

STATE OF THE WORLD 2016

A YLG presentation by Operation World

[SLIDE 1: TITLE]

As we share about the state of the world, please listen with your hearts, your minds, your spirits. If the material inspires or challenges you, we at Operation World (info@operationworld.org) would love to hear from you. We are embarking on a reboot of the ministry, including the need to recruit. So please get in touch with us if this kind of information and ministry interests you!

[SLIDE 2: World religions map]

WORLD RELIGIONS

As we look at the concentration of the world's religions, it becomes apparent that despite all the talk of globalisation and migration, most religions still tend to be fairly concentrated in a particular region. This is true of Hinduism, Buddhism, even Islam to a degree.

[SLIDE 3: World Christians map]

GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

1. Christianity is a notable exception – it is the world's most globalised, most geographically dispersed, and most culturally and ethnically diverse religion.

[SLIDE 4: Mosaic]

Who are the world's Christians and where do they live? We are 2.3 billion individuals, in different traditions and from around 38,000 denominations. There are now groups of believers meeting in every country, from more cultures and ethnic groups and locations than ever. The need for unity among brothers and sisters in Christ is as relevant now as it was when Jesus prayed that we might be one in John 17.

[SLIDE 5: Shifts in Christianity]

2. **Shifts in recent years.**
 - a. Christianity has accounted for around 1/3 of the world's population for the last hundred years. But where that 1/3 lives has shifted, dramatically. In 1960, 29% of all evangelical Christians were from Africa, Asia, or Latin America. Today it is around 78%, and by 2020, this figure is expected to be 80%. This shift is observable across all major Christian traditions and blocs, not just evangelicals.

[SLIDE 6: Evangelical Christianity]

- b. **But the wider Church IS becoming more evangelical.** EVANGELICALS were less than 3% of humanity in 1960, and are over 8% now (that's over 600 million evangelicals). Around 1 out of every 4 Christians now adhere to an evangelical expression or practice of their Christian faith. (This is according to the Operation World definition of and methodology for counting evangelicals - <http://www.operationworld.org/glossary>)

[SLIDE 7: Globe / hands (Research, partnership, prayer)]

1. Only during the 1990s – nearly 2000 years after Jesus' Commission to disciple all nations - did we gain a relatively complete global picture of all peoples, languages, denominations, Christians and the like. This is the result of painstaking research done by key groups with global vision: Patrick Johnstone and Operation World, David Barrett and the World Christian Encyclopedia, the Joshua Project, SIL's Ethnologue. With this information, together with UN and other NGO data, we now have an understanding of needs and opportunities like never before. We know better than ever where the church is, where the church still needs to go, and what the church still needs to do! Used well, we have incredible fuel for prayer, and vital data for wise mission strategy and decision-making.
2. There is a greater degree of collaboration and partnership than ever before - partly out of necessity due to the size and complexity of church and mission, but partly out of an increased willingness and desire to partner together in God-honouring ways. Lausanne itself is a testament to this development.
3. There is also greater deliberate focus on prayer in the Global Church – dynamic new prayer movements, networks, and initiatives are popping up all over there world! For every one that you have heard of before, there are dozens of grassroots ones that you have never heard about – and probably never will! Some meetings draw in over 1 million people (the monthly Holy Ghost Service in Nigeria), and many meetings are less than 10. We know someone who committed with one friend, and whoever else joins them, to pray for the world using Operation World every night at 9PM, until Jesus returns. Prayer is changing the church, and changing the world.

[SLIDE 8: Progress in the Great Commission]

GREAT COMMISSION

1. More people have become believers in the last 25 years than at any other point in history, by a huge margin. And much of this growth has occurred in the context of significant persecution and suffering.

The world population has gone from 50% unevangelized in 1960 to 29% unevangelized in 2015. Out of over 16,000 distinct ethnolinguistic people groups, there are only around 650 with significant population who are considered unreached, and who are also unengaged by missionary activity. This is incredible progress globally!

[SLIDE 9: Polycentric sending (map)]

2. Missionary sending has conclusively shifted. "From the West to the Rest" has become "From Everywhere to Everywhere" - increasingly referred to as "polycentric mission", where we have multiple centres for sending and receiving. The mission fields of our grandparents' generation are now home to some of the world's most dynamic mission-sending movements - such as Nigeria, China, Brazil, India, Philippines, Indonesia, Ethiopia. Former mission *fields* sending workers to former mission *sending lands* is seeing "reverse mission" happen: one profound example is of the Mizo people of NE India sending missionaries to Wales - the place from which *they* first received the Gospel from Welsh missionaries 100 years ago.

As a result of these shifts the world's mission force is more diverse than ever! It is diverse in nationality, ethnicity and locations. But also in the organisations involved, and in the many various ways mission is done.

[SLIDE 10: Urbanization]

GENERAL CONTEXT OF SOCIETY AND CULTURE

1. Looking at the wider context: The story of humanity has been the story of urbanisation, from the Garden of Eden to the New Jerusalem. In 2008, the human population passed 50% urbanite for the first time – *and* urbanisation is accelerating. Cities now contain not just the most people, but by far the most influence - whether economic, cultural, or political. Megacities, more than nation-states, will be the dominating global force of the future.

[SLIDE 11: Demographics - lifespan and decline]

2. Human lifespans are increasing, and human birthrates are declining. The average age of human beings is getting older and older. By the year 2050, there will be as many people over 60 years old as those 15 and under. Just as one example: In the '80s there were around 100,000 people who were aged over 100 years old. By 2050 there will be 4 million of them. Such changes will have a massive effect on employment issues, retirement age, pensions, and the cost and duration of medical care for the elderly. It will also present many new opportunities for Christian service.

[SLIDE 12: Demographics - future growth]

As Global North populations begin to actually decline in number, half of all human population growth between now and 2050 will happen in just 8 countries. Additionally, and in the same time frame, more than half of all projected population growth will happen just in Africa. How strategic is it that we pour prayers and workers NOW into those places of greatest future growth!
(<http://tinyurl.com/zoe6gmf>)

[SLIDE 13: Poverty and disparity]

3. We've actually made amazing progress in reducing absolute poverty around the world. Only about 10% of the world's population now lives in what the UN refers to as "extreme poverty" – a first since such things could be measured!

On the flip side, that means over 700 million people still live in extreme poverty. Injustice and exploitation continue, especially amongst the poor, while the gap between haves and have nots widens rapidly. The 62 richest people in the world possess as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity. The richest 1% control half of the world's resources.

4. So, what happens when you have one set of countries with most of the wealth, as well as a declining, elderly population, and then another set of countries with most of the poverty, with a young and fast-growing population?

[SLIDE 14: Migration]

The migration challenges that we face today are only the tip of the iceberg compared to what will happen over the next 40 years. In the years to come, migration, as much as any other factor, will be the context for human need and conflict – and for ministry opportunity.

[SLIDE 15: Information / Media / Human Identity]

5. More than ever, our lives are driven by data- a truly mixed blessing. Like which movies get 7 sequels and which don't, which cereal you can buy off the shelf of your local grocery store, which posts and ads appear in your social media feeds.

As the volume of information increases, so does our reliance on someone or something else to curate it for us. By accident or by design, we get stuck in a “filter bubble” where we primarily read from sources and people who most agree with our own views and values. This gives an ever more narrowing perspective, isolated from those with whom we disagree! This not only prevents us from learning and growing and engaging, but can also trick us into dehumanising those who hold different views. The most powerful way to remind myself of the sinfulness of human nature is to delve into the comments section of posts on most social media sites.
(https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles)

6. What does it even mean to be human? This might seem like a silly question – but it is one that is increasingly important as morals and ethics as well as science and technology push the boundaries.
With medical advances, virtual reality, ever longer lifespans, and artificial intelligence - and with debates raging on the sanctity of human life and the nature of human sexuality - forming a sound Biblical worldview and ethic is essential.

B. LOOKING AHEAD

We are in new territory now. The challenges we face are staggering and unprecedented, and they are coming at us faster and faster.

[SLIDE 16: Unprecedented change and complexity]

THE FUTURE OF HUMAN SOCIETY

1. *Unprecedented change.* Life is accelerating in almost every sphere. For example, the first human genome was sequenced in 2004 at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. Now, machines can sequence 18,000 genomes a year for \$1,000 each. Long term planning becomes extremely difficult in such volatile environments. Nimbleness, adaptability and short-term flexible planning win out.
2. *Unprecedented complexity.* The world is inextricably interconnected and complex - and getting more so. It is impossible for any one person - or group - to understand how everything fits together and inter-relates!
3. *Unprecedented uncertainty.* We live in an age where humanity can wipe itself out by the push of a button or by the release of the wrong virus, and where we have the capacity to cause irreparable damage to our own environment for no other reasons than greed, selfishness and short-sightedness. No one is sure where it's all headed - but we will all be affected!

On the more mundane level, you don't have to be a Shia Muslim in Iraq or a religious minority in Pakistan to get killed by an act of terror – you could be a Dallas police officer, a Brussels commuter, a transit passenger in Istanbul, a Parisian concert-goer, a coffee drinker in Sydney, a blogger in Bangladesh, a student in China, or at a school camp in Norway.

Our existence has never been so secure, so comfortable, and so precarious at the same time.

4. *Unprecedented opportunity.* It's not all bad news! Never before have we had the capacity to do so much GOOD in the world. All these advances in technology, communication, and more. can

also translate into effective and rapidly deployable means of sharing and demonstrating the Good News.

At this point, we can shift from looking *around* to looking *ahead*.

[SLIDE 17: Religions - future growth]

THE FUTURE OF WORLD RELIGIONS

Contrary to popular secular opinion, the world is becoming *more* religious, not less so. The population peak for 'non-religious' adherents was in the 1980s. With the dissolution of the USSR and changes within China, Vietnam, Cuba, etc, the world's religious population has surged up from 80% at the peak of the Cold War to around 86% today, and is expected to reach 90% by 2025. The non-religious population has the lowest fertility rates in the world. So, when people lazily assert that religion is disappearing globally, please dissuade them from that misconception! The facts are out there to see plainly.

At the same time, fundamentalism or radicalisation is rising up, especially within the sphere of most world religions - not just one! It is largely a reaction against some very complex developments - *modernity, globalisation, secularisation, and pluralism*. When you have these forces aggressively pushing up against each other, it usually creates a context wherein sharing the Gospel becomes more difficult and often more costly.

[SLIDE 18: The global body - globe]

THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

Most future Christian growth - and most growth of evangelical Christianity - will continue to happen in Africa, Asia, and Latin America in coming decades - from higher birthrates and larger numbers of conversions. This means the Global South majority in the worldwide body of Christ will become an ever-larger majority.

While the Global South Church strengthens as a majority in the decades to come, places like Brasil, Nigeria, Ethiopia, China, India, and the Philippines will increasingly provide leadership to - and set the agenda for - the global Christian family. Our experience of this reality is being somewhat delayed because the Global North Church - especially USA, Europe, South Korea - is often entrenched in leadership, tends to reflect more assertive cultures, and, let's be honest, has a lot of money! But change is inevitable - and it is already here! After all, the Pope is Argentinian, the head of the WEA is a Filipino, the head of IFES is from Chad, of OMF from Hong Kong, of SIM from Nigeria, of Interserve from India, of the Navigators from Kenya, and of OM from Singapore. PRAISE GOD FOR THAT. The body of Christ is starting to really look like a BODY and not like a pile of index fingers!

[SLIDE 19: Unevangelized - pie charts]

THE FUTURE OF MISSION AND EVANGELISATION

Mixed Progress

As mentioned before, the **percent** of the world's population that is unevangelized has decreased from being 50% to around 29%. But, due to population growth, the **number** of unevangelized individuals increased by over 600 million people in that same time frame. Every day there are more unevangelized individuals on planet earth - unevangelized populations are multiplying faster than they are being reached with the Gospel. We are losing ground, and this reality is a massive challenge facing the church.

[SLIDE 20: Unevangelized - map]

The unevangelised are concentrated in particular parts of the world, and in the stronghold regions of other faiths. They tend to be concentrated in the most volatile, unstable and often most violent areas. 85% of people living in poverty are also located in the unevangelized world. The need is much more than only spiritual.

[SLIDE 21: Where the unevangelized live]

Although 1 in 6 people globally live in slums - over 1 billion people! - less than 1 out of 500 Christian missionaries works in the slums. Only a tiny fraction (perhaps 1 in 10,000) of national workers (such as pastors) works in slums in their own countries. Few would want to. Few would choose to. But out of the 200,000 who move into cities **every day**, 80% end up in slums. In reaching the unreached, these are the places to which we must go.

Rural communities can't be overlooked despite the mass migration to urban areas. Remember that over 3.5 billion people still live in rural contexts. The least evangelised countries also happen to have the highest rural population proportion. Even while we prioritise urban slums, and urban ministry, we absolutely cannot abandon the rural unreached.

There are 232 million international migrants – together they would be the 5th largest country in the world by population. The average stay in a refugee camp is 17 years. These are not “camps”. They are cities in their own right where people are born, live, and die without ever hearing the Gospel or experiencing the love of Christ.

(<http://tinyurl.com/jchcm2v>)

We must keep our eyes and our hearts open for the **most vulnerable / overlooked populations among us**. As just one example - 1.2 million children are trafficked every year. 80% of trafficked people are women and children, and the majority of those are trafficked for the sex trade.

When Scripture talks about pure and undefiled religion, it is talking about caring for the most vulnerable groups of people in society. Who are the most vulnerable groups in *our* societies and how can we be caring for them?

[SLIDE 22: the 81%]

It is estimated that 81% of the world's non-Christians don't personally know a Christian. 81%! For hundreds of millions of people, **we** are the only Gospel they may ever encounter. Many of those same people also lack access to the gospel message in their own language, in any form. There may be Christians in every country, but the spread is far from even. Christian are over 90% of the population in some countries and less than one hundredth of one percent in others.

[SLIDE 23: repeat the people group mosaic slide?]

With the challenge of nearly 7000 least reached people groups, who account for most of the 2 billion plus unevangelised individuals, I think the need is obvious to all. If the need were not obvious, urgent, and real, then why is there such a growth of mission sending movements from the Global South?

It is our responsibility together to ensure that no communities or people groups remain hidden, overlooked, or ignored when it comes to our sharing the love of Christ and the good news of His gospel. It was probably said best by William Carey, known to many as the father of modern missions in his seminal work *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792):

One of the first, and most important of those duties which are incumbent upon us, is fervent and united prayer...The most glorious works of grace that have ever took place, have been in answer to prayer; and it is in this way, we have the greatest reason to suppose, that the glorious out-pouring of the Spirit, which we expect at last, will be bestowed...Many can do nothing but pray, and prayer is perhaps the only thing in which Christians of all denominations can cordially, and unreservedly unite.

What story will future generations of Younger Leaders tell of us, and how we faced this challenge in our generation?

[SLIDE 24: Our Response]

C. LOOKING WITHIN AND LOOKING UP

There is no magic bullet for solving this. There is no shortcut through the long, tough slog of becoming disciples, and of making disciples - all throughout the body of Christ, all around the world. Last week, a small, off-the-record gathering of Global South church and mission leaders met at the Operation World offices. One of their conclusions from talks together was that the urgent priority and strategic bottleneck to further church growth and mission advance was the great challenge of making disciples rather than converts.

To convince an increasingly hostile world of the **truth** of the Gospel, we need to radically demonstrate the **power and love** of the Gospel. We need to be different from anything the kingdoms of this world can offer, even when this is difficult, even when it is costly.

We **must** do it, because the King of Kings has commanded us,
but we **can** do it because the one with all authority in heaven and earth has commissioned us.

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Statistics on Religions, Christianity, Denominations, Evangelicals, the Unevangelized /Unreached and Missions taken from Operation World, Center for the Study of Global Christianity, and Joshua Project