
Some New Directions in Missions

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The work of missions is as old as the church. It has always been dynamic. Witness the dynamic of the Holy Spirit working through the believers scattered from Jerusalem in the earliest days of the church. These believers naturally shared the good news of Christ across Judea, in Samaria, and in the great multicultural city of Antioch in Syria where they were first called “Christians”. It was out of this ethnically mixed church that the Holy Spirit directed a new dynamic outward thrust commissioning Barnabas and Saul to preach the gospel in new areas and establish believers in those places.

The missionary spirit of the Moravians and their connection with the Evangelical Revival and John and Charles Wesley resulted in a strong missionary impulse. This impulse was specifically nurtured for followers of the Wesleys by Thomas Coke, the ardent champion of Methodist missions.

John Wesley laid a practical, theological framework that is important for Wesleyans today: the Wesleyan Quadrilateral which emphasizes the primacy of Scripture as the governor and judge of all else, the informative role of the tradition of the church, the importance of spiritual experience (the witness of the Spirit), and the contribution of reason. Within this framework of understanding, the Wesleyan experiments in practical religion have left us emphases which may be more important and relevant in the 21st century than in Wesley’s own time.¹

These emphases include the importance of religious experience.² In the postmodern world experience is highly prized. We need to emphasize the “witness of the Spirit,” the “born again” experience, and the work of the Holy Spirit in one’s life.

¹Leonard Sweet. Also see Sweet’s book, *11 Genetic Gateways to Spiritual Awakening*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

²The four emphases given here and below follow the EPIC idea: experience, participation, image driven, and connectedness or community driven. These ideas have been popularized by Leonard Sweet and others and used widely in the USA and Europe.

A second emphasis that John Wesley discovered was participation. He saw the importance of participation in a small group (band or class), in doing good works, and gathering in societies for the spiritual growth of believers. Personal accountability and responsibility for one another's spiritual lives was important. Participation precludes a spectator approach to vital religion. This emphasis is especially important to people today who sense the need for personal contact, experience, and relationship. "Hands on" is perhaps more important today than ever before. Think of the popularity of "work and witness" participation. People today desperately want to be more than spectators.

A third emphasis is image or graphics. Wesley could utilize a certain amount of symbolism: the cross, clerical garb, and so forth. But he had no movies, no video, and television, not even photographs! The 21st century is image saturated and driven. This is the MTV age. Movies have captured the attention and influence even the most conservative evangelicals and holiness people. Televisions are ubiquitous. Whole communities and nations are captivated by the images of our time. Graphics can be one of the most powerful instruments for missions in the 21st century. The Jesus Film is but one example of the power of image in missions today.

A fourth emphasis is community or connectedness. With the explosion of mega-cities, millions of people often live close to each other, but with little or no real connectedness. Community is often missing in this new urbanized world. There is a void within the lives of millions, a void that can be filled. Wesley's England was in the throws of the beginning of the industrial age and the beginning of urbanization. People flocked to the new urban centers from small villages where community had been taken for granted. Wesley seemed to understand well the need of people to connect with one another and to rebuild meaningful community. This was largely the difference between himself and George Whitefield who failed to gather his followers into meaningful communities. For Wesley, the community was largely the band, the class meeting and the societies. These provided both opportunities for participation, and connectedness

to build a real sense of belonging. It was a functioning community. The need for close community is probably much greater in the 21st century than in Wesley's day.

The approaches of missions today that take into serious account these four elements will make a strong impact for the gospel in this present century. Note that most of the fastest growing and largest churches around the world are utilizing most of these principles. The small group, cell approach to evangelism and church growth has been highly successful. Often the modern-day followers of Wesley have left this emphasis to others. The principles will work for Wesleyans today just as well as for others! Why should this good Wesleyan emphasis be left to the Pentecostals and Charismatics?

The World Mission Communication located on the campus of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary represents one of the "cutting edges" to missions. Few theological schools have the modern communication facilities and master's degree level programs that our offered on the APNTS campus. Here is an attempt to utilize the image emphasis, so especially important to this generation. Every pastor and Christian worker should receive education and training in this area to better understand and utilize the power of image communication for the gospel.

The Owens School of World Mission on the campus of APNTS has access to this modern facility specializing in broadcast and video media. This is incorporated into a unique master's degree program known as the Masters in Christian Communication with a concentration in Intercultural Communication. This 48 hour thesis program gives exposure to innovative use of mass communications studies, combined with cultural anthropology, theology of mission, cross-cultural communication and field work, and a significant supervised intercultural internship. Rounding this out is writing a relevant thesis combining communication and missions concerns.

As a denomination we Nazarenes have done a superb job of fielding hundreds of missionaries at any one time for many decades. These have mostly been career missionaries (now known as "global missionaries").

There are other organizations and denominations that may field more missionaries, but proportionately we have done very well.

However, this is a new day. The old paradigm of sending and receiving is changing dramatically. Most of the unreached peoples of the world live in countries that do not issue missionary visas! We have moved into the age of closed nations, and covert missionary activity. Tentmaking missions have become increasingly important. The ability of western nations to continue the expensive support of missionaries in the traditional ways is now in question. The major denominations have long since drastically reduced missionary support for financial and theological reasons. The trend to reduce missionary staffs is already evident in evangelical and holiness circles.

New trends for sending missionaries have been with us for some time. The short-term missionary has contributed much. These are mostly volunteers who may be college students giving a summer to missions, doctors who go for a few months or a year or two, teachers who do the same, and lay people and pastors who give a couple of weeks for work and witness projects. These do not take the place of the long term missionary, but they have been a new avenue for many to become significantly and personally involved in the work of missions.

Newer ways yet of doing missions and fielding large numbers of missionaries are already on the horizon! Many local churches in countries like Korea, Brazil, Nigeria and Peru, to name just a few, have been sponsoring missionaries at various levels—short-term, bi-vocational and full-time. Direct participation by local congregations in commissioning, sending and supporting missionaries is an important development. This reflects the Wesleyan concern for participation, and touches very well the postmodern desire for closer personal involvement. New missionary organizations are being formed in Asia, Latin America, and Africa where none existed even a few years ago. These groups are experimenting with new ways to field missionaries as well. Some of those ways include short-term missions. This can be a weekend, a few days, a few weeks or months or even a few years. Very few missionaries give a life time

exclusively to missionary work let alone to a particular field. The significance of these new groups is that they represent whole new groups of churches from the newer churches of the Third World. These are already fielding large numbers of missionaries all over the world. Many times this is done with less financial support than western mission groups have been used to. Sometimes this is because the new missionaries go to unreached ethnic groups nearby or even within their own countries. Sometimes it is because the emphasis is upon bi-vocational or tentmaking kinds of missionary work.

One of the most interesting and inspiring developments comes from the Philippine Missions Association under the leadership of Robert Lopez. By the year 2010 this organization aims to field 200,000 missionaries in up to 180 countries of the world! The primary method to accomplish this is a plan to utilize the vast Filipino diaspora—about 8,000,000.³ At least ten percent of these could well be evangelical Christians. The idea is to identify, challenge, commission, and train at least 200,000 of these people who are already working in an overseas country to understand themselves as sent missionaries who can and will function in a missionary capacity first to the their fellow countrymen in these nations, and secondly to persons native to those nations and/or to persons from other nations who are also living and working in the country. An important new book, *Scattered*, published in 2004, details the arguments for this approach. Diaspora missionary approaches are attractively under consideration in Korean, Indian, and Nigerian circles as well as Filipino. Whether this approach succeeds as well as anticipated is not so important as is the attempt to find and utilize new approaches that have good potential to work.

There are other developments as well. There is spiritual renewal and revival in places across the globe from Laos, to Brazil, to Columbia, to the Philippines to China. The phenomenal growth in urban churches, often

³See Luis Pantoja, Jr., Sadiri Joy Tira and Enoch Wan, editors, *Scattered: The Filipino Global Presence*, (Manila: LifeChange Publishing, 2004).

“international” in character in places as different as Kiev, Bogota, Amsterdam, and Manila. Some of these utilize the basic methods of Jesus with his disciples as articulated by Robert E. Coleman in *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. At least two major ministries that are now ministering to thousands each week are based upon this book and have developed an approach known as G-12 or D-12. Some characterize these methods as the Jesus method with a multiple marketing component.

Yet another phenomenon is the church planting movement that has seen almost unbelievable numbers of churches planted in various part of the world in very short time frames, i.e., 20,000 new believers and 500 new churches in a four year period, or in another place a similar four year period growing from 85 believers and three churches to 55,000 believers in 550 churches. This is a movement, which means the structural and administrative controls that most denominations and para-church organizations are used to cannot be applied. There must a a very high degree of freedom and Holy Spirit dynamic for this kind of movement to exist and work. The expectations of certain levels or finance, educated pastors, property ownership, and buildings have to be abandoned.⁴

This is the greatest day to be alive and active in the work of world evangelization! The greatest opportunities for spiritual harvest are now. The mission is the same—“make disciples of all nations.” The approaches and the paradigms may be changing. The methods may be undergoing adjustments. This is a time for bold advancement in the Name of Jesus Christ—to make Him known. It is wonderful to see the formation of the Donald Owens School of World Mission on the Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary campus here in Manila, Philippines. The school proposes to be a center for innovative and creative missionary thrust based upon a solid biblical and theological base. It is our prayer that this school will play a pivotal and role in the tremendous challenge of world evangelization in the 21st century.

⁴See David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Richmond, Virginia: International Mission Board, 2000).

OWENS SCHOOL OF WORLD MISSION

The Donald Owens School of World Mission was officially launched in September 2004. It was a unique blessing for the founder of APNTS, Dr. Donald D. Owens, General Superintendent Emeritus, to be present on September 21-23 to deliver the first lecture for the School of World Mission. “APNTS is located in the heart of urban Manila with a very diverse student body,” stated Owens. “It is an ideal place to teach missions.”

The vision for a school of world mission was born in April 2004 when APNTS celebrated its twentieth anniversary. Members of a planning session that included Dr. Owens, Dr. Donahue, Dr. Cobb, Dr. Fukue, Rev. Dave Hane and Dr. Cunningham envisioned that the Donald Owens School of World Mission would provide a venue for educating regional missionaries. Planning session participants also expressed their hope that the Donald Owens School of World Mission would help the Church of the Nazarene develop new approaches to missionary work and to the processes of discovering, developing, and deploying missionaries for the twenty-first century.

Plans for the Donald Owens School of World Mission include sponsoring lectureships and drawing in visiting professors, as well as offering summer mission institutes. It will also help to coordinate distance and extension education mission programs. Most importantly, the School of World Mission is intended to inspire passion for the mission of God.

More specifically, the planning committee envisioned that the School of World Mission would:

1. Educate regional missionaries (non-formally as well as formally);
2. Become a primary missionary training center for other prospective Nazarene missionaries;
3. Remain a place where each course is relevant to missions in the region and directly addresses the regions that APNTS serves;
4. Provide a means of procuring funds and endowments, as well as gaining visibility for the missions programs and funding lectureships and visiting professors;

5. Initiate summer “institutes” consisting of a mission track of three summer courses, possibly attracting non-Nazarene missionaries and utilizing non-Nazarene resources;

6. Foster distance and extension mission program in coordination with regional communications;

7. Enable holistic ministry and evangelism for the seminary community and interaction with districts;

8. Develop multiple internship sites;

9. Develop new missions paradigms for the twenty-first century that design new approaches to missionary work and the processes of discovering, developing, and deploying missionaries;

10. Excite a passion for the mission of God.

A by-product is that a quality mission training program at APNTS will help keep Asia-Pacific leaders serving on the Asia-Pacific Region. Dr. Robert Coleman delivered the second lecture series of the Owens School of World Mission in January.