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Table of Contents

"Short Time, or Long:" Best Practices to Turn Short-Term Missions into Long-Term

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Partnership is not a new concept in missiology (Barnes 2013; Tizon 2008, 37–94, 209–30; O'Connor 2007, 47–65). In fact, many trace its roots back to the beginning of the Christian missionary endeavor (Nissen 2004, 103, 113), and some suggest that the notion partnership in mission hails from a time before time began (George 2004, 3–5; Anastasios 2010). Partnership in mission is an idea whose time has come in a unique way with the advent of the 21st century. One potent application of this ancient missional concept is to use partnership to condition the local church's practice of short-term mission (STM). Years of reflection on STM has produced no shortage of critiques. Nor has there been a dearth of suggestions for possible corrective measures to lead to more adequate practice of STM (Priest 2008; Haynes 2018). But one suggestion that has gained momentum in recent years (Ehle 2016; Kisling 2016; Schmor 2016) is for churches to practice STM within the context of long-term relationships (either with other churches or with parachurch organizations). In grossly oversimplified terms, this approach suggests that instead of picking random locations to practice STM, church leaders can focus their investment of time, resources, and energy in a single location, producing a lasting connection to a place and a people. The argument is that this approach mitigates some of the more self-centric, touristy aspects of STM and provides a healthier platform for global engagement by local churches. This thesis is masterfully defended in the works just cited.

This paper, then will not concern itself with describing or justifying the use of partnership to condition STM. Rather, it will address the question that immediately arises once we are convinced that STMs are best practiced within the context of a long-term relationship: "how exactly should we do that?" Using original survey research supplied by churches from the US and around the world (which forms the basis of my forthcoming dissertation), I will address patterns of belief, thinking, and behavior concerning partnership that have allowed short-term trips to become more impactful and healthy by placing them within the context of long-term relationships. I will begin

with some preliminary tasks; first outlining the research methodology employed, then sparing a few remarks on how widespread these international congregational partnerships (ICPs) have become. I will then address the perennial issue of determining what constitutes a healthy expression of partnership after which I will describe how healthy existing ICPs actually are. After laying this groundwork, I will turn to the patterns of belief, thinking, and behavior that the healthiest partnerships have in common. Finally, I will close with some thoughts on how churches can set up their partnerships to give short-term engagements long-term impact.

Methodology

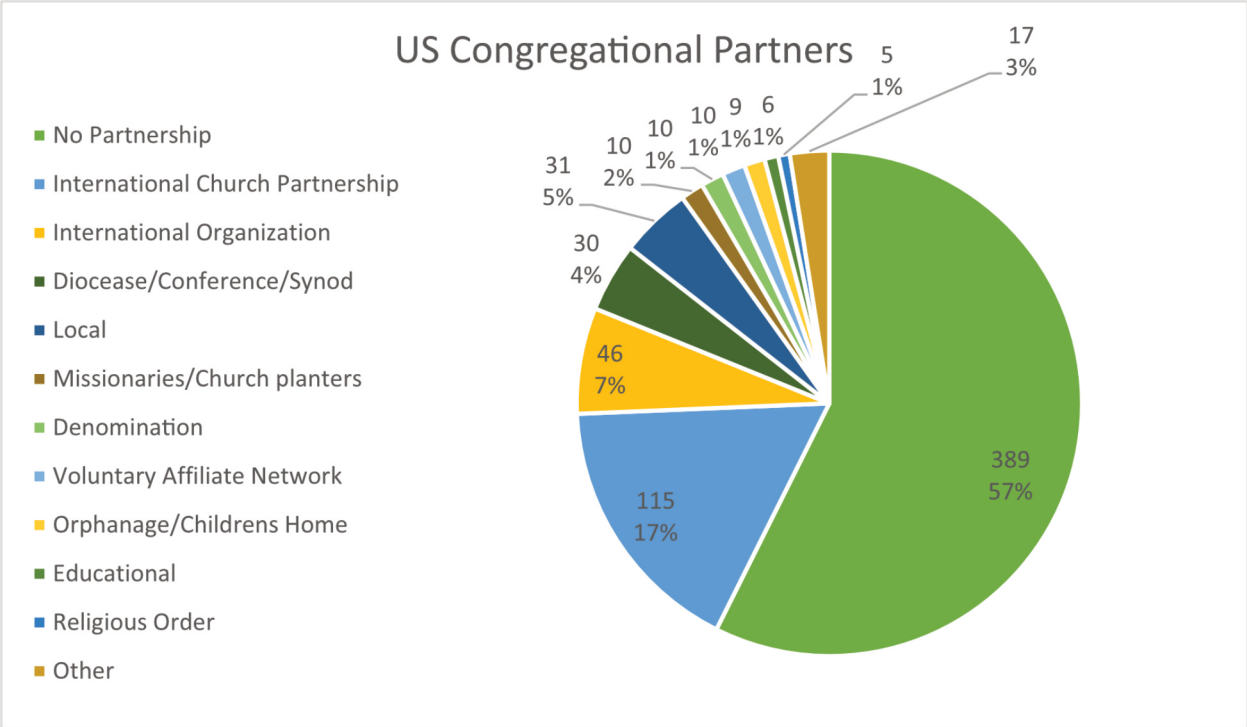
The research for this project was conceived based on the immense body of literature that has grown up around international mission partnership in the last century (the space necessary to give an adequate treatment to this literature is not conducive to a journal article, but I must say that I am deeply indebted to the following exemplars: Addicott 2005; Bakker 2013; Brown 2007; Butler 2006; Cheung 2013; Eitzen 2003; Kraakevik 1992; Kruis 2009; Lederleitner 2010; Manuel 2001; Reeves 2004; Rickett 2014; Shoemaker and Shoemaker 2011; Van Engen 2001; Wuthnow and Offutt, Stephen 2008). I noted 25 themes (some theological, some defining ideas about partnership, some structures or practices that operationalized these concepts) that were consistently mentioned in this literature as key factors in the success of an international mission partnership. I then developed a survey that measured how consistently each of these themes were practiced by a given congregation. I also developed an evaluation to include in the survey that allowed me to group the congregations based on how healthy their practice of partnership was. This allowed me to compare the average prevalence of any given theme between healthier and less healthy groups to see if the literature is right about that theme leading to better partnerships. This process involved running ANOVA and Tukey post-hoc tests to establish correlation within at least an 80% confidence interval (the vast majority of variables had a much higher confidence interval). The tests were run twice, to reduce the possibility of data entry error, using PSPP (an open-source data processing platform that can be found here: https://www.gnu.org/software/pspp/).

This survey, dubbed the Global Congregational Survey (GCS), was deployed in two phases (more information can be found at: htpps://globalchurchpartnerships.org). Phase 1 entailed developing a truly random sample of US congregations and their international partners. This was accomplished by randomly selecting eight states (one

from each of the socio-economic regions defined by the Bureau of Statistics of the US Department of Commerce). From these states, I randomly selected two counties, one urban and one rural, and secured a list of all the congregations in each of these 16 representative counties. From August 2019 to February 2020 these congregations were contacted by email and telephone to determine (1) what sort of mission partnerships they had (if any); (2) how many people regularly attended the church; and (3) if they would like to participate in the survey and invite their partners to do so as well. Phase 2 consisted of sending out online surveys to all willing participants; 169 emails were sent out with links to the surveys on surveymonkey.com. Of these, 30 were returned completed; 24 from US congregations, 6 from their international partners. Ecuador, Mexico, India, and Kenya were all represented. The next section will present information gathered during Phase 1, while the succeeding sections will summarize the findings from Phase 2.

Tracking Partnership among US Churches

Assertions about the recent increased focus on partnerships among American churches have become axiomatic of late.(Bakker 2013, 44; Lederleitner 2010, 21; Guthrie and Bonk 2002, 118–19) Of particular interest is a footnote in which Lederleitner quotes Scott Moreau's claim that churches and mission agencies claiming some kind of mission partnership have increased by 6900%. What is somewhat less clear from the existing literature is just how widespread the phenomenon has become. The first phase of the GCS provided some much-needed insight in this regard. It turns out that mission partnerships of one kind or another have become quite pervasive among American congregations. In fact, 43% of American Churches would say they have some kind of mission partner (All percentages given in this section reflect a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of +/-2.76%.). Of these, the majority partner directly with another congregation (ICPs), while most others work with a parachurch agency of some sort. Other major partners for American congregations include local (non-international) churches and organizations or diocesan partnerships handled at a level above the local church in the denominational structure. This article will deal specifically with the most prevalent form of partnership: ICPs. While there are certainly nuanced differences among all these types of partnership, there are also plenty of insights to be gleaned from a study of ICPs that will be applicable to the other types.



While a complete profile of congregations who frame their missional participation using long-term partnership is beyond the scope of this article, I will spare a few words concerning the current trends. The vast majority of churches practicing mission partnerships are denominationally unaffiliated (37% of ICPs and 21% of all other types of partnership are pursued by non-denominational congregations), followed by Baptists (12% of ICPs and 13% of all other types of partnership), Lutherans (10% of ICPs and 16% of all other types of partnership), Roman Catholics (7% of ICPs and 14% of all other types of partnership), and Methodists (3% of ICPs and 9% of all other types of partnership). Surprisingly, the majority of churches pursuing partnership are also smaller churches (weekly attendance under 500). However, when you compare the distribution of all US congregations according to size to the distribution of partnering congregations according to size, an interesting phenomenon appears. ICPs are more likely to be pursued by larger churches than other forms of partnership, while the distribution of non-ICP partnerships very closely matches the distribution of all congregations. In other words, size does not affect how likely it is that a church will create a mission partnership; but it does impact the kind of partnership they will develop.

Defining Healthy Partnership

The first thing a church has to do, if it wants to situate its STMs within a long-term partnership, is define what success will look like. A definition of "success" for ICPs can be very elusive. Indeed, each author tends to define it in slightly different ways, and I will not break with this tradition. I refrain from using "successful" when speaking of partnership because it is so problematic. The language of "success" or "achievement" has connotations that emphasize the performative dimensions of a partnership; but is less attuned to a holistic view of what makes a partnership "good." The language of "flourishing" or "health" is certainly inclusive of performance, without being unnecessarily exclusive of other dimensions of goodness in partnerships. That is why I choose to employ it throughout this article. In this project, the definition of a flourishing partnership coheres around three points. Healthy partnerships: (1) succeed in what they attempt to accomplish, (2) create positive feelings between partners, and (3) shape the local church's understanding of itself and its place in the world. Each of these measures is a crucial dimension of a healthy, flourishing partnership. Similar to a marriage, congregational partnerships are at their best when the people in them feel that the relationship is not stale or stagnant, but instead trust that the relationship is able to do what they need it to. They flourish when they are happy being in a relationship with each other; when being partnered creates more positive feelings than negative ones. And partnerships reach their true *telos* when the relationship has a transformative impact on the identity and purpose of those involved. A healthy partnership does not exist for its own sake, but to cause the partners to become something they could not be on their own. These three dimensions of a flourishing partnership (performative, affective, and transformative, respectively) form the basis for the evaluation in this study.

In order to facilitate analysis, I've placed congregations into three groups based on how they scored in the evaluation. Group 1 consists of congregations that scored in the 80th percentile or higher (4.616 or higher). Group 2 consists of congregations that ranked between the 70th and 50th percentile in the evaluation (between 4.616 and 4.33). Since this paper focuses on distinctions between the most and least healthy congregational partnerships, Group 2 will not be dealt with very much. Group 3 is made up of congregations that scored in the 30th percentile or lower (4.17 or less) with respect to overall partnership health. If there is an aspect of belief, thought, or behavior concerning partnership that is consistently practiced by Group 1 but not by Group 3, it can be assumed that this aspect is strongly correlated to partnership health.

The evaluative section of the GCS presented some interesting results. First, 75% of the respondents to the GCS scored a 4 or better (out of 5) in the evaluative section, indicating that they have moderately to extremely healthy partnerships. In fact, only one partnership strays down toward what might be characterized as an unhealthy partnership. I am tempted to suggest, as this dataset certainly does, that the majority of churches are abnormally successful in international partnerships. However, I suspect there is something else going on here. After all, only 19 of the 29 individual respondents who replied to the GCS also filled out the evaluative section. This means that roughly a third of the congregations sampled declined to comment on the state of their partnership. It may be that those respondents would score in a similar distribution to those that filled out the evaluation; but I would find that highly unlikely.

In the conversations I had with some participants, I noticed that most were terribly self-conscious about their partnerships. Many did not want to fill out a section if they felt they were not going to give the "right" answers. And they were quite loath to paint their partnership, and especially their partners, in an unfavorable light. Despite constant reassurance to the contrary, many people felt their partnership had to "measure up" to some unspoken expectation in order to participate. I have had many discussions with colleagues in the partnership field who have had similar experiences. One colleague, who works in a denominational partnership office, said she finds many congregations unwilling to even disclose that they have international sister churches, because they do not want to face scrutiny from the denominational office if they feel they are not performing adequately. While it seems that American churches are increasingly interested in pursuing international partnerships, they are also very unsure whether they are doing it right. And they are not really willing to talk about their partnerships unless they are sure. So, the finding that 75% of congregations are experiencing healthy partnerships is likely a reflection of greater willingness to discuss a partnership with outsiders on the part of people who are confident about their partnerships. Maybe most partnerships are just abnormally successful. But given the factors just mentioned, it is likely that many of them simply decline to report negative outcomes rather than say something that might reflect poorly on their partner or on themselves.

In the coming sections, I will unpack how theological, conceptual, and practical considerations explain the difference in health between Groups 1 and 3. Of course, there are other possible explanations for the difference in outcomes. National origin or denominational affiliation did not have a significant impact on how healthy a partnership became. The two demographic factors that seemed to have the greatest

impact were (1) the population density where the American partner was located and (2) the size of the congregation. Both of these factors cohere around the issue of access to resources: human, financial, and material.

While access to resources generally seems to have a significant impact on the overall health of a partnership, it would be disingenuous (not to mention profoundly unhelpful) to simply say that the best thing a church can do to ensure a healthy partnership is to be large and/or urban. Congregations do not usually have much of a say in those matters. It may be more helpful to suggest that congregations who lack access to material and human resources would find their partnerships enriched by finding creative access to resources. This might entail partnering with better resourced mediating institutions (such as denominational or extra-ecclesial missionary agencies rather than with international congregations directly). Under-resourced congregations engaged in international partnerships might also benefit from sharing resources with each other: creating multi-lateral partnerships, forming co-ops, etc. in order to broaden their resource base. One definite advantage that better resourced congregations have is that they are often working with a larger and more globally connected staff. It is far easier to nurture a healthy international partnership when there are missions pastors on staff and a large and highly organized pool of volunteer labor. When the health of the partnership is incumbent upon a one or two person staff, it is harder to allocate the attention needed to create better outcomes. In this case, working with a consultant or sharing a missions staff among multiple congregations might help under-resourced churches improve the overall health of their partnerships.

Beliefs About Healthy Partnerships

So, access to resources is clearly connected to partnership health. The next question a church conditioning its STM's by long-term commitments will need to answer is what they actually believe about partnership and its relation to God, the Church, and Christian life. In this section I will look at certain ways churches theologize concerning their partnerships that also contribute to overall partnership health. The GCS clearly indicates that, while a given theological approach may not guarantee a healthy partnership, it does set a ceiling for how healthy a partnership is likely to become. A robust, biblically grounded theology does not mean your partnership will always succeed, but a lack of one is a clear indication that it will be troubled. An examination of how much and what kind of theologizing about partnership is most effective has yielded three main findings.

First, theology should be done robustly, or not at all. A fully fleshed out theology of partnership has much more impact than one that touches on only two or three ideas. Likewise, the more (and more varied) biblical passages that frame the practice of partnership, the healthier the partnership may become. Second, theology that specifically addresses collaborative ministry and relationships among Christians is demonstrably more effective than a theology that only addresses general missiological principles. Mission theology is certainly important for churches engaging in international partnership. It provides a kind of baseline understanding that is unquestionably significant; but it is also insufficient on its own. Accordingly, churches who are able to move past simply motivating mission and draw on rich theological understandings of the unity of the body of Christ, the pattern of the self-giving love of the Triune God, and the shared calling of all Christians to work together with God in his mission find themselves operating in more meaningful and healthy relationships with their sister churches. Third, grounding theological precepts in biblical examples has a profound effect on the health of a partnership. Scripture is a powerful motivator and it is very effective in allowing congregations to imbue their collaborative ministries with ultimate significance. Relating to the biblical story is how congregations see their theology impact their partnerships. These theological factors may not guarantee a healthy partnership. But they do provide a foundation that suggests how healthy a partnering ministry is likely to become.

I recently planted a tulip tree in my back yard. There are lots of practical factors that will determine how that tree will grow in the coming decades: rain patterns, fertilization, ice storms, pests. But if I had not planted it in healthy, slightly acidic soil; it would not have a chance to flourish, even in the best of circumstances. Theology functions in a similar fashion for partnerships. It is the soil in which these precious relationships are planted. There are a myriad of practices, structures, and ideas that will inform how healthy a partnership becomes. Those will all be examined in the coming sections. But the theological richness and depth in which those partnerships are located sets the upper limits for how well the best executed of collaborative ministries may develop.

Concepts of Healthy Partnerships

Congregations seeking to situate their practice of STM in long-term relationships also need a clear idea of what constitutes an adequate understanding “partnership.” The GCS provided tremendous insights into how congregations in healthy partnerships

conceptualize the nature of partnership. The following concepts were significant factors in the kind of partnership that developed:

(1) Relational Priority – Partnership means putting the relationship ahead of things like programs.
(2) Shared Calling – Partners are called together to something they could not be/do on their own.
(3) Mutual Valuation – Resources (material and spiritual) are clearly defined and mutually valued.
(4) Space for "Others" – A combination of radical Hospitality and cultural competence.
(5) Non-Dependence – Focus on Sustainability/Capacity Building
(6) Interdependence – Bi-directional flows of resources, people, and ideas.

These six ideas are all practiced more consistently among healthier partnerships than among less healthy ones (some more so than others). But these concepts are far more powerful when they are combined with each other than when measured on their own. Shared Calling, Mutual Valuation, and Space for Others constitute the driving forces in the healthiest conceptual frameworks; while Relational Priority catalyzes each of the other concepts, deepening their overall impact. Additionally, partnerships are healthier when their conceptual framework moves beyond seeking to mitigate dependency and seeks to foster genuine reliance on one another.

This has some important implications for congregational partnerships, and for the field of mission partnerships in general, going forward. First, we need to move beyond a siloed approach to definitional concepts. Ideas like radical hospitality and a sense of being called by God to something greater are not as significant on their own as they are when placed into a wider constellation of ideas about what "true partnership" means. The definition of partnership is one of the major stumbling blocks to its study and implementation in the field of missiology. And one of the reasons for this is that partnership's definition is irreducibly complex. Perhaps one of the reasons that a definition of a "true partnership" remains elusive is that we keep trying to define it in discrete terms when it really is a combination of essential ideas. Attempts to define partnership in terms of a single *sine qua non* will only perpetuate the current state of affairs. Going forward, we must resist the urge to essentialize partnership into one or two concepts because, as the GCS has made abundantly clear, partnership exists as a complex web of definitional notions.

The GCS also draws attention to the fact that interdependent international relationships between congregations are incredibly hard to find. While there is a laudable focus among respondents to the GCS on building the capacities of international partners, there remains a clear sense that the Non-American congregation needs the contributions of their American sister far more than the American partner needs what their international sister provides (Adler and Offutt, Stephen 2017). The prominence of Mutual Valuation in this chapter makes it very clear that American congregations value the resources brought to them by their sister churches. But they also think they can get those resources without their partners. When it comes to the contributions American congregations make to their global partners, there is a sense that those are far more essential. The question, then becomes: what it would take for American congregations to rely on their partners as much as their partners rely on them? Exactly what that would look like, remains an open question. As is the question of whether American congregations are actually willing to attempt something in their own neighborhood that requires resources from outside their own congregation. Looking forward, I can see no more pressing issue for global congregational partnerships than the question of how to convince American congregations of the necessity of relying on the rest of the global Body of Christ.

Practices of Healthy Partnerships

Finally, a church looking to practice STM within long-term partnerships needs to understand the kinds of actions and structures that can set them up for success. Reflection on the results of the GCS provides a clear understanding of the operation of healthy ICPs. A model of operational structures would include three pillars: expectation, communication, and revision. Commitment to a high degree of clarity concerning what partners can expect from each other, who is responsible for which duties, and how communication and documentation should flow between partners is paramount. A comparison between Groups 1 and 3 makes it abundantly clear that any deviation from being as clear as possible on these points leads to inconsistent or negative outcomes. Churches in ICPs also should structure their partnerships to include a mechanism for reviewing and revising their processes and expectations. Consistent feedback, even when it is negative, is essential for a healthy organism. Just imagine the state of a person whose brain never received any information about how the body was performing and consequently never changed course. Such a person would probably not last more than a few minutes. Should we expect any different from a partnership that is unable to evaluate its own state or how well it is functioning?

A model of operational practices would have to place leadership buy-in and exercises that build trust in a league of their own. Without enthusiastic support from church leadership, partnerships tend to have severely limited impact. Additionally, healthy partnerships tend to be the ones that began building trust early in the development of the relationship. Trust is something that builds slowly over time, as partners demonstrate goodwill and the capacity to deliver on their promises. So, creating many opportunities to do this, even on a very small scale, early on in the development of a partnership can have an enormous effect on partnership health down the line. These two factors (buy-in and trust-building) are clearly the most impactful practices that partners can employ when they want to improve the quality of their partnerships. Without these, there can be little hope of enjoying a healthy relationship.

Next, regular exchange of hospitality, commitment to work through problems, and culturally appropriate accountability form a nucleus of highly recommended practices. There is some evidence that a congregation can have a healthy partnership without them; but when they are consistently employed these practices definitely lead to healthier results. Exchange of hospitality builds social capital,(Brown 2007) creating a sense of belonging to one another and a narrative of belonging with which both host and guest can strongly identify. It is one thing to say, "we are all one body of Christ" it is another to say, "Geoff and Emilio are part of my family." Additionally, hospitality often creates a situation in which the guest is vulnerable and needs the host to provide for needs the guest is accustomed to providing for themselves. This can itself be a powerful trust-building exercise. Commitment to work through problems is about making the decision to remain in the relationship, come what may, before trouble actually arises. It comes from a conviction that the relationship itself is valuable and not to be jettisoned lightly. This suggests that partners should be honest with themselves and each other about the likelihood of the relationship being troubled from time to time and affirm to one another that this will not mean the end of the relationship. Failure to discuss this or signaling that you may not be in it for the long haul, does a huge disservice to the partnership. Finally, emphasizing culturally appropriate accountability demonstrates a measure of cultural intelligence. Cultural Intelligence refers to an understanding of one's own culture and a concurrent understanding of the validity of other culturally defined beliefs and practices (Livermore and Clark 2009). This willingness to suspend judgement helps reduce friction in one of the most sensitive areas for ICPs: money.

Organizational penetration also seems highly advisable. Not all congregations pursue partnership in a way that integrates their partnership into other ministries of the church. Some prefer to silo it off as a kind of self-contained ministry program. But some churches integrate aspects of their partnerships into multiple ministries of the church such as weekly worship, children's or youth programming, and small groups. Some rely on their sister church to help them become better at outreach to certain segments of their own neighborhood (refugee populations, for example). Granted, this is not as prevalent as other factors. But when it is present to **any** degree, those partnerships are always in Group 1. It is still possible to have a healthy partnership without organizational penetration. But when the partnership interfaces with multiple facets of congregational life, the relationship is always the healthier for it.

Conclusions – Short Time Becoming Long

Partnership has become a major factor in the way American congregations interface with the global church. As STMs continue to be the most pervasive mode of engagement, many churches seek to condition their practice of mission by situating their trips within a long-term relationship. This allows them to build expertise and investment in a specific area, and also (ideally) gives non-US congregations a greater say in the process by serving as partners in mission rather than objects of mission. Of course, the attainment of this ideal is still more elusive than many of us would like. By surveying churches who are pursuing this type of international missional engagement, and gauging how healthy their relationships really are, this article has provided insight into what kinds of ideas and practices can make that ideal a bit less elusive.

Having, or creatively sourcing, access to human, financial, and material resources is clearly a factor in making partnerships as healthy as possible. But it is also important to anchor the pursuit of partnership in theologically substantive themes; ones that go beyond general missiological interest and locate partnership at the center of faith. Themes like the mutual life of the Trinity and our calling to a life of self-giving love give a theological framework to partnership that infuse it with ultimate significance. And expressing that framework using biblical passages and metaphors grants congregants a more tangible and more easily imitated example of the meaning of partnership than when we leave these concepts at the level of abstraction. It is one thing to talk about covenantal faithfulness, but it seems much more weighty to talk about David and Johnathan putting their kingdoms on the line for one another, or about Jesus hanging on a cross even when his people had abandoned him.

Healthy partnerships also have clarity about what they mean when they talk about "partnership." They rely on definitional concepts like a shared sense of calling, placing equal value on each partner's contribution, and an openness to who their partners are and how they do things. They place more emphasis on building a relationship than attaining a goal. And, at their very best, they not only seek to build capacity and sustainability; they emphasize that both partners should give and receive people, ideas, and resources.

Finally, churches who frame their STMs within long-term partnerships follow a consistent pattern in their organizational structures and operational practices. They are transparent about their expectations of what the partnership will achieve and who will be responsible for making that happen. They provide clear lines of communication and documentation so that communication can flow freely between partners. And they have regular opportunities for meaningful feedback so they can evaluate and adjust how they do things as changes and problems arise. They also take every opportunity to build trust between partners and they have leadership that is strongly committed to the partnership. They open their homes and churches to one another often, and they resist the urge to insist that their culturally-defined method of accountability must hold sway. They are realistic about the likelihood of difficulty and commit themselves beforehand to work though problems in the relationship. And they integrate their international relationships with as much of the daily life of the church as possible.

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Long-term Impact through Short-term Missions: Key Components for Meaningful

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Missiologists and missions practitioners have long expressed mixed sentiments about the effectiveness of short-term mission trips. Do these trips have any meaningful long-term impact on either the participants or the host communities? Despite the temporary reduction of trips due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 1.5 to 2 million U.S. Christians will, as the pandemic subsides, likely resume their annual participation in short-term international mission work at a cost of about $2 billion per year. Many missiologists believe that U.S. Christians who desire to help those living in extreme poverty should invest their resources in different ways (Ver Beek 2006, 478). Some would like for Christians to go back to the former days when denominations trained and funded all full-time, long-term missionaries. Such a nostalgic return to the former approach to missions is unlikely to happen. Nearly all U.S. Christian denominations are in serious numerical and financial decline, forcing these denominations to scale back significantly on their funding of long-term missionaries. Moreover, given the expenses involved in training, medical insurance, retirement, travel, and living expenses, funding long-term missionaries is not necessarily the most cost-effective way of doing international mission work.

Despite the lack of appealing alternatives, some missiologists still believe that short-term mission trips should cease. Nevertheless, the Pandora's box of short-term missions (STM) has been opened, and evidently no one has the capability of closing it no matter how much they dislike STM trips. Robert Schreiter labels this movement as the "Third Wave" of missions created by the ease of travel, the desire of Christians to be directly involved, and the availability of resources to make short-term missions happen (Schreiter 2015, 6-7). This Third Wave follows the two earlier waves of missions: the First Wave of missions (1450 to 1750) began with missionaries who accompanied European explorers to new lands, and the Second Wave of missions (1800 to 1914) arose with the founding of missionary societies and orders during the era of colonialism

(Schreiter 2015, 6). With the Third Wave of missions (1980s to the present), thousands of churches and mission-sending organizations have bypassed fading denominational missionary societies and boards to become directly involved in Christian mission work both locally and globally.

Given that short-term missions will likely remain a significant component of the Christian missions landscape, how can STM leaders avoid the potential pitfalls often associated with visiting short-term mission teams: cultural insensitivity, paternalism, misguided projects, dependency issues, cost inefficiency, and potentially temporary effects. Short-term missions come in a variety of shapes and sizes; some are much better than others. A significant number of churches and Christian organizations seek to be a witness to all the world by sending teams out to as many different countries and people groups as possible. Such an approach covers a large amount of territory but has little depth. Relationships without deep roots tend to fade quickly, resulting in largely short-term effects that can indeed be detrimental to the host communities. While these pitfalls may be the case for many short-term mission trips, others seem to have a much different result. Some trips have led to long-term transformation for those in the host community as well as the trip participants, resulting in deep, long-lasting, crosscultural partnerships.

The purpose here is to highlight three such partnerships developed through short-term missions that have resulted in long-term mutual transformation and development. In so doing, these partnerships offer insights about the ways that faith-based short-term missions can become a reflection of meaningful crosscultural Christian fellowship, true *koinonia*. They embody the "healthy reciprocal relationships" that DJ Schuetze and Phil Steiner claim are "critical to successful short-term mission trips" (Schuetze and Steiner 2018, 1). These faith-based international partnerships reflect a different approach that seeks to have groups focus on one specific community over an extended period of time. This process, sometimes called "twinning," works to build relationships that will inform the types of mission objectives as well as the methods for fulfilling these objectives. Twinning relationships move beyond quick fixes to fixing the problems, from charity to development (Cosgrove 2008, 376). These faith-based partnerships may be formed between two congregations or between one congregation and a Christian non-profit organization or between two Christian non-profit organizations which are typically supported by one or more churches as well as individual Christians. Typically, one of these partners tends to have greater material wealth and technical expertise which they seek to share in dignifying and empowering ways with the other partner (Cosgrove 2008, 375). The three sets of twins for this study

are Christian non-profit partnerships with close connections to churches for their support and implementation of the objectives for development. The first is Adventures in Life Ministry and its partnership with Rancho Tunillo in Oaxaca, Mexico. The second partnership is Mission Waco Mission World and Rise and Stand Up with Power (Leve Kanpe Avek Pouvwa) in Ferrier, Haiti. The third is Straw to Bread and its partnership with Bethlehem Home in the Nyakach Plateau in rural Kenya.

The members in these three crosscultural partnerships recognize that poverty is larger and more pervasive than what is visible on the surface. The goer-guests recognize their own shortcomings and areas of impoverishment, seeking to become learners even as they are teachers in other areas. The Potter's House Association in Guatemala has developed a model for conceptualizing poverty that proves instructive for evaluating crosscultural partnerships. This Guatemalan ministry divides poverty into eight different spheres. Physical poverty manifests itself in easily visible ways and often serves as the starting point for mission objectives: meeting the basic needs of clean water, food, shelter, and medical care. Intellectual poverty refers to lack of access to formal education, but it also applies to the poverty of knowledge and understanding on the part of the goer-guests. Economic poverty highlights the need for sustainable businesses and a system that enables individuals and families to earn a living. Other spheres of impoverishment include spiritual poverty, a poverty of the will, poverty of a support network, poverty of affection, and poverty of civic involvement (Potter's House 2020). While the Potter's House Association in Guatemala is focusing on communities within its borders, these same forms of poverty manifest themselves in affluent countries as well though their presence often lies deeper below the surface.

Case Study 1: Adventures in Life Ministry

Adventures in Life Ministry (AIL) exists to make known the transforming power of the Gospel through short-term mission in Mexico. This is done through holistic ministry partnerships designed to reach the heart of Mexico. One of the key areas of its work is in Oaxaca. They partner with Rancho Tunillo, a small sustainable agricultural co-op that exists to provide help, support, and expertise in the primarily indigenous communities that surround Oaxaca City. This partnership formed in 2010. Dave Miller, the director of AIL, has worked hard to develop lasting relationships with those in Oaxaca, especially pastors. Through these deep, mutual friendships, he has learned about the greatest areas of need in the community and has learned from the local leadership what works best to minister to those in the region.

Over the years, they have worked together to provide clean water through filtration systems, basic medical care through local clinics, and needed supplies during emergency situations. They emphasize sustainability and training. Rancho Tunillo serves as a training center for subsistence farmers to come and "learn how to increase their crop yields, giving them better outcomes within the world they live" (Miller 2019). Together, they build and distribute micro-greenhouses to help local families have greater access to healthy food. During the pandemic, local church leaders like Pastor Chablé in Oaxaca partnered with AIL to distribute basic food supplies and chickens to help meet an immediate need for protein for isolated families, but they also distributed incubators to help these families create an ongoing source of food and income. Moreover these crosscultural partners provide vocational training in a variety of areas to assist the participants in finding gainful employment. Because of the well-established relationships, AIL was able to provide immediate care in December 2014 when riots broke out in the Oaxaca region, resulting in burned vehicles and businesses along with serious injuries to several AIL friends. Functioning as a caring extended family, supporters of AIL provided funds for medical care and replacement of vehicles and business losses. "Elisa was one of those injured by the rioters. After the violence and when she had healed, she was elected mayor of the Eloxochitlán. Now she's a member of the Oaxacan State Congress and a strong advocate for women's rights. She told me [Dave Miller] that AIL had been a huge part of the healing and recovery of her town" (Miller 2019). These partners are making plans for the future by developing a local presence of AIL through the establishment of Adventuras en la Vida Mexico with Asaf Vera, the son of a local pastor, serving as its Executive Director (Miller 2020).

Case Study 2: Mission Waco World Mission and Rise Up and Stand with Power

These are two Christian non-profit organizations supported primarily by churches and individuals. The two ministries have been in partnership for 30 years. Mission Waco Mission World's programs are built around three objectives: 1) empowering the poor and marginalized through relationship-based, holistic programs, 2) mobilizing middle-class Christians toward "hands-on" involvement, and 3) addressing systemic issues which disempower the poor (Dorrell 2019). Through its entire history, Mission Waco Mission World staff and volunteers have worked hard to balance "hands-on" relationships with the poor, local churches, and the community. The call to bring good news to the poor has been a driving force since its first day, and the desire to create a

biblical base for empowering compassion is still at its core. Rise and Stand Up with Power in Ferrier, Haiti, employs seven staff members. Janet Dorrell directs the international program for Mission Waco Mission World, and Dr. Nirla Nelson and Guy St. Vil oversee the work of Rise and Stand Up with Power. Their programs are focused on empowerment and addressing systemic issues that disempower the poor.

Through the 30 years of partnership, these two organizations have worked together to improve community and family well-being through several measures. They have drilled and maintained 400 water wells to provide clean, potable water. Together, they help provide education for 350 children. Each of these sponsored children receives individual medical care from Dr. Nirla Nelson, a Haitian medical doctor and daughter of the original leader of the Haitian parachurch organization. Together, they worked to meet another need in this Haitian community, the need for clean light. In November 2015, they supplied 750 solar-powered LED lights for a five-kilometer area around and in Ferrier. Dorrell explains, "Clean light is important because the oil lamps they were using were filling up their lungs with black carbon" (Dorrell 2016). The two organizations are also working to empower women through microcredit and job training. Eighty women have completed the program, and 140 others are now enrolled. One of the joint goals for these crosscultural partners is to remove the "invisibility cloak," to let them know that, like Hagar in the wilderness, God sees them and cares for them (Dorrell 2017, cf. Gen. 16:13). Dorrell summarizes the transformation in this way:

> The women who finish our training continue to meet weekly for encouragement in their lives. These women have dignity that changes the way they see themselves and the way their community sees them. They repair their own homes, put locks on their doors, pay their debts and put their own children in school. Their health has changed because they have capacity for point-of-use filters in their homes and can provide more meals per week for their families. They also have a leadership role in the community. Empowerment and dignity go together. We have seen that the women who are empowered do not stay in violent relationships. These women also speak up for one another. Their community of women relationships gives them courage and encouragement (Dorrell 2019).

Case Study 3: Straw to Bread and Bethlehem Home

Straw to Bread is a U.S.-based Christian non-profit organization whose goal is to collaborate with Bethlehem Home (BH), a Kenyan parachurch organization, located among the Luo people living on the Nyakach Plateau in rural Kenya. Habil Ogolla, the director of Bethlehem Home, and Lisa Baker, the director of Straw to Bread, are working together to improve health and education, economic empowerment, access to clean water, and food security for the Luo people. These two leaders have been collaborating for nearly 20 years, deriving much of their support through churches and individuals, both in the U.S. and in Kenya. Although they have communicated through various means, short-term mission trips have provided the greatest opportunities for Baker and her team members to develop relationships with the Luo people and experience personal transformation in the process (Straw to Bread 2020).

As with the other two partnerships mentioned above, the ministry in Kenya focuses on key areas for the health, development, and empowerment of the community. Straw to Bread and Bethlehem Home have collaborated to drill a centralized well that has the capacity to provide up to 500 gallons of fresh, pure water per hour. They also supplied hundreds of 250-liter rainwater-harvesting systems at the homes of the poorest residents of the Plateau, providing water during frequent droughts. Straw to Bread also works with Bethlehem Home to help the members of the community implement sustainable farming methods that maximize their crop yields, resulting in greater food security. Baker emphasizes the collaboration in this process: "At the center of our work is the philosophy that any successful farming project must be part of a continuing conversation with BH member farmers. These projects always occur as a partnership between Bethlehem Home and Straw to Bread" (Baker 2019). They have also prioritized education and medical care, resulting in a thriving school and hospital. Dr. Don Ogolla, son of the host partner earned his M.D. from the University of Nairobi and administers much of the medical care, gladly serving his home community even though he could earn more money in one of the larger cities. To work toward greater sustainability, the two ministries support microbusinesses, but they have also worked together to build a mortuary which will create a significant source of community income for years into the future (Baker 2020).

Discussion

All three of these partnerships have common traits that have resulted in life-giving transformation on the part of everyone involved. First, they have listened and learned

from one another, and the host partners have taken the lead in setting the agenda for priorities for *what* needs to be done in their communities and *how* these objectives should be accomplished. Unlike many short-term mission trip groups who insist on controlling the agenda for the trip, the goer-guests in these partnerships have listened to their host partners and followed their lead. For example, all three host partners identified access to clean water as a critical need for their communities; however, the means by which they accomplished this goal differed according to their contexts. What works best in one location does not necessarily work best in another. The U.S. partners provided technological expertise and material resources, but the host partners informed them what would work best in their specific communities. One size does not fit all. Water catchment containers and a centralized, deep well in one community, a network of water-filtration systems for another community, and a multitude of relatively shallow wells in the third community. Each host partner desired improvement in and greater access to education, but the type of education and method of providing that education varied from vocational training camps to sponsorships for students to attend local schools to the establishment of a new school with free education for orphans, supported in part by tuition-paying students whose parents desire to send their children to such a high quality school. Business development and training varied from culinary arts and photography to the making of straw baskets and sewing sanitation pads to building and running a mortuary.

The effectiveness of each endeavor has depended greatly on truly listening to the host partners and then working together with the resources and expertise of all parties involved. In so doing, these three U.S. partners appropriately addressed one of the most important concerns expressed by STM host partners: they desire to have significant oversight of the agenda for their community and local ministry (Horton et. al. 2013, 72-73). They desire for their voice to be heard in order to fully collaborate with each other in ministry and development. As one exasperated Haitian ministry leader bemoaned after the 2010 earthquake, "Oh, Americans—they would be almost perfect people except for one thing: if they would listen!" (Stafford 2010, 20). These three U.S. partners did listen and continue to listen to their international partners.

A second key component for the effectiveness of these partnerships is the investment of time for the purpose of building trusted relationships. The development within each of these communities has taken years of faithful commitment by each partner in the relationship. Miller has been working with his colleagues in Oaxaca for ten years, Baker has been involved with the work of Bethlehem Home in Kenya for 20 years, and Dorrell has been working in Haiti with her longtime friends for 30 years. From

the beginning, their intention has been long-term partnership. The short-term trips serve to facilitate long-term relationships, not simply a series of projects. As Eugene Cho wisely observed, “Without genuine relationships with the poor, we rob them of their dignity, and they become mere projects. And God didn't intend for anyone to become our projects” (quoted in Schuetze and Steiner 2018, 1).

Third, these partners have worked toward sustainability in terms of material resources. The U.S. partners are quite aware of the dangers of dependency. They have read about “toxic charity” (Lupton 2011). They have also read about “rich Christians in an age of hunger” and the biblical imperative for materially wealthy Christians to be generous towards those living in physical poverty (Sider 1997, 2015; Rowell 2006). They understand the necessity of “helping without hurting (Corbett and Fikkert 2009). Their goal is to share resources in such a way that their generosity does not debilitate but rather empowers those in the host community. Initial costs can be insurmountable for those living in financial poverty, but resourceful members of the host community are quite capable of maintaining and developing a wisely run endeavor whether that be water supply, a poultry enterprise, a sewing business, a greenhouse, a school, or even a mortuary. The end goal, however, is not complete independence. Both groups benefit from and desire to be in relationship with one another, leaning on the other as needed. In the words of Mark Elliott, "What is needed between crippling dependence and crippling independence is a biblically based mutual interdependence" (Elliott 2020, 85). These partnerships reflect the image of the body of Christ, one body with many different members. All members contribute according to their gifts, knowledge, skills, and abilities for the good of the entire body.

Fourth, they also work toward sustainability in terms of leadership. Adventures in Life has worked for years with Pastor Chablé and Pastor Vera. Now a new generation is getting involved with the leadership responsibilities. Pastor Vera's son, Asaf Vera, is leading the newly formed partner organization, Adventuras en la Vida Mexico (Miller 2020). Miller has recruited and trained others in the U.S. who will be able to keep the U.S. side of the ministry healthy and productive. The Haitian partner organization for Mission Waco Mission World has grown its leadership staff and now has its own Haitian medical doctor. Bethlehem Home now has its own Kenyan doctor and many other leadership staff. With support from their U.S. partners, members of the host communities have become medical doctors, pharmacists, teachers, as well as workers in other professions, using their education and training to build up their home communities.

Fifth, the members of the U.S. mission trip teams enter the host communities as learners in need of transformation. The team leaders shape the trips in ways that encourage their group members to be humble and seek to learn from those in the host community. Mission Waco Mission World, for example, refers to its trips as "exposure trips" to help their members understand from the beginning that they are not going to Haiti to rescue the Haitians. Rather, they are going to gain exposure to how God is already at work in Haiti and to learn how they can partner with the Haitians, serving in ways that are beneficial but also growing in their faith that leads to transformation in their lives. The team members realize that they, too, are broken in different ways, that they likewise experience certain forms of poverty. Our false sense of security in our relatively high material wealth can lead to spiritual poverty (cf. Luke 18:18-23). Many of these U.S. team members also suffer from isolation and loneliness because of the high level of individualism in the U.S. As we enlarge our understanding of poverty, we realize that we are all impoverished in one way or another. We need to learn from one another and lean on each other. As the percentage of Christians and the vitality of Christianity declines in Europe and North America, we should recognize that we have much to learn from Christians in the global South and East whose vitality and many examples of deep spiritual devotion have much to teach. This experience of "reverse missions" requires humility, but the lessons may invigorate our lukewarm faith (Burgess 2020, 249-253). My own study of students who participate in mission trips demonstrates that such participation has a tendency to lower student levels of ethnocentrism and materialism; moreover, these STM experiences often have a transformative influence on their lives and sense of vocational calling (Horton et. al. 2011, 58-62).

Sixth, both partners acknowledge and accept that they will make mistakes and experience failures, but they do not allow these failures to keep them from continuing to work together. Even with training, wisdom, collaboration, and hard work, problems arise from time to time. Team members occasionally say or do something culturally inappropriate, moral failures damage the community, government regulations cause delays and increased costs, droughts wipe out newly planted orchards, earthquakes and riots disrupt businesses, and pandemics bring a halt to planned visits. In short, life happens with all of its good and bad and disruptions. Commitment to the partnership, however, has kept each of these groups collaborating with their partners as they attempt to minister to one another and their respective communities.

Seventh, these groups understand the mixed cultural repercussions of past missionary interactions, but these partnerships do not become immobilized by past

mistakes. Growing concern for indigenous cultures have led some to accuse past missionaries of cultural imperialism. These critics believe that missionaries imported Western culture as part of the gospel while simultaneously stripping the indigenous culture away from those who converted to Christianity. Indeed, some missionaries were guilty of this, forcing converts to adopt Western clothing styles, music, and social etiquette. Some Christians have reacted to these past mistakes by discouraging mission work and any interference with those in other cultures. Lamin Sanneh, a Gambian Muslim who converted to Christianity and later became a professor of World Christianity at Yale Divinity School, referred to such a reaction as the "Western guilt complex about missions" (Sanneh 1987, 331). Sanneh warned Christians not to become immobilized by such guilt. Rather, they need to recognize that past missionaries also played an important role in preserving indigenous cultures and that they can continue to have a preserving cultural role today (Sanneh 1987, 333-34). The better response then is to learn from past mistakes and interact responsibly and appropriately with those of other cultures. Each of the U.S. partners in these case studies have worked diligently to respect and learn from the cultural values and customs of their host communities. They eat the local food, adapt to the local customs and etiquette, and grow in their appreciation of values that differ from their birth culture.

Conclusion

While some argue that short-term missions are ineffective with little positive lasting impact on the participants and negative or inefficient impact on the host community, these three examples of long-term mutual partnerships based on deep relationship provide evidence of a different narrative. The examination of these three partnerships—these three sets of twins—provides valuable lessons. Some key themes and values include the meaningfulness of long-term relationships along with the value associated with a holistic approach, sustainability, local empowerment, host-community input and leadership, mutual learning, reciprocity, involvement and interdependence of individuals, churches, and organizations. Long-term partnerships developed through short-term missions include one network of entities collaborating with another network of entities. It doesn't take a village; it takes two villages.

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Building a Biblical Foundation for Evangelism among Justice-Oriented Gen Z

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Introduction

Many Generation Z mission team members are asking: "When did it become unacceptable for evangelicals to seek justice?" Meanwhile, many ministry leaders are asking: "When did it become objectionable to verbally proclaim the gospel?" A false dichotomy often emerges between evangelism and social justice in mission circles (especially white, Western circles) that is further accentuated by today's generational differences.

How can mission leaders help Christian emerging adults gain a biblically-integrated response to human need that fully reflects God's nature and mission? How can we prepare them for short-term mission outreach among whole persons who experience deep spiritual concerns along with physical and social hardship? This article discusses Gen Z traits, advice for leaders, and ideas for teaching Scripture's evangelism mandate among Gen Z with passages that integrate word and deed and link to the Bible's grand narrative.

Others have written at length on the evangelical debate concerning the relationship between evangelism and social justice (see Ott et al. 2010, 137-161). For our purposes here, it's helpful to remember that those who place priority on evangelism *and* those who advocate for holistic/integral mission often agree that evangelism and social action are more effective when joined together as a sign of God's multidimensional kingdom. Indeed, when Jesus described the greatest commandments (Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28), he emphasized the significance of both the gospel and creation mandates of redemption, both the vertical and horizontal realms.

Gen Z Overview

A summary of Gen Z as a whole will give an orientation to the context Gen Z believers navigate within their generation. Some would call these Christian emerging adults "resilient disciples" (Kinnaman and Matlock 2019, 32-33) or "engaged Christian young adults" (Barna Group 2020, 40) who share traits with their generational peers, yet differ on matters of faith.

The Marist College Mindset List says that for college sophomores the Tech Big Four–Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Google–are to them what the Big Three automakers were to their grandparents. Gen Zers have probably all been "gaslighted" or "ghosted," and their world has always had smartwatches and a Catholic Pope who visits a mosque (McBride, 2019).

Social scientists describe Gen Z as recession marked, Wi-Fi enabled, multi-racial (the most diverse U.S. generation to date), sexually fluid, growing older younger (GOY), globally connected, and raised in a variety of Gen X parenting styles (snowplow to free-range). They traverse a post-Christian, post-truth world even while 78% still believe in God (White 2017, 49). Sociologist Steven Bird, who studied 18,000 students at 46 Christian colleges, explains that both Gen Z and Millennials have been raised in a fundamentally different digital and media-saturated society than older generations, and yet there are technology-related differences between them (Bird 2020b). Gen Z is more private about posting online content than the Millennial generation and prefers to learn alone (Elmore and McPeak 2019, 27).

Gen Zers perceive the world as dangerous, avoid risk, fear an uncertain future, and pursue security. They are motivated by making a difference and seeking career stability (Seemiller and Grace 2016, 15-16, 35-57). Gen Zers are entrepreneurial and nearly half expect to work for themselves. They desire individual freedom (White 2017, 48) and 51% say happiness is their ultimate life goal (InterVarsity 2018).

Gen Zers are open-minded, inclusive, and compassionate. Many are concerned about social justice, poverty, and racism (Seemiller and Grace 2016, 8-10, 37-40). They look very much like Millennials on key social and policy issues: they are progressive and pro-government and most see the U.S.'s increasing ethnic diversity as positive. "Gen Zers and Millennials are about equally likely [roughly two-thirds] to say that blacks are treated less fairly than whites in [the U.S.]…compared with about half of Gen Xers and Boomers." They are also on track to be the best-educated generation yet (Pew Research Center 2020).

Gen Z lives in the world previous generations constructed—they did not invent the smartphone or create TikTok. As we lament Gen Z's perceived flaws, we must remember that each generation has lamentable shortcomings. Like cultures, generations have good, neutral, and evil traits and all are in need of God's redemption and transformation. Just as cultural groups are good at sensing an ethnocentric spirit in cultural outsiders, Gen Zers are skilled at detecting a critical spirit in authority figures that will limit those leaders' influence.

The sky is not falling regarding emerging adult views on evangelism. A recent Barna finding received much attention: among Millennial Christians (who share many faith-related traits with Gen Z Christians) 47% think it is wrong to "share one's beliefs with a person of another faith in hopes that the person will come to share one's beliefs." And yet the same study also found that young "practicing Christians feel as strongly as other generations that being a witness is part of faith" (96%), with 73% feeling confident in their ability to share their faith compared with lower rates for older generations (Richardson 2019). Additionally "young adults who remain active in the faith are, statistically speaking, just as eager as older Christians to share [their faith]" (Barna Group 2018, 71) and "when given a chance to imagine themselves serving in specific overseas missionary roles" (business leader, entrepreneur, artist, church trainer), half say "yes, I can see that" (Barna Group 2020, 75-76).

Leading Gen Z

Although they are digital natives, Gen Zers report that they prefer face-to-face interaction over online contact at high rates (Seemiller and Grace 2019, 61). Several sources agree: Gen Z wants humble, teachable, and authentic leaders who relate in personal ways. As we walk alongside Gen Z, we must seek to be relationally effective, active listeners, and responsive to Gen Z learning styles.

Gen Zers are natural researchers with vast amounts of information available at their fingertips. They find it distasteful when leaders are convinced they know best. Yet, the continuous stimuli Gen Zers consume can bring bewilderment, difficulty focusing and forming convictions, and little time for reflection. It's wise for mentors to provide starting points for Gen Z self-directed learning, and to aid information discovery, evaluation, and life application (InterVarsity 2018).

Gen Zers need persistent messages of hope; there are voices in every direction saying they are not enough and that their life is not as exciting as the well-crafted social

media "brand" of their peers. They feel pressure to appear happy at every turn online, which does not pair well with authentic connection on spiritual matters (Barna Group 2018, 40). This leads, in part, to increased depression, anxiety, and a volatile self-image (Elmore and McPeak 2019, 47-48; Twenge 2018, 104). We should affirm Gen Z's commitment to make a difference in the world, and instill confidence that God will help them develop (2 Cor. 3:5). Due to inexperience with risk and disappointment, mentors should assure Gen Z that failure is part of life and prepare them to lean on Christ and his body when they make mistakes.

As leaders attempt to build Gen Z conviction for pursuing gospel proclamation, we can avoid a "download expertise" method, asking instead what they think and feel about evangelism. Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say I am?" (Matt. 16:15) and often responded to questions with questions. We can follow Jesus' approach by using open-ended questions to uncover Gen Z attitudes about evangelism, and to demonstrate interest in their perceptions and help them reflect. We should also seek collaborative or reciprocal mentoring rather than top-down, and let Gen Z offer critique and teach us what it's like to be young today (InterVarsity 2018; Kinnaman and Matlock 2019 140).

Because they want to respect the beliefs of others, Gen Z Christians may not feel the same compulsion to share their faith as previous generations (InterVarsity 2018). They may fear being labeled as extreme or shamed for perceived intolerance. Leaders need to grasp the intense pressure Gen Zers feel to be inclusive and accepting. We can help them express their anxiety and address it empathetically from a biblical perspective.

Gen Z Christians may not understand the gospel fully. The sheer volume of input they absorb may leave them with multiple points of unevaluated confusion. *It's crucial to help them develop personal convictions about the gospel before focusing on how to share it.* Mentors can sit down with them, turn off phones, listen, and be prepared to explain the basics (InterVarsity 2018). We can avoid reducing the gospel to forgiveness of personal sins, emphasizing that all "need to hear not just that 'God loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life,' but also to hear (and see) that God loves the world and has a wonderful plan for its future…[that] God has begun [his] redemptive work within history" (Seversen and Richardson 2014, 36). Leaders can direct Gen Z to God's invitation to join his work within Christian community, and to a vision for participation in the *missio Dei*.

It's important to be transparent and admit to young adults that many in older generations struggle with evangelism just as they do. Leaders can show grace toward Gen Z, seek to laugh with them and lighten their load rather than add to it with weighty "duty" language. We can remember:

> We cannot give to others what we do not have in our own lives. Imitation is often what helps bring real change. And information alone is often a very poor catalyst for transformation. Too many of us in the academy... and in other Christian contexts, model evangelism far too little to have any significant impact in catalyzing evangelistic engagement (Richardson 2014, 27).

Because Gen Z has been exposed to cultural stereotypes of invasive evangelism and mission association with colonialism, our word choice matters. While many are evangelistically inclined, they are concerned about mission ethics; they may think of evangelism as propagandistic proselytism. Barna discovered that young adults find the word "convert" objectionable. They also dislike "winning souls," "making disciples," and "evangelism." To a lesser degree they dislike "mission work" and "missions." Very few object to "sharing faith." They prefer "making a difference," "following one's calling," and "helping to save lives" (Barna Group 2020, 28-29, 33-35). Leaders can underline God as the one who convicts, converts, and transforms, and expose Gen Z to less baggage-laden biblical expressions concerning evangelism.

How can Gen Z's aversion to insensitive proclamation help us? Will we allow God to use it to refine our evangelism practices among those of other faiths and in post-Christendom societies where past Western conceptions of effective evangelism are less useful? I believe that if we engage and leverage Gen Z's entrepreneurial spirit and mentor emerging adults effectively, they can help us announce kingdom good news at home and abroad in fresh ways without compromising core truths.

Ideas for Teaching Witness in Word and Deed

While biblical literacy among Gen Z is low, the Great Commission passages may feel cliché; Gen Zers often favor passages about social action. Barna "found that young Christians with a well-rounded, theologically rich understanding of the gospel are more likely to have a resilient, lasting faith, but also that such an understanding is uncommon among young believers" (Barna Group 2020, 97-98). I think it's helpful to use less-familiar passages connected to salvation history when teaching about the

church's mission of word and deed. We can inspire Gen Zers with the Bible's overarching story of which they are a part to foster enthusiasm for witness. This approach examines passages that resonate due to a social action component and nurtures greater biblical literacy. It also helps them internalize a narrative identity based on the larger biblical story (Setran 2020, 94). Since Gen Z desires ownership of their learning, it's important to facilitate interactive reflection on the passages discussed below.

The Temple Cleansing Event

Outside of Jesus' death and resurrection narratives, there are just five events the Gospel writers share in common. Four of them are Jesus' baptism by John; Jesus' feeding of the 5000; Peter's profession of faith in Christ; and Jesus' anointing by a sinful woman. Each helps develop Christ's biography as the Jewish Messiah in significant ways. The fifth event is Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his clearing of the temple courts marketplace, his "temple cleansing" (Bessenecker 2014, 14). Why is the temple cleansing among the few events described by all the gospels? Perhaps this is due to its rich theological connections to the Bible's metanarrative.

Mark 11 begins with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the Jewish Passover season. Just five days later he would be crucified as the final Passover Lamb, who at great cost to himself broke down the sin barrier to God and the barriers among us in which some are privileged and others excluded. In v. 11, "Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve." It's instructive that Jesus stopped to consider the situation before acting. The next day:

> Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the money changers' tables and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers'" (Mark 11:15-17).

Jesus entered "the epicenter of Judean power" (Bessenecker 2014, 15); it was jam-packed and the temple was at the center of it all. It was a deeply significant time of worship like Easter would be for us. Many diaspora Jews had come for Passover, preparing to remember God's salvation from slavery and his great mercy in bringing the

Israelites out of Egypt, even though they were a "stiff-necked people" (Ex. 33:3; Deut. 9:13). Note the links to Old Testament (OT) salvation history and Jesus as a new deliverer.

People were buying, selling, and exchanging money in the temple courts because they arrived with different currencies than the temple tax required and purchased their sacrificial animals in Jerusalem rather than bring them long distances. Since the text mentions those selling doves, the sacrifice of the poor, we know poor people were present. Imagine it: there are wall-to-wall people and merchants, wings are flapping, cattle are stomping and bellowing, sheep are bleating, people are stepping delicately around manure, and the smell is foul. Could we pray in this setting? Hardly. We get distracted today when a cell phone beeps.

Barriers to Worship for Outsiders. Historical sources tell us this market in previous years had been set up on the Mount of Olives. But at this time the high priest allowed the merchants to set up in the temple courts, almost certainly the Court of Gentiles, and likely the Court of Women. These two courts were man-made additions to the original blueprints of the tabernacle and of Solomon's temple, neither of which corralled women and Gentiles who wanted to worship Yahweh into separate courts away from pious male Jews (Bessenecker 2014, 16). Judah's Babylonian exile had cured her of idolatry, but exclusivism had grown.

Jewish leaders posted signs for Gentiles on the Gentile Court wall saying, "do not enter further upon penalty of death." Clearly, this was not God's design. By the time Herod built the first-century temple, Jewish authorities had added barriers, building fences around who was in and out of the privileged group based on ethnicity and gender. They also made worship very difficult for non-Jews and women by filling their courts with bustling commerce.

Most of Christ's Church is Gentile, an extension of the outsiders who came to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem. Can you imagine if church authorities today required seekers to worship in a courtyard, and then at Easter created such a raucous market in the courtyard that prayer was virtually impossible? Then imagine those seekers, with many poor among them, charged outrageous prices. There is nothing wrong with commerce, but from extra-biblical historians, we know the merchants raked in great profits on exchange fees and over-priced animals among their captive audience. According to Josephus and these historians, the high priest and religious elites received a large cut (Bessenecker 2014, 17).

This event illustrates Jesus' concern for both *evangelism and justice*. Perhaps that is also why it appears in all four gospels. The justice in view is what Jesus intended in Matt. 23:23 when he confronted the Jewish leaders with: "[you] have neglected the weightier matters of the law: *justice* and mercy and faithfulness." It is justice that reveals God's character, demonstrates our love for him and neighbor, and denounces evil and oppression. It is the social action intended when the National Association of Evangelicals was founded in 1942 with an aim "to recapture the dual commitment to social concerns and the gospel," which the founders believed "were being neglected by both the fundamentalists and the social gospel proponents" (Hammond 2019, 6).

Jesus' Concern for People's Spiritual State. Through the temple cleansing passage we can help Gen Z discover the religious elites' apathy for those alienated from God and how this event illustrates Jesus' concern for people's ability to pray and worship. The authorities prioritized their greed and comfortable life over the spiritual hunger of Gentile outsiders who sought God's mercy. This was a serious insult to God, who planned to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham's seed (Gen. 12:1-3), and who told Malachi at the end of the prophetic record that his name would be worshipped in every place among the nations (Mal. 1:11).

Jesus was soon to become the Suffering Servant and Lamb who takes away the sins of the *world,* of the privileged and the marginalized. He quoted Isaiah 56 regarding the temple's purpose, which differed radically from the merchandising and barriers the Jewish leaders had established. Verses 6-7 say: "And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord…these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer…for my house will be called a house of prayer *for all nations*" (cf. Is. 2:2-4; 66:18-24).

One thousand years earlier scores of Israelites collaborated in a seven-year project to build the first temple. Its completion could have been the apex of Israel's nationalistic pride after all David and Solomon had accomplished. Yet Solomon prayed at the temple dedication in 1 Kings 8:41-43:

> As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name— *for they will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm*—when they come and pray toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, *so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you*.

Solomon longed for and expected our Gentile ancestors to worship Yahweh unhindered. He asked God to answer their prayers! Verse 42 says they will come because they will hear of God's great name, meaning his *character*, and mighty hand, meaning his *saving activity*, implying word of mouth sharing. Why did Solomon want God to answer their prayers? So that *all the peoples may know his name and fear him*.

When Jesus referenced Isaiah 56, which connects to 1 Kings 8, he showed that proclamation about God's nature (name) and salvation (mighty hand) matters profoundly to him. We can help Gen Z uncover this event's focus on the spiritual needs of outsiders and its rich OT links to the Pentateuch (Abrahamic covenant, Passover/deliverance from slavery), historical books (temple construction/dedication), and prophetic literature (Is. 56; Mal. 1).

Jesus' Concern for Justice. The greed on display in the temple cleansing event brought enormous profits to the powerful at the expense of the poor. When Jesus said, "You have made my house 'a den of robbers,'" he quoted Jeremiah's pronouncement at the temple gates about Israel's false religion:

> If you really change your ways…and *deal with each other justly*, if you *do not oppress* the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you *do not follow other gods* to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place…for ever and ever (Jer. 7:5-7).

Then in Jeremiah 7:11 God asked, "Has this house…become a den of robbers to you?" The Hebrew for "den of robbers" suggests violent thieves in a cave counting their loot, just as the first-century religious leaders did centuries later with the temple as their safe hideout. Thus, in Jesus' reference to Jeremiah 7, we find a robust concern for justice in the prophet's mention of just dealings, oppression of the vulnerable, and greed among thieves. Jesus' concern for right relationship with God also appears in Jeremiah's statement about following other gods.

Jesus Lamented When Both Were Obstructed. Jesus' two concerns in the temple cleansing were proclamation and justice. When these were hindered, Jesus lamented with the prophets; we can sense his heavy and frustrated heart in Mark 11. He grieved Israel's failure to be Yahweh's servant of his integrated mission in the world, knowing their failure would result in the temple's destruction 40 years later. Jesus lamented just as he lamented upon entering Jerusalem in Luke's account (19:41-44).

When Jesus encountered great spiritual and social poverty and grave human sin, he did not shut down in cynicism, nor retreat in separatism, nor start a political uprising through nationalism; rather, he lamented. *Many Gen Z believers understand lament*. They struggle with anxiety and depression and are haunted by the world's pain. They may find Jesus' anguish surprising and validating.

Many who teach this passage portray Jesus as angry since he overturned tables and made a whip of cords (John 2:15). They may use the event as a basis for human righteous anger.[1] It is agreed among scholars that Jesus used the whip to clear animals, not people, out of the courts. A potential hazard with focusing on anger is that some may suggest Christ's followers have indiscriminate authority to take a figurative whip and lash away when they do not think enough is being done in proclamation or justice efforts. But, the temple belonged to Jesus; he called it "my house." Believers do not own the church, nor are they sinless. As people who make up God's house, all generations must relate and minister carefully with humility as Christ's sinful but redeemed servants.

Jesus Also Acted. Jesus was expressive and assertive; he felt and responded. Not just here, but throughout the gospels this pattern is evident. He cleared out the merchants, judged the oppression that benefited the privileged, and opened space for all to hear about God and worship. He was not passive, nor vicious. He perfectly displayed his longing for access to good news and justice that fully reveal his multidimensional kingdom. Jesus marvelously combined the use of his *mind* by considering the situation the night before, his *heart* in lament and motivation, and his *will* in action. How striking it would be if his church and our mission teams consistently followed this order. Jesus modeled engaging his whole person in a holistic response.

Believers who are "evangelism champions and social justice advocates live in same house but different rooms" (Richards 2018). Together they make up God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:19-22), but they may populate different generations, attend different conferences, teach or take different courses, perhaps read the Bible selectively, or eye the other group suspiciously. They are often tempted to compare the best of their own group (or generation) to the worst of the other.

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[1] Luke 19:41 says Jesus wept over Jerusalem just before he cleared the temple, indicating his great sorrow on this day. While Jesus' actions in the temple courts could be interpreted as rising from anger, the texts (Mt. 21:12-17; Mk. 11:15-19; Lk.19:45-48; Jn. 2:13-16) do not describe him as angry. Perhaps overturning tables and clearing merchants/animals was the most practical way to clear a large, crowded area. I find it plausible that sorrow was Jesus' leading emotion based on Luke 19:41-44, especially since in v. 44 Jesus references the future destruction of Jerusalem's buildings (including the temple). If other interpreters conclude Jesus' leading emotion was anger in the temple cleansing, it remains problematic to derive from the passage a basis for righteous human anger that involves physical or symbolic severity.

And Jesus still laments. We can teach Gen Z that when we unnecessarily divide kingdom good news and kingdom action, we grieve him…and our true enemy, Satan, rejoices. Emerging adults may need help seeing that even in the crushing weight of global physical and social need, our King is Christ, not a social justice agenda. Such an agenda can become an ultimate pursuit, and when threatened, may breed un-Christlike suspicion or division.

The marginalized outsider like Jerusalem's first-century Gentile, the displaced refugee, or the one trafficked needs justice that brings safety and freedom. She also needs a relationship with a loving Savior, and inclusion in a compassionate faith community to heal from trauma, find true hope and equality, and discover new purpose in God's mission. She needs the beautiful vertical and horizontal reconciliation our Lord offers; she needs a biblically-integrated kingdom that fully reflects our King and his salvation community.

Jesus' Description of His Purpose

Another passage that links to the Bible's metanarrative is Jesus' description of his purpose in Luke 4:16-21. Jesus went to Nazareth and on the Sabbath in the synagogue, the scroll of Isaiah was handed to him. He turned to Isaiah 61 and read:

> The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor…He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus quoted another of Isaiah's prophecies that described his purpose to proclaim and liberate. The verbs show Jesus was anointed by the Spirit and sent to proclaim several blessings—good news, freedom for captives, sight for the blind, and the year of the Lord's favor, a reference to the Year of Jubilee and an announcement of salvation. Jesus said he had come to do much Spirit-enabled proclaiming among the most vulnerable, the very ones Gen Z might want to serve mainly in deed but not in word. In Luke 4:25-27, Jesus also described God's integrated OT care for Gentiles—the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian—to indicate his purpose to include Gentiles in his kingdom's spiritual and earthly provision.

Examination of this passage with Gen Z will provide insight into the Mosaic covenant's Year of Jubilee that points to Christ and God's grace, two significant OT narratives about God's holistic mission among Gentiles, and proclamation among those in physical and social hardship. Here Jesus highlighted evangelism and concern for the oppressed, and described outreach that included cultural outsiders in Jubilee grace.

Summaries of Jesus' Activity and Instructions to Disciples

Several times Jesus' ministry was summarized by Matthew and Luke with three words: *teaching, proclaiming, and healing*. Matt. 4:23 says, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people." Matthew and Luke describe a similar pattern in Matt. 9:35 and Luke 9:11. In addition, when Peter spoke about Jesus to Cornelius' household, he referenced the *preaching* of good news and that Jesus "went about *doing good* and *healing*" (Acts 10:36-38).

Jesus also instructed his disciples to focus on teaching, proclaiming, and healing in Matt. 10:7-8; Luke 9:2, 6; and Luke 10:8-9, the same chapters where Jesus discusses finding persons of peace and being sent as sheep among wolves. These passages also point to the church age and eschatological aspects of the Bible's grand story in Matt. 10:15, 17-31 and Luke 10:18-20. These summaries of Jesus' activities along with his instructions to his disciples can help young justice advocates grasp that Jesus, the apostles, and the historical church engaged the whole person in ministry, including people's minds and hearts through teaching and proclaiming even when it risked potential persecution.

The Lord's Prayer

Due to familiarity, Matt. 6:9-10 may seem unremarkable to Christian young adults. However, the first two requests of the Lord's Prayer may be the strongest sign in all of Jesus' teaching of his desire for word and deed integration. Exploring these verses with Gen Z after a time of worship may make them especially poignant.

With "hallowed be your name" Jesus taught his followers to ask God to ignite reverence for his name. It is a request in the original language for God to reveal the good news of his greatness so that people everywhere will separate and exalt his name above every other pursuit. Jesus taught us to plead: "Father, lift up…and reveal Your name to

the people of the earth…cause the people of the earth to know and adore you!" Jesus wanted more and more people to enjoy the blessing of knowing and exalting their Creator and Savior above all else (Winter and Hawthorne 2009, 59). With Gen Z we can praise God someone shared the gospel *with us* so that we can enjoy God today. Together we can ask: Who needs to hear it *from us* so they can worship him tomorrow?

People languish in this world's kingdoms amid hardship, oppression, and violence just as they did throughout the biblical narrative. With "thy kingdom come, thy will be done" Jesus invited us to cry out for and participate with him in bringing his reign on earth. In his heavenly kingdom under his rule, which is described in many OT and NT passages, everyone is in relationship with God, all are protected, there is no violence, pain, barrier, greed, or corrupt system.

The phrase "on earth as it is in heaven" connects to both petitions and shows Jesus' desire for God's name to be known, and his will to be done everywhere. The Lord's Prayer is an integrated mission prayer! Leaders can impart new meaning on this familiar prayer to Gen Z, and inspire them to plead with God daily on behalf of people across the street and across the globe who experience spiritual and physical/social poverty. Barna recommends teaching young adults to pray because they "are far less likely than older adults to say that praying specifically for missions is in their future." Gen Z may need pastoral teaching on prayer's importance and mentoring on how to actually pray (Barna Group 2020, 92).

Early Church Word and Deed Ministry

What about the early church? Did they do better than the Jewish leaders in Mark 11? Gen Zers likely think of the early church positively but imprecisely. A few passages in Acts may help them grasp important specifics. In Acts 3, a man who was lame asked Peter and John for money; they healed him instead and he ran into the temple praising God. Then Peter in Acts 3:11-26…was content to let his actions speak louder than words. NO! Peter launched into a sermon and used *many words to boldly proclaim Christ* as the source of power that heals, to confront sin directly, call for repentance, and plead with the crowd to put their faith in Christ. The sermon contains direct references to Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. Acts 3 points to integration in the earliest days of the apostles' ministry and reliance on scripture's metanarrative in proclamation.

In Acts 6:1-7 young adults will be encouraged by how early church leaders listened to minority voices on a social issue, did not tell them their experience was invalid or

only perceived, corrected an injustice among poor Hellenistic widows, all while upholding the ministry of the word. In the process they prevented what could have become a significant cultural divide in the church. The outcome in v. 7 was that "the word of God spread…and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." The church quickly became multiethnic and multi-class, comprised of elite priests, widows from a cultural minority, and a Gentile convert to Judaism named Nicolas (v. 5), who was among the seven Hellenists chosen to lead a justice ministry. This illustrates that God's kingdom community is meant to be inclusive and responsive to minority voices. It connects to God's concern for vulnerable groups in the Mosaic law and prophetic literature that include widows and sojourners. And yes, the early church did better than the Jewish leaders. May we equip Gen Z to follow in their footsteps!

In Acts 7:2-53 and Acts 8:4-8, 12-14, 26-40 we observe that Stephen and Philip, those tasked with social outreach in Acts 6, also became powerful evangelists whose messages referenced OT salvation history. They were justice ministers who also proclaimed good news grounded in the Bible's grand narrative. These men provide important character studies for Gen Z. They reveal that spoken proclamation only or justice activity alone is rarely enough to make sense to seekers and hurting people who need to trust the credibility of the messenger and of the message. They also show that those involved in justice work knew the Bible's story well and were able to ground the good news of salvation in God's work throughout history.

Conclusion

We all need to "speak to the hell that is to come, and address the hell that is now" (Richards 2018). If we miss either, Jesus laments. Transformed people go hand in hand with transforming social outreach. "People live in a series of integrated relationships; it is therefore indicative of a false anthropology and sociology to divorce the spiritual or the personal sphere from the material and the social. The church begins to be missionary not through its universal proclamation of the gospel, but through the universality of the gospel it proclaims" (Bosch 1991, 10). Separating evangelism and justice is like asking: Should I choose my heart or my lungs? Both work in unison simultaneously in our bodies. Within Christ's body we can help Gen Z offer words and deeds anchored in the fullness of God's transcendent kingdom rather than detached evangelism or social justice framed only by immediate needs. Together we can become an undivided sign of God's kingdom.

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Diaspora Missiology and Mid-Term Missions: An Action Plan

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Introduction

The concept of "mid-term missions," a ministry assignment lasting from a few months to a couple of years, has been around for quite some time, but the demand for such mission opportunities continues. Mission agencies hope that some of the mid-termers they send out will come back as career missionaries. But most of the time this hope is not realized. At the same time, a growing number of unreached people groups can be found in diaspora pockets throughout North America. Many churches have a burden to reach out to the newcomers but often are not well equipped to connect with these diverse people groups.

This paper will present a possible action plan for creating dynamic partnerships between mission agencies and North American churches, using mid-term missions as a platform to effectively reach the unreached who live among us. This paper was originally written and presented in 2014. Some of the material has been updated. In addition, COVID-19 has changed the face of short-term and mid-term missions. The paper needs to be understood in this context. But the underlying premise of mission agencies and churches cooperating in order to employ former mid-term and long-term missionaries as channels to reach diaspora peoples in North America remains valid.

Diaspora: Accessible but Out of Reach

Guilt became my primary emotion whenever I went to my neighborhood coffee shop in metro Detroit and passed through the clusters of men sitting outside smoking cigarettes and sipping espresso. They were there almost every day, shooting the breeze before starting their workday. As I walked past, I couldn't understand a thing they were saying; they were speaking Albanian. As recent immigrants to America from Albania and Kosovo and other Albanian-speaking countries, they had found each other and developed their own ethnic Albanian community.

As a Christian and a missionary, I wanted to connect with these men. The mission agency I served with had a team of evangelists and church planters engaged in Albanian ministry in southern Europe, but here was a cluster of men from that same people group just blocks from our mission headquarters. They were easily within reach of the church and the gospel—at least it seemed like they *should* be. But efforts to make a connection while they were drinking their coffee only resulted in empty stares. Their morning coffee clique was clearly a closed group; outsiders weren't welcome. And so I walked past and felt guilty.

A church just a few blocks away had an ESL program, and other churches in the area had similar outreaches. But these men didn't seem interested in learning more English or developing friendships with Americans. They were accessible—at least physically, if not linguistically or culturally—but they continued to be just as unreached as their relatives in the Balkans. And ten years later, none of them had ever attended the ESL program at the church (L. Speight, email message to author, February 4, 2014).

I didn't realize it at the time, but as I discovered more about diaspora groups, I learned that it is not uncommon for certain groups of immigrants to create their own tightly knit culture within the United States, maintaining their own language and traditions while resisting integration into their new host culture.

What might have happened if someone who had spent a few years overseas learning Albanian language and culture had showed up at my local coffee shop just to "hang out"? Perhaps these men who weren't interested in learning English or American culture would be more responsive to someone who had studied *their* language and culture. Such a person could engage these men on their terms instead of on ours. Isn't that the basis of a sound missiological outreach? When a missionary moves halfway around the world to take the gospel to a particular people group, the first emphasis is on learning the language and the culture. Going to another country expecting its people to be able to speak the missionary's language and relate to the missionary's culture would be an exercise in futility. Why should it be any different when the people group we want to reach is only a few blocks away instead of on another continent?

Diaspora Missions and the Local Church

Payne (2012) points out that for the past several decades many of the world's least-reached peoples have been migrating in ever-increasing numbers to Western nations, including the US and Canada. Out of the estimated 272 million international migrants

worldwide (as of 2019), an estimated 40 to 50 million live in North America. From 2000 to 2010 the increase of migrant populations was expected to be the highest in North America, at 24%. During that same time period the US took in 8 million new immigrants—the most of any host country—for a total migrant population of 43 million people, making up 13.5% of the US population. And in 2005, among countries with a population of at least 20 million, Canada had the second highest proportion of migrants at 19%.

While these totals and percentages are staggering, even more staggering is the number of unreached people groups (UPGs) included in these statistics. According to research Payne (2012) cites from the Global Research Department of the International Mission Board, there are 361 UPGs represented in the US, with another 180 groups present in Canada. While not all these UPGs are migrant populations, the numbers of unreached peoples coming to North America from around the world—often from countries that are closed to the open spread of the Gospel—can't be ignored. Payne calls on the North American church to take notice and make the most of this opportunity to engage locally in diaspora missions, while bemoaning the fact that most evangelicals—including churches, denominations, and mission agencies—have been slow to respond.

For mission agencies, the slow response may be rooted in the centuries-old paradigm of missions: Missionaries go from "here" to "there." The culture of traditional missions emphasizes *where* we serve rather than *who* we serve. For the entire history of many mission agencies, their whole strategy has been sending missionaries to a particular location to initiate ministry and plant churches. For those agencies to embrace the call to diaspora missions within their home "sending" country, their whole paradigm needs to change. Instead of thinking in terms of sending missionaries to *Albania*, they need to think in terms of sending missionaries to *Albanians*—wherever they are—even if that means here in North America.

Payne (2012) shares a case study of one such outreach to the Albanian diaspora. After spending five years living in Albania learning the language and culture, a missionary returned to the US to plant three Albanian churches in the greater New York area. While this missionary continues to travel to Albania and Kosovo, his focus is on reaching Albanians rather than Albania. According to various census reports, only about one-third of the world's ethnic Albanians live in Albania (Faith 2017). Certainly if "the majority of Albanians don't live in Albania [then] missionaries must adjust their worldview to reflect contemporary realities" (Payne 2012, 121). And while this change of perspective is slow in coming, there are signs of change. As of summer, 2020, SEND

International had six different diaspora teams in five different cities in the US. The mission agency Pioneers has people working with migrants from Islamic backgrounds at a major US university. Other agencies are also beginning to see this as a new opportunity.

But it isn't just missionaries or mission agencies who will need to embrace this new way of thinking and adjust their worldview. Churches, particularly independent missionary-supporting churches, will also need to make changes. Typically, missionaries who are initially assigned to a stateside role or who return from a foreign location to work in a domestic location have an extremely difficult time maintaining support. Those whose supporting churches funded them at a sufficient level while they were serving out of the country often find their support reduced or eliminated when they move back to serve in North America. If the new reality is that diaspora missions gives us an opportunity to connect with unreached people groups in our own backyard, then church policies regarding financial support for stateside missionaries engaged full-time in reaching these groups need to be redesigned to reflect that reality.

In addition to recognizing the new reality of local diaspora missions, we must also keep in mind the reality that most North American Christians are not equipped for effective cross-cultural engagement. In a presentation on current trends in missions, Camp states that one thing many churches want mission agencies to provide for them is "guidance and assistance in local cross-cultural outreach" (2010, 2).

While churches in North America increasingly recognize the need and opportunity to engage diaspora populations in their communities, often their efforts are limited to offering ESL or citizenship classes.

> When the peoples of the world migrate into our neighborhoods, it's an invitation from God. Some might serve them by helping them get their documentation in order. Others might start an English as a Second Language program. Others can simply provide hospitality (Borthwick 2012, 43).

These churches should be applauded for their heart for ministry and desire to reach those who have never heard the Gospel. Unfortunately, those efforts may not be enough. And in some cases, they might even be detrimental.

What these ministries may inadvertently communicate is "let us help you become like us—learn to talk like us, dress like us, and be good American citizens like us—then

you'll be able to worship our God like us." There is an underlying assumption that these "foreigners" want to assimilate into American life. And with such an assumption there is a danger that

> some Christians in their practice of diaspora missions still manifest the kind of cultural superiority that should be anathema in the body of Christ. They demand assimilation to the host society, prefer the role of benefactor to partner, and have no patience for contextualization (Lorance 2011, 271).

Such an assumption comes naturally to the American way of thinking. In previous years high school civics classes taught us that American society was a "melting pot" where multiple cultures blended to make something new and unique. For the most part, previous generations of immigrants wanted to quickly integrate with their new culture and be known as "American." In contrast, immigrants today

> are coming in even greater numbers, but they are not becoming *American*. They are maintaining their language, their foods, their culture, their religion; they are not pledging "allegiance to the flag of the United States of America." They are changing the face of America (Pirolo 2013, *x*).

Whether they intend to or not, when American churches take this "assimilation" approach in reaching local diaspora they come perilously close to replicating the errors of the Judaizers within the early church. While there were significant moral and theological issues involved in the Judaizers' dispute with Paul, much of their concern revolved around issues of culture. One of the accusations raised against Paul was that he taught "all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our *customs*" (Acts 21:21 [NIV], emphasis added). When Paul confronted Peter in Antioch he asked why Peter would "force Gentiles to follow Jewish *customs*" (Gal. 2:14, emphasis added). The Hebraic Jewish Christians were saying that to become part of the church, the Gentiles and Hellenistic Jews must first become cultural Jews—eating like them, following their traditions, and so on. In other words, "first become a good Jew; then you can become a Christian."

While offering ESL or citizenship classes can be key elements of diaspora missions, if such methods are the *only* ones churches employ in reaching out to a local diaspora their message may be perceived as saying, "First become a good American; then you can become a Christian." The American church needs to be careful not to communicate to

migrant populations that they must learn *our* language, adopt *our* citizenship, become able to function in *our* culture and worship in *our* churches, before they can become Christians. That approach is akin to that taken by the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, inviting the nations to "come to us"; but the New Testament model enjoins us to go to *them* and meet them within their linguistic and cultural milieu.

But beyond the expectation that immigrants will want to assimilate into the host culture, other factors might motivate the American church to adopt a "come to us" approach when engaging in diaspora missions. An integral part of our American culture is a hunger for efficiency. We are always looking for a faster, cheaper, easier way to accomplish a task. That drive for efficiency can easily influence our diaspora missiology. After all, diaspora missiologists emphasize the concept that the world has "come to us"; we have unreached peoples "on our doorstep"; the nations are now "easily within reach"—terms that Lorance refers to as "the language of convenience" (2011, 277). Some have even argued that, unlike traditional missions, diaspora missions does not require that we learn the language or study the culture of the focus population. One simply needs to "be a friend" to a stranger from another culture to accomplish the missiological task. With this mindset, it's reasonable for a local church to assume that diaspora missions can be a "faster, cheaper, easier" means to reach the world. The time required to learn a *new* language and *new* culture is removed as volunteers teach the *English* language and *American* culture to the newcomers. The costs of sending full-time workers out of the country are eliminated as local volunteers accomplish the task.

> Unfortunately, few have taken the full compass of culture and language seriously enough in the training of their workers or in demonstrating a willingness to allow ethnic churches to develop without cultural and denominational restrictions imposed by the larger organization (Pirolo 2013, 183).

Thus, missionary specialists with appropriate skills, training, and spiritual gifting are replaced with untrained volunteers who may have plenty of passion and drive but may not be prepared for all that is involved in doing cross-cultural evangelism and church planting.

Perhaps the most disconcerting element of this approach is that it is sometimes encouraged by missiologists—people who should understand the need for contextualization of the Gospel message when approaching a new culture. Howell claims that "the goal of missiology should always be to empower the local church to

engage in mission, rather than train specialists or professionals for the task" (2011, 83) and that applying culturally appropriate missional strategies will distance the local church from diaspora ministry. Howell argues that in place of professionals applying contextualization strategies, a better method of diaspora missions is for local believers to engage in "radical hospitality, compassion, and justice" (79). At the same time, he affirms that "efforts to reach new immigrant populations in North America can certainly benefit from concepts of culture and contextualization" (83) as long as the effects of being surrounded by the pressures of a new culture are kept in mind.

The employment of a contextualization strategy in diaspora missions will certainly necessitate the involvement of specialists and/or professionals. But Howell's concept that local church engagement in missions, rather than the equipping and training of specialists, should always be the goal of missiology is debatable. Howell defends his reasoning in part by pointing out that contextualization strategies will become "rapidly obsolete" (2011, 84) as subsequent generations assimilate into the host language and culture. There may be some validity to that argument, but it is too limited and overlooks important additional facts. As Pirolo states,

> the "melting-pot" effect of past generations is not true today. Some immigrants, even those who have been here for two or three generations, are maintaining their cultural distinctives. So, with all their unique characteristics, they are here, living among us (2013, 199).

Many of today's immigrants to America eschew the idea of becoming Americans, or even mixing with other immigrants with similar linguistic and ethnic backgrounds.

> Fearful, not only of whatever defines "America," but fearful of other ethnic groups, the internationals who live among us are isolating themselves in ethnic communities. Their community becomes a place where they can enjoy the familiar and be protected from those "others"—a place where they are "at home" (Pirolo 2013, 171).

In addition, Howell's (2011) assertion seems to imply that immigrants from any one people group come to their new home all at the same time, so that when that initial generation is gone, so is the need for contextualization. But as Payne's (2012) statistical analysis makes clear, new waves of immigrants are coming to the US and Canada every year. Rather than disappearing, the need for contextualization is renewed with each new wave, and, at least for some groups, may continue for multiple generations into the future.

Payne (2012) seems to argue in favor of contextualization by reminding churches that existing methods of evangelism, discipleship, and leadership training may not communicate well when connecting with people from a different cultural background. He challenges his readers to understand that "our cultural preferences for functioning as a church are not necessarily biblical requirements" (135). While never actually using the term *contextualization*, he certainly seems to build a case for needing a contextualized approach when engaging in diaspora missions.

But Howell's concern regarding local church engagement in contextualized diaspora missions is legitimate. Lorance acknowledges that

> the pursuit of contextualization is simply too difficult for most North American Christians. It is too difficult to develop cross-cultural competencies and learn a new language, to engage in respectful interreligious dialogue, and to seek to deeply understand one's neighbor from another nation in order to better communicate the love of Christ in a way he or she can understand (2011, 281).

So, if offering ESL and citizenship classes is too limited and potentially smacks of ethnocentrism, but engaging in contextualized diaspora missions is beyond the capacity of the typical North American church, what options are left? If churches truly are looking for "guidance and assistance in local cross-cultural outreach" (Camp 2010, 2), is there some way that mission agencies can help?

Mid-Term Missions and the Mission Agency

A time-length element is necessarily a component of any detailed examination of mission opportunities today. In addition to traditional career or long-term missions, in the late 1990s and early 2000s there was an explosion in opportunities for short-term missions. The definition of "short-term" varies widely. Priest, Priest, Rasmussen, and Brown use the parameters of two weeks to one year (2006, 431). Dross, who coined the term "Very Short Term Missions (VSTM)" for the approximately two-thirds of short-term mission trips that last less than two weeks, "favors STM of 3 to 12 months" (2009, 1). And Peterson, Aeschliman, and Sneed (2003, 69) break the short-term mission time variable into four subcategories—days ("mini short-term"); weeks ("standard short-term"); months ("seasonal short-term"); and years, up to four years ("extended short-term").

While definitions of what constitutes the time length of a short-term mission vary, most define it in terms of less than a year. What Peterson et al. (2003) call the "extended short-term" is actually a third time-length category for missions that doesn't match the concept of either short-term or long-term.

Many refer to this third time-length category as the "mid-term mission." Like short-term missions, the meaning of "mid-term" varies considerably depending on who is using the word. There doesn't seem to be an accepted standard for defining lengths of mission engagement, and a survey of various church and agency websites reveals a wide disparity in the use of terms. Mid-term can be defined as lasting as little as a couple of months, or as much as two or three years.

While there is no consensus regarding the length of a mid-term mission commitment, and the lines between short-term, mid-term, and long-term continue to become more blurred, there appears to be a category of missions that is longer than short-term and shorter than long-term. For purposes of clarification in this paper, mid-term missions will refer to a trip that is at least six months but less than three years in length, thereby embracing most of the parameters employed by churches and agencies today.

The development of mission agencies that specialize in mid-term missions, along with the growing number of large churches and long-term-focused mission agencies that offer mid-term-length trips, points to the growth of interest in this kind of mission engagement. Paul Van Der Werf, director of GoCorps, sees evidence that recent college graduates are looking for service opportunities of about two years' duration. He believes that young evangelicals—and the churches that attract them—want to make a significant investment in ministry while avoiding a long-term commitment to career missions (2014).

Research within long-term-focused mission agencies shows the same trend regarding interest in mid-term missions, and many of them now offer a mid-term option. This trend, combined with GoCorps' experience, may indicate that mid-term has become a popular length for a mission assignment. Both agencies and churches should take this trend seriously and learn how to leverage it strategically in order to reach the unreached.

Career-focused mission agencies typically invest in mid-term missions for two primary reasons, and their mid-term programs function with one or both of these agenda items as the goal. The first reason is for their mid-term missionaries to help

accomplish a specific task or project within a limited time period while serving cross-culturally. Van Der Werf (2020) does the best job of addressing that expectation with transparency in an entry on the GoCorps website stating that the organization seeks to mobilize "recent college graduates to serve globally for two years using their passions and degrees [to assist] with strategic long-term projects."

The second reason is actually more of a hope. The mission agency is hoping and literally praying that the mid-term missionary will catch a vision for the ministry and the needs on their field of service and will want to return as a long-term missionary. Mission agencies have many long-term needs that are going unfilled. Even though the initial return on the investment often doesn't justify the time and money spent to prepare, send, and host the mid-term missionary, sending offices are willing to take the risk in an effort to fill some of those long-term needs. And if that doesn't happen, the agency's hope extends to the possibility that the mid-term missionary will return home to become a prayer supporter, financial supporter, and/or an advocate for the cause of world missions.

Some mission agencies and churches *require* a willingness or desire to become more involved in missions from candidates who apply to serve as short- or mid-term missionaries. Bethlehem Baptist Church (2020) specifies that in most cases those who are sent out on trips sponsored by the church

- Have an interest in serving in vocational ministry and seek firsthand exposure to missions to help determine a calling into full-time Christian service.
- Aim to serve in a cross-cultural setting.
- Consider the trip as a vital step of preparation for a missionary career abroad or for a better-equipped life at home as a follower of Christ.

The hope, then, is that the mid-term missionary either will facilitate a particular task that the long-term team is addressing or will become engaged in world missions in a new way or to an increased degree. While exact statistics on how many mid-termers eventually return to the field as career missionaries are difficult to obtain, anecdotal evidence indicates that most mid-termers return to live in North America and follow their planned career path. Apparently, this goal for mid-term missions is seldom achieved.

It is even more difficult to measure how many actually return to engage in "life at home as a follower of Christ" (Bethlehem Baptist Church 2020). In at least one measurable way, however, there is evidence that this hope is being fulfilled. Savannah Kimberlin, Director of Published Research for the Barna Group, reports that individuals who have been on a mission trip give four times as much to missions as those who haven't. And, depending on their age, those who have been on a mission trip see themselves as between 11% and 15% more likely to give to missions in their future (September 11, 2020, email message to author). It would seem prudent to build on this interest in short- or mid-term missions, and to maximize on the measurable impact it can have on the goer's life.

What if churches and mission agencies formally embraced a third potential purpose for their mid-term missions programs—one that recognized that many, if not most, mid-termers will return to live in North America, where they could conceivably continue to use the language, culture, and ministry skills they developed overseas even as they move along their anticipated career path? What if church–agency partnerships determined to use mid-term missions strategically as a training ground to equip kingdom workers to engage in diaspora missions back home?

A Strategic Plan: A Long-Term Purpose for Mid-Term Missions

Most evangelical mission agencies, whether denominational or interdenominational, recognize that their role is to facilitate the church in fulfilling her calling to take the gospel to all peoples. One way sending entities could help the church in North America would be to provide direct assistance in reaching out to various diaspora groups.

We've already seen that this outreach has been identified as a felt need for at least some churches. We've explored the limitations and difficulties a local church faces when trying to accomplish this outreach on its own. We've highlighted the ongoing and growing need for contextualized ministry with the groups of internationals moving into our cities and communities. Who better to facilitate such an outreach than mission agencies that have significant experience engaging in cross-cultural ministry and that are equipped to train cross-cultural workers, utilizing a mid-term mission immersion experience in that culture's homeland?

Payne's (2012) case study of the missionary who lived in Albania and then returned to plant Albanian churches in New York serves as a perfect example. Others have engaged in similar ministries. Often these are missionaries who went out as long-term

career workers, planning to stay in their overseas assignment, but who were forced to return home earlier than anticipated for family, health, or other pressing reasons. Once they return to their home country, they begin an outreach to the diaspora of a people group identical to or similar to the group they ministered to overseas. They have learned the language, they have wrestled with the issues of culture, they have been engaged in evangelizing adherents to the host culture's religion, and they can utilize that expertise in reaching people from that background who are now part of the diaspora.

There are numerous anecdotal stories about this kind of ministry, but typically these opportunities develop unexpectedly. Returning to America to launch diaspora missions is not the long-range plan. The background of most missionary teams engaged in diaspora ministry in the US seems to reflect this unintended shift in ministry. There's no doubt that this provides an excellent opportunity for cross-cultural workers to utilize their years of experience; agencies and churches should be encouraging this ministry venue. However, the missing element is *intentionality*. "Without intentionality, rarely does anything get accomplished . . . Without an intentional plan to reach the strangers next door, it is unlikely that they will be reached in your community" (Payne 2012, 127).

Along with that intentionality there needs to be a sense of urgency. Payne points out that immigrant populations have been growing in North America for the past thirty to forty years, yet only now are "people, churches, networks, denominations, societies, and mission agencies . . . starting to act on the need" (17). Pirolo joins Payne in emphasizing the importance of timing and encourages North American evangelicals to start "taking deliberate steps *now* to bridge the cultural distinctives of the internationals who live among us, to present a Savior *in a context relevant to them*" (2013, 5, emphasis added).

But for that kind of intentionality and urgency to be realized, traditional missiological approaches need to be reexamined. Wan states that "the reality of demographic trends of diaspora of the 21st century requires a different missiological paradigm from which new mission strategies and action plans can be developed" (2011, 4).

As churches and mission agencies separately explore the parameters of this new mission paradigm, perhaps the cause of diaspora missions will be better served if churches and agencies partner together. Neither is equipped to do the job alone.

> The reality is that if people in diaspora are going to be reached, it will require a synergistic relationship between local church and mission structures. We will need to bring to bear the extensive experiences and vast resources of these structures together with the local context and human contact of the local church (Mitchell 2011, 286).

One potential new strategy or action plan involves using the existing interest in mid-term missions as a springboard for diaspora ministry, applying an intentionality that goes beyond current goals for mid-term missions and embraces the goal of church planting among the diaspora in North America. Agencies and churches could together identify and adopt an unreached ethnic community within the reach of the church and develop a strategy for ministering to that diaspora. Mid-term missions could be part of that strategy, sending workers overseas to gain the language and cultural proficiencies necessary to launch a contextualized outreach to the adopted people group upon their return to America. This would give a new long-term purpose for mid-term missions and would present an opportunity for churches and agencies to work together to reach ethnic communities and engage in contextualized church planting among diaspora.

This strategy will require a paradigm shift in how traditional mission agencies define "the field." As discussed above, terminology will need to be changed from references to ministry in certain *locations* to ministry among certain *peoples*. It will also require a paradigm shift in how churches allocate their financial resources for cross-cultural ministry. The question of the missionary's location will need to be replaced with consideration of the people group being reached, regardless of the location. It will require finding new ways of "networking the expertise of organizations and churches skilled in contextual (1) church planting, (2) discipleship, and (3) leadership development" (Yang 2013, 48).

But embracing such a paradigm shift does not mean abandoning the existing paradigm. Neither strategic use of overseas mid-term mission experience as a venue for diaspora missions back home, nor any other creative approach to engaging with diaspora, should be seen as a change that eliminates or minimizes the need to send long-term missionaries to the unreached peoples of the world (Payne 2012, 18). It simply recognizes that with changing demographics come needed changes and new approaches in how to deal with mission realities and mission strategies. "Diaspora missiology is a complement to, not a substitute for, the traditional approach of sending missionaries to other lands. It is an approach to thinking about the missionary work of the church from an integrated perspective" (Payne 2012, 151).

An Action Plan

So how would this plan actually work? Borrowing from the recognized structure of short-term missions, a plan might unfold through three phases—pre-field, on-field, and post-field—and incorporate the three entities involved—senders, goer-guests, and host-receivers. An excellent tool to facilitate working through each phase of this action plan is the MISTM grid. That can be found in the book *Maximum Impact Short-term Mission*, by Peterson, Aeschliman, and Sneed (2003).

Pre-Field Phase

Step 1: A community of an unengaged, unreached diaspora group is identified as living in a certain area.

A variety of informal approaches can be applied to identify what people groups are present in a selected area and where they are most prevalent. A survey of ethnic restaurants, grocery stores, and/or social clubs or religious centers will provide some clues. Contacting the local schools or district office to find out what languages are represented in the public school system can help identify which internationals are present and what areas they are clustered in. Researching US Census data is also a viable method.

A promising option for identifying which people groups are in a given area is the People Groups Initiative (2020), a joint project of the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Working together and drawing on the network of Southern Baptist churches and other contributors, they continually compile population information on a website called PeopleGroups.Info, specifically designed to assist the church in North America to identify and engage local diaspora people groups.

Step 1 can be initiated either by the local Christian community (a specific local church or a network of churches), or by a mission agency. Part of Step 1 is determining that either no one is currently working within a given diaspora, or that attempts to engage the community through ESL, hospitality, and other traditional means have proven only minimally successful in developing significant evangelistic relationships.

Step 2: Once a diaspora focus group has been selected, potential partners are identified and partnerships launched.

If the local Christian community initiates the process, then a partner mission agency or agencies will need to be identified; if the mission agency initiates the process, a local

church or churches will need to be contacted. Once the church–agency connection is in place, the new partnership begins to develop plans to launch a diaspora ministry while ensuring a healthy relationship between all parties involved. Procedures such as how the potential cross-cultural workers are selected, approved, and trained will need to be clarified. Target dates and schedules can be developed. Financial agreements will need to be clearly defined. Many logistical details will need to be dealt with at this stage, similar to those involved with sending short-term teams or other mid-termers; the church–agency partnership's past experience in that area can inform this part of the process.

Step 3: The plans and agreements developed in Step 2 are put in motion.

Potential candidates are identified, approved, and trained. The appointees launch into support discovery to develop and retain sufficient financial resources. Prayer partners are identified and prayer networks developed—both for the cross-cultural workers and for the diaspora people the church desires to reach. The long-term missionaries, national hosts, or other on-field support networks are brought into the process and prepared for the arrival of the mid-termers. The logistics are navigated and the mid-term missionaries are commissioned and sent out.

On-Field Phase

Step 1: The mid-termers learn how to work with the diaspora focus group.

While on-field, the mid-termers engage in language and culture acquisition, learn how to best approach ministry within the diaspora focus group, and provide much-needed encouragement and assistance to the long-term missionaries, national church, and/or national community. They may engage in accomplishing a specific task that their training or educational background equips them for, or they may engage in a variety of ministries that help develop the skills they will need back in North America.

Step 2: The home-based congregation learns how to work with the diaspora focus group.

While the mid-termers are serving on-field, the church–agency partnership in North America will need to educate and train the home-based congregation(s) regarding cross-cultural ministry in general and the diaspora focus group in particular. Short-term teams from the church(es) can be assembled and sent to work alongside the mid-termers and their on-field partners. This gives the sending church firsthand opportunity to learn about the culture they will be engaging back home.

Step 3: The mid-termers return to North America.

After spending the specified amount of time living overseas in the new culture, the mid-termers return home to spend the next two to three years (or longer) engaging in contextualized outreach with the diaspora focus group.

Post-Field Phase

Step 1: The mid-termers begin to develop contacts within the diaspora focus group.

Using the language, culture, and ministry skills they gained while living in the focus group's home culture, the now experienced cross-cultural workers begin making friends and making themselves known within the North America–based diaspora community. Perhaps they even find housing within the diaspora community. Depending on funding levels and career path goals, some mid-termers may engage in ministry full-time; others may divide their time between work and ministry as they begin to also enter their selected vocation.

Step 2: The home-based congregation engages with the diaspora focus group.

The local Christian community begins to work alongside the mid-termers, engaging in culturally appropriate ministry outreaches with the experienced mid-termers giving direction and leadership.

Step 3: A contextualized, indigenous church is planted within the diaspora focus group.

Reflecting again on the coffee shop in the suburbs of Detroit, perhaps one day a mid-termer who has spent time in southern Europe living with and ministering to Albanians goes for a cup of coffee. He sees the Albanian workmen sitting outside drinking espresso and smoking. The mid-termer takes his coffee to a nearby table. He greets them in appropriate Albanian style. Then he laughs as he overhears one of their jokes. Before long they are asking him how he learned Albanian, where he lived during his time in Albanian-speaking Europe, and maybe—just maybe—he makes some friends.

Building on these kinds of contacts, the local Christian community, the mission agency, and the mid-termers have *intentionally* taken a huge step toward an effective evangelistic outreach to a previously isolated diaspora community, developing relationships and sharing the Gospel in word and deed. Eventually, God willing, individuals and family groups within the diaspora focus group begin to come to Christ. As time goes on, these new believers begin to meet together to study God's word and to

create a local fellowship that reflects both their home culture and the culture of their new spiritual citizenship.

Conclusion

Intentionally utilizing mid-term missions as a component in diaspora missions is only one suggestion for how Wan's call for "a different missiological paradigm" (2011, 4) might be realized. Churches and agencies together have the opportunity to creatively explore innovative, intentional strategies and action plans to make disciples and plant churches among diaspora people in their communities.

Borthwick, citing Taylor, refers to the "tsunami of peoples coming to the United States" (2012, 29). We can easily see the vastness of this wave when we look at the statistics. We can observe the effect this great wave of new peoples is having on our economy, culture, politics, and language, and we have a choice. We can ignore the wave, or we can learn how to surf. We can let the wave overwhelm us, or we can capture its energy and ride it into a new century of missions and church planting. We can choose to make the best of this unique opportunity. And we can consider the viability of using mid-term missions as a strategic training venue for equipping home-based missionaries prepared to plant contextualized churches among diaspora. This paper presents one possible way to surf. Churches and agencies should be encouraged to work together to find more.

> For this reason, partnership is of utmost importance. A single denomination, a local church, or an individual must not pretend that it, he, or she can reach a city alone. It takes an organized groups [*sic*] of people, churches, and Christian organizations…to reach out to the…ethnic groups present there, to strategize and to carry out all the practical aspects that entail proclaiming the Good News, planting churches, and discipling new believers (Bongoyok 2011, 206).

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Between 2015 and 2019, several of my Christian friends, seminary professors, and Christian organization leaders with whom I am acquainted, in the United States and in Asia, indicated to me that they had gone on short-term mission trips or survey/vision trips to the Middle East. In that same period, when my husband and I were serving in Jordan, we encountered numerous short-term teams. For example, in 2017, a local church near a major Syrian refugee settlement informed us they received short-term mission teams virtually every week throughout the year. To date, however, short-term mission research has not yet been done on the relatively new phenomenon of short-term mission trips to the Middle East.

This paper is based on first-hand field experience in the Middle East with the goal of offering analysis, reflection, and evaluation of this particular trend in short-term mission engagement. In addition to drawing on own experience serving refugees for a few years in Jordan as well as month in Turkey, I communicated with seven fellow long-term workers serving in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan. Additionally, I conducted a formal interview with the director of a Christian NGO in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The names of locations and organizations are intentionally withheld in this paper to protect my fellow workers' ministries on the ground.

Previous Research on STM

Over the past two decades, many missiologists have researched STM, yielding the following main critiques: lack of real cultural experiences (Linhart 2006), lack of good relationships with the local people (Adeney 2003), the ministry being always dominated by the sending churches (Zehner 2008), or the trips being designed for short-termers' spiritual benefits rather than for the local people (Adeney 2006). Other research shows that the impact on the participants, especially young people, is limited (Ver Beek 2006, 2008). Rick Richardson comments, "If there are no follow-up structures, research

suggests that there will be no behavioral changes" (Richardson 2008, 553). Priest's research shows that, with good culture orientation and culture-learning training, short-term mission can decrease the participants' prejudice or stereotypes toward other cultures (Priest, Dischinger, Rasmusen 2006).

Chinese American churches, on the other hand, show different weaknesses and strengths in their STM practice. They are strong and effective in evangelism to non-believing Chinese and avoid some cross-cultural conflicts and mistakes. At the same time, they lack cross-culture experience. Their social engagement and charity efforts are also limited (Wu 2016, 154). Before analyzing the new trend of refugee-focused STMs in the Middle East, I will set the context by outlining the STM destinations, tasks, and participants from previous research.

Top STM Destinations

According to Priest, Wilson, and Johnson's (2010) study in the STM of US megachurches, the top STM destinations were either Latin American or African countries (see table 1). In this paper, I borrow the categories of "World A, World B and World C," developed by Barrett and Johnson:

> World A: the unevangelized world, where less than 50% of people have heard the gospel or heard of Jesus.
>
> World B: the evangelized non-Christian worlds, where at least 50% of people have heard, with understanding, about Christianity, Christ and the gospel, whether or not they have accepted it or have become disciples of Christ, and less than 60% are Christian.
>
> World C: the Christian world- countries that are at least 60% of Christian of all kinds, including Roman Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Anglicans, Independents, and marginals Christians. (2001, 761-769)

Within the framework of these definitions, the top 10 destinations of STM teams of US megachurches are in World C since about 80% or more of the populations of the listed countries self-identify as Christians.

U.S. megachurches' STM destinations	U.S. Chinese churches' STM destinations
Mexico	China
Guatemala	Taiwan
Honduras	Mexico
Dominican Republic	Hong Kong
Nicaragua	UK
Brazil	Germany
South Africa	Brazil
Kenya	Thailand
Uganda	India
Haiti	Myanmar

Table 1. Comparison of STM destinations between megachurches and Chinese churches in the U.S.

The STM destinations of Chinese churches, however, are quite different from those of US megachurches. My research on Chinese American churches (Wu 2016, 121-126) showed the top ten STM destinations to be mostly Asian countries and countries containing the Chinese diaspora. The number one destination was mainland China (see table 1). Among the top ten, four of the destinations are in World C (Mexico, UK, Germany, and Brazil) and six are World B. The research also showed that Chinese American churches sent STMs mainly to Chinese speaking countries and areas. Only about 9% of Chinese American churches reported STM teams ministering to non-Chinese people (Wu 2016, 92).

STM Activity Focus

According to the data reported by Priest, Wilson and Johnson, the top focus areas of US megachurches are:

1. Building, construction, and repair
2. Evangelism and church planting
3. Vacation Bible School (VBS) and children's ministries,
4. Medical and health care
5. Relief and development (Priest, Wilson and Johnson 2010, 89).

My survey research from 2013 showed that Chinese churches in the US focused on the following areas:

1. Discipleship training and Bible teaching (32.4%)
2. Evangelism and church planting (23.8%)
3. VBS and children's ministries (18.6%),
4. Education and teaching English (6.7%),
5. Art and drama (3.3%) (Wu 2016, 129).

It is noteworthy that the top three covered about 75% of total activities.

The activity focus is impacted by both STM destinations and the people to whom STM teams minister. For example, the number two STM focus of US megachurches is evangelism and church planting, which aligns with the fact that their top STM destinations are all in World C. It would be difficult to have this kind focus if the STM teams are sent to World A, such as the countries of the Muslim world. Another example is Chinese diaspora STM. Since their top destinations are China and other Chinese speaking countries/areas, and their ministry focus is either Chinese nationals or Chinese diaspora, their STM teams often do not need translators. Thus, it is possible and effective for them to do discipleship training and Bible teaching. Previous research also found that Chinese American churches tend to "focus more on 'spiritual' or traditional ministries and direct evangelism, compared with USA megachurches, and Chinese churches focus less on social service and charity" (Wu 2016, 131).

Participants of STM

The purposes and the tasks of STM determine the kind of people who are sent on STM trips. Different age groups can possess different skill sets to contribute to mission. The number one activity focus of US megachurches is "building, construction, repair," which can be carried out by youth. The same research found that 94% of high school youth programs had organized overseas STM trips, and 78% of them sent more than one youth STM team per year (Priest, Wilson and Johnson 2010:98). As for Chinese churches, since their top STM focus areas have been "discipleship training/ Bible teaching," "evangelism, church planting," and "VBS, children's ministries," it is less likely they will send their youth group to carry out this type of ministry. The previous research reports that 50% of Chinese American churches' high school youth programs never organize STM trips overseas, and 59% of Chinese American churches report that

the majority age group of STM teams is "adults only," and only 14% of STM teams are high school youth. This research also indicates that most of these STM goers are actually church leaders (i.e. pastors and elders) who are able to teach and run trainings (Wu 2016, 135-137).

A New Trend

Revolutions, civil wars, and regional sectarian conflicts in the aftermath of the Arab Spring have produced significant waves of migrants and refugees from the Middle East and North Africa to neighboring countries and Europe over the past decade. Between 2011 and 2016, 12.6 million Syrians were internally displaced or made refugees by civil war (Das and Hamoud 2017, 16). In 2014, the rise of ISIS in northern Iraq forced hundreds of thousands of Iraqi minority people such as Christians and Yazidis to leave their homes. In 2015, the photo of a drowned 3-year-old Kurdish Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, who was washed up on the shores of Turkey, shocked and saddened the world (Barnard and Shoumali 2015). The refugee crisis has remained frontpage news since 2015, and some consider it the greatest humanitarian crisis of our times (George 2018). Although the media pays more attention to the refugee crisis in Europe, Middle Eastern countries have hosted most of the refugees. According to recent data from the UNHCR, Turkey currently hosts 3.5 million Syrian refugees and Lebanon nearly 1 million (UNHCR 2020); furthermore, a 2015 government census indicates Jordan hosts about 1 million Syrian refugees (Jordan's Department of Statistics 2015). The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), an autonomous (and relatively safe) region to the north of the country, also hosts about 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Syrian refugees (UNHCR USA, n.d.).

According to the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* of the UN, a refugee is defined as follows:

> A refugee is someone who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (UNHCR, n.d.).

According to the *United Nations Guiding Principles,* Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are defined in this way:

> Internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situation of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (UNHCR, n.d.).

Christian churches in different parts of the world have attempted to engage with those in need during the refugee crisis. One such way is to send short-term mission teams to the host countries of refugees, such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq (KRI). As a result, these places have recently become popular short-term mission destinations.

Refugee Ministry in the Middle East

Since the beginning of the refugee crisis, a number of Christian field workers and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have flocked to refugee host countries to respond to the humanitarian need. A director of a Christian NGO in KRI, whom I interviewed, told me that in the city where he serves, "there were less than 10 field workers before 2015. But after 2015 there was an influx of NGOs. I think right now there are a few hundreds of NGOs." In addition, to foreign workers and organizations, some local churches in the Middle East also started their relief ministry during the time of different refugee "waves." In general, there are three types of Christian groups engaging in refugee ministries on the ground in the Middle East: (1) local churches, (2) field missionaries, and (3) faith-based NGOs. In many cases, two or three of these groups above will cooperate with one ministry.

Middle Eastern countries such as Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt have a Christian minority, most of whom are from historic and traditional Orthodox, Catholic, or ancient Eastern churches. Christians in these countries, those born in Christian families to Christian parents, have the freedom to worship and observe Christian holidays. But "proselytizing Muslims" is still socially and cultural offensive in these countries (to varying degrees), and the risk level depends on the country (Wu 2018, 26-27). Relatively speaking, there is more freedom in Lebanon (Das and Hamoud 2017, 89-91), since, politically, Lebanon is not a Muslim country, but a secular one. But

with more than 50% of the Muslim population in the country (Pew Research Center 2015), Christians still have to engage with Muslim culture.

In general, refugee ministry on the field includes English courses, relief distributions, home visitation, medical care, job training, and children's ministry. Different local churches, Christian NGOs, and missionaries have different approaches to bearing witness to Jesus among refugees according to their ministry convictions and the security situation of their contexts.

Short-Term Mission Involvement

We and our colleagues in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and KRI have witnessed a surge of STM teams since 2016 up until the Covid-19 pandemic. When my husband and I served in Jordan, we partnered with a local church for about half a year in 2017. This local church ran several Syrian refugee projects, and during this period they received a constant stream of STM teams. The church offered accommodation, transportation, and scheduled activities for short-term teams to get involved, such as visiting refugee schools, refugee home visitation, medical clinics, and children's ministry.

In Lebanon, one mission organization regularly hosts STM teams. This organization is resourceful and able to provide numerous interpreters, accommodation, and transportation for the STM teams. They also arrange the schedule of the trips for the teams. Usually, the activities include attending the presentations and briefing their Syrian refugee ministries, home visitation, women's ministry (female short termers sharing their testimonies), children's ministry, and engaging local people on the streets. The staff in charge of receiving STM teams reports they have received STM teams from North America, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

In Turkey, a refugee ministry center run by a group of field workers hosts about 11-13 STM teams each year with the length of their stay being from 1-2 weeks to six months. The teams partner with the refugee ministry center, which takes full responsibility for these teams (i.e. schedule, budget, lodging, etc.). Their ministry activities include English classes, children's ministry, a women's outreach group with a free meal, home visitation and clothes distribution, and medical care. In contrast with Arabic-speaking countries like Jordan and Lebanon, the cross-cultural workers in Turkey speak Turkish (rather than Arabic or Kurdish), and yet their ministry focuses on Arab and Kurdish refugees; thus, this well-organized ministry heavily relies on translators.

A New Model of Diaspora Mission

In the past, China was the top destination for STM teams from Chinese churches in the United States. However, the door to China has been shut in recent years since the new Regulation on Religious Affairs began to be enforced in February 2018 (Law Info China. 2018). Since then, a new wave of persecution and missionary expulsions has taken place. Thus, many Chinese churches in the diaspora, including my home church in the US, are looking for new fields to continue their STM mandate. Meanwhile, the tremendous needs of Middle Eastern refugees caught the attention of some overseas Chinese churches. One example is a Christian organization which was founded by diaspora Chinese from Hong Kong and has offices in Hong Kong, the US, and Australia. This organization used to send medical STM teams to China and some Southeast Asian countries, but due to the closed door in China, they have begun to send STM teams to the Middle East in recent years.

Both "push" factors (China's closed door) and "pull" factors (Middle East refugee crisis) have begun to change the way overseas Chinese churches strategize and execute STM. It used to be "mission through diaspora," which means mission through Chinese diaspora to reach other Chinese diaspora (or Chinese nationals). Now the Chinese diaspora have started to do mission "beyond" their kinsmen Chinese and share the love of Christ to Middle-Easterners in diaspora. It is mission to and beyond the diaspora! A humanitarian ministry that is founded in KRI and carried out by Chinese Christians in diaspora is one of the best examples. The next section will focus on this NGO.

Humanitarian Efforts in the Kurdistan Region

In recent years, several Christian friends and acquaintances of mine, all Taiwanese Americans, have participated in STM trips to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). For some, it was their first ever STM trip. Later, I realized all were hosted by the same NGO (registered in KRI), which was founded by American Christians whose backgrounds are from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. This NGO started their humanitarian work in KRI in 2016 and has brought medical STM teams to serve numerous displaced Yazidis and Syrian refugees. Yazidis in Sinjar (a town in Nineveh province in Northern Iraq) suffered from genocide along with other atrocities perpetrated by ISIS, and many were forced to abandon their homes. Yazidis are a Kurdish minority group. They are not Muslims but follow a different kind of monotheism, and therefore suffer persecution from time to time.

The founder and director of this NGO, Mr. T., serves in a Chinese American church in California. Before he started this ministry in KRI, his church had been sending STM teams to China and other Southeast Asian countries for years. Through his advocacy, his church sent their first medical STM teams to the Middle East to serve Yazidis in 2015. The first two trips were to Turkey. After the Lord closed the door on their humanitarian work in Turkey, they started bringing STM teams to KRI, beginning in 2016. This NGO also made an effort to give short-termers orientation and trainings, such as cross-cultural principles, basic theology, and missiology. In just the past two years, this NGO brought in short-term teams of medical surgeons who operated on a total of 45 patients.

Transnational Networks

In 2016, this NGO brought in five STM teams to KRI, and since 2017, they brought in more than 10 teams every year until the COVID-19 pandemic began. The numbers and the sizes of teams continued to grow every year. This encouraging turnout comes from extensive recruiting and networking of the NGO director. Mr. T. said, "We are highly active in recruiting. I am constantly talking to pastors, to organization leaders, and to our network." The vast majority of their STM teams are made up of ethnic diaspora Chinese from North America, Southeast Asia, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Only three of their STM partners are Korean American organizations. In response to this observation, Mr. T. noted, "I do not limit our partnership to only overseas Chinese or Chinese in general. But it is our natural network."

STM teams come through transnational networks, not only in KRI, but in other Middle Eastern countries as well. For example, a Chinese American pastor who was involved in a prayer ministry in Lebanon hosted STM teams from Chinese churches in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and North America over the past two years. Also, transnational networks in STM are not restricted to Chinese mission. For example, a Korean pastor in Lebanon who leads a Kurdish congregation brings STM teams that are mainly from South Korea and diaspora Koreans from North America. Whether in New Testament times or in our era of globalization, diaspora collaboration in STM through utilizing transnational networks and resources is common and natural (Wu 2016, 33-34,115-116).

Feedback from the Field

My fellow field workers reported positively that STM teams were meeting real needs on the field, were showing encouragement, love, and care both to refugees and their hosts on the field. My colleague in Lebanon says:

> They encourage the refugees with their testimonies. The refugees enjoy receiving the gifts they bring and getting free health care. The love shown in the name of JESUS has a powerful impact from my experience. They encourage the long-term workers and help to keep us renewed… They bring new ideas and energy.

A field worker involved in refugee ministry in Turkey commented, "STM teams can relieve some of the burden of long-term workers. They can be bolder than a worker that lives here. They bring us sensitive resources. They encourage long term workers. They allow us to do special events like VBS when we lack the manpower to do it ourselves." From our experience and that of colleagues in the Middle East, STM teams that work best in refugee ministry are those made up of specialists who come for specific projects such as medical teams. While serving in Jordan, we received a few medical STM teams and their compassion and care for the Syrian refugees truly touched the refugees' hearts. In KRI, some of the STM participants are retired medical doctors in their 60s and 70s. They show their love with their actions, and it encourages and blesses the IDPs, refugees, and frontline workers on the field.

Most of the negative feedback on STM teams had to do with their insensitivity to the culture, some bad attitudes, the problems caused by language barriers, and the significant effort it takes to provide them translators and accommodation. A fellow field worker in Lebanon commented, "The language and cultural barriers are pretty wide when working with Syrian refugees, so unless it is project oriented, it was hard to connect the short termers with Syrians because a translator always needed to be present." As with other STM programs, good training and orientation is essential. In Turkey, the Christian worker in charge of their STM partnership told me, "Sometimes they can be a burden if they do not carefully read over and follow our training manual. We want mature believers that are self-starters and ready to do whatever job assignment we ask."

When my husband and I were serving in Jordan, our local church partner hosted two STM teams from two western countries at the same time. They both stayed in the church guesthouse and ended up having conflicts. Meanwhile, a young lady from one of

the STM teams who failed to understand the gender boundaries in Muslim culture had inappropriate interactions with a local Muslim driver. The local pastor who hosted them was embarrassed by this incident and told the STM team leader, "Could you please not bring immature Christians for STM trip next time?" It was discouraging and disrespectful to the local community.

Besides the problems caused directly by the STM teams, there are also concerns of partnership with local churches in the Middle East. The churches in the Middle East are small (usually with a few dozens of members) and limited on manpower and resources. Constantly hosting foreign STM teams can be a distraction to local church's pastoral ministry. Furthermore, the foreign partners bring resources and funds that may encourage the continuing dependency, and "without careful planning, well-intentioned giving may backfire, betraying donors and harming recipients" (Wu 2018, 30).

Findings and Evaluation

Comparison with Previous STM Studies

The refugee/IDP-focused STM teams are different from previous STM trends in several ways. First, there is a change of destination. Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and KRI in Iraq—the countries which have received an influx of STM teams between 2015 and 2019—are not World C. Turkey's Christian populations is less than 1%, Lebanon is about 37% Christian, Jordan is about 2%, and Iraq is less than 1% (Pew Research Center 2015). Except for Lebanon, all of these are part of World A. The research on American megachurches shows that their top 10 destinations are all World C. As for Chinese American churches, their top 10 destination countries are either in World B or World C. For both types of churches, Muslim countries in the Middle East were not on the list of their top STM destinations. These countries are unreached for multiple reasons. Socially, culturally, legally, and spiritually, these countries are resistant to the gospel. In addition, some Middle Eastern countries, like Iraq and Lebanon, are not considered stable or safe, and hence they have a stigma. Thus, due to security reasons, as well as the preferred activities of STM teams, the Middle East was not a popular STM destination before the recent refugee crisis.

Second, since the destinations have changed, the ministry focus has been adjusted accordingly. The most common STM activities in the Middle East are medical, health care, VBS, children's ministries, vision trips, prayer walking, education/teaching English, home visitation, and relief and development (see Table 3). The STM in the

Middle East in recent years has had a clear humanitarian focus since it has been a response to the refugee crisis. Although American churches have historically had some relief and charity focus in their STM, there are still some differences. The top two emphases of American megachurches are "building, construction, repair" and "evangelism, church planting." The first one is not a ministry focus for refugee ministry in the Middle East, and the second is not culturally practical. It may even bring danger to STM team members and their host. On the other hand, "children's ministries," "medical, health care," and "education—teaching English" meet the felt needs of refugees. Home visitation of refugees—most of them Muslims—can be considered a new STM focus, which provides opportunities for building bridges and breaking stereotypes.

As for the majority of Chinese American churches, regardless of destination, they previously focused on ministering to Chinese nationals or Chinese diaspora. It is a major shift for Chinese churches to send out STM teams to minister to non-Chinese and to adopt a charity and relief focus. It may be challenging for them to do "discipleship training/ Bible teaching" in a Muslim context to refugees or IDPs who only speak Arabic or Kurdish since many short termers lack the relevant cultural and linguistic knowledge. The previous research shows Chinese American churches focusing on spiritual needs and direct evangelism. Refugee ministry gives them an opportunity to consider and adapt a holistic approach to mission and extend their mission to non-Chinese.

	US Megachurch STM	**US Chinese Church STM**	**STM to the Middle East (2015-2019)**
Destinations	World C (mostly in Africa and Latin America, 80+% Christian population)	World B and World C (mostly in Chinese speaking societies and/or to Chinese diaspora)	World A and World B (mostly in Muslim societies to displaced unreached people)
Ministry Activities	Building, construction, repair Evangelism, church planting VBS, children's ministries Medical, heath care Relief and development	Discipleship training/ Bible teaching Evangelism, church planting VBS, children's ministries Education-teaching English Art/Drama	Medical, health care VBS, children's ministries Vision trip, prayer walk Education—teaching English Home visitation Relief and development
STM teams	Mostly Youth	Mostly Adults	Mostly Adults

Table 3. Summary of the comparison of three types of STM.

Third, the STM activity focus determines what type of people churches will send on STM trips. Neither me nor my fellow workers ever hosted a youth group team in the Middle East in the past few years. Since refugee ministry mostly focuses on medical/health care and education, high school teenagers apparently are not suited for these kinds of tasks. There may also be security concerns for parents sending their teenage children to some of the war-torn areas in the Middle East. As for Chinese American churches, the previous research data shows that they tended to send adults, including pastors and lay leaders, to do teaching and training. From what we and our colleagues have observed, they have been sending church leaders and medical professionals to the Middle East.

Evaluation and Recommendations

In responding to humanitarian needs, STM in the Middle East extends STM efforts to "least reached" peoples, bearing witness to the love and compassion of Christ to suffering refugees and IDPs through holistic ministry. It is hard to predict how long this trend will last. If the refugee crisis subsides, this trend may die out. However, with continuing conflicts in the Middle East, we do not foresee refugees and IDPs disappearing any time soon. On the other hand, this paper is written during a pandemic when international trips are paused or restricted and thus interrupting all overseas STM events. With the possibility of a higher travel fare and more strict entry regulations in the near future, we should explore new strategic and effective ways of carrying out STM.

This new STM trend in the Middle East presents a beautiful picture of international collaboration for kingdom work. We and our fellow workers received STM teams from nearly everywhere: North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia, Oceania, and even other Arab countries. Overseas short-term mission activity is no longer "the globalization of American Christianity" (Wuthnow 2009, 3). Furthermore, since the shift to a refugee focus, STM has highlighted a significant need of Arabic or Kurdish translators, and Arab Christians have many opportunities to serve in this way. Years ago, our colleagues in Jordan mobilized a group of Jordanian Christians to go on a STM trip to Turkey. It is truly "mission from everywhere to everywhere."

Due to workload and capacity issues, it is challenging for field workers to host short-term teams frequently, and if they do host a team, the size of the team tends to be smaller. As for local churches, they may be distracted from their own ministries by constantly hosting STM teams. Thus, if a Christian organization or a faith-based NGO—

like the one founded by Mr. T.—can provide a platform to host the teams and allow them to plug in to ministry, it will be beneficial all involved. Mr. T. describes the vision of his NGO:

> We want to be the platform, the organization on the field, to serve the people there so that the Chinese churches in general and the North American churches can easily send their people to serve with us and to work with us… most people start their long-term work as a short-term worker…They need to taste the experiences. Sometimes it is good experience, sometimes it is bad experience. Sometimes it is really a short-term work or one-time work, and there is no continuity and no sustainability. But if you have a good host, a good organization, that has a long-term presence on the ground, then there is a continuity, then there is a sustainability.

Mr. T.'s NGO successfully brings STM teams and puts them to work on projects that meet the needs of IDPs and refugees in KRI. Many of the short termers come back to KRI to serve repeatedly. In this way, it is not merely short-term ministry, but a long-term effort with impact on these IDPs and refugees. They grow to love and care for a people group completely different from them in ethnicity, language, culture, and faith. This is remarkable in the context of Chinese diaspora mission.

Compared to those serving in World C, short termers in World A have to overcome a larger cultural barrier, and misunderstanding is more likely to happen. Thus, cultural training and orientation are necessary. Moreover, refugee ministry in the Middle East involves responding to human suffering and facing the hostility of Islamist ideology in some host countries. A sense of entitlement and lack of maturity not only causes a hindrance to people's witness to the love and truth of Jesus, but it may also bring negative experiences to short-termers themselves during STM trips. All the mistakes from the previous paradigm can still happen in refugee/IDP-focused STM in the Middle East, and it may actually cause more harm in this context. STM in the Middle East is most effective when there are well-established host like mission organizations or NGOs who can provide orientation and arrange activities beneficial to both the recipients and the short termers. Also, it is important to have a specific project for which short termers are skilled so they can plug in right away.

Conclusions

The new trend of STM in the Middle East with a refugee/IDP focus indeed redirects kingdom efforts from evangelized countries to least reached people. It has the potential to shed light in the darkest places ravaged by corruption, violence, wars, and the bondage of false religion, but it also has a higher risk in causing harm if there is a lack of cultural orientation and pre-trip training. For American churches, the Middle East presents an unfamiliar new field that may help to break stereotypes, overcome prejudices, and build bridges. For Chinese diaspora churches, it may be a paradigm shift, since their attention has shifted from China and the diaspora Chinese to displaced Arabs and Kurds in the Middle East, as well as from Bible teaching to holistic ministry. Through partnership with an on-the-ground organization, and with pre-trip training and orientation of the local culture, a well-designed project that meets the humanitarian needs of the displaced, and a mature and teachable attitude of STM participants, the refugee-focused STM in the Middle East can make an impact for kingdom work.

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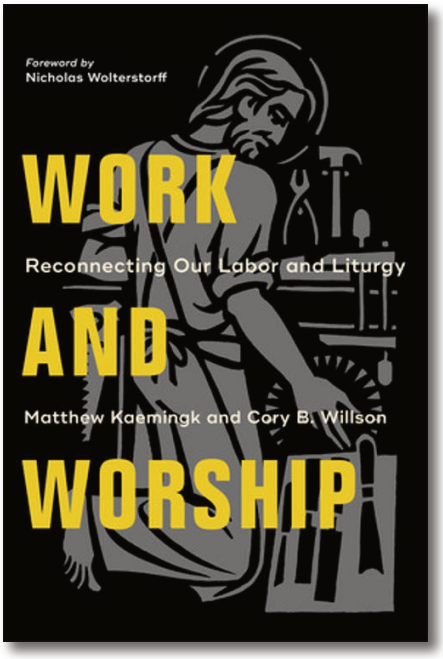
REVIEW: *Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy* by Matthew Kaemingk and Cory B. Wilson

REVIEWED BY
ERIC ROBINSON

Kaemingk, Matthew and Wilson, Cory B.
Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy.
Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. 2020. xi + 304pp,
ISBN: 978-1-5409-6198-3. $29.99 paperback.



In their book, *Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy*, Matthew Kaemingk and Cory B. Wilson observe a problem: "Walking into a sanctuary, many workers feel like they're visiting another world, a world quite detached from their world of work" (2). They feel that the "sanctuary . . . is incapable of responding to the raw struggles, questions, and issues they face in the workplace" (2). The disconnect many workers feel between worship and work is not first a theological one (4), but a deficiency in the way the gathered church forms workers. The solution the authors draw out in the book, stated concisely, rests in the intentional formation of workers during gathered worship, so they might fulfill their role as a priest in their marketplace parish as participants in God's mission.

In Part 1, the authors embark on an in-depth discussion of how worship can contribute to the formation of workers, and also specific ways in which it fails in its calling to form workers in their vocations. They argue that worship should be responsive to "five elements that workers carry with them into the sanctuary: vocational laments (tears), vocational praises (trumpets), vocational confessions (ashes), vocational requests (petitions), and vocational offerings (fruits)" (210). In Part 2, drawing from both the Scriptural text and other sources, the authors consider how the worship practices of both Old Testament Israel and the early church can contribute to the formation of workers as participants in God's mission.

Finally, in Part 3, the authors consider how contemporary worship practices can assist workers in meaningfully bridging the gap between their Sunday worship and their working lives. In chapter 10, the authors walk through seven actions (examining, approaching, thanking, receiving, sharing, holding, and consuming) "a worker might engage in at the [Lord's] table," and establish a tangible connection between God's work in Jesus Christ and the believer's experience in and through their daily work (196). Using the framework of the "five elements" from Part 1, in chapter 11, the authors consider practically how the liturgy of gathered worship can be transformational for the worker's exercise of his or her priesthood in the marketplace. Chapter 12 considered how "corporate worship actively push(es) and propel(s) worshipers back into their work in the world" (241). Corporate worship has a vital sending role, commissioning workers to participation in the mission of God, including "God's creative, sustaining, and redemptive plan" (246).

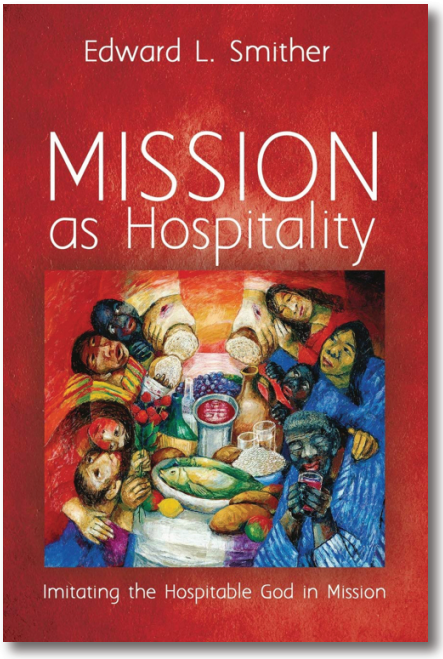
With its razor focus on the worship of the gathered community and its power to guide, disciple, and transform workers, *Work and Worship* breaks new ground in the discussions about faith and work. This book is a must-read for those who plan and participate in gathered worship, as well as theological educators who help equip believers for ministry in the church. In addition to offering a strong biblical and theological foundation for worship which forms workers, Kaemingk and Wilson offer a host of diverse liturgical practices ranging from prayers to entire worship services. These practices are drawn from the richness of the Biblical text, the history of the church, as well as the modern global church.

The book also invites further contextual discussion, especially in light of Covid-19 and the rapid changes in the global workplace, which affect both gathered worship and the experience of workers in the world. The authors acknowledge this in saying that their "task . . . is not to prescribe a universal plan for tying worship and work together…[but] to provide a set of enduring biblical, theological, and liturgical resources that diverse leaders can use to imagine and create deeper connections between worship and work" (11). The invitation is to creatively imagine how the liturgy which guides the worship of the church can equip the believer for transformative ministry as a priest in her everyday work.

REVIEW: *Mission as Hospitality: Imitating the Hospitable God in Mission* by Edward L. Smither

REVIEWED BY
JESSICA UDALL

Smither, Edward L. *Mission as Hospitality: Imitating the Hospitable God in Mission.* Eugene: Cascade, 2021. viii + 139pp, ISBN: 978-1-7252-5731-3. $20 paperback.



In his concise and engaging *Mission as Hospitality*, missiologist and professor, Edward Smither asserts that "Christian mission is a hospitable endeavor because God is hospitable" (p. 4). Hospitality, then, is not simply a practice of the church but an imitation of God, displaying his glory through echoing his welcoming character.

Chapter one and two of *Mission as Hospitality* cover examples of missional hospitality in the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the early church. Before delving into specifics, Smither frames the discussion in terms of hospitality: humans are invited and welcomed by God to know Him through the pages of Scripture, and by approaching Scripture with a desire to know God, believers are inviting and welcoming Him into their lives.

Employing a "hermeneutic of hospitality" (p. 8), the thread of missional hospitality is traced through stories that readily come to mind and some that are less obvious. In order to grasp the full meaning of Old and New Testament hospitality, Smither argues, all these examples must be "understood in light of God's gracious hospitality at the Messianic Banquet to come" (p. 19).

Indeed, when the Messiah was on earth, his ministry was characterized by his hospitality toward sinners—both as host and as guest—that will continue even into the eschaton. After Jesus' commission to his followers and ascension into heaven, "Hospitality became an important means for the young church to invite new believers into the community" (p. 45).

Chapter three cogently explains that "the Eucharist exists because of God's mission" (p. 78). Smither points out that when receiving the Eucharist, a believer "is invited to a table," just as the disciples were when Jesus first broke the bread and shared the wine during the Last Supper (p. 54). This chapter also explores the integral nature of celebrating the Eucharist as part of the mission of the growing church as seen in New Testament writings, the *Didache*, and Justin Martyr's *Apology*.

Chapter four explores the hospitable aspect of the many-faceted history of monasticism, particularly focusing on the missionary monasticism which was characterized by the "value" of "neighbor-preferring love" which understood that when caring for a visitor, "their worship was not actually interrupted but simply took another form" (p. 97). The chapter concludes with biographical sketches of various monks and monastic groups who exemplified hospitable mission.

Chapter five surveys six more contemporary case studies of missional hospitality being practiced in the global church today. Smither delves into diverse examples ranging from a well-known haven for spiritual seekers in Switzerland to the little-known hospitable affinity between Brazilian missionaries and Arab Muslims growing in friendship in the Middle East.

Chapter six seeks to reflect upon the previous content and suggest applications for current-day missionary work in light of the fact that "Christian mission is inherently hospitable" (p. 118). By practicing missional hospitality, we are inviting others "to a feast that begins now and stretches on into eternity" (p. 127).

Mission and Hospitality concisely yet convincingly conveys that throughout Scripture, Christian history and the practices of the global church today are vivid examples of table fellowship being a key component in people receiving and rejoicing in the message of Christ. A strength of the book is its efficiency; clear and brief explanations, a strong logical flow and a robust bibliography mean a complex topic can be digested easily in a short period of time with options for studying further according to interest. Smither also goes beyond current literature on the topic of Christian hospitality in order to explore "the crossroads of hospitality and mission and the hospitable nature of Christian mission" (p. 6) so as to emphasize the importance and encourage the practice of hospitality in missionary efforts today.

Yet while engaged by the fast-paced nature of the book, I found myself pausing at a simple and almost offhand person example which concluded: "The ministry of hospitality begins when I deliberately stop what I am doing and say with a smile, 'Please

come in.'" This simple sentence effectively summed up the entire book and begged for more examples like it. Perhaps there was not space in this slim volume, but by leaving us wanting more, Smither uncovers a need for much more writing on the personal and practical outworkings of missional hospitality in the midst of the daily grind.