST is currently the Director of Communications for HCJB Global (www.hcjbglobal.org) in Colorado Springs where he is working to develop innovative strategies for communicating the Great Commission with the church world-wide. He and his wife Mindy also operate a think tank called Generous Mind (www.generousmind.com) that works with people world-wide to help them share their ideas effectively. Jon graduated from Judson College with a major in Communications and a minor in Sociology. Jon speaks often about the applications of intellectual property and content in the ministry world. Jon has had the privilege of working with a wide variety of ministries including the Baptist General Conference, the Bible League, Link Care Center, the Billy Graham Center, Tyndale House Publishers, Global Publishing Alliance (part of ECPA), SIL International, the Forum of Bible Agencies, the Seed Company, TEAM, World Bible Translation Center, and many others.

Part One: Innovation Trends

1

Innovation in Church Mobilization

Ellen Livingood

One church, infused with excitement about its involvement in missions, sends a steady stream of people to teach English classes among a largely unreached minority group in Asia and generously supports the outreach with finances and prayer. Across town, leaders of another congregation bemoan the lack of interest in missions and watch their global-outreach giving plummet.

One missionary writes off the church in North America and declares that short-term teams are a waste of time and money. Yet another cross-cultural worker in the same city enthuses about the growing partnership with a sending church and raves about the impact of short-term teams.

Involvement in cross-cultural outreach remains a biblical mandate for local churches, so what makes the difference between these congregations? Evidence shows that innovative approaches to missions

mobilization—whether initiated by the church, a missionary, or mission agency—can help propel local congregations into effective global outreach. As these new methods spur involvement, they benefit the church as well as the project.

Change transforms churches' global and local environments. The makeup of many communities shifts as immigrants from around the world relocate next door. E-mail, cell phones, and inexpensive travel connect us to almost anyone, anywhere. As the speed of life increases, church schedules get tighter and volunteer hours shrink, while, at the same time, expectations for excellence in church programming and communications escalate. All of these factors and many others demand new missions approaches.

Churches Take the Initiative

Local churches are reshaping their missions programs. In many cases, the name has changed to “global outreach” or “international ministries,” but the shifts go much deeper.

Sharing Who They Are

Once primarily designed for youth, short-term mission trips now are often geared for adults, families, and intergenerational groups. Field visits can ignite relationships that release tremendous potential, even from relatively small congregations.

In 1997 Guy and Kelli Caskey moved to Houston, Texas, to establish Crossroads, a network of small groups with a central celebration built on an incarnational, cell-church model with people from very diverse backgrounds. Two years later they visited Ethiopia where Caskey says, “God crushed us with a passionate burden for the nations. At first we thought maybe we were to pack up and move there, but eventually he led us to embrace a global and local vision that included Houston,

Ethiopia, and places beyond. We feel called to the nations; it's the heartbeat of all we do."

"We focus on developing relationships in which people are disciplined, not running a lot of programs," Caskey explains. "And discipleship can be reproduced anywhere, although it may look different in Ethiopia than in America. Our commitment to relationships gives us an immediate connection with our brothers and sisters in Africa. We connect instantly with Ethiopians as we tell stories of how God is changing lives and building churches through believers living out the gospel, because their story-based culture predisposes them to respond to a narrative approach to presenting truth."

Partnership is an important ingredient for Crossroads. While they go to teach what they have learned from their experiences, the teams also learn much from their Ethiopian counterparts. One dynamic congregation in Addis Ababa has multiplied to about forty churches, and the pastor has spent significant time visiting Houston to learn and share.

Crossroads has also become a training ground for long-term missionaries. One missionary couple spent six months at Crossroads to experience and learn the cell model they saw being so effectively multiplied in Africa. The International Mission Board (Southern Baptist) regularly places interns there for hands-on exposure.

At least thirty people from Crossroads—one-fifth of the regular attendance—have served in Ethiopia, many of them several times. Leadership training, microenterprise development, and teaching English are key ministries. Equippers from the Houston church meet with current and prospective African equippers. Women reach out to train women.

While Caskey still shepherds the overall outreach to Ethiopia, much of the ministry happens spontaneously because the cells own the vision and each recognizes its global role. Believers in Texas and

Ethiopia have become close friends and partners. (Crossroads' website: www.xroadsonline.net.)

Working from Their DNA

Local churches are defining who they are and who they want to become by adopting vision and mission statements based on their strengths and uniqueness. Many congregations desire to apply these same qualities to their missions endeavors.

Mariners Church in southern California has been built with a creative, entrepreneurial spirit that carries over to their missions involvement. For example, the church's global outreach arm takes business people on one- and two-week trips to lead business training seminars. Putting their nine-to-five skills to work for the kingdom, Mariners' entrepreneurs teach basic business principles and Christian ethics to CEOs of everything from small, local businesses to international corporations.

As a result, a CEO Fellowship was formed that now involves over one hundred national business leaders. This group has created a "virtual foundation" that provides an avenue for funding projects that help the poor and needy.

Mariners harnesses its entrepreneurial instincts for missions in other ways. Last year their faith-challenging goal was to touch the lives of over one million people around the world through their people and resources, yet not one penny of their annual missions budget (currently over one million dollars) comes from the church budget.

Several years ago, the global outreach team set up a kiosk on Sunday mornings to sell coffee and lattes with the proceeds going to underwrite mission projects. Soon the enterprise moved into permanent quarters, extended its hours and menu, and took on the management of the church's bookstore. While directed by staff, volunteers contribute hundreds of hours for the benefit of world ministry. (Mariners' missions website: www.marinersglobal.org.)

Adopting a Strategic Focus

Church leaders are increasingly dissatisfied with the “mile-wide and inch-deep” approach that has marked the typical mission program—dozens of diverse ministries each supported with a modest amount of funds and limited congregational ownership. In growing numbers, churches are seeking one or more strategic involvements geared toward a goal they feel will have major kingdom impact. Adopting a people group, concentrating on the launch of a church-planting movement, or focusing on a specific type of ministry (such as leadership development) describes many of these concentrated efforts. For most congregations, adopting a strategic focus involves personally assessing needs and reaching out to meet them in a variety of ways.

Grace Point Church of Newtown, Pennsylvania, a suburban Philadelphia congregation of approximately six hundred, believed it could do more than just support twenty-some missionary units. Entering a major building program of their own, they wanted a partnership that would help churches in least-reached areas acquire a facility while also engaging their members in hands-on involvement. Discussions with The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM), a mission agency with which they had already worked, led to an invitation to consider partnering with two church planters in the process of establishing new congregations in Japan.

Grace Point sent a survey team to Japan to meet with the missionaries, evaluate the need, and determine what they could contribute. A three-year partnership was launched with the understanding that the American church would provide a flow of short-term teams to make evangelistic contacts, an English teacher to work on-site for one to two years, and some financial assistance. The goal was to see both church plants in their own facility with a realistic mortgage, a salaried national pastor leading each congregation, and the missionaries transitioned out.

Over the course of the partnership, Grace Point sent thirty-five people to Japan, including a one-year English teacher. Several leaders from the Japanese churches visited Newtown and two groups of unbelievers from English classes were also hosted in Pennsylvania—creating opportunities to serve for those who could not travel to Japan. At the end of the project, Grace Point sent representatives to join the celebration of the opening of the second church building.

Both the American church and their missionary partners, Ron and Amy Barber, were eager to capitalize on what they had seen God do. Another partnership has been launched, this time including a mature Japanese church as the third partner in the church-planting effort.

“Trust, communication, and chemistry were critical to our success,” explains Barber. “There are many benefits to this kind of close partnership, but I think they center on ownership. The partnering church can move beyond superficial contact with missionaries and missions to more significant understanding and participation. As a result, they pray differently and act differently.” (Grace Point’s website: www.gracepointpa.org.)

Tackling Global Issues

Some churches participate in establishing strategy or set up partnerships directly with national churches and workers. Such efforts are often led by professional missions pastors, employed by an increasing number of churches; smaller churches ignited by a big vision can also have a huge impact. In some cases, larger churches are developing contexts in which smaller congregations can maximize their involvement.

In late 2002 the missions pastors of Mars Hill Bible Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan), Perimeter Church (Atlanta, Georgia), Mariners Church (Irvine, California) and Wooddale Church (Eden Prairie, Minnesota) met in Rwanda with the HIV/AIDS crisis staring them in the eye. On that trip they sensed a call to action that has resulted

in Churches Together, a new initiative to address the African AIDS pandemic.

“It is a big, audacious dream,” Tom Correll of Wooddale Church admits. “But we are at least ten years behind in addressing the problem. This project is all about churches being missional, about awakening to our role as the body of Christ.”

What is different about Churches Together is the commitment to direct engagement of three entities: churches in North America, churches in Africa, and mission agencies or humanitarian organizations. African churches bring the potential of a huge army of volunteers. Agencies and nongovernmental organizations can contribute the wisdom of years of experience in relief work. North American churches can offer finances and other resources. The challenge is how to connect them.

A cooperative effort of this magnitude is uncharted territory, and a multitude of questions must be answered to engage the potential partners and begin taking action. But today a growing list of churches is committed to empowering and walking beside African churches as they take the lead. Clusters of U.S. churches are working with coalitions of African churches, creating avenues for thousands of additional congregations to answer the call to make a difference. (Churches Together website: www.churchestogether.com.)

Developing Worldwide Networks

The we-they dichotomy between missionary-sending churches in the West and missionary-receiving churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America is fast dissolving as local congregations discover a kinship regardless of where they are located. Sister-church relationships are multiplying with benefits flowing in both directions. While this may be a fairly simple reciprocal relationship between two congregations, some churches are developing worldwide networks.

Elmbrook Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is pioneering a new venture called the Global Church Partnership. Challenged by the emer-

gence of high-impact churches in strategic cities around the world, Elmbrook has launched a global network with the La Puerta Abierta Church in Buenos Aires, Argentina; the Nairobi (Kenya) Chapel; and the Glenabbey Church of Belfast, Northern Ireland; and will likely add a few others.

The four churches share a commitment not only to global outreach but also to culturally expressive worship and to strong, biblical exposition. The essence of the network is high-trust relationships. Each church encourages the others by sharing its cultural uniqueness in worship, by ministering in reciprocal relationships, and by jointly conceiving ways to further the local and global impact of each congregation.

The cooperative effort is proceeding slowly as relationships develop and is not Western driven. Annually, each network partner sends three or four members to a meeting held at one of the churches. The willingness to invest time and money just to come together is considered critical. Recently, a joint mission venture in Argentina involved young adults from each congregation. Another joint team is being considered to minister in Uganda, and a conference on worship in eastern Congo is on the drawing board.

Staff exchanges and shared internships are strengthening the ties. One couple from Elmbrook served for three years on the staff of the Nairobi Chapel, and another couple is now doing the same. Interns from Belfast and Nairobi have come on short-term assignments to Milwaukee. The teaching pastors of the network have preached in each other's pulpits.

“Our network revolves around the value of sharing what each member brings,” Dick Robinson emphasizes. “For example, the African church has much to teach us about the gift of suffering. And we are learning about prayer and worship from our global partners. Mutuality and reciprocity are the keys to success.” (Elmbrook’s missions website: www.elmbrook.org/harvest.)

Agencies Take the Initiative

While initially hesitant about these new church initiatives, mission agencies are increasingly eager to explore new models of partnering with churches. Wrestling through questions of control, competence, and financing, agencies are discovering that true partnerships take work but also multiply results.

Helping Churches Plant Churches

Focused historically around the work of long-term missionaries, agencies sometimes struggle to use short-term personnel. But some have developed highly effective programs.

The e3 Partners Ministry (formerly Global Missions Fellowship) creates dynamic synergy by pairing teams of North American Christians with a national church in places like Russia and Colombia. The result after one week of concentrated evangelism was one—or, more often, three to five—embryonic new church that will be nurtured to maturity by the partnering national church after the North Americans leave.

The e3 staff lay the groundwork with the North American church participants by meeting with the pastor and other church leaders and then presenting the challenge to the congregation. The e3's church mobilization director, Dana Crawford, lauds the commitment of the associate staff—volunteers with extensive training and experience as trip leaders who contribute their time to work with churches and brief team participants and to lead at least one or two mission trips each year.

Team members are trained through a series of self-studies enhanced with video presentations and a final orientation at a central site or by phone. Once on location overseas, each North American is matched with a national believer and a translator, if one is needed. Throughout the week of ministry, the visitors transfer their evangelism skills and passion to their national partners. In the process, teams see people come to Christ and gathered into small house groups or churches.

The key to long-term results is the commitment of the national church partner to investing time and effort to preserve the harvest. The e3 Partners Ministry looks for churches that share their vision and have enough people to follow up the new believers and provide pastoral leadership for new congregations.

This innovative approach offers a win-win situation for both partners. When trained to use simple evangelism tools, believers from both cultures get excited to see how God uses them and want to continue to share the gospel in their own context. Both churches are challenged to focus on a strategic goal—to trust God to bring a church into existence and to continue a long-term relationship with the new group of believers.

While e3 Partners has no overall statistics on how many of these church plants survive, they regularly receive updates. One such update was from a Southern Baptist missionary in Colombia who reported that all ten of the new works started during campaigns in 2000 were still functioning three years later with an average attendance of thirty-two adults and seventy-six children. (e3 Partners' website: www.e3partners.org.)

When Daniel Holmquist became pastor in 1999, the Lancaster (California) Evangelical Free Church (LEFC) was a congregation of just fifty people with token missions involvement. But this small church became convinced they didn't have to be large in order to make a global difference. All but one of the elders joined e3 staffer Dan Hitzhusen on LEFC's initial short-term team committed to high-impact evangelism in South Asia.

That first team saw five new congregations planted, and LEFC has never looked back. After watching God use them on multiple e3 trips to various areas of the world, the congregation adopted a people group in East Asia and now sends teams there approximately every nine months. An estimated 60 percent of LEFC adults have been on one of

these trips, which Hitzhusen describes as “discipleship on steroids” for their impact on the lives of those who go.

“Everybody goes on every trip,” Holmquist declares. “By that we mean everyone goes spiritually and provides assistance and support. For example, children make bracelets that present the gospel through different colored beads that are used by the teams in outreach. Everyone is encouraged to sign up for the twenty-four-hour prayer chain or the fasting chain. And people adopt team members, committing to help care for their families while they are gone.”

Holmquist also has watched his congregation learn to “pray large”—asking God to do more of the miraculous things they have seen him accomplish through them in tough circumstances around the world. When teams return, the church holds a story night, often taking three hours to allow people to describe how God blessed their involvement and answered prayer.

Now numbering one hundred and fifty in attendance, LEFC is on target in fulfilling its goal of fielding one new long-term missionary unit every two years. And their long- and short-term ministries involve them in partnerships spanning the globe as they network with multiple agencies and other churches from California to Singapore.

LEFC does not have a mission committee. Instead, missions is led by the elders and integrated into the heart of everything the congregation does. “Missions has given our church an identity,” Holmquist declares. “To know you are being used by God to reach people who have never heard the gospel is incredibly energizing.” (LEFC’s website: www.lancasterefc.org.)

Giving Away the Task

Some mission agencies are actively encouraging local churches to take ownership of aspects of global outreach. Welcoming church initiative, they shift from CEO to consultant in the missions enterprise.

As director of the mission responders network for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) World Mission, Steve Hughey wrestled with how to involve Lutheran congregations in global outreach. He began to experiment with partnerships that allowed congregations and smaller mission societies to take ownership of the task. In 1996 he brought together representatives from twelve societies for sharing, and from that meeting came the Association of Lutheran Mission Agencies (ALMA) that now includes eighty-seven of the over one hundred separate mission agencies in the LCMS. (The ALMA website: www.almanetwork.org.)

Individual churches or groups of churches are encouraged to consider mission needs, discover where God wants to use them, and then form their own mission society complete with registration as a not-for-profit organization. Hughey shares information with the new groups to help them learn from others and puts them in touch with the appropriate ALMA groups for assistance with issues such as funding, communication, and strategic planning. ALMA groups meet together annually along with LCMS World Mission staff and missionaries to coordinate their efforts.

Many of these societies then develop a formal partnership with LCMS World Mission with a written agreement that defines responsibilities, explains relationships, and clarifies accountability. They work with the missionaries and field directors to set strategy, whereas, deploying career missionaries is usually left up to the LCMS World Mission. The societies field short-term volunteers, provide services, and supply materials and money for the work. For example, one entity called Orphan Grain Train ships mission supplies for various groups. People of the Book Lutheran Outreach is coordinating a new church-planting effort for Pakistan in cooperation with ten other ALMA mission agencies as well as LCMS World Mission.

A variety of strategic partnerships are offered as options for Lutheran congregations and mission societies. Five levels are of-

ferred from basic project or missionary support to initiation of work among an unreached group where the denomination has never before ministered.

Hughey observes, “This is a great way to both reach more lost people and involve the people of God in meaningful ways. It is a real win-win in that it avoids a ‘them and us’ mentality.” (The LCMS World Mission website: www.mission.lcms.org.)

Serving Global-Local Outreach

Once typically referred to as *foreign* mission societies, agencies today are coming to recognize that their expertise in reaching across cultural and religious boundaries is of great value in helping churches reach immigrants in their own communities.

After a century of operation as a foreign mission, Serving in Mission (SIM) began to apply its expertise to reach ethnic communities in North America. In 2000 SIM added an Ethnic Focus division designed to mobilize and equip churches to reach the burgeoning ethnic populations at their door, under the direction of Gerry Johnson, former SIM church planter in Eritrea.

Their services fall into three categories. First, they offer feasibility and evaluation studies to local congregations considering the launch of an ethnic ministry. They talk to the pastoral staff, lay leaders, and any ethnic believers within the church. Their critique not only assesses the church’s potential but also predicts problems they will face and suggests practical steps for initiating an ethnic ministry in that particular location.

Second, SIM Ethnic Focus team members offer to pastors seminars on ethnic ministry. These one-day programs highlight models of successful church-based ethnic ministry and present guidelines for mentoring such ministries and how-tos for getting started. Similar one-day seminars focus on ministry to particular ethnic groups or specialized

outreaches such as international student ministry or English Second Language tutor training.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the SIM team provides on-going church mentoring, coming alongside to walk a church through the process of starting ethnic outreach. Their guidance covers topics such as choosing an organizational model for ethnic ministry that fits the church's ministry context, how to prepare the congregation, tips on becoming more "internationals friendly," training for English language teachers, suggestions on how to advertise English classes, and networking with similar ministries elsewhere. There is a waiting list of churches who want this kind of assistance. (SIM's website: www.sim.org.)

Currently, the Ethnic Focus team consists of sixty people, primarily former SIM missionaries, many with expertise in a particular religion or people group or a specific type of ministry. One church they have assisted is Maranatha Chapel in Evergreen Park, just outside Chicago.

When former missionary Doug Banks accepted the call to pastor this Caucasian congregation, it was with the agreement that the church would reach out to the large ethnic communities surrounding them. Within a ten-minute drive of the church were thousands of Eastern Europeans, Hispanics, Arabs, and African Americans.

Initially, church members were supportive but a bit apprehensive. SIM personnel helped explain the concept and offered hints on preparing the congregation. They provided guidelines on doing demographic studies and suggested resources on sharing the gospel with Muslims.

As he prayed for God's vision for this congregation of just over three hundred people, Banks felt led to outline a five-year plan that included the launch of a new ethnic congregation each year. Maranatha already has added a Hispanic congregation numbering about eighty people and an Arabic-language group that has climbed to an average of forty in attendance.

Banks likes to describe it as “one church with three congregations.” There is a unified pastoral staff, board, and budget, but each group holds its own weekly worship services with occasional tri-lingual services. They also meet together for baptisms and missions conventions.

During the summer Maranatha holds International Sunday Nights at the Park, featuring potluck suppers that resemble an international buffet. Each week the congregations take turns providing dessert, music, and a devotional, introducing the others to their culture. Games and activities create a setting for fellowship that melds people from different backgrounds and also attracts passersby. One evening a group of curious young Arabs approached the group, and a member of the Arab congregation was able to share his faith with them. On Wednesday evenings the church holds a unified prayer service that includes teaching, worship, and prayer. Interceding together has brought the three congregations even closer.

The early hesitations of the original congregation have evaporated. Now they work side by side with their Hispanic and Arab fellow believers in vacation Bible school and rejoice together over God’s blessings to Maranatha—such as the news that a Muslim recently placed his faith in Christ. (Maranatha Chapel’s website: www.mchapel.net.)

Some Questions Demand Consideration

Churches, missionaries, and mission agencies open to innovation have vast opportunities to plow new ground. As new methods are considered, important questions demand consideration:

- From a biblical perspective, who owns the task? The local church? The missionary? The agency? All of them? None of them?
- Which party should take the lead? Why?
- Do we have a kingdom mentality, or are we, perhaps unconsciously, focused on benefiting our own organization?

- How do we make a clear-eyed assessment of what we bring to the task?
- Are we sensitive to the priorities of the national churches around the world and sufficiently appreciative of their current and potential contributions?
- Have we embraced the fact that the mission field is no longer foreign but local as well as global?
- Are we willing to take risks and adopt new approaches, especially as younger generations move into roles of service and leadership?

ELLEN LIVINGOOD was born and raised in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and enjoyed the privilege of a Christian home. She is a graduate of Philadelphia Biblical University and Wheaton Graduate School. Her ministry experience includes a short-term mission assignment in France and service with a local church, Bible college, and two mission agencies. In 2005 she launched Catalyst Services to assist mission agencies to collaborate more effectively with local churches. Ellen is also director of Global Outreach at Grace Point Church of Newtown, Pennsylvania.