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Executive Summary

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The Rising Missions Movement in China (the World's New Number 1 Economy) and How to Support It

David Ro

Several prominent Chinese leaders from the unregistered churches have been convening in Seoul with global and Korean evangelical leaders to discuss China's future direction in world missions. A *Mission China 2030* vision was launched at the Asian Church Leaders' Forum in 2013. Last year, China's leading pastors met in Seoul again to strategize on plans to accomplish the vision to raise up a younger generation to: *plant thousands of churches in the cities; reach China's 500 unreached minority people groups; and send out 20,000 overseas missionaries by 2030.*

The church in China has been maturing in its theological and biblical understanding of the role of the church in world missions. Unregistered house churches have taken the lead with hundreds of missionaries sent to Central Asia, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and even northern Africa. Chinese leaders are taking into account lessons from past difficult experiences, focusing on healthy sending bases and sending structures, unity, and a humbler posture.

History can attest to national mission movements occurring in periods of geo-political and economic growth. On December 4th, 2014, the Chinese economy overtook the US economy to become the largest in the world. We should celebrate China's new status as the largest economy because China's rise is God's overall plan for China to bless the world through his church.

The gospel from China comes from a church that has gone through suffering. Whether the political environment tightens or not, the Chinese church will continue with its call. On the basis that 20,000 foreign missionaries have been sent to China in the last 200 years, the *Mission China 2030* challenge is to see at least 20,000 Chinese missionaries overseas by 2030.

Mission sending requires strong and healthy churches. The next ten years have been called the Golden Era of urban church planting. Missions to unreached people groups within China will be important in preparing for future cross-cultural overseas experience. China's leaders are sharing the *Mission China 2030* vision and mobilizing a younger generation to sacrifice.

The current number of overseas missionaries sent from China is around 500. While the goal of 20,000 in 15 years seems to be ambitious, one could point to Korea for inspiration. Based on current church growth trajectories, China's Christian population is predicted to grow to 247 million by 2030, making it the largest Christian nation in the world.

Ministries in China should shift from fast-pace growth tactics to long-term strategies of high-level leadership training. The majority of pastoral leadership training should be done in China or preferably in Asia. However, Chinese with graduate level degrees in missiology and theological education are in demand for Chinese seminaries and Bible and mission training schools. Hundreds of mainland Chinese are currently studying at seminaries and Bible schools in both Asian and Western countries. Scholarships for these seminarians would be highly strategic.

The church in China is searching for international partnerships. Expertise in organizational management and culture, governing structures, church and agency systems and policies, financial accountability, ministry competency and oversight, mission statements, vision, and values are needed to prepare it for mission in a globalized world.

The most effective partnerships are with Chinese leaders at the grassroots level who truly desire deep long-term engagement. Ministries that go deep in the area of expertise with just a few local partners are most valued and respected in the long-term.

China's example should inspire church leaders anywhere to come together in unity to accomplish a global mission vision for their country. They also need to be prepared for a Chinese church on mission with a global reach. Through trials and suffering, God has faithfully blessed the church in China so that it may be a blessing to the world.

Buddhism in Asia: How can Christians engage?

Hugh Kemp

Christian mission among Buddhists in Asia has traditionally been ‘very hard’, not because of open conflict necessarily, but because of indifference to or misunderstanding of the gospel, or because of the way the gospel has been offered. Missionaries tell stories of long years and much prayer invested in Christian witness to Buddhists, with little fruit by way of explicit conversions. There are a handful of exceptions: phenomenal church growth in China and Mongolia are two.

Buddhism throws up many challenges but there are a number of ways that Christians can approach Buddhists. Christians need to actually talk with Buddhists themselves rather than simply learning about them.

When a Christian seeks to engage with Buddhists, it is common experience to feel overwhelmed. The categories are complex, based on fundamental differences in worldview assumptions. For a Buddhist, the fundamental human problem is suffering, and the solution is awakening, then release from *samsara*. For a Christian, the fundamental problem is usually articulated as sin, and the solution is salvation/freedom in Christ.

I would recommend a respectful conversational approach, seeking to listen well so as to clarify meanings, but also being unapologetic about differences. Conversations that may yield fruit for the gospel could concern praxis, doctrine/theology, authority, the Ideal Person, and spiritual power.

Some claim Buddhism has things in common with Christianity: the heaven/paradise in *Pure Land* Buddhism is sometimes posed, or ideas like compassion and peace, which are both expounded repeatedly by the Dalai Lama. However, this is superficial. The *Pure Land* ‘paradise’ is not a reward in itself, but merely a better place to practise the dharma (Buddhist teachings) and where one has a better chance of attaining awakening. The Dalai Lama uses the English words *compassion*, *peace*, and *harmony* to translate Tibetan words which contain quite different meanings.

Some Christian converts out of Buddhism have conceptualised Jesus Christ as the ultimate *bodhisattva*, who lays down his own life so that others might be freed from karmic bondage and break out of suffering (*samsara*) into full relationship with God.

If alleged commonalities between Buddhism and Christianity are superficial, Christians involved with mission among Buddhists need also to recognise that, like other religions today, Buddhism is pressured by common global dynamics: it is susceptible to commodification, fundamentalism, and politicization. Sri Lanka and Thailand are examples.

Several evangelical mission agencies prioritise Buddhist people groups, and there are some networks of scholar-practitioners who are thinking and strategizing for work among Buddhists in Asia. A conference held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, each January, brings together Christians to think about mission among Buddhists and share best practices. In 2012, a workshop/seminar was held in Bangkok, where academic deans from 15 Asian seminaries and Bible colleges met to re-examine college curricula regarding missional engagement with Buddhists. Should the reader wish to explore mission among Buddhists further, please contact the author at h.kemp@xnet.co.nz.

Strategic Foresight: A new horizon for innovation in ministry

Derek Seipp

US President John F Kennedy in 1961 called for a man to be put on the moon within a decade. Considering the available technology at the time, Kennedy's horizon was audacious. People thought it just could not be done; yet eight years later, it happened.

If we had simply continued doing what we were doing, taking incremental steps to do it a little better each year, we would probably never have set foot on the moon. Yet, this is where most of us find ourselves: looking for steady, incremental improvements. The problem with this kind of thinking is that we look back at what we have done in order to see what is possible in the future. In essence, we look backward in order to look forward.

However, Kennedy did not base the future upon the past. He set an audacious horizon, looking forward, to something far and beyond where we were. It inspired people to reach beyond mere incremental improvements.

Kennedy knew that the knowledge and technology needed did not even exist in 1961. This caused scientists to look forward and explore what technologies would be necessary to accomplish such a radical goal. Once those necessary technologies were identified, scientists began working their way back to the present. This allowed them to create a roadmap starting from the future, which identified each technology that needed to be developed to bring them to their desired destination.

Great horizons always push us to look forward beyond ourselves. Once we understand the desired future, we walk back to the present and figure out how to get there. This kind of thinking results in innovative, paradigm-changing ways of impacting our world.

Bill O'Brien was Vice-President at the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board) when he read an article in 1994 about a physicist at NASA who was setting such higher horizons. O'Brien was inspired and began helping other organizations practice this type of thinking. One such project was with World Vision. Many significant changes came out of those meetings. Another was with The Mission Society. The organization refined its vision and mission, and then changed its structure and culture as well.

Our world is changing faster than ever before. In the face of radical changes, merely seeking incremental improvements in our ministries will only set us further and further behind. Forward thinking empowers leaders to explore and understand all the various places the future could take them. They break free from limited thinking patterns holding them back from something greater. As leaders do this, they begin to see themselves differently. They also view the resources at their disposal differently too. The Bible is full of stories which highlight this type of thinking, such as that of Gideon.

A good soccer player knows not to go to the ball, but to get to where the ball is going to be. The same can be said about ministry organizations. As the changes leaders face come faster and faster, leaders must learn to align their organizations with the future environment before it emerges.

To do so, leaders must seek to understand the most likely environments to emerge in the future. One way to do this is by studying the emerging trends, issues, and choices being made to create forecasts about their future environment. The greater these are understood, the clearer the forecast of the future will be. And when leaders have a clearer picture of the future, they have a much greater chance of getting to where the ball is going to be.

Building a National Church Database Useful to All: Implications for missions

Dwight Martin and Marten Visser

Church statistics were born the same day the Christian church was born, when the apostles decided to count the new believers who were baptized. Protestant missionaries have always been among the most enthusiastic users of statistical information on church membership—or more accurately, on church non-membership.

William Carey was the first missionary to do this when he wrote his famous clarion call for missions, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of Heathens* (1792). This has blossomed into a whole industry of information on the state of the church and the need for missions worldwide. The most well-known examples include *Operation World* (Jason Mandryk) for those interested in missions and the more academic *World Christian Database* (Todd Johnson). Several lists, including *Joshua Project*, specifically seek to list unreached people groups.

All these are wonderful tools that the Lord has used to raise prayer and people for missions. However, they all have limitations that diminish their practical use for grassroots ministry. *Operation World* and the *World Christian Database* provide valuable information. But because of their global scope, they do not go down to the level needed for strategic decision-making in missions. In addition, these lists suffer from a more serious problem: not enough insider information has been used to produce them.

To obtain data that informs on-the-ground ministry, another step is needed. If national churches and mission organizations are to use data in developing and implementing their strategies, data needs to be reliable, recent, detailed, and reportable.

The way to do this is to change from gathering statistics for missionaries to gathering data for a nation: national church statistics. An outsider perspective has to be changed to an insider perspective. Because of the rapid spread of IT capabilities worldwide, this now can be done.

GlobalRize offers ‘online solutions for the global church’. A primary solution of GlobalRize is *Harvest*, a database and mapping web-application. It is a highly secure cloud-based database, with maps and reports created in real time. Harvest has a long list of features including reports, maps and graphs, licenses, and a church directory.

Through selling licenses, the organization managing the national database of churches is able to pay for the system. Rather than GlobalRize always looking for donations to fund the project, it has been designed such that those who receive benefit from the database are able to participate in the development and use of Harvest.

Though it is possible to build up a Harvest database starting from one denomination, it is not ideal. It is better if an association of denominations takes the lead. The most promising solution is to set up an independent Church Resource Center that builds trust with and is willing to serve all denominations.

Harvest has the potential radically to change the face of mission statistics by making an insider perspective on a national church possible for everyone. It is the authors’ conviction that this contributes to the advancement of God’s kingdom in many ways, most notably in showing all the areas in a country where the gospel has not yet reached.

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Lausanne Global Analysis

Lausanne Global Analysis seeks to deliver strategic and credible information and insight from an international network of evangelical analysts to equip influencers of global mission.

Editor's Note: The Lausanne Movement connects influencers and ideas for global mission, with a vision of the gospel for every person, an evangelical church for every people, Christ-like leaders for every church, and kingdom impact in every sphere of society. Our three foundational documents are *The Lausanne Covenant*, *The Manila Manifesto*, and *The Cape Town Commitment*.

The Lausanne Movement is a global network of individuals and ministries from a wide range of denominations, nationalities, theologies, and strategic perspectives that shares an evangelical faith and commitment to global mission. Articles in the *Lausanne Global Analysis* represent a diversity of viewpoints within the bounds of our foundational documents. The views and opinions expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the personal viewpoints of Lausanne Movement leaders or networks.

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