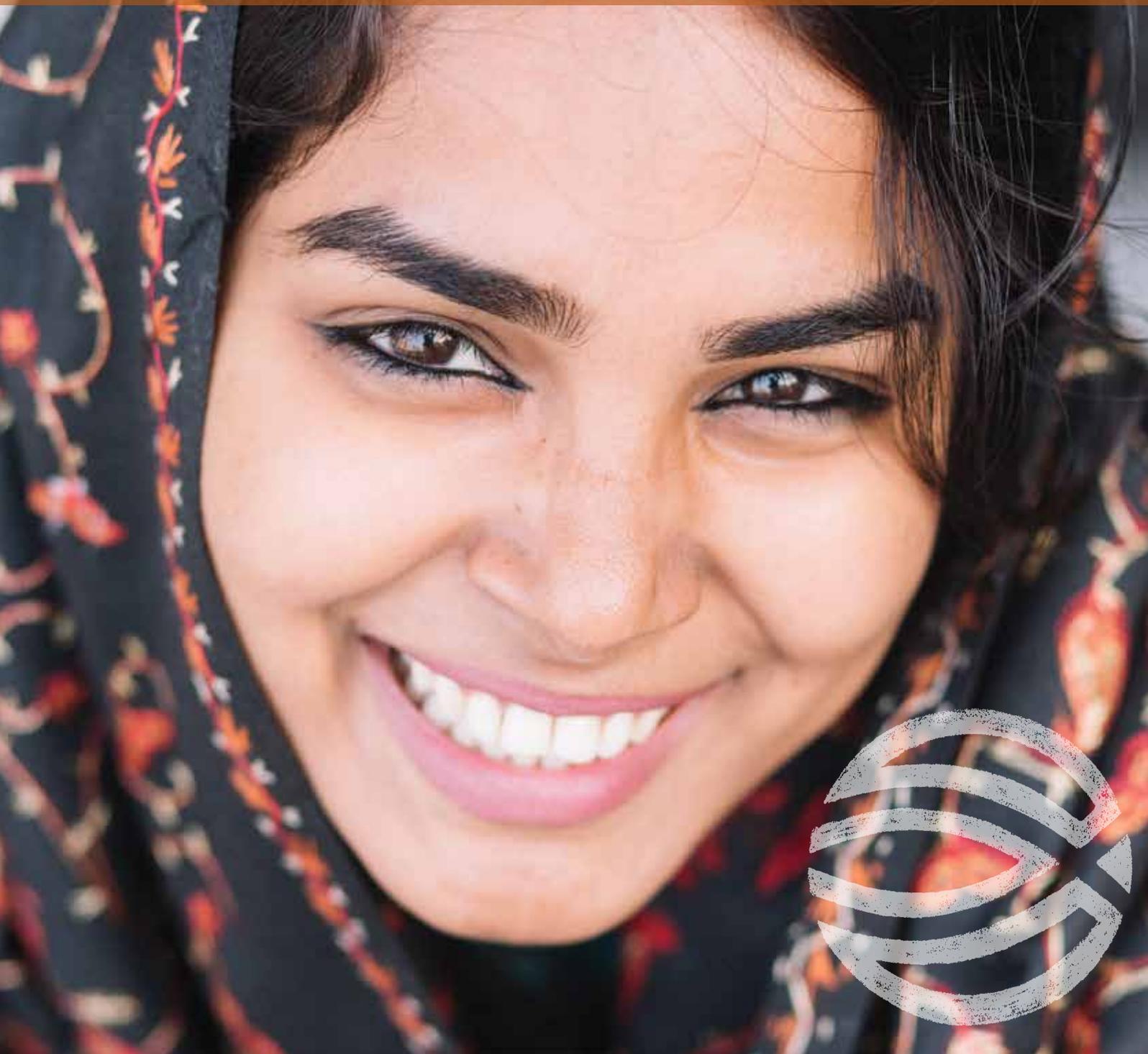


# Unfinished

A publication of The Mission Society

Fall 2015 | 60



## The rise of the Global Church

Unveiling surprising details of God's growing kingdom

UNFINISHED  
Fall 2015, Issue 60

**Publisher/CEO**  
Max Wilkins

**Editor**  
Ruth A. Burgner

**Design**  
Cari Voutila

**Proofreaders**  
Theresa Gardner  
Beverly Mancuso  
Lauren Mead Rogers

**Founding President/President Emeritus**  
H.T. Maclin

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**Cover photo:**  
The Global Church is in transition. This year, there will be a net gain of 27 million Christians worldwide, and by 2100 over three-fourths of all Christians will be living in the Global South, in places like India.

# Want to unlock your church's potential?

## WE HAVE THE KEY.

Scores of churches have discovered that our **Global Outreach Workshop** has been the **catalyst** for transforming their church to align with God's mission to **'go and make disciples.'**

You too can **discover principles, plans, and tools** that will set your congregation on a path of increasingly **fruitful ministry** locally and around the world.

The **end results?** Greater **personal engagement** of your congregation, more **strategic outreach**, **deeper mission partnerships**, and **increased funds for outreach**.

For more information or to schedule a workshop at your church, contact the church ministry department at The Mission Society at **800.478.8963, ext. 9048** or email us at [cm@themissionsociety.org](mailto:cm@themissionsociety.org).

"It's been 13 years since God in His sovereignty brought the Global Outreach Workshop and The Mission Society into our congregation. The seed planted in that one weekend is still bearing kingdom fruit in Grace Church these years later. It will change your church and your life!"

*Jorge Acevedo, Lead Pastor  
Grace Church, Cape Coral, FL*



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—Habakkuk 2:14, ESV



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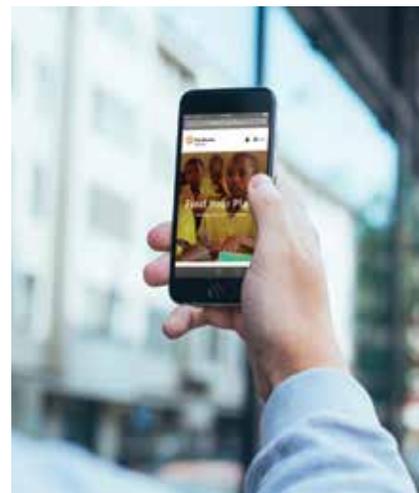
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### Grateful for the witness of Julia McLean Williams

Julia McLean Williams passed into the presence of Jesus on May 7, 2015. Williams served as the third president of The Mission Society, from 1991—1994. She leaves behind four children and eight grandchildren.

Before joining the staff of The Mission Society, Julia and her family served in Bolivia for 10 years. She and her husband helped the Aymara Indians with agricultural techniques. Prior to serving in Bolivia, Julia was a teacher and started the first class for exceptional children in the public schools in Lincoln Parrish in Louisiana.

After returning from Bolivia, Julia was asked to start a non-profit school for exceptional children in Raleigh, North Carolina. The school is called Learning Together, Inc. and continues as an award-winning program after 30 years.

We praise God for the witness and lively spirit of Julia Williams, for how she shaped The Mission Society and those who knew her. The Mission Society community will keep on telling the story she told so beautifully of the One who loves us most of all. She would like that the best.

### The Mission Society opens a hospitality house in Wilmore, Kentucky

The Mission Society is excited to announce “The Yellow House,” our hospitality house in Wilmore, Kentucky. Located near Asbury University and Asbury Theological Seminary’s campuses, the house will serve as a multipurpose facility.

The vision for the house is to create a place of connection

and community so students and Mission Society missionaries and staff can learn together. A Mission Society staff member will reside in the house and be available to students for discipleship and mentoring. The house will also serve as a meeting place for students interested in cross-cultural missions and discerning their call. Mission Society missionaries returning from the field can use the house temporarily while stateside, which will allow them to participate in Asbury classes and meet with students. The space will also be used for events such as workshops, focused dinners, community-building activities, and more.

If you are in the Wilmore area, be sure to stop by the hospitality house for a cup of coffee with a Mission Society missionary or staff member!

### The Mission Society launches a new website

In September, The Mission Society launches a new website on its same domain, [themissionsociety.org](http://themissionsociety.org). Check in to see the beautiful new design, experience easier online giving, an updated candidate system for potential missionaries, and an interactive map with information about our fields.

### Equipping missionaries

*Mission Society missionaries and ministers from other nations join together to train for cross-cultural service*

The Mission Society held its annual H.T. and Alice Maclin Mission Training Institute on July 9-21, 2015 in India.

Mission Society staff, new missionaries, and Indian Chris-



From left to right: Four presidents of The Mission Society: Al Vom Steeg, Max Wilkins, Julia McLean Williams, Dick McClain; The Mission Society's new hospitality house; new website; Dr. Ubolwan Mejudhon, new board member (see more about new board and staff members on page 30), and this summer's H.T. and Alice Maclin Mission Training in India.

tian leaders from all over the country came together for 13 days of training and fellowship. The attendees included 18 Mission Society missionaries and 41 Christian ministers from India, Kenya, and the Netherlands.

“We choose to do training in India because we learn so much about our own worldview related to cross-cultural ministry when we study with people from other cultures. It helps all of us step back from our traditional mindsets and explore new ways to introduce people to Jesus,” said the Rev. Frank Decker, vice president for mission training and development. “This year we had representatives from 18 different states within India. One-fifth of the world resides in India, so there are literally thousands of cultures within that one country, and cross-cultural awareness in mission is essential.”

The sessions were taught by Mission Society staff members and missionaries, as well as Indian missiologists and church leaders. The attendees also visited nearby communities to practice the cultural observation skills they were learning.

“While the training in content had similarities to previous years, what stood out to me this year was how much was taught that was not specifically in the content. From responses of the Indian participants, we heard how The Mission Society staff modeled the involvement of women in leadership and showing respect for women. We ‘taught’ about servant leadership in that, when our president arrived, he wasn’t automatically ‘front and center,’ speaking for the full day. We modeled community in how we worked together. We ‘taught’ about following the guidance of the Holy Spirit when we sensed and addressed spiritual issues outside of the scripted

schedule. It was such a reminder to me that, as missionaries, we teach by our lives and behaviors as much as or more than by our words,” said Jim Ramsay, vice president for mission ministries.

“Many of the Indian trainees had 10, 20, even 30 years of experience. Many serve in very difficult areas under extreme pressure. One attendee told of how he had just been hiding in the jungle the week prior, due to a wave of persecution.

“Much of the learning came not from the content we taught, but from the assembled community's engagement with that content,” said Ramsay.

One attendee said, “Our organization has targets—we have to perform so many baptisms, have so many souls won. But we are losing them because we do not emphasize discipleship. I want to start discipling people so they will walk in the faith.”

One Mission Society missionary said, “It’s been a life transforming experience. The Lord has transformed my thoughts and my strategies.”

“It was evident that many of the Indian nationals who attended our training had been schooled into a mindset of revivalism, in which obtaining decisions for Christ, planting a church, then moving on was a common practice. Many of these dear brothers and sisters expressed appreciation for the fact that they are now challenged to take a more incarnational approach to ministry that is steeped in entering the host culture as a learner, presenting Christ appropriately, and emphasizing discipleship in their ministries,” said Decker.



# How to grow the Church

Some forecasters say the Christian faith is disappearing. Here's what they are not paying attention to—and four things that all 'seed-sowers' should.



## Extinct Christianity?

The recent report about the demise of the Christian faith centers on the declining church numbers in Great Britain. But "experts say that Christians would be naive to think that the United States isn't far behind." (*The Inquisitor*, June 14, 2015) Curiously, just as Christianity is predicted to fade in the West, it is predicted to grow meteorically in the Global South. (See pages 6-11.)

## "Christianity to be Extinct by 2067 Says New Government Report!"

This headline began appearing on my social media feeds in mid-June. The related story concerned a group of people who, extrapolating the current decline rates of various Christian denominations, concluded that the faith will be extinct in the West in 2067. This article was only the latest in a trend of handwringing, worrying, and prognosticating the imminent disappearance of the Church in a changing culture. I see many believers in the United States losing heart and becoming discouraged and depressed. I am not among them. Indeed, although I will likely not be around to witness it, I am certain the Church will be very much alive in 2067 and beyond! These

stories fail to take several important things into consideration.

### What Jesus is doing

Jesus preached and taught the kingdom of God. He helped His followers to understand that the kingdom was both a present reality, inaugurated by Jesus, and something yet to come. Jesus also established the Church, His Church, as a part of the unfolding kingdom of God, and stated that He would build His Church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it!

So the kingdom of God has already begun, and we know that His kingdom will never end. Likewise, Jesus is building His Church, and what He builds will stand. Indeed, Jesus intends His Church to be storming the gates of hell,

pushing out the darkness as the light of Christ takes its place and the kingdom of God emerges.

Jesus often used *seed* as a metaphor for the *kingdom of God*. Consider this passage from Mark 4: "He also said, *This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.*" (Mark 4:26-29, NIV) Notice that the farmer understands that there is a mystery in the working of the seed that will produce a harvest, a mystery that is unfathomable and beyond his ability to

“The person . . . who looks for quick results in the seed planting of well-doing will be disappointed. If I want potatoes for dinner tomorrow, it will do me little good to go out and plant potatoes in my garden tonight. There are long stretches of darkness and invisibility and silence that separate planting and reaping. During the stretches of waiting there is cultivating and weeding and nurturing and planting still other seeds.”

—Eugene Peterson in *Traveling Light*

control. Yet he acts with full confidence and expectation that the mystery will bring forth its fruit!

### What we can do

So it is with the kingdom of God today. This is God’s unfolding kingdom and God is the ultimate mystery bringing it about, but like the farmer in the parable, we have a role to play in kingdom fruitfulness. How we handle the seed is of vital importance. Here are some things to consider:

**1** *Don’t eat the seed*  
In agrarian cultures, especially in times of drought or bad harvest, there is one hard and fast rule: never eat the seed! No matter how hungry one might be or how short the supply of grain, eating the seed means there will be no future harvest. The seed is for sowing, not for consuming. The word of God says that God always blesses us that we might be a blessing. All kingdom seeds that flow into our lives are for sowing into the kingdom. Too many in the Church today are entrenched in a self-serving mentality. We are figuratively “eating our seed.”

**2** *Sow the seed liberally*  
As the parable of the sower points out, we are called to sow the seed widely, among all kinds of soil, with the

hope and expectation that some of it will hit good soil (and produce 30, 60, even 100 fold). Our role in kingdom fruitfulness is to keep sowing, always and everywhere.

**3** *Expect fruitfulness faithfully*  
I love how the man in Jesus’ story sows the seed and then goes on with his life. He goes weeks without seeing any fruit, but he trusts and believes that the fruit will come. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain

“The seed is for sowing, not for consuming. . . . All kingdom seeds that flow into our lives are for sowing into the kingdom.”

of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24, HCS) The time of the falling and dying can often seem discouraging and hopeless, but the fruit does come!

**4** *Prepare for the harvest*  
In the year 2000 there were almost exactly two billion Christians in the world. In 2015 that number was over 2.4 billion. The Church grew by

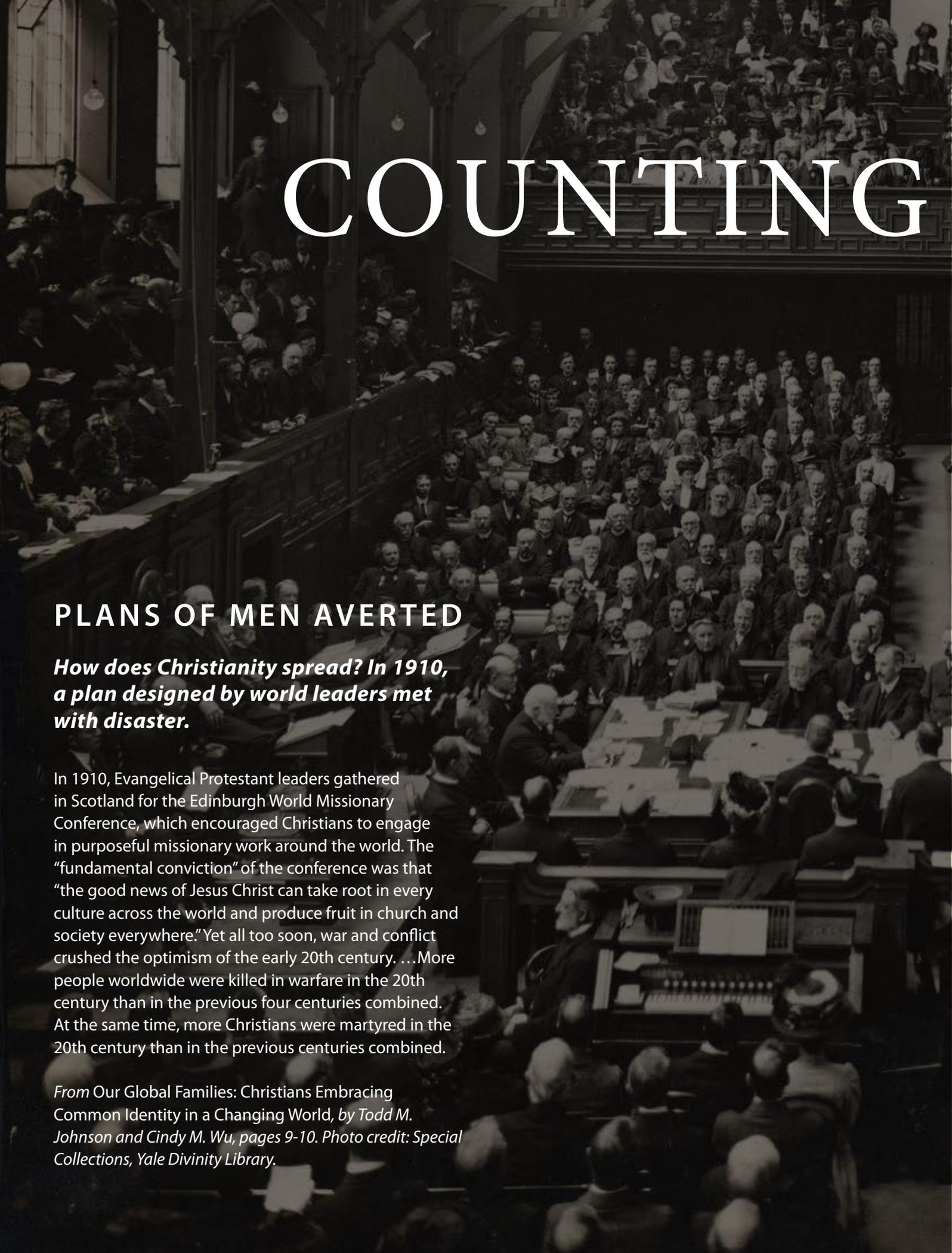
over 400 million people in 15 years! This is the most rapid growth of the Church in its 2000-year history. Much of that growth was related to the patient kingdom sowing of missionaries throughout the 20th century. The harvest is coming. Many in the emerging Christian world are now coming to the West, sowing kingdom seeds here. The harvest is still coming.

### Do not grow weary

In this issue of *Unfinished*, you will read stories of kingdom faithfulness and fruitfulness. You will read of people who continue to join Jesus in His mission, believing that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and that He will reign forever and ever. I hope you will be encouraged by this issue.

I’m not worried about 2067. I plan to be kingdom living in that year and forever. I share that hope for you as well. As the Apostle Paul reminds us: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9, NIV) †

**The Rev. Max Wilkins is president and CEO of The Mission Society.**



# COUNTING

## PLANS OF MEN AVERTED

***How does Christianity spread? In 1910, a plan designed by world leaders met with disaster.***

In 1910, Evangelical Protestant leaders gathered in Scotland for the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, which encouraged Christians to engage in purposeful missionary work around the world. The “fundamental conviction” of the conference was that “the good news of Jesus Christ can take root in every culture across the world and produce fruit in church and society everywhere.” Yet all too soon, war and conflict crushed the optimism of the early 20th century. . . . More people worldwide were killed in warfare in the 20th century than in the previous four centuries combined. At the same time, more Christians were martyred in the 20th century than in the previous centuries combined.

*From Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World, by Todd M. Johnson and Cindy M. Wu, pages 9-10. Photo credit: Special Collections, Yale Divinity Library.*

By Todd M. Johnson and Cindy M. Wu

# CHRISTIANS

How many Christians are there? Where do they live, and what are the implications for every believer?

**Tracking numbers, following the rise and decline of Christianity through the ages, authors of a new book reveal the worldwide body of Christ in transition. Despite Christianity's stalled advance, momentum is gaining for a never-before-seen Global Church.**

## **EVER SINCE I WAS A SMALL CHILD, I HAVE COUNTED THINGS.**

Math was my (Todd's) favorite subject. When my family went on road trips, I calculated the miles, counted the landmarks, and kept track of different colors of cars. Later, in my early twenties, I lived in the inner city of San Francisco, working in a homeless shelter by day and mobilizing students in surrounding universities for mission by night. One day a friend and I noticed a large pallet of bricks across the street at a construction site. Offhandedly, I said to him, "I bet there are 2,500 bricks on that pallet." He asked, "How do you know it's 2,500?" "It just looks like 2,500 to me" was my unhelpful reply. Curiosity propelled us across the street, where we examined the pallet. It held 10 rows of bricks by 10 rows, stacked 25 high—2,500 bricks! My friend looked at me meaningfully and said, "You should count something more important than bricks!" A year later, I encountered David Barrett, the world's leading religious demographer, and under his tutelage I eventually started counting Christians.

*In 1982, Barrett was featured in Time magazine for compiling the 1000-page World Christian Encyclopedia (WCE). A few years later, he would become Johnson's mentor in a doctoral program, and they would later work together to produce the second edition of the WCE in 2001. Soon afterwards, Johnson would establish the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to "continue Barrett's work of counting Christians." The following (beginning on page 8) is an excerpt from Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World, by Todd M. Johnson and Cindy M. Wu, a book which begins by the authors' tracking Christianity's dramatic spread around the world.*

**Note:** In this issue you will notice many references to the "spread of Christianity." We recognize, however, that the emphasis of Jesus' teachings—He told 14 parables about the kingdom of God—and the focus of His life on earth (Luke 4:43) was not the establishment of a religion called Christianity, but rather the emergence of the kingdom of God. So by use of this phrase, we by no means intend to omit true movements to Jesus as Messiah that may not identify themselves under the banner of institutional Christianity, but nonetheless are a part of the movement of Christ in the world today.

So how many Christians are there, and where do they live?<sup>1</sup> What languages do they speak, and what denominations or networks do they belong to? What does the global Christian family look like? In the Western world we typically think of a family as a nuclear family—mother, father, and a couple of children—but the Christian family is more of an extended family, a vast assemblage of aunts, uncles, cousins, and other relatives. Ever since the first century, the Christian family has reflected a broad and far-reaching collection of people related by faith. Christians have never spoken just one language, represented just one ethnicity, or lived in just one country.<sup>2</sup>

Christians are individuals who have distinct ethnic identities, speak identifiable languages, and make their homes in specific geographic locations.<sup>3</sup> In fact, throughout the history of Christianity, the Christian message has often been embraced by whole villages,

tribes, or peoples. At other times the number of Christians has declined in a particular place, either because they have been killed or because they have left their faith.

In the many ways our story is framed, our global family has a long and illustrious lineage. From the shores of Galilee

Today, in 2015, three continents (Europe, Africa, and Latin America) all have approximately the same number of Christians. In a few short years, Africa will have, by far, the most Christians.

in the first century to the remotest villages in the Himalayas today, followers of Jesus Christ have gradually spread to virtually everywhere in the world. Barrett and I (Todd) estimated that there have been approximately eight billion

Christians since the time of Christ (out of 38 billion human beings).<sup>4</sup> Today (2015) the world's 2.4 billion Christians constitute 33% of the global population.

### The Long View: 2000 Years

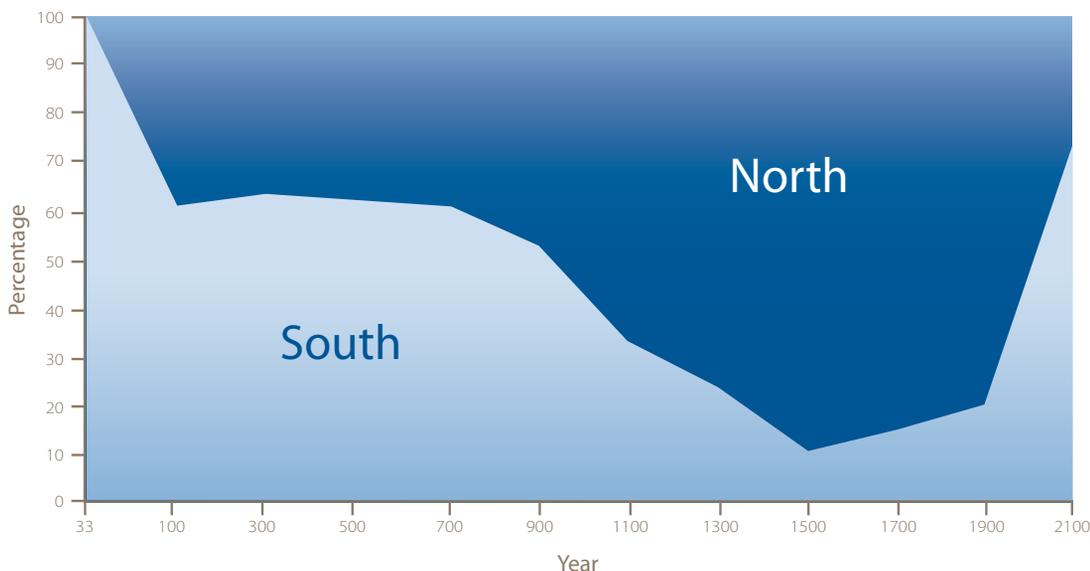
Using clues from historical records, we can track the numbers of Christians in every continent of the world across the entire history of Christianity.<sup>5</sup> The global percentage of Christians has gone up and down over time. Some high and low points are the years 700 CE (20%), 1000 CE (17%), 1300 CE (23%), 1600 CE (18%), and 1900 CE (24%). Asia had the most Christians for at least the first 700 years. By 1000 CE, Europe had that distinction and has held it to the present. Today, in 2015, three continents (Europe, Africa, and Latin America) all have approximately the same number of Christians. In a few short years, Africa will have, by far, the most Christians. In addition, Asia and Latin America will each have more Christians than Europe.

1. For the purposes of this book, the authors adopted the United Nations' definition of Christian as one who self-identifies as such.  
2. Part of this chapter is derived from Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Bellofatto, "Upon Closer Examination: The Status of World Christianity," in *River of God*, ed. Stephen Burris (Eugene, OR:

Wipf and Stock, 2012).  
3. For a detailed enumeration of Christians past, present, and future, see David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University

Press, 2001).  
4. David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2001)*, 97.  
5. A detailed analysis can be found in Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University*

Christians by percentage in North or South, 33-2100 CE



"The global Christian family is made up of 2.4 billion people (about a third of the human family)," writes Todd M. Johnson and Cindy M. Wu. "This year 45 million babies will be born into our Christian family, 22 million of us will die, 16 million will join us as adult converts, and 12 million will defect, most to agnosticism. As a result, there will be a net gain of 27 million Christians. That's a lot of new family members to become acquainted with."

We can also group totals of Christians by Global North and Global South for the entire history of Christianity. By Global North, we are referring to Europe and Northern America; by Global South, we are referring to Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania.<sup>6</sup> For at least the first 900 years (until about 920 CE), Christians in the Global South outnumbered those in the Global North. Christians were all Southerners<sup>7</sup> at the time of Christ, gradually becoming more Northern until 1500 CE, when fully 92% of all Christians were Northerners (Europeans). This percentage began to decline gradually until 1900, when it was 82%. After 1900, the percentage declined precipitously

(while in the South the percentage rose meteorically). If these trends continue, by 2100 over three-fourths of all Christians will be living in the South.<sup>8</sup> This represents a return to the demographic makeup of Christianity at the time of Christ (predominantly Southern) but also a vast extension of Christianity into all countries as well as thousands of peoples, languages, and cultures. The percentages are shown in the graph on page 8.

### The Short View: 115 Years

After 1900 something profound happened to the European dominance of global Christianity. Churches outside Europe and the Americas that had taken

root in the 19th century grew rapidly in the 20th century.<sup>9</sup> Africa, in particular, led this transformation, starting with only 10 million Christians in 1900, rising to 380 million by 2000, and being expected to grow to over 560 million by 2015.

An examination of demographics covering the past 115 years shows three important trends. First, during those years, Christianity changed very little as a proportion of the world's population. In 1900 it was 34.5% of the global population, and today (2015) it is 33.0%. Second, one can see that Christianity has been growing more rapidly than the population in the Global South. Third, it has been growing more slowly than the

6. *Global North is defined in a geopolitical sense by five current United Nations regions (53 countries): Eastern Europe (including Russia), Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Western Europe, and Northern America. Global South is defined as the remaining 16 current UN regions*

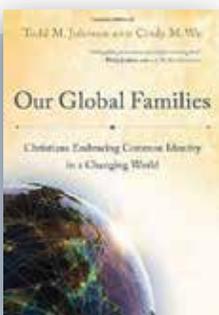
(185 countries): Eastern Africa, Middle Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, Western Africa, Eastern Asia, South-central Asia, Southeastern Asia, Western Asia, Caribbean, Central America, South America, Australia/New Zealand, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

7. Ancient Palestine is located in the present-day

UN region of western Asia, defined above as part of the South.

8. Note as well that many of those Christians living in the North will be Southern Christians who have emigrated there.

9. Latin America was already 95% Christian (Roman Catholic) in 1900. The changes in Latin



## Learn more! Check out:

### ***Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World***

by Todd M. Johnson and Cindy M. Wu  
Baker Academic (February 17, 2015)

As Christians, we belong to not only a diverse global Christian family but also a diverse human family. Todd Johnson, a noted expert on global Christianity and world missions trends, and Cindy Wu show how divisions within these families work against our desire to bring about positive change in the world. They provide an overview of global Christian

identity, exploring how we can be faithful to our own tradition while engaging Christians across denominations and be better informed as we work with people of other religions. The book utilizes the latest research data on global Christianity and world religions and includes tables, graphs, charts, and end-of-chapter discussion questions.

*"For years we have read statistics about the rise of the global church, but here we have a stellar introduction to those realities that makes this phenomenon personal. Behind the numbers, we are discovering the family of God in new and profound ways. At a time when we often hear stories of how divided the world and church are, it is refreshing to discover this deeper connectedness that is emerging in the church. Our Global Families is the best introduction to global Christianity you will find. I heartily recommend it."*

—Timothy Tennent, Asbury Theological Seminary

## The challenge ahead

“Only 14% of non-Christians today know a Christian. ... So there’s a lot of work to do in fulfilling the Great Commission, especially with those who have no contact with the faith.”

—from *First Things*, February 25, 2015, “World Christianity by the Numbers,” by George Weigel

population in the Global North. These two trends help to explain the rapid demographic shift of global Christianity to the South. While 82% of all Christians lived in the Global North in 1900, today nearly 65% of all Christians live in the Global South.

### Recounting the Past Century

At the turn of the 20th century, Protestant Christian leaders were full of optimism for what they anticipated would be a time of great strides for the church, a century of peace—a “Christian Century,” as the eponymous magazine put it. The advancement of Christianity was to go hand in hand with the “civilization” of the remotest parts of the world. Human beings would no longer exploit one another, being too advanced and educated to continue in the “primitive” activities and beliefs of “less civilized” times. In 1910, Evangelical Protestant leaders gathered in Scotland for the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, which encouraged Christians to engage in purposeful missionary work around the world. The “fundamental conviction” of the conference was that “the good news of Jesus Christ can take root in every culture across the world and produce fruit in church and society everywhere.”<sup>10</sup>

Yet all too soon, war and conflict crushed the optimism of the early 20th century. This began with World War I in 1914, resulting in a severe decline of hope through traumatic and deadly events including the Bolshevik Revolu-

tion, the rise of Adolf Hitler, World War II, the horrors of the Holocaust, fears of Communism, Mao Zedong in China, and Pol Pot in Cambodia. In the final decade of the 20th century, the genocide in Rwanda and the civil war in Sudan killed millions, mainly Christians. More people worldwide were killed in warfare in the 20th century than in the previous four centuries combined.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, more Christians were martyred in the 20th century than in all previous

Until now, Western scholars have written the dominant theologies of Christianity, but the massive movements of Southern Christianity, whether they be Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, or Independent, will likely chart the future of Christian theology.

centuries combined.<sup>12</sup>

During this century, missionaries, mainly from the Global North, took the gospel to “the ends of the earth.” This provided the initial spark that helped to make Christianity a worldwide phenomenon (although local converts did almost all of the evangelism). Unfortunately, in this process, Western Christianity was imposed on other cultures,

giving the impression that despite its translatability, Christianity was a Western religion. ... Nonetheless, all around the world, indigenous churches contextualized the gospel in their own cultures. Projections for the future show that the Christian churches of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania will likely continue to acquire an increasing percentage of global Christianity. As noted earlier, it is expected that by 2100 over three-fourths of all Christians will be from the Global South.

### Theology Moves South

Until now, Western scholars have written the dominant theologies of Christianity, but the massive movements of Southern Christianity, whether they be Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, or Independent, will likely chart the future of Christian theology. Theologians such as the Ghanaian Kwame Bediako have begun to outline the enormous challenges this project holds for African Christians.<sup>13</sup> Malaysian Methodist bishop Hwa Yung poses that as the Asian church grows rapidly, it needs to “self-theologize, developing a theology for itself that is rooted in one’s culture, history and context.”<sup>14</sup> The Northern church would do well to take on the posture of learning. British missiologist David Smith advises,

We are witnesses to the emergence of new centres of spiritual and theological vitality as Christians from the southern continents add their

*America since then refer to the growth of Protestantism and Pentecostalism.*

10. Kenneth R. Ross, “Edinburgh 1910: A Defining Moment,” in Johnson and Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity*, xvi–xvii.

11. Robert Conquest, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001).

12. *Forty million in the twentieth century out of 70 million in all of Christian history. See Barrett and Johnson, World Christian Trends, Part 4.*

13. Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995).

14. Hwa Yung, “Theological Issues Facing the Asian

*Church,” 2 (paper presented at ALCOE V, August 2002, Seoul). See also his more detailed proposal in *Mangoes or Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Oxford: Regnum, 1997).*

15. David Smith, *Mission after Christendom* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), 61.

insights to the church's total knowledge of the incomparable Christ. In the present transitional stage we are moving from a Christendom shaped by the culture of the Western world, to a world Christianity which will develop new spiritual and theological insights as the biblical revelation is allowed to interact with the many cultures in which Christ is now confessed as Lord.<sup>15</sup>

An alternative is the possibility that the differences between Northern and Southern Christianities could cause them to drift apart to such an extent that "the North would define itself against [Southern] Christianity."<sup>16</sup> But Cuban American historian-theologian Justo González calls the Western/Northern church to humbly join the larger

movement of global Christianity.

The fact is that the gospel is making headway among the many tribes, nations, and languages—that it is indeed making more headway among them than it is among the dominant cultures of the North Atlantic. The question is not whether there will be a multicultural church. Rather, the question is whether those who have become so accustomed to seeing the gospel expressed only or primarily in terms of those dominant cultures will be able to participate in the life of the multicultural church that is already a reality.<sup>17</sup> †

*This has been excerpted from pages 1-11 of Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a*

*Changing World, by Todd M. Johnson and Cindy M. Wu, published by Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2015. Used by permission.*



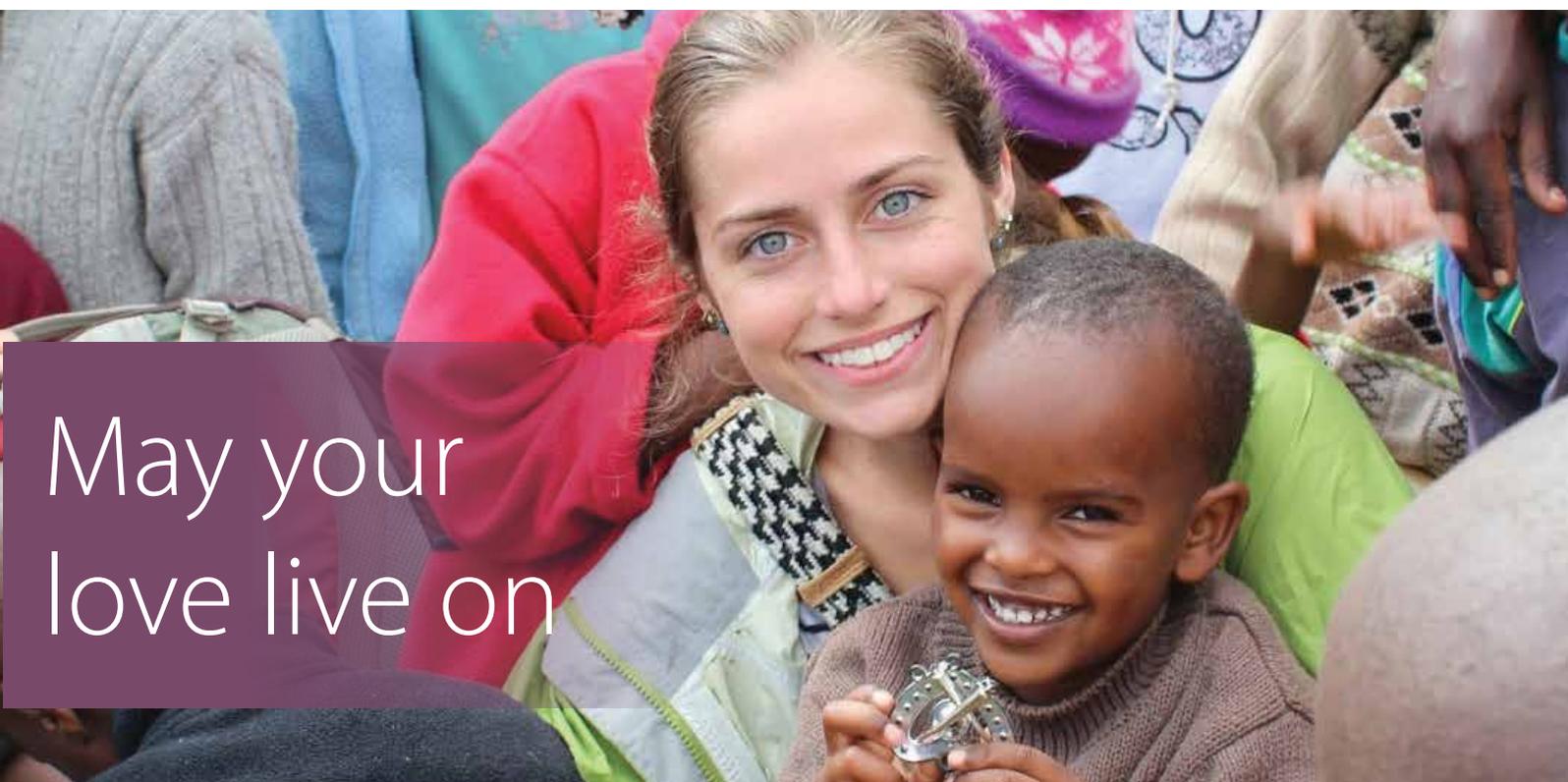
**Todd M. Johnson Ph.D.**, is director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity and associate professor of global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is also visiting research fellow at the Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs at Boston University.



**Cindy M. Wu (MA Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary)** has served in various church-planting contexts.

16. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 162.

17. Justo Gonzalez, *For the Healing of the Nations: The Book of Revelation in an Age of Cultural Conflict* (Mayknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999).



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# TRENDING

## *What missions communities are buzzing about*

You've noticed differences in your neighborhood lately. Maybe you see more immigrants than 10 years ago. Maybe formerly packed-out churches have fewer cars in the parking lot these days, while, curiously, church services are being held in your local coffee shop. You hear more lately about Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists coming to Christ. It's not just in your imagination. The Global Church is changing. With input from Mission Society missionaries, Becky Stephen, senior director of field ministries, describes emerging trends experienced by our missions community and identified by missiologists. These paint a picture of the Global Church in transition.



## NORTH AMERICA

### *Church redefined*

Although the number of “evangelicals” has grown slightly in the past decade, the number of Americans who self-identify as Christian declined by five million people. More than 20% of Americans have no religious affiliation. Nowhere is this more true than among young people. Three out of five leave the church in their late teens, claiming it to be irrelevant, boring, and inauthentic. They are looking for a Jesus who connects to the real world and the real people in it, a Christian community that is not afraid of people who are “not like me,” and a God who loves them just like they are and who has power to bring about justice in the world. Many young believers are investigating ancient forms of church, or abandoning traditional forms of “church” altogether, simply forming communities of faith with others who prefer an “untamed Jesus.”

## LATIN AMERICA

### *Missions among Muslims*

Like the rest of the Global South, there is an increase in the number of missionaries from Latin America. Discipled by Western missionaries, many of these young missionaries-in-training have broken the traditional pattern of perpetually receiving financially and spiritually and, instead, are preparing to reach Muslims. Without the kinds of resources the Western Church and missionaries are used to, many Latin American missionaries must find ways to answer God’s call that does not require enormous amounts of money or complicated infrastructures. (Also see article on pages 31.)



## EUROPE

### *Immigration*



Of the 20 nations with the lowest birthrate, 18 are in Europe. With the decline in population, migrants have moved in to do the work needed to keep these countries going. The European Union is now home to 27 million immigrants, 18 million of whom are Muslim. The Church, too, is in decline, with atheism on the rise and a growing Muslim population. Yet God is at work, revealing Himself through vibrant immigrant congregations of Africans and Asians who are communicating the gospel in new ways in the shadow of Europe's historic cathedrals. Prayer centers and praying communities are springing up all across the continent as God's people cry out to God to break through the darkness that now covers this once-homeland to Christianity.

## AFRICA

### *Indigenous Leadership*



Africa has been the poster child for US missions for more than 200 years. That "child" has come of age, no longer in need (if it ever was) of the oversight stereotypically offered by Western missionaries. Today Western missionaries, agencies, and churches, in the name of "partnership," often overextend authority, then become bewildered and frustrated when African partners don't play by Western rules or follow our lead. Yet Africans are leading the growing Church. "In the last 15 years alone," reports *Christianity Today*, "the Church in Africa has seen a 51% increase, which works out on average at around 33,000 people either becoming Christians or being born into Christian families each day in Africa alone." And Africans are leading beyond the continent. Even in the face of great persecution, Africans are crossing tribal, religious, and geographic lines around the world for the sake of the gospel. (See pages 24-25.)

# ASIA

## *Urbanization*



“We have moved from a world of about 200 [countries] to a new world of some 400 world-class cities. The missional challenge of the 21st century is the city,” observes Ray Bakke, urban missiologist. Of the world’s 28 “megacities” (population over 10 million), 16 are in Asia. China leads the way with the largest urban migration in history. Fifty years ago, only 9% of China’s population lived in cities. Since 2000, 54% have moved to cities to find work and a better life for their children. Urban populations are young—and lost. Teens tend to emulate American culture in an attempt to escape the confines of parental pressures to perform. Fleeing tradition and void of spiritual roots, young people are adrift in these megacities, hungering for something more.



## MUSLIM WORLD

### *Miracles*

Perhaps the most hidden people of all are Islam's one billion women. Most Muslim women live within the narrow limits of home and village or neighborhood community. Yet harassment and violence against women is on the rise, as is suicide. But something else is also on the rise: Muslims who follow Jesus. According to official reports, more than six million Muslims in Africa alone place their faith in Jesus each year. There may be 350 million culturally Muslim Jesus-followers in the world. How is this possible when the Muslim world has historically received the fewest number of missionaries? The most common testimony among Muslims following Jesus is that Jesus appeared to them in a vision or a dream. Others point to prayers answered or miracles done in Jesus' name.



## SOUTH ASIA

### *Business as Mission*

"Business as Mission" (BAM) arose as a missions strategy over the past few decades, initially as a means of gaining access into "closed" countries. The feasibility and fruitfulness of this approach has been hotly debated. But for missionaries who are creating for-profit businesses that provide training and jobs for the marginalized, BAM is simply obedience to the command of Jesus to make disciples "as you are going." These prayer-infused business ventures demonstrate to ordinary people what it means to follow Jesus in ordinary life.

These are exciting times! Though change can be overwhelming, even downright scary sometimes, it is a God-given opportunity to reflect on the past and to make new decisions for the future. It's a time for learning. A time for prayer. A time to embrace new ways of thinking, doing, and even being for us individually and as the Church. God is giving us, the Church in the West, opportunities in these days to sit at the feet of godly leaders from around the world, to participate in new ways of sending gospel messengers, to pray for things many of us have not believed possible, to be the Church, not just do church, and to allow the Spirit of God to change

us in ways that reveal the true nature of Jesus to a generation in desperate need of His love, mercy and power.

*Prior to her joining The Mission Society staff in 2013, **Becky Stephen** served for 29 years with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, 13 of which she recruited, trained, supervised, and cared for overseas staff and their families. She served overseas in India (five years) and Dubai (three years) and holds an M.A. in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary.*



# UNTOLD



# What the statistics can't tell you

“Followers of Jesus Christ have gradually spread to virtually everywhere in the world,” say the authors of *Our Global Families*. But even detailed charts and numbers can't tell the stories of the ways the gospel is traveling. Here, Mission Society laborers tell the amazing movements they see right where they serve.

In **Paraguay**, one of South America's poorest nations, there is a “tremendous movement amongst the youth,” writes missionary Christian Dickson. In this country, where an absence of men in families can be common, these young people “trust in the Holy Spirit and truly feel that God is the real father figure in their lives.” More and more Paraguayans, says Dickson, are preparing for missions in their own country and abroad. In **Germany**, where atheism is on the rise, churches filled with migrants from other nations are “helping to recommunicate the gospel in newly presented ways,” writes missionaries Kirk and Nicole Sims. “Prayer centers and prayer initiatives are springing up as some Christian leaders are seeking a new move of God in this nation.” In **South Sudan**, where 51% of the population is age 15 and younger, “the children and adults are hungry—not only for nutritious food, but to learn. We believe the Holy Spirit is fostering this hunger,” writes missionary Sharon Fogleman. Also, in South Sudan, “the simple technology of radio, cell phones, and internet are

Newly disciplined Peruvians take the gospel with them as they migrate to countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, Uruguay, and Italy, tells missionary Arthur Ivey. (See story on page 31.)

being used to spread life-saving messages, not only of health education and prevention, but of Christian discipleship.” And here in our own country, physician and missionary (to Ghana) Cam Gongwer reports from **Indiana**, “Through much prayer, the Lord has called believers together from different denominational backgrounds as one Church, witnessing together in a city. It is happening in seven communities statewide through a ministry called ‘Revive Indiana.’ People are hearing the good news, are choosing to follow Christ, and are entering into a discipleship process. ... Also, we see in our community in South Bend and other locations open doors for engaging international students attending university. Whether it be through Alpha groups among Chinese students or other student outreach ministries, young people are discovering Christ.”

In future issues, you will read more of these and other reports. In the pages that follow, three Mission Society mission workers tell stories about how they see firsthand God at work in the world.

# Light

Teaching in Muslim nations, this missionary keeps being dazzled by the witness of Jesus followers, even in sometimes life-threatening circumstances.

Within our world, we seem to be headed towards greater disorder or entropy. And yet, like Esther, I believe the body of Christ in this generation has been born for such a time as this. What we perceive as fatal flaws in the world are actually spectacular opportunities for the good news to work its way into dark places—places traditionally considered the most closed to the light of Jesus.

## Radiant faith

I have been “underground” in a country with believers who overflow with energy to reach Muslims. They have no concern for their own oppression; they simply desire to be trained in loving methods of building bridges to share the good news. They go where Westerners are not welcome. So we train them, then stand back and watch the beautiful expressions of faith as Muslims come to a full knowledge of Jesus. The doors of opportunity are flying open in this country. I am humbled by the determined obedience of these men and women. And astonishingly, this is happening in more than one country! There is light!

## Brilliant joy

Once a week, a woman secretly uses her regular classroom teaching time to teach the stories of the Bible. She lives in a highly controlled environment, but with such joy. Because of severe political unrest in one section of the country, the government has begun

a program to resettle the younger of the protesters in her city. She now has many of them in her class. God is using what is meant for re-education of the rioters to be redemption of the rebels! There is light!

## Stunning courage

Many locations are closed to missionaries, so believers in those countries have stepped up to prepare the people of their own country to communicate Jesus. One dear sister who had previ-

“Once a week, a woman secretly uses her regular classroom teaching time to teach the stories of the Bible.”

ously been imprisoned for her faith is preparing her daughter to be ready to face death. This friend explained that when (not if) she is arrested again and her captors threaten her daughter’s life to force her to speak the name of others in the church, she will not relent. The children are trained to take the narrow path that leads to life! There is light!

## Illuminating love

In the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula, believers are willing to cross borders into enemy territory to tell the

stories of Jesus. I was in country and, incredibly, ran into a woman I had trained to use the Bible to teach others. She was from a neighboring country where she herself is undergoing stringent oppression. She had come to serve those who would hate her if they met under different circumstances. She came to serve them in their time of great need and was with a team of other women who had the same heart. God does not see borders! Borders are porous for those who have met Him face to face. There is light!

## Glorious worship

In another country, there are those who are so committed to growing in their newfound faith that they choose to meet in their car and drive around the city having a time of worship and Bible study in private, away from curious eyes. This is a movement of creative worship happening all over the globe! There is light!

## Bright encounters

In an attempt to reach a safe haven, many who live in war-torn or rebel-held countries are fleeing their homes, risking their lives on the seas. There is now a great movement of missionaries serving in refugee camps. Is it an accident that hundreds of refugee camps are located in countries where we do not even need a visa to enter? There is light!

“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

—John 8:12, NIV



### **Gleaming visions**

The landscape of mission is experiencing a profound upheaval. God is revealing Himself through dreams and visions to those who would be most resistant. Through these visions, He urges them to seek out His followers, so that they can hear the whole story of redemption.

### **Sparkling opportunities**

That Jesus is appearing personally in

these marvelous ways must not cause us to hesitate from the call to “go into all the world.” For Westerners, God’s work among people of other faiths should cause us to lean into opportunities to relate to those who dress differently, eat differently, worship differently, and follow different holy books. There may be someone standing right beside us in the grocery store who is waiting for a believer to explain his or her vision of Jesus!

God is bringing to our shores those He desires to know Him. May there be a huge welcome of loving acts. Nothing speaks louder than building relationships with our “enemies” who live in our midst. There is light! ✝

*This missionary, who regularly travels to many different countries, is unnamed for security reasons.*

# Hunger

The spiritual hunger I see in China “goes deeper than any hunger I’ve ever experienced,” tells this Mission Society missionary. All around, he sees young people searching to fill a void.

One of the greatest areas of praise in China is the abundant harvest, ripe in the field. But there is also another harvest in China, a harvest dying on the ground because the waiting and longing have gone on too long.

I imagine myself around a dinner table with my family. We have just finished our prayer of thanks for the meal before us. As we raise our bowed heads, we find that we are surrounded by Chinese. They are looking at our meal with a longing that goes beyond my understanding. Their hunger goes deeper than any hunger I have ever experienced. We are compelled to share what we have, but it is quickly gone. As far as I can see, there are men and women waiting to be fed. Each day, we are given provision for our table and we share it with those nearest out table, but so many go without.

## Searching

The American influence is strong here. In urban China, teenage culture is on the fast track to emulate American culture in the drive to satisfy what we would call the “desires of the flesh.” Teens rebel against traditional culture and their parents to “escape the oppression” they feel—to work hard, study hard, make money, and provide security.

A student who has been accepted to the leading university here in China wants to make a “career” out of playing

video games. So far his parents have kept him moving toward university. He is such a bright young man, he didn’t have to work hard to pass his tests. He plays 10-12 hours a night and sleeps during the day.

A group of four teens were convicted of abusing a teenage girl. They come from wealthy families and attend the top high school in Beijing. One of the boys texted a friend saying he was proud of what he had done.

“The spirit and heart of a person are often ignored for the sake of the development of the mind. The mind is everything.”

Stories like this abound. The spirit and heart of a person are often ignored for the sake of the development of the mind. The mind is everything. This causes huge emotional and mental upheaval in the family and cultural units.

## Dying

These are examples of a harvest that has been too long in the field, waiting for workers. It falls to the ground, dying.

If it takes feel-good stories to motivate us as Americans to enter the harvest, then we will not be prepared to

handle the work needed for the harvest, nor will our prayers penetrate the war for eternity being fought in the field. We need the prayer of the Egyptian slaves who cried out in pain and agony for God to save them. Billions are dying spiritually out here.

We are privileged to be part of The Mission Society community who understands the hunger that exists and is devoted to His plan and glory. And we realize that without you and those like you crying out in prayerful support of this organization, it would not continue. We are ever dependent on your prayers. It is an honor to have a table here.

## Finding

We see daily evidences of a languishing harvest—those who are starving for the Truth of God. But we also see those who have received. It is amazing to see the changes that occur from just the smallest of portions.

A teenager girl who was fortunate to be close “to a table of the food of God’s Truth” has amazing insight into her peers and has a hunger to make a change in the world. She has had a life filled with abandonment, but by God’s grace, she daily seeks Him and finds Him faithful. Through the pain she has experienced, her desire to help others has grown. Pray that He will surround her with His Truth as she enters a time and place devoted to filling the mind,

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’”

—John 6:35, ESV



not necessarily with Truth.

We have met many homeschooling moms who are not following the normal path for their children, but are instead teaching them from Christ-centered materials as they teach the standard Chinese subjects. Our former Chinese tutor has been working at a Christian preschool, where she teaches English to little ones while expressing the love of Jesus. These women (and many others like them) seek to bring light and Truth to the children, who are the future of the Church in China.

One of our dear friends is a great prayer warrior, a children’s Sunday

school teacher, and a house church leader. On the eve of Christmas and new year’s celebrations, she spends 24 hours or more with brothers and sisters on their knees in prayer. Fearlessly, she speaks the Truth of Christ. We are blessed and humbled to have her as a friend. Many of my coworkers have left behind careers, receive lower pay, and face pressure from their parents in order to do the work of helping bring the Truth of Christ to hurting people.

The Church in China continues to mature and develop. It is by far providing more tables to the masses than those here serving from other coun-

tries. These churches are realizing the need to care beyond a sermon and are looking for ways to minister to the daily lives of those around them. Counseling, once seen only as a secular method of help, is now beginning to be seen as an extension of God’s Truth applied to those daily struggles. And through it, His Truth is changing lives and drawing Chinese hearts to Him. ✝

*This couple and their family, unnamed for security reasons, have served in China since 2005. Photo by Dave Bartroff/Genesis Photos*

# Together

**A Kenyan pastor tells the fruitful ministry landscape he sees—marked by lively collaboration and indigenous leadership. The result is a freshly trained and growing Church.**

“In Kenya, partnerships are growing among Kenyans. More people are embracing teamwork, and the fear of competition is losing its hold on many Christian leaders. Networks are being created. Denominational walls are falling, and as they fall, Christians are becoming free to share the word and love of God beyond cultural and denominational borders,” writes the Rev. Simon Mwaura. A Kenyan pastor, Mwaura founded and heads God’s Grace For All Nations (GGFAN), a strategic partner of The Mission Society.

For GGFAN, collaboration has become regular practice. Here, the Rev. Mwaura tells how working together with others is helping spread the gospel among Kenya’s unreached:

Our vision is that all the 122 tribes in Kenya would have access to the gospel of God’s love. Our mission is to make the gospel more accessible to Kenya’s 22 unreached and least-reached tribes. But we admitted that we could not do this alone. So GGFAN embraced the strategy of developing new indigenous leaders in each tribe (as we also cooperate with other ministries globally). In the last couple of years, we have been working among Kenya’s Samburu, Turkana, Areal Rendille, Borana, and the Lchamus tribes. We are witnessing notable progress as we partner with others through some of the following ministries:

### **Reaching unreached through story**

We realized that the largest population

among the unreached Samburu community was illiterate. How would we reach this tribe with the gospel?

We formed a partnership with T-4 Global (a ministry that communicates the gospel to those in oral cultures) and started an orality training project in Samburu in early 2007. The first 10 pastors to be trained in orality each brought five more people who had been trained in church planting.

The first people to train under the T-4 Global Orality Program were not

“Our mission is to make the gospel more accessible to Kenya’s 22 unreached and least-reached tribes. But we admitted that we could not do this alone.”

Samburu themselves. But they were Kenyans whose aim was to train others from the Samburu community. In training the Samburu leaders, Bible stories, songs, and drama were developed, recorded, and stored in audible devices for the Samburu people.

On April 3, the first 60 orality trainers in Samburu county graduated! Equipped with trainers and these new audible resources, “listening groups” have formed in this unreached community. Consequently, many in the Samburu commu-

nity have been reached with the gospel! Graduates from the orality program are now working to plant churches among this unreached community.

We are now starting the T-4 Orality Program in all the four divisions of Samburu and moving to Lchamus, which is our new mission field.

### **Planting 1000 churches**

The Nkalup Vision means 1,000 in Samburu. The Samburu county Nkalup Vision was born in 2011 as a partnership between GGFAN, Faith Ventures Foundation, and the church in Samburu to make the Samburu county a reached county by planting 1,000 churches. At the time of this writing, over the past three years, 328 local preaching point leaders have been trained, and 127 preaching points have been planted in Samburu county through Nkalup Vision. Faith Ventures Foundation has contributed greatly to the development and empowerment of the board, and supports 93 preaching point leaders with a monthly stipend. Meanwhile, GGFAN provides leadership training and organizational management counsel.

The demonstrated lack of competition among ministries has led many to embrace the Samburu Nkalup Vision. GGFAN is starting the same program among the unreached Lchamus community.

### **Reaching another unreached community, a milestone**

GGFAN sent a missionary couple to

“Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which bind everything together in perfect harmony.”

—Colossians 3:14, ESV

Isiolo to minister among the unreached Borana community. Through them, GGFAN has partnered with Mission Society missionaries Sonia Crawley and Sonja Pass to train church planters in Isiolo. The “Timothy Initiative Training” graduation was held in March of this year. This is a great milestone in reaching the unreached in Isiolo. Nineteen students were awarded with diplomas in theology of church planting and discipleship. These students/pastors and leaders are now planting churches in their communities. In fact, some had already planted churches at the time of graduation.

#### **Training pastors through pastor's school**

This has the greatest multiplication effect. Every month we train pastors who have never had theological training, and who don't have the educational qualifications or the financial capacity to enroll in a Bible school. Last year, we graduated 70 pastors from nine denominations and seven tribes. Another class of 30 pastors from five tribes and 16

denominations is being trained this year. In the course of training, two churches have been planted from this class.

#### **Mobilizing churches for mission**

GGFAN has a vision to see all of our churches become mission-minded. To accomplish this, we are going into regions to train about missions and are mobilizing and teaching even in other denominations principles taught in The Mission Society's Global Outreach Seminar.

#### **Experiencing the miracles around us**

Through all of these ministries, we are witnessing a move for a greater hunger of the knowledge of God. More and more communities are embracing the Christian faith. There is manifestation of the miraculous to confirm the authority of the Word of God.

One pastor from Samburu shared the story of a Samburu woman who sought healing from different area doctors with no results. When the pastor visited her in her home and prayed with her, she was healed. She gave her life to Christ

and later became a member of the church in Samburu.

This is one of many stories about how God is manifesting His power and changing the lives of people who have long held onto traditional African beliefs. An old, blind woman who was reached with the gospel through the orality program now speaks the word of God with authority! This is evidence to us that God uses all who believe in Him! †



*A Kenyan pastor, Simon Mwaura founded and heads God's Grace For All Nations (GGFAN), a strategic ministry partner of The Mission Society.*

*In 2006, Mwaura participated in The Mission Society Global Outreach Seminar and has helped teach the seminar to other Kenyan pastors and leaders. In 2009 he attended The Mission Society's cross-cultural training and later a regional gathering of missionaries. Today, a couple with The Mission Society is preparing to serve as missionaries with GGFAN.*



# Extraordinary love

*Christianity is advancing in  
Atlanta's coffee shops*

In this “transitional phase” of global Christianity, what should we be doing? “Practice hospitality,” say the authors of *Our Global Families*.

For Atlanta's Mr. Jim Brown, this is no new news. Offering hospitality, particularly through discipling young people, has been a way of life over the past 50 years. Here, he offers two keys to opening one's heart to others, and he tells the little prayer that took him—and keeps him—on this journey.

**“WE ARE NOT CALLED BY GOD  
TO DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS,  
BUT TO DO ORDINARY THINGS  
WITH EXTRAORDINARY LOVE.”**

**—JEAN VANIER**





When our editor asked if I would be interested in interviewing Jim Brown for a magazine article, I immediately jumped at the opportunity. Jim Brown came on our radar screen because several of our staff members attend church with him, who is renown in that congregation as a discipler. Since discipleship is so central to The Mission Society, we set out to discover how he discipled.

I scheduled coffee with Mr. Brown and got there early. (It was 8:00 at night, so I was drinking decaf.) While I waited for the baristas to deliver my drink, I heard laughter and turned to see them smiling as an older gentleman had asked them if they could give him directions to the smile factory. I had a sneaking suspicion that this was Jim Brown. It was.

We grabbed a table; I took out a pen, paper, and a recorder and expected to run through some of the questions I had prepared for our meeting. Jim knew this article would be about discipleship, but he also knew that discipleship is about people. We couldn't jump into the details about the relationships he formed over the past 50 years without knowing a little bit about each other first.

### Being uncomfortable

I soon realized I was in over my head, because I could never adequately recount the amazing story I was about to hear. Jim and his wife moved to Alaska after feeling God's call on their lives. He laughed, remembering that they lived a mile from the main road in a home with an outhouse for a bathroom. He told of the 100-mile trek to the hospital in 30-degree-below-zero weather for the birth of their first daughter. That story seemed the perfect introduction to tell me what he would tell me next. So much of ministry, he said, is learning to put up with being uncomfortable.

In Alaska the Browns taught school, pastored a community church, and opened their home as house parents to their Native Alaskan students. From there, Jim went on to a slew of ministry-related jobs in California—dean of the Sacra-

mento Bible Institute, church pastor, and Christian school superintendent. Then God brought the Browns to the Atlanta area where Jim serves on the staff as a mission administrator. Together, he and his wife open their metro-area home for a weekly house church for college-age young people. It seemed to me like an overwhelming lifetime of experiences, but to Jim, he's just "a little piece of God's puzzle," answering where God calls.

Sometime after Jim and his wife moved to Georgia, he prayed that God would send him someone to disciple. Perhaps he should have been more specific in his request, because *three* young men approached him. Jim smiled, remembering these men and memories fondly. He said that every phase of life is different—choosing a job, choosing a partner, finding a career, becoming a father. But all these phases are really the same struggles; they're all about growing into the person God designed you to be.

### Being interested

He told me his time with the men he discipled starts with a simple invitation, "Tell me your spiritual story." From there, there is no agenda. The key to being a disciple-maker, he says, is to be interested and to listen. *Listen*. These instructions come up several times in our hour together: "Be will-

ing to be uncomfortable, and listen."

Being a disciple-maker is walking together with an open heart and mind and helping that other person grow to the point that he is independent from you. "They belong to God, not me," he says. "Learning to hear from God and learning to discern is crucial."

He reminds me, "I don't have all the answers. It is their relationship with

God that counts, and I want them to grow and be dependent only on Him."

Maybe surprisingly, no one ever discipled Jim. "I'm kind of like Elijah who we don't read of ever having been discipled," he says. "But Elijah discipled Elisha and started a school of the prophets. I make the comparison because I don't think you have to have been discipled to disciple others....Basically all my life I wanted someone to disciple me, but that didn't happen. So that helps me to be available to guys and even pursue those I feel the Lord calling me to disciple."

Over time the three men who asked to be discipled by Jim started discipling others. "All the guys I've discipled end up discipling others. I don't instruct them to do it. They just do it because God is at work...His Spirit is in their hearts." This is how the Lord grows His Church.

"All the guys I've discipled end up discipling others. I don't instruct them to do it. They just do it because God is at work... His Spirit is in their hearts."

## Being led

Initially, Jim was concerned about having enough time to devote to three men, but at one point, the number of men being disciplined by Jim grew to 40! I asked him how in the world he managed to spend meaningful time and nurture relationships with so many. Raising his iced tea he said, “Well, this is my third Starbucks today!” I think now about how this is similar to how the Lord cares for His children. Seeking us, He meets us where we are. And sometimes God meets us at closing time at a Starbucks on a Tuesday.

Jim’s willingness to be completely at the service of God at all times has steered the direction of his life. He knows that wherever God leads him is where he belongs. “I used to be afraid I wouldn’t have the answers; I wouldn’t know what to say. But I realized that if God brings them to you, you can’t miss.”

“God is love” he says. “If I’m loving, I’m displaying Him.” This is Jim’s heart. It is his wisdom and compassion. It’s why he listens. Every ministry takes a different shape. In talking

with Jim, I began to see that discipleship is really a bit of a misnomer to describe what he does. It’s not a hat he puts on and says, “Okay, today I’m going to disciple.” It’s his whole life.

Judging from Jim, I realize discipleship ministry is a ministry of hospitality. In the same way that we open our homes to friends and family, Jim opens his heart. If you are looking to invest your life in others, consider this little prayer Jim prays: “Lord, if you want me to talk to someone, let me know.” God is in the business of shaping people into His image, and He answers. †



**Lauren Mead Rogers** is The Mission Society’s donor administration coordinator and is pursuing her master’s in public administration. A college English major, she takes on writing projects from time to time, for which we are very grateful. Photos by Cari Voutila

## Why your welcome mat matters

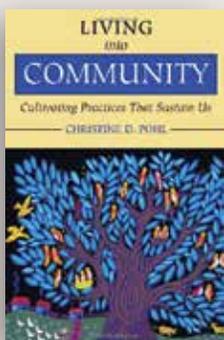
You might be more ‘missional’ than you know.

*Can you be a listener? Can you invite someone to have a cup of coffee and hear where God is at work in their story? This is you on mission.*

“Being missional in a multifaith, postmodern world should not limit itself to preaching the good news,” writes authors Todd M. Johnson and Cindy M. Wu in *Our Global Families*. “A

holistic perspective on mission includes mutual listening, suffering, dialogue, study, cooperation, and friendship. ... It includes hospitality.”

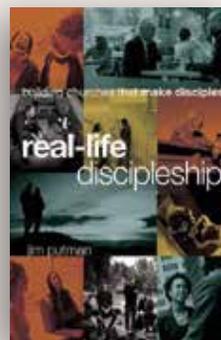
For your fall reading or your next small-group study, here are some splendid books on community life and discipleship. Join Jesus in His mission by offering hospitality to a stranger.



**Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us**  
by Christine D. Pohl

Every church, every organization, has experienced them: betrayal, deception, grumbling, envy, exclusion. They make life together difficult and prevent congregations from developing the skills, virtues, and practices they need to nurture sturdy, life-giving communities. In *Living into Community*, Christine Pohl explores four specific Christian practices—gratitude, promise-keeping, truth-telling, and hospitality—that can counteract those destructive forces and help churches and individuals build and sustain vibrant communities.

—



**Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches That Make Disciples**  
by Jim Putman

How does a church effectively disciple an entire body? Discipleship is often thought to be the pastor’s job. Actually, the responsibility falls to every believer in your fellowship to create followers of Christ, who in turn create other intentional followers. The pastor’s job is to make sure everyone is truly being disciplined. The difference is in how

you design and lead your small groups. Discover how you can create and make disciples who create other disciples. Check out [relationaldiscipleshipnetwork.com](http://relationaldiscipleshipnetwork.com) for a wealth of resources.



**The Mission Society welcomes new board and staff members**

At the biannual meeting in May, The Mission Society’s board of directors welcomed four new board members:

- **Bill Hewitt**, a retired businessman, earned a master’s in electrical engineering from the University of Connecticut and a B.S. in engineering from the United States Coast Guard Academy. He has served as CEO of two listed companies and was a founding partner in two successful private companies.
- **Susie Maclin**, a former archivist, is the daughter of Alice and H.T. Maclin, The Mission Society’s founding president and CEO. She was raised in the Belgian Congo and Kenya before returning to the US for college. Maclin served as an archivist for many organizations before her retirement.
- **Dr. Ubolwan Mejudhon** serves as pastor of the Muangthai Church in Bangkok, Thailand, which, along with 10 sister churches, she founded alongside her husband, Nantachai Mejudhon. She earned master’s and doctorate degrees from Asbury Theological Seminary. The Mejudhons work with Mission Society missionaries in Thailand.
- **John Spencer** is a retired scientist and is active in prison ministry in Virginia. He earned a Ph.D. from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and worked as a radio astronomer for the Naval Research Laboratory.

As we welcome these new board members, we also are filled with gratitude for the four outgoing board members: Robert Aboagye-Mensa (from Accra, Ghana); Paul Baddour, William M. Johnson, and Don McGehee. Your prayer, your commitment to The Mission Society’s mission and vision, your courage, insight, and tireless work have been used of God to announce the gospel in places never imagined The Mission Society might minister. You leave an indelible mark, and we are grateful beyond words.

To meet the growing demands of ministry, The Mission Society added several members to the home office staff in Norcross, Georgia. We welcome our newest colleagues:

- **Duane Brown, Ph.D.**, is the senior director of church ministry. He fills the role previously occupied by Stan Self, who has retired from this position.
- **Eunice Cook** serves as the receptionist and finance clerk.
- **Kate Hilderbrandt** moved from the mobilization department to serve as field ministry innovation manager in the field ministry department.
- **Nathan Naidu** serves as the coordinator of mobilization.
- **Nikiya Richard** serves as the field ministry administrator.



From left to right (top row): Bill Hewitt, Susie Maclin, Dr. Ubolwan Mejudhon, John Spencer, Ph.D., Duane Brown, Ph.D., Eunice Cook, Kate Hilderbrandt (bottom row): Nathan Naidu, Nikiya Richard.

**They are on their way!**

**Josh and Bekah Hilts – Thailand**  
(March 2015)

Josh and Bekah recently moved to Bangkok, Thailand to live with, love, and minister to those who are exploited through human trafficking. Their goal is to see enslaved men, women, and children freed to follow Jesus and to walk with them on their journey of becoming His life-long disciples.

## Special Report:

### Why ministries of Mission Society missionaries in Latin America are changing

By **Betsy Phillips**

*Today, the Global South is estimated to account for almost half of the world's missionary force.\* With the shift in the global Church, Mission Society workers in Latin America are taking on the role of preparing this new generation of missionaries.*

#### **Brazil**

Ben and Jenny Reyes have ministered together in Brazil since 1989, most recently through training missionaries for national and international missions. They teach courses on culture shock, cross-cultural communication, inductive Bible study methods for discipleship, and ministry to Muslims, in order to prepare young people for effective and fruitful missionary service. Over the past few years, they have seen missionaries from the Brazilian Methodist Church sent to countries such as Estonia, Mozambique, and Angola to serve from several weeks to several months at a time.

Commuting to Paraguay for more training opportunities, the Reyes have just completed teaching a course on culture shock to five young men and women, three of whom are preparing to work among primarily Muslim populations. Ben Reyes states, "Many Brazilian missionaries return to their home country within three years due to lack of proper training in cross-cultural international missions, dwindling financial support, or insufficient member care." Despite facing such potential difficulties, young Latin Americans trained by the Reyes are both motivated and determined to prepare themselves to respond to the call of the Great Commission.

#### **Peru**

The discipleship experience led by Arthur and Mary Alice Ivey in Peru currently has a presence in 11 of the country's 24 regions, reaching many different cultural and language groups. Arthur writes, "As people really get to know Jesus, they are very excited about sharing with others. When they have to move because of work or other reasons, they want to carry the discipleship experience with them, and they introduce it to other areas through their new relationships."

The Iveys have seen this happen as Peruvians migrate to countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, Uruguay, and Italy. And recently, others are considering taking the gospel to other countries as cross-cultural international missionaries. As is often the case, the primary barrier to

The harvest is plentiful, and laborers are multiplying, as a new paradigm in missions thrives with missionaries from all the world going to all the world.

international missions is economic, yet the Iveys are currently working on several projects to overcome that barrier, including helping potential missionaries develop skills to become tent-making missionaries (those who work in another country as a means of earning income and as opportunity to expand their witness).

#### **Nicaragua**

Meanwhile, in Nicaragua, Ronnie and Angi Hopkins share the stories of two young people. Erenia, who worked with the children's ministry, completed Bible school with help from the Hopkins' scholarship program. While attending nursing school, Erenia was discipled through serving on the Hopkins' youth leadership team and participating in an-



Missionary to Nicaragua Angi Hopkins with leaders of the sewing circles. Angi and her husband, Ronnie, actively develop leaders, some who will serve overseas.

nual Sunday school conferences where she learned specific skills for ministry. Harry has been a part of the Hopkins' ministry for more than 10 years, initially serving as an interpreter for short-term teams. He also graduated from the same two-year Bible school, further developing his gifts in music and praise/worship leadership. Both Harry and Erenia were then able to continue their training, including improving their English abilities, through an internship program offered by one of the Hopkins' supporting churches. Today, Erenia and Harry are preparing to serve in Africa.

As Latin America continues to change from being a mission field to becoming a missionary force in the world, Mission Society missionaries will have more opportunities to invest in the discipleship and training of those who respond to God's call to serve as cross-cultural witnesses. The harvest is plentiful, and laborers are multiplying, as a new paradigm in missions thrives with missionaries from all the world going to all the world.

*\*From CT Gleanings, "The Surprising Countries Most Missionaries Are Sent From and Go To," by Melissa Steffan, posted July 25, 2013.*

*After having served for 20 years in Latin America with The Mission Society and World Gospel Mission, Betsy and Len Phillips now serve on The Mission Society's Global Resource Team.*



# Scattering and the kingdom

The astonishing way Christian populations are growing



In Jordan, where an estimated 10% of the population are refugees, the Jordanian Church and faith-based organizations are welcoming and providing assistance to these exiles, most of whom are Muslim. As a result, many are coming to faith.

*“And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”* This simple statement shows up in Acts 8:1, just after Stephen was stoned. Until that event, the record of the early Church growth was in Jerusalem. Certainly some of the visitors who heard Peter’s sermon and came to faith at Pentecost had returned to their homes, but we don’t hear anything about them up to this point. But then Stephen is martyred, and a general persecution breaks out.

The fourth verse goes on to say, *“Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.”* Following this is the specific case of Philip, who ends up in Samaria where people start coming to faith so much so that

word got to Jerusalem, and Peter and John went up to check things out.

## The scattered early church

We can assume that there were other cases of the “scattered,” like Philip’s. This can do much to explain why, in later stories, we read of believers already existing in other places such as Joppa and Antioch.

This scattering of people was probably not on the apostles’ 25-year plan for evangelizing the Roman world. Yet the kingdom broke out in the midst of this scattering. Paul often moved in and out of the scattered Jewish communities that were pervasive across the Empire (an earlier scattering that certainly had not been planned, but was important to the growth of the early Church). It is informative to see how God used this sociological and demographic phenom-

enon to spread the news of redemption and reconciliation in Jesus Christ. The kingdom broke out in the midst of the scattering—in the midst of something that most would not have been seen as a positive development.

## Today's scattered church

Fast forward to today and observe the unprecedented phenomenon of people movements. The United Nations estimates that 230 million people now live outside of their countries of origin. This would include legal immigration as well as undocumented immigrants and refugees. Another nearly 700 million can be added to that number who are internally displaced within their own nation.

In the United States, there is much handwringing over the issue of immigration. We hear concerns about

# Millennials filling American churches

Immigration from Asia has made an impact in, to pick an example, evangelicals in universities. If you were to visit the student ministries at some of the major universities of the Northeast (or many other places), you'd find a surprising number of Asian-American Christians there.

To quote Bob Smietana: "Almost every day, it seems, there's a new story

about how 'Millennials are leaving the church.' But there's a problem with these trend pieces: They aren't true. American Christianity still has plenty of Millennials—they're just not necessarily in white churches."

*Excerpted from The Exchange, Nov. 3, 2014, "4 Ways (Im)migration Impacts the Mission of the Church," by Ed Stetzer*

the number who have arrived outside of the legal system. We hear concerns about the many who come legally, but seem to have a different set of values than is "truly American." Regardless of opinions and concerns about this, is it possible that God is active in this modern-day scattering in ways that will show His kingdom breaking in today?

## Scattered refugees

With the ongoing crisis in Syria and Iraq, Jordan is home to huge numbers of refugees—estimates are that over 10% of the nation's current population are refugees. The Jordanian Church, along with many faith-based organizations, has stepped up to provide welcome and help to the refugees, most of whom are Muslim. As hospitality is shown in the name of Christ, many are coming to faith. The kingdom is breaking out in Jordan in the midst of a terrible situation.

Some of the most closed countries to expressions of the Christian faith in the Middle East are also home to large numbers of Filipino foreign workers, many of whom are believers in Christ. In the midst of the challenge of working far from home, the kingdom breaks out as these workers live out their faith in places that traditional missions cannot penetrate.

## The scattered church among us

Coming to our own nation, there are some exciting possibilities for the kingdom as we consider the scattering of people among us. On the one hand, this influx of people gives amazing potential for outreach. We have the opportunity to show hospitality to those who have come to live in our cities and towns. But if our first response is fear and distrust,

"Just as the Lord of the Harvest used the context of scattering in the early Church to broaden the reach of His Church, He is doing the same in the scattering of the 21st century."

we miss a great kingdom opportunity. Are we like Philip in Samaria, willing to cross-cultural barriers to build relationships with people who come from very different cultural and faith backgrounds?

The United States is host to over a million international students and scholars annually, many of them from countries that are closed to Christian mission. Yet estimates are that 80% never are invited into a Christian home. Imagine how the kingdom might break

out if that 80% were shown Christian hospitality and fellowship?

As we look at the United States, one often overlooked fact is that the majority of those immigrating here actually come from Christian backgrounds. Ironically, many seem worried that these new citizens may water down our nation's faith. On the contrary, there is great kingdom potential for them to bring new life to a culture that is increasingly post-Christian. Some of the largest and most vibrant churches in Europe are pastored by people who have emigrated from Africa. Increasingly, new migrant communities of Christians in the United States are seeing as part of their mission to help revitalize the American Church and call it back to orthodox Christianity. This is an example of the kingdom breaking out in the context of migration.

There are many other examples, but suffice it to say that, just as the Lord of the Harvest used the context of scattering in the early Church to broaden the reach of His Church, He is scattering the church of the 21st century. He invites us to have kingdom eyes to see how His hand is moving and to join Him in His mission. ✚

*Jim Ramsay is The Mission Society's vice president for mission ministries. Photo by Jedediah Smith/Genesis Photos*



## The tale of two trees

New churches spring up in the same areas other churches die? How? What do these new churches do that yours might not? This is the tale of shade trees and fruit trees.



“Shade tree churches tend to exist to provide a sanctuary. Their primary focus is internal. ...On the other hand, fruit tree churches tend to exist to disseminate the gospel and multiply believers. Their primary focus is external.” Want real-life examples? Keep reading.

Back in the day when short-term mission ventures were a novelty, I, along with two of my cohorts, received an invitation to speak about one such mission at the morning worship service of an historic denominational church. The church building itself was lovely with four massive columns at the front, beautiful woodwork on the inside, and a seating capacity for some 400 worshippers.

On the morning we were there, the congregation consisted of about 35 dear souls, all over the age of 65. We discovered this was not an anomaly. That morning's attendance represented the average attendance of the church, even though the area teemed with homes and apartment complexes. Discussing the situation over lunch that day, the pastor related that the church leaders had concluded there was nothing they could do to effect growth. In short, the church had sunk into a state of ambivalent atro-

phy. It was not surprising to learn later that this church had closed its doors.

Today, this scenario repeats itself far too frequently. Estimates are that 80% of all churches in the United States have plateaued or are in decline. Additional estimates are that roughly 4,000 churches close their doors each year. Experts suggest that we should be starting between 10,000 and 14,000 churches to stem the tide of church decline and closings. Given that the percentage of declining churches is so high, that may seem counterintuitive. One might reasonably ask, “If the Church is in such decline, how could it be possible to start so many churches?” Perhaps an example might help here.

### **New plant**

In North Central Georgia, there is an established denominational church in the center of a town of about 9,000 people. The church had seemingly ceased grow-

ing (number wise), and the denomination decided to plant a new church in the same area. After meeting in a home for a while, the new church moved to the local high school less than two miles from the established church.

The new church's members were intentional about two things. First, they purposely sought after unchurched people in the area and, second, they committed to serve the community in demonstrable ways. Every week members of the start-up church would be out in the community showing love through acts of kindness and service and building relationships with people. As new people came into the church, they were encouraged to learn and do the same. This was coupled with the development of small-group studies and solid biblical preaching that took the church into an ever-deepening living relationship with Jesus. Within two years, the start-up church had surpassed the attendance of

# Churches, want to be more fruitful?

The Mission Society's church ministry department exists for the purpose of helping develop "fruit tree churches." We do this through training and mentoring. Please contact us by email at [cm@themissionsociety.org](mailto:cm@themissionsociety.org). Or call us at **678.542.9046**, and we can discuss your church's needs.

the older church, and within five years attendance tripled. (Keep in mind, the growth was primarily due to engaging those who were in the community but not going to church anywhere.)

The two churches in this example are representative of many I have encountered. I refer to them as "shade tree" churches and "fruit tree" churches.

## Two trees

Shade tree churches tend to exist to provide a sanctuary. Their primary focus is internal. They offer a safe place for like-minded people to gather, enjoy one another's company, escape from the cares of the world, study, play, and worship together. They are happy when others decide to join them. However, only occasionally will they make a concerted effort to reach others who have not sought them out first.

On the other hand, fruit tree churches tend to exist to disseminate the gospel and multiply believers. The primary focus of fruit tree churches is external. They study, play, and worship together as much as shade tree churches, but the priority is on outreach. Additionally, fruit tree churches expect that all coming into the fellowship will begin a process of discipleship that will lead to becoming disciples themselves. Dr. Charles Anderson, directing pastor at University United Methodist Church in San Antonio, Texas, characterizes this process as taking a person from being *No Disciple* to a *New Disciple* and finally to a *Trained Disciple*.

## Lasting fruit

One can hardly question the biblical mandate to be a fruit tree church. The Bible is rife with calls for followers of Jesus to bear fruit. For example, in John 15:5, Jesus reminds us that He is the vine and we are the branches, and if we remain in Him and He in us, we will bear much fruit. And in John 15:16, He tells us that He chose us that we might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. The good news is that whether your church is a declining church, a

*"The good news is that whether your church is a declining church, a plateaued church, or a church wanting to avoid those two, you can begin to become a fruit tree church."*

plateaued church, or a church wanting to avoid those two, you can begin to become a fruit tree church. The details of how a local church would go about that will vary depending on the culture and context of the church. However, from a broad perspective, becoming a fruit tree church will entail the following:

### 1 Determine a purpose

The purpose should serve as the church's marching orders that reflect a clear expression of why you are doing outreach in your community. It should be written from a kingdom perspective and most likely will be similar to Jesus' purpose for coming to live among us.

### 2 Design a plan

This is the "how-to" of engagement with your community. The plan will serve as a guide for the specific approach to outreach. It will also ensure that outreach will be orderly, reproducible, and sustainable over time.

### 3 Develop a passion

Outreach to the community must become a way of life for the entire church. For many in the congregation, this will be a new and even daunting matter. Therefore, preaching, teaching, motivating, and (later) celebrating will be an ongoing need in mobilizing the church. Remember, Jesus called the 12 to be "fishers of men." Then he spent much of the next three years teaching, demonstrating, and leading them in doing that.

Perhaps you feel your church is in a hopeless situation. You may think your congregation is too old, too tired, that it lacks leadership, or opportunity. Do not give up. Even dry bones can live again as God gives breath. The tree can produce fruit. †

*Retired senior director of church ministry, Stan Self serves now as training consultant for The Mission Society.*

*We welcome Dr. Duane E. Brown, new senior director of church ministry. See page 30.*



# Leaving a trail of fruitfulness

A message for those who long for wholeness in our broken world



*Everywhere are signs of hopelessness—and signs of the kingdom. People like the late Richard Twiss show how to sow seeds of reconciliation into our world. The Mission Society offers opportunities to sow kingdom seeds in other cultures. Visit [www.themissionsociety.org](http://www.themissionsociety.org) and complete a no-obligation interest form.*

Many of us shop for produce at grocery stores and, lacking farm experience, have no appreciation for the processes and people that produced the items we will purchase. After all, we are simply consumers. Our only concern is that the cost is low and the quality is high.

So it is with many followers of Christ. They crave to see spiritual fruit—kingdom fruit—but they have no intention of participating in the processes that yield the fruit. To put it more clearly, they long for wholeness in the broken world around them, but don't sow seeds for the kingdom in the very places that need new life. They blame and whine but want someone else to do the planting.

## Signs of hopelessness

A casual perusal of social media will reveal massive hopelessness with a prevailing sense that the world is broken. Our typical response may be to shake our heads and say, "That's too bad," or to blame one party or another.

As I watch the news and listen to story after story of tragedy, I wonder

who is sowing seeds of the kingdom into these situations. How many disasters or injustices could have been prevented by people sowing in their own places of influence.

## Seeds of selflessness

When I think of selfless sowers, I think of the late Richard Twiss, an Asbury Seminary graduate and member of the

*"The world is broken. ...Our typical response may be to shake our heads and say, 'That's too bad,' or to blame one party or another."*

Sicangu Lakota Oyate from the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. Despite the way his people had been treated, he chose to sow seeds of reconciliation. Richard traveled the world using preaching, dance, and music to help his audiences learn to value and

appreciate people who were different from themselves. Although he is no longer with us, the fruitfulness of his ministry continues.

A Korean proverb says: "Beans come out of where beans are planted, and red beans come out of where red beans are planted." In other words, whatever we sow is what we will reap. Is the world reaping our seeds of self-centeredness, indifference, and laziness, or is it reaping our seeds of love, generosity, and peace?

## Fruit of transformation

Let's be seed-sowers and not passive consumer Christians. Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God. Everywhere He went, He sowed seeds of the kingdom. And everywhere, those seeds began to blossom and produce the fruit of salvation, the fruit of relational reconciliation, and the fruit of societal transformation. Like a divine Johnny Appleseed, Jesus left behind a trail of fruitfulness. And the believers who abided in Him continued His work, sowing seeds for the kingdom to places beyond where He ventured.

Now in 2015, in our broken world, let's join Jesus in His mission. Let's sow seeds of the gospel, expecting God's kingdom to invade the dark places and produce abundant fruit, fruit that will remain. †

*Richard Coleman is The Mission Society's senior director of mobilization and candidacy. Photo by [Nikole Lim](http://www.nikolelim.com). Visit her website at [www.nikolelim.com](http://www.nikolelim.com).*

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- Fund one (1) Global Outreach Weekend at a US church, mobilizing it for global mission **\$1,250**  
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- Train one (1) US missionary to multiply his or her ministry through strategic cross-cultural partnerships **\$3,750**  
*Project ID #: 0111*



The Mission Society



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