

MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES

RPTS Missiology Series

REACH • PLANT • TRAIN • SERVE

Volume 1



VISION, MISSION, AND CORE VALUES

RPTS

Missiology Series

REACH • PLANT • TRAIN • SERVE



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RPTS Missions Series Publication

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PREFACE


Greg Mundis

As workers in the kingdom of God, we are on a life and ministry journey. This journey is full of joys, and yes, even sorrows. There are smooth roads, fast roads, and obstacles that need to be removed or overcome. Sometimes we are so caught up in the cares of the journey that the destination is not given priority. When this is the case, we find ourselves on side roads or roads that lead to cul-de-sacs. As leadership, we have reflected on the journey we are all on and have come to the conclusion that we all need to reemphasize and refocus not only the how, when, who, and what of the journey, but also the where and why.

This compiled volume on our mission—Reach, Plant, Train, and Serve (RPTS)—is about the where and why. You see, our vision, purpose, mission, and core values provide for us a compass pointing true north to the goal of our journey. Our hope, prayer, and objective is that this resource will be an additional navigational tool to keep us all going on the right road, going in the right direction, and going with each other.

May Jesus Christ our Lord, Savior, and Guide be glorified on the journey and in our reaching His goal.

Series Introduction

n November 23, 1914, in the second General Council of the Assemblies of God held at Stone Church in Chicago, attendees made the commitment “for the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen.”¹ From that time to the present, the Assemblies of God (USA) has maintained a missional focus as part of its DNA.

We have remained resolute to reaching every people in every nation with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This commitment is driven by our deep sense of call to the harvest fields of our world *so all can hear!* Our purpose flows out of AGWM’s vision that *Christ will be proclaimed and His Church will be established in all nations through the power of the Spirit.* (Refer to Appendix A for statements of our vision, mission, and purpose.)

Today's generation stands at a unique vantage point as we look back over 100 years of missions history and, at the same time, gaze into the future toward the unfulfilled task of over 4 billion people who remain without a meaningful life-giving witness of Jesus. For this reason, we do not think it at all strange that a mission with a 100-year history should be reemphasizing the importance of its vision, purpose, mission, and values. There are three reasons for prioritizing

¹ General Council of the Assemblies of God Minutes, Monday, Nov. 23, 1914.

these key DNA elements to keep us focused and committed to our collective call in our missionary task.

The *first* reason is the tendency of missions agencies to shift their focus over time. Human organizations are predisposed to drifting away from the core and elemental vision, mission, and values of their original call, which is termed “mission drift.” For individuals who have served many years with Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) as well as those newly joining, it is important to reinforce key elements to ensure that our vision, mission, and values continue to shape our team's collective focus for future generations.

A *second* reason is the success of missions itself. In the twentieth century we observed many denominational missions organizations and agencies evolve and expand as they experienced success in their endeavors, only to lose sight of the moorings that anchored them to their biblical mandate and original purpose. Likewise, AGWM has evolved and developed over time in response to worldwide growth, yet we pray the Spirit helps us keep the main thing, the main thing!

A *third* reason is the phenomenon of the social turn in North American Christianity. Until the 1950s, the consensus was that missions had to do with making disciples and planting churches. With the social turn, many Christians see missions as issue-based, focusing on a particular social problem without any relationship with or value placed on evangelizing the unreached and discipling reproducible communities of faith. Yet those who want a more integrated approach would maintain a strong connection to evangelism, church planting, and discipleship in the pursuit of responding to social issues. We should not assume missionaries over time will remain informed by the vision and mission or that new personnel will share the vision and the mission to reach, plant, train, and serve in an integrated whole as we evangelize the world.

A deep conviction of AGWM is to understand and implement the RPTS mission practice as an integrated approach. Viewing any one of its elements as a silo, as something to be practiced apart from the others, results in a disjointed, fragmented, and unhealthy mission philosophy and method. Drawing upon Scripture and missions history as well as insights from current missiological realities, we can glean valuable principles that inform the importance of an integrated approach to our mission for AGWM missionaries serving Christ in diverse regions around the world.

In light of this rationale and background, the decision to introduce a new AGWM publication called the *RPTS Missiology Series* emerged. The *RPTS Missiology Series* seeks to advance the cause of world evangelization and alignment of our AGWM vision, mission, and values through study and evaluation of missions concepts and strategies from biblical-theological, historical, and practical perspectives, with a view to affirming sound missions theory and practice within AGWM, Assemblies of God churches, and support ministries. While we value functioning strategies and practices, the goal is to focus on “best practices” for the expressed purpose of being a flourishing mission. As such, this series will engage in various contemporary missions and missiological themes in order to articulate, discuss, highlight, and interact with key issues in missions today from the backdrop of continuity with Assemblies of God missiological heritage with fresh and robust thinking and assessments.

In this first volume, the articles focus on AGWM's vision, mission, and core values. The idea is to begin the series reemphasizing the foundational elements that shape the overall philosophy and methodology of our mission. This volume is divided into two sections. The first section consists of two articles addressing the vision, purpose, and mission written by AGWM's executive director and the director of Communications. In section two, eight articles follow

written by members of the AGWM Executive Committee addressing each core value and the significance of that value related to our mission's practice.

Our call to world evangelization means proclaiming the gospel and planting the church in the power of the Spirit among every people to give witness to Jesus Christ. Vision, mission, and values provide the glue that binds our collective call together to see that all people receive a meaningful, life-giving witness of the gospel.

Reach, Plant, Train, and Serve...so all can hear!

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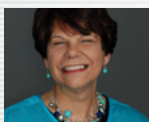
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AGWM VISION, PURPOSE, AND MISSION



“

BUT YOU WILL
RECEIVE POWER WHEN
THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES
ON YOU; AND YOU WILL
BE MY WITNESSES IN
JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL
JUDEA AND SAMARIA,
AND TO THE ENDS OF
THE EARTH.



— ACTS 1:8, NIV



Vision and Purpose of Assemblies of God World Missions

Greg Mundis

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In 1923 John W. Welch, an early leader and general superintendent of the Assemblies of God (AG), stated regarding this young Fellowship formed in 1914: “The General Council of the Assemblies of God was never meant to be an institution; it is just a missionary agency” (cited by McGee 1986, 81). The mission and purpose of Assemblies of God World Missions is deeply rooted in Scripture and integrated with the vision of the General Council. In the beginning, the Assemblies of God made no clear delineation between overseas missions and work in the United States. Outreach was all-inclusive and the reason for its existence.

In order to understand the Assemblies of God, one must recognize that our founding fathers regarded the Fellowship as a means, a vehicle, to evangelize the world. They intended the Fellowship to be readily perceived as part of the body of Christ, patterned after the New Testament Church. Several Scriptures shaped AG missiology during its early missional formation (e.g., Matthew 24:14; Mark

16:15, 17–18; Acts 1:8). In October 1915 the newly formed Fellowship went on record regarding evangelizing heathen lands through New Testament methods. Later J. Roswell Flower (a founding father of the Assemblies of God) reported to the General Council in 1920, “The vision of our Pentecostal missionaries is becoming more clarified, and it is realized we have a distinctive mission in the world. . . . An apostolic ministry in apostolic power and fullness is the aim of our Pentecostal Missionaries” (Flower 1920, 8). In 1921 the council constructed the Foreign Missions Department, including the missions committee and missionaries. At that point, the Foreign Missions Committee was identical to General Council's Executive Committee. This lasted until 1923, when the first executive director took leadership of the Foreign Missions Department. The subsequent three-year period was not administrated steadily, but in 1926 (later ratified by the 1927 General Council) incredible development and growth began under the leadership of Noel Perkin, the first executive director with actual overseas missions experience.

In the first several years of developing overseas missions, a committee appointed by the fledgling General Council defined the parameters of the Foreign Missions Department with five critical guidelines. For our discussion, two guidelines are most relevant: (1) “The Pauline example will be followed, so far as possible, by seeking out neglected regions where the gospel has not yet been preached, lest we build upon another's foundation” (Romans 15:20), and (2) “It shall be our purpose to seek to establish self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing native churches.”¹

These guidelines have been our compass throughout the 100-year history of World Missions (modified to be relevant in each context) and are rooted in the DNA of the church's outreach. For instance, along with the

¹ General Council 1921, 61. There can be little doubt of the significant influence on these by Alice Eveline Luce's three-part essay, “Paul's Missionary Methods,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (Jan. 8, 1921, 6–7; Jan. 22, 1921, 6, 11; and Feb. 5, 1921, 6–7) which in turn was based on Roland Allen's *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*

indigenous church principle articulated in early documents, anchored in AGWM's core values is this coupling: the principle of the indigenous church and the principle of partnership with indigenous churches.²

VISION AND PURPOSE STATEMENTS

This brief background provides a platform to discuss the AGWM vision and purpose:

Vision Statement

“Christ will be proclaimed and His Church will be established in all nations through the power of the Spirit.”

Purpose Statement

“So *all* can hear.”

VISION AND PURPOSE STATEMENTS: EXPLAINED

Vision Statement

“Christ will be proclaimed.” When evangelicals ask Pentecostals to name the most important truth they proclaim, many express surprise that Pentecostals name the message of Christ—His virgin birth, sinless life, atoning death on the Cross, burial, resurrection, ascension, return as King, and place beside God in eternity—because they think the most important truth for Pentecostals is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The fact is, Pentecostals depend totally on the help and guidance of the Spirit;

² Melvin L. Hodges (1971; 1978) has been an important voice in AG missiology, especially with his works on the indigenous church principle, and Morris Williams (1986) is likewise noted for his articulation of the partnership principle.

however, Scripture points out that the Spirit was sent to lift up Jesus (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:12–16). The center of AG theology and missiology is Jesus Christ. Jesus testified about himself, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him” (John 3:14–15).³

“And His Church will be established.” In Ephesians 5:23 Christ is described as “the head of the church, his body.” In Acts 9:4 Saul, on his way to persecute followers of Jesus Christ in Damascus, was interrupted by the Lord Jesus through divine revelation, saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you *persecute me*?” (emphasis added). Melvin Hodges, who was a Latin America missionary, missions executive (field director), and author, wrote in his book *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective*, “The word *church* is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia* which means ‘the called out, the summoned.’ The Church is a select company of people ‘called out of the masses’ for worship, service, and witness” (Hodges 1977, 54; emphasis original). Hodges goes on to say, “The Bible teaches that the Church is the medium of expression of God’s purpose to the world manifested in the gospel during the interim between Christ’s first and second advents. . . . We believe that the Church is God’s only redemptive agency in the earth today” (Hodges 1977, 69). AGWM’s conviction is emphasized by the words of J. Philip Hogan, a former executive director of the missions agency: “The chief mission of the church in this age is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in finding and maturing a body known as the church of Jesus Christ” (Hogan 2006b, 36). And further, “The Division of Foreign Missions is not satisfied until there emerges a local identifiable unit of the body of Jesus Christ” (Hogan 2006b, 39). Douglas Petersen, quoting Hogan, writes, “If the work of God grows, . . . it must grow on the local level. . . . Success . . . would be measured by our gains in churches, not endeavors” (Petersen 2006, 14).

“In all nations through the power of the Spirit.” From Genesis 12:3, which clearly declares, “All peoples [nations, tribes] on earth will be blessed

3 This and subsequent biblical quotes will be from the NIV.

through you,” and throughout the rest of the Bible, the Lord makes clear that His love and salvation are not exclusive, but rather inclusive for all mankind. He manifests His love and salvation through His Church in the power of the Spirit. Prior to the Pentecostal outpouring in the twentieth century, R. A. Torrey wrote, “The Baptism with the Spirit is not intended to make us happy. . . not even primarily for the purpose of cleansing from sin, but for the purpose of empowering for service.”⁴ The Spirit is needed in order for His Church to be the bold witnesses required to turn the world upside down. The Spirit prepares the hard soil, empowers the worker, guides the mission, and matures the Church. As David Kent Irwin (founder of Center for Ministry to Muslims; now Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples) said,

It would be the ultimate tragedy for the church . . . to think the extensive outpouring of the Holy Spirit “upon all flesh” is some kind of ecclesiastical fad. . . . The Great Commission and the charismata are not options we can take or leave. The same Holy Spirit who prepares ethnic soils in preevangelism is also maturing the harvest. The Great Commission is the standard by which our stewardship will be judged.⁵

Purpose Statement

Although the purpose statement “So *all* can hear” is not found word for word in the AG founding documents, this purpose has manifested itself throughout the Assemblies of God and its missions history. Taking the gospel to people who have not heard is a central strand of our spiritual DNA. It is an expression of the Great Commission woven throughout generations of AG missionaries, pastors, and leaders to the present day. AGWM presses beyond geographical borders and borders of religion, worldview, and personal perceptions. At every turn, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, every available creative means is used to reach the lost

4 Torrey 1897, 15, quoted by McGee 2004, 18.

5 Hogan is quoting Irwin, Hogan 2006a, 116.

around the world. As Randy Hurst, director of AGWM Communications, wrote, “Humanity is lost. Eternity is certain. Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation” (Hurst 2012). Thus, the priority is reaching the unreached without neglecting so-called “Christian nations” like the United States and much of Europe. Everyone everywhere deserves the opportunity to hear, to understand, and to be able to respond to the gospel. Every person needs an *adequate* witness in order to realize that opportunity. Even as national churches grow and thrive, AGWM in particular and the Assemblies of God in general cannot neglect any unreached people groups or any lost people in those countries. The Lord compels His children to rely on the Spirit’s guidance and empowerment to keep pressing on to reach the lost everywhere.

CONCLUSION

Under a great and awesome commission from God, AGWM and each follower of Jesus Christ cannot be content to coast into the future upon collective, historic missions efforts. The Holy Spirit empowers with a holy dissatisfaction for the status quo. AGWM workers, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, are empowered by the Spirit to be His witnesses so *all* can hear—that Christ will be proclaimed and His Church established in all nations through the power of the Spirit.

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Our Mission: Reaching, Planting, Training, and Serving

Randy Hurst

Reach the lost. Plant churches. Train believers. Serve the poor.

When the Lord issues commands, there is no choice about which commandments to obey. Lordship requires complete obedience. Nothing less.

The four elements of the AGWM mission were not defined by a strategy committee. They came about through obedience to biblical commands and the Spirit's leading. By simply obeying the Word and the Spirit, the early AGWM missionary leaders became strategic. In 1982 a mission statement was formalized, based on four thematic mandates of Scripture: evangelism, establishing indigenous churches, training national believers, and serving the poor and suffering with Christ's compassion. But the Assemblies of God (USA) missionaries had been fulfilling these four long before the mission statement was officially established. In 1997 AGWM's mission statement was simplified to express its mission in four simple words, and in 2015 those words were updated to *reach, plant, train, and serve*.

REACH THE LOST WITH THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST

No one communicated eternal truth as clearly as Jesus did. He poignantly emphasized the priority of reaching the lost: “There will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7, NASB). If it is true that every person will face eternity and Jesus is the Savior of the world, then everyone must be told. It’s that simple.

The Bible teaches that every person faces only two possible eternal destinations—heaven or hell. No one is more lost than anyone else. But not all spiritually lost people have the same access to the gospel. This fact compelled the apostle Paul to keep pressing into “regions beyond” where Christ had not been proclaimed (2 Corinthians 10:16, Romans 15:19–20).

There are more than 67 million church members in AG fraternal fellowships. When compared with the staggering estimated 4.4 billion people in the world who lack an adequate witness of the gospel, it is overwhelming. The numbers show an ironic reversal of the 99 to 1 ratio in the Parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke 15, where the shepherd leaves the 99 secure sheep to rescue the 1 lost. The number of believers attending AG churches worldwide equals about 1.5 percent of the world’s unreached. Any joy or sense of pride over those safely in the fold is vastly overshadowed by the sobering reality of those still lost and without access to an adequate witness.

Like Paul, we must seek to proclaim the good news where Christ has not been named. It is unacceptable that the message of Jesus has not been adequately presented to more than two-thirds of the world’s population. How tragic it is that some people can hear the message repeatedly when others have never heard it once.

PLANT INDIGENOUS NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES

Those reached through evangelism must be discipled, as our Lord commanded in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20). The mode by which this discipleship takes place is within a local church. As the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23) clearly shows, genuine spiritual life can begin in a heart, yet still die from scorching persecution, the thorns of temporal needs, or the desire for riches. The seed must be watered and cultivated so life can endure and multiply.

A 1914 resolution at the second AG General Council states: “We commit ourselves and the movement to Him for the greatest evangelism the world has ever seen.”¹ Another resolution from the 1921 General Council determined *how* the Fellowship could enact that earlier declaration. Our mission would be guided by “New Testament practices” and “seek to establish self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing native churches”—known simply today as “indigenous churches” (General Council 1921, 61).

The directive of AGWM, based on a New Testament understanding of Paul’s mission and the work of Christ, is to plant local groups of believers who will not be dependent on the church that sent the missionaries. An indigenous church begins (is planted), grows, and multiplies in its natural environment.

While this principle is almost a century old in AG missiology, over the past five decades, a clearer and more robust perspective on indigenous church principles has emerged and been tested. When and where the “indigenous church principle” is applied, the national church becomes strong, healthy, and self-multiplying. Where this principle is not implemented by missionaries, the national church is weak and dependent.²

1 General Council of the Assemblies of God, Nov. 23, 1914, 12.

2 On the indigenous church principle, see the chapter by Greg Beggs.

As a healthy national church grows and matures, the missionary relationship progresses from spiritual parenting to spiritual partnering. When missionaries and national churches committed themselves to intense evangelism in the 1990s, the strategy of partnering with indigenous churches produced the greatest growth in the history of the Assemblies of God worldwide. During the last two decades, AG fraternal fellowships around the world have increased in membership from 28 million to more than 67 million today.

TRAIN BELIEVERS FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE

The primary means God uses to establish His Church is the same today as when He commanded His first followers: by discipling people as He did. Even in the face of challenges and increasing restrictions, the work of discipleship essentially involves one follower of Christ preparing another to do the same. The apostle Paul instructed Timothy: “The things which you have heard from me . . . entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

Paul instructed Timothy and Titus to appoint elders and deacons in every new church. This practice exemplifies the Holy Spirit’s work of raising up and equipping leaders wherever the Church is established. Training leaders is not only for personal fulfillment and advancement. AGWM trains spiritual leaders to serve effectively as pastors, evangelists, teachers, and missionaries—gifts to the Church as the Spirit intended them to be.

From Jesus’ first disciples to believers today, the Lord continues to call each laborer into His harvest field. We are commanded as a mission to equip those whom Christ has chosen to “teach others also.”

SERVE THE POOR AND SUFFERING WITH THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

From the Assemblies of God's earliest beginnings, Spirit-filled missionaries have reached out to the poor and suffering. Why? Both the commands of God's Word and the Spirit of Christ within them would not allow them to "pass by on the other side" when seeing someone in need, as did the priest and Levite in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37). But a major difference exists between how our missionaries serve those in need and how secular or even parachurch organizations do.

Assemblies of God missionaries and compassion ministries³ do not merely serve people's physical needs. They also reach people with the good news about Jesus. Unless the needs of people's eternal souls are addressed, any effort to meet their physical and social needs is incomplete and temporary. Ever present are the words of Jesus, "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36, NASB).

Historically, many missions organizations have diluted their missionary purpose and become agencies of social reform at the exclusion of proclaiming the gospel. They have literally fallen into "mission drift." For the Assemblies of God, compassion ministry is always integrated and part and parcel with sharing the gospel and establishing the church.

More than 366,000 AG churches⁴ around the world are the most effective distribution network for compassion ministries. Believers not only help people around them but also share the gospel and offer the lost a spiritual family where new believers can grow in the Lord.

³ On compassion ministries, see the chapter by JoAnn Butrin.

⁴ For the latest statistics, see *Assemblies of God World Missions*, *AGWM Vital Statistics*; and *Assemblies of God, Statistics of the Assemblies of God (USA)*.

In some countries, compassion ministry is the primary means through which an entrance can be made into the country and/or locale in order to have a venue for presenting the gospel. As a result of AGWM's responses to natural disasters and other crises, many have experienced the compassion of Christ, new believers have responded to the gospel message, and new churches have been established.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20, NIV).

To be committed to the Lord's mission means being submitted to His lordship. Unlike many church bodies and missions agencies that focus only on certain parts of the world, early AG leaders felt compelled by the Spirit to obey our Lord's command, "Go into *all* the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15, NKJV, emphasis added).

How could such a small group as the disciples even consider attempting to preach the gospel throughout the world? They believed both Jesus' command to reach the whole world and also His promise that they would receive the Spirit's power to do so (Acts 1:8). They committed themselves to a purposeful mission guided by the directives of Jesus.

AGWM follows a comprehensive and integrated plan to reach, plant, train, and serve. Each component works with the others to accomplish our first priority—establishing the church where it doesn't exist.

While parachurch organizations focus primarily on one aspect of missions, usually evangelism or compassion ministry, few are involved in training national leaders, and almost none are involved in church planting. However, the Church is called and commanded to do everything the Lord commanded.

More than 4 billion people still wait for an adequate witness of the gospel. The overwhelming need of the unreached in our world challenges us to do all we can to get the gospel to everyone we can. But even more than the need, obedience to our Lord's commands is our primary motivation. Jesus began the Great Commission by saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18, NASB). His lordship is the foundation of all we do.

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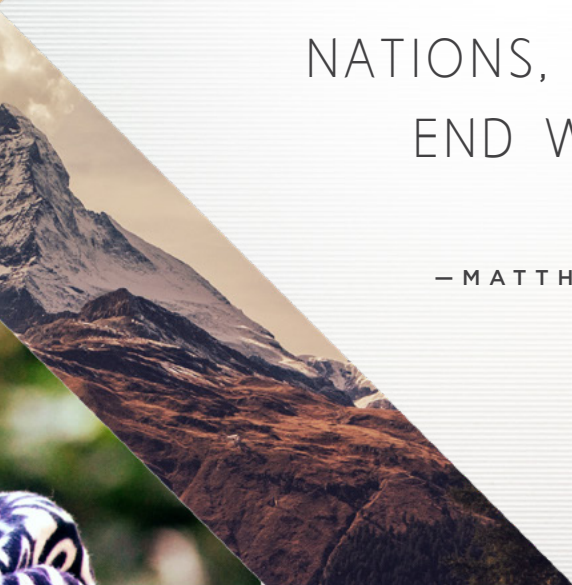


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AND THIS GOSPEL
OF THE KINGDOM WILL
BE PREACHED IN THE
WHOLE WORLD AS A
TESTIMONY TO ALL
NATIONS, AND THEN THE
END WILL COME.

— MATTHEW 24:14, NIV



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A Biblical Understanding of the Church's Mission

Ron Maddux

THE FOUNDATIONS

The mission, purpose, and nature of the Church are rooted in the biblical text, both Old and New Testaments.¹ Assemblies of God World Missions is committed to being Bible-based, Christocentric, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus clarifies the foundations of the Church in Matthew 16:18, where He states, “And on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (ESV). By this statement Jesus indicates His intention to create a new entity—the Church—that would perpetuate His redemptive purpose throughout the world among all peoples. The mission of the Church would be an endeavor fraught at times with violence, persecution, upheaval, and turmoil, but the Church would ultimately prevail.

¹ An important work looking at the thread of the *missio dei* (“mission of God”) through the Bible, church history, and into the future is John York’s *Missions in the Age of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2000). Some other key works that go into greater detail are listed in the bibliography at the end of this chapter.

The rock of foundation upon which Jesus would build His church was the confession of Peter, in which he stated that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”² Thus, this Church would be built on Christ and for Christ, in order to bring the peoples of the world to Christ.

The Church, then, is both a redeemed and a redemptive entity: redeemed in that it is a corporate body comprised of all who are beneficiaries of the salvific work of Christ; redemptive in that its mission is to bring the message of this salvation to all nations (*ethne*), which is in order to fulfill Revelation 7:9, “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” If Christ established the Church in order to advance His eternal purposes, what then does that look like—what is the mission of the Church?

The biblical mission of the Church is embodied in four actions: the preaching of the Word to all peoples everywhere with the intention of making disciples; the planting of the church that, in turn, perpetuates the gospel witness; training of believers to conserve the harvest; and ministering compassion in demonstration of the love of Christ.

REACHING THE LOST

First, the Church is to be a mobile enterprise that seeks out lost peoples, whoever and wherever they may be, in order to proclaim His message to them. The global nature of this venture requires that it be performed in a linguistically and culturally appropriate context. Jesus, in the Gospels and Acts, has commissioned the Church to perform this task as its primary concern. His final instructions must

² Matthew 16:16. All scripture portions are NIV unless otherwise noted. All italics in biblical quotes will be this author's emphasis.

be the Church's first priority.

In Matthew 28:18–19, Jesus indicated that He provided His authority in which the Church would move forward in this endeavor: “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*’ ” Jesus’ intent was not that this message just be communicated, but that it would be communicated with purpose. It was and is true that disciples who follow the commands of the Lord are to point people (of all nations) to Christ and that the end result will be that these new disciples will, in turn, propagate the good news of Jesus Christ. The implication is that the mission of the Church is not complete until the hearers of the message have become thoroughly discipled. Evangelism, then, is not the final goal to fulfill the Great Commission; rather, it is discipleship (Matthew 28:19–20; Romans 1:5).

Further, the mission is more than local. Jesus’ mandate in Mark 16:15 clearly demonstrates that the Church’s mission is worldwide and to all people, requiring verbal communication of the gospel message: “Go into *all the world* and *preach* the good news to *all creation*.”

In Luke, Jesus said the message of “*repentance for the forgiveness of sins* will be *preached* in his name to *all nations*, beginning in Jerusalem” (24:47). Luke continues Christ’s directive as Jesus amplifies His instructions in Acts 1:8: “But *you will receive power* when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and *you will be my witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the *ends of the earth*.” Jesus is saying to the Church that while this is a great mission that reaches from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, there will be a great empowerment as the Holy Spirit comes on individuals and equips them for the task. In this Luke/Acts narrative, Jesus is further communicating to the Church that His mission is focused on

all peoples. In other words, the mission of the Church is to take the message of repentance and forgiveness to all peoples wherever they may be.

The “all peoples” aspect of the Church’s mission cannot be overemphasized. The Church today is largely focused on nation-states. However, Jesus was focused on peoples. The “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of the earth” imperative was not about geopolitical entities, but about the fact that these are where and who the people are. A nation-state can disappear or appear as the result of a war or a treaty. People groups generally remain, and it is for people that Jesus gave himself as a ransom (Matthew 20:28).

The Church is to go and send; without that, the message of Jesus is not communicated. Romans 10:14–15 demonstrates this truth: “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?” Paul also speaks of this in his introduction in Romans 1:1: “Paul, a servant of Christ, called to be an apostle and *set apart for the gospel of God*.” Acts 13:2–3 records this: “‘*Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul* for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them *and sent them off*.” The Church must forever be a “going and sending” enterprise—going by setting apart, and sending its best in obedience to the biblical mandate.

PLANTING THE CHURCH

A second aspect of the mission of the Church is the replication and perpetuation of itself in local manifestations—that is, the mission of Christ to build His church by forming Great Commission disciples into communities of faith that will themselves be self-propagating.

Jesus established the seeds of the Church when He appointed the apostles: “Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he *might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons*” (Mark 3:13–15). Jesus established a training program in which He demonstrated to these newly designated apostles the nature of apostolic ministry. They learned that apostolic ministry involved both the task of declaration and the enablement for demonstrations of power.

In Acts 2:42–47, the apostles whom Jesus had trained demonstrated an additional aspect of apostolic ministry, the establishment of communities of faith (churches): “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. . . . They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” This Church was planted after Jesus’ model of ministry as “many wonders and signs performed by the apostles” (Acts 2:43) demonstrated that apostolic church planting is done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

While the common understanding of a church in Western culture expects land and a building and an erected cross, Paul required much less. In Romans 16:5, when sending greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, he requested, “Greet also *the church that meets at their house*.” Our task is not to plant and nurture what looks like an American version of church in style and appearance, but what truly reflects a community of believers to Jesus.

One aspect of the work of the Church is to establish faith communities where they do not exist—among those who do not have access to a meaningful witness of Christ—in formats that may be unfamiliar to traditional believers, but familiar to Christ by the

people's faith and praise. Paul purposed such when he professed, "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation" (Romans 15:20).

TRAINING BELIEVERS

Third, the mission of the Church is to train believers so the harvest can be conserved and perpetuated. The Matthew 28:18–20 Great Commission passage, having mandated the Church to "therefore go and make disciples of all nations," goes on to say, "*teaching* them to obey everything that I have commanded you." Again, the newly formed fellowship of believers in Acts 2 "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching." From the very beginning of the Church, the need for solid training as well as perpetuating the training to others was foundational to the Church's early and sustained growth.

Paul's model is that having won disciples and established churches, he would return to them to further train the believers. For example, as noted in Acts 14:20–22, "The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith."

Paul's ministry to the established churches was a teaching ministry, as he reminded the church at Corinth: "For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with *what I teach everywhere in every church*" (1 Corinthians 4:17).

Training is to be perpetuated through generations of believers so that it can be disseminated through the Church. As such, Paul instructed Timothy, "And the things you have heard me say in the

presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). Training and discipleship go hand in hand for the sake of future generations of followers of Jesus Christ.

However, it is not just about training for training’s sake; the greatest gift the Church can pass on is sound doctrine. This is in order that successive churches may be able to withstand false teaching and doctrinal error. Paul instructed Titus, “You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Sound, clearly articulated doctrine is necessary for the perpetuation and proper growth of the Church.

SERVING THE MARGINALIZED

Fourth, the mission of the Church is to respond with compassion to the hurting, the helpless, the hopeless, and the disenfranchised. By so doing, there is both a demonstration and declaration of Christ’s love to them.

Jesus, having been baptized in water, having the Spirit descend upon Him, and having been tempted by Satan, gave his inaugural address in His hometown synagogue in Nazareth. He read from Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18, KJV). Jesus’ personal mission statement, which is a model for the Church’s mission, indicates His intention toward a ministry demonstrating concern for both human suffering and spiritual need. Each point has double implications: for those in physical poverty and spiritual poverty (without Christ); for those whose hearts are broken by the cares of life and by spiritual need; for those who are in physical captivity and those who are captive to sin and Satan;

for those who are actually blind and those who are spiritually blind without knowledge of the Savior; and for those who are bruised by the circumstances of life and those who are bruised by spiritual conflict. For whatever reason people are suffering, Jesus ministers a compassionate touch to them, and so must the Church.

Serving the lost and the marginalized with the compassionate touch of the Master, in His name, brings those who would not otherwise have a chance to know Him an opportunity to see Christ through His servants. Compassion meets needs, touches hearts, and reflects the hope of Christ to a lost and dying world.

CONCLUSION

Our understanding of God's redemptive purpose in the world, which informs our understanding of the mission of the Church, is rooted in both the Old and New Testaments. The biblical mission of the Church is embodied in four actions: preaching the Word to all peoples everywhere with the intention of making disciples; planting the church that, in turn, perpetuates the gospel witness; training believers to conserve the harvest; and ministering compassion in demonstration of the love of Christ.

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Fulfilling our Mission in the Power of the Holy Spirit

Jeff W. Hartensveld

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:6–8)¹

These final words of Christ have echoed in the hearts of believers from generation to generation. Each generation has taken up the baton of the Great Commission and passed it on to the next, but oftentimes believers, including the majority evangelical missions world, hear only this command: “Go.” In contrast, at the core of Pentecostal theology—and what has driven the “go” from the Assemblies of God’s beginning until now—is Spirit empowerment.

¹ This and all subsequent biblical quotations in this chapter will be from the ESV unless specified otherwise.

Jesus clearly has a second order for us, which we see both in Luke 24:49, “And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high,” and in Acts 1:4–5, “And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’” The disciples were to obey, receive power, and then go; so also with missionaries today. Mission follows Spirit empowerment.² This can be clearly seen outlined and thematic in the Book of Acts. It’s also a dominant theme in the history of Pentecostalism in general and the Assemblies of God in particular.

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD AND BEING SPIRIT-LED

The Assemblies of God formed in 1914 as a product of two types of events: people were filled with the Holy Spirit with tongues as evidence, and then the more significant result, those people went out on missions. Time and space will not permit naming those who went in those early days; suffice to say, the catalyst for their mission was the Spirit infilling and empowerment they had received.³

After reading through hundreds of our candidate history papers and reflecting on personal experience, it is clear that today’s missionaries

2 This is a key theological theme in Pentecostal thought. See, for example, Gary B. McGee, “The Radical Strategy in Modern Mission: The Linkage of Paranormal Phenomena with Evangelism” in *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics*, edited by C. Douglas McConnell, 69–95; and Paul Pomerville, *Third Force in Missions: A Pentecostal Contribution to Contemporary Mission Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985).

3 As a good survey of missionaries sent in the Assemblies of God, see these books by Gary B. McGee: *This Gospel Shall Be Preached: A History and Theology of Assemblies of God Foreign Missions to 1959: Vol. 1* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1986); and the sequel to that volume, *This Gospel Shall Be Preached: A History and Theology of Assemblies of God Foreign Missions Since 1959: Vol. 2* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989).

line up with the same biblical and historical model we had at the beginning. When the Spirit infilling takes place, mission should be instantaneous—not that the Spirit’s infilling immediately catapults someone to a foreign land, but rather, the Spirit-led believer is immediately placed on Christ’s Great Commission trajectory. Spirit infilling brings an urging to “go.” The first instinct is to go to one’s own Jerusalem; however, it is important not to get stuck in that cul-de-sac, which would result in spiritual stagnation. The Spirit’s empowerment somehow drives followers of Christ to the ends of the earth. Spirit empowerment is valued because it is biblical, historical, and results in mission.

ASPECTS OF THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED LIFE

What are the implications of a Spirit-empowered life? First, the Spirit-empowered life is one of dependence on the Spirit for every aspect of ministry—the words spoken, the things done, and the finances needed. The Spirit-empowered life is the lessening of dependence on human ways and becoming more dependent on the Spirit’s ways. It is a reduced dependence on the flesh for answers and a greater dependence on the Spirit for answers to life’s struggles. The Holy Spirit enables us to see struggles through spiritual eyes and empowers us to do things His way—not our default human way—when we approach Him for help.

The Spirit-empowered life is also a Spirit-led life. This life is full of divine appointments that, as events are interpreted after their conclusion, were surely Spirit-driven. The Spirit-led life contains no circumstantial or coincidental happenings. Commonly stated questions are, “Lord, why did I meet that person?” or “Why were my plans derailed so that I ended up here?” The beauty of the Spirit-led life is that there is no need to be fazed or upset by delays or

the derailments of plans; the Lord may be divinely redirecting the schedule in order to accomplish His plans.

The Spirit-empowered life is just as it sounds—powerful. It is powerful for the taking down of strongholds, for seeing miracles, and for establishing the kingdom of God in places where it has never been established. The Spirit-empowered life gives confidence to those who operate in it that nothing is impossible with God.

Paul states in Ephesians 6:12, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” As the Kingdom is advanced around the world, some places are darker than others because the strongholds of the enemy have prevailed there for millennia. Nothing short of the Spirit-empowered life will take down those strongholds.

The fuel for a Spirit-empowered life is prayer and fasting. Remember that as believers pour out, they become empty, and not only that, but they also leak sometimes! That pouring out and leaking place the follower of Jesus in constant need of fuel. If ministry is out of the overflow of believers’ own lives, then rules of nature dictate that they will eventually run dry if there is no refueling. The fueling stations for the Spirit-empowered life are times set aside for deep prayer, especially with fasting. Spirit empowerment is not a reward for prayer and fasting; it is a byproduct. The motivation is to be more deeply connected to and in tune with the Spirit and His unlimited supply of power for our lives and ministry.

The Spirit-empowered life is not an exact science. It is important to not get puffed up thinking that any believer has the mind of God a hundred percent of the time. Discernment is needed, and the fruit of the Spirit must always be evident. A true Spirit-empowered life is one of humility and submission—humility in knowing everyone can be

wrong sometimes, and submission to other Spirit-empowered leaders and mentors. This submission enables believers and missionaries to hone their ability to be truly Spirit-empowered. Perhaps this is where the Spirit-empowered life gets derailed most often, when Spirit-empowered people no longer feel they need any other voice in their life. The fruit of the Spirit should be the more telling evidence of the Spirit-empowered life than the manifestation of spiritual gifts, which is more frequently associated with power.

Spirit-empowerment in daily lives of Christ followers and ministries is crucial because the focus is to be Spirit-driven rather than human-driven. With this, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Jesus and the Holy Spirit must lead the way.

PAUL’S MODEL OF THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED LIFE

One of the best scriptural examples of the Spirit-empowered life is found in Acts 16 when the apostle Paul receives the Macedonian call. This was nothing more than Spirit empowerment in Paul’s life to guide him where God wanted him to go. It is unclear if Macedonia was even on the apostle’s spiritual radar when he had the vision. Attempts had been made to go to Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, and Bithynia, places that were all forbidden by the Holy Spirit. How the Holy Spirit forbade Paul and his comrades to go into these regions is unclear, but they were so in tune with and dependent upon the Spirit that they knew not to go there. The entire story leads to a divine redirection in the form of a vision. So confident were they that they immediately got on a ship and went to Philippi. Almost immediately they saw conversions, miracles, and the establishment of the church. Spirit-empowered lives are easily redirected by the Spirit and not bent on accomplishing a personal vision or calling over what the Spirit is trying to accomplish.

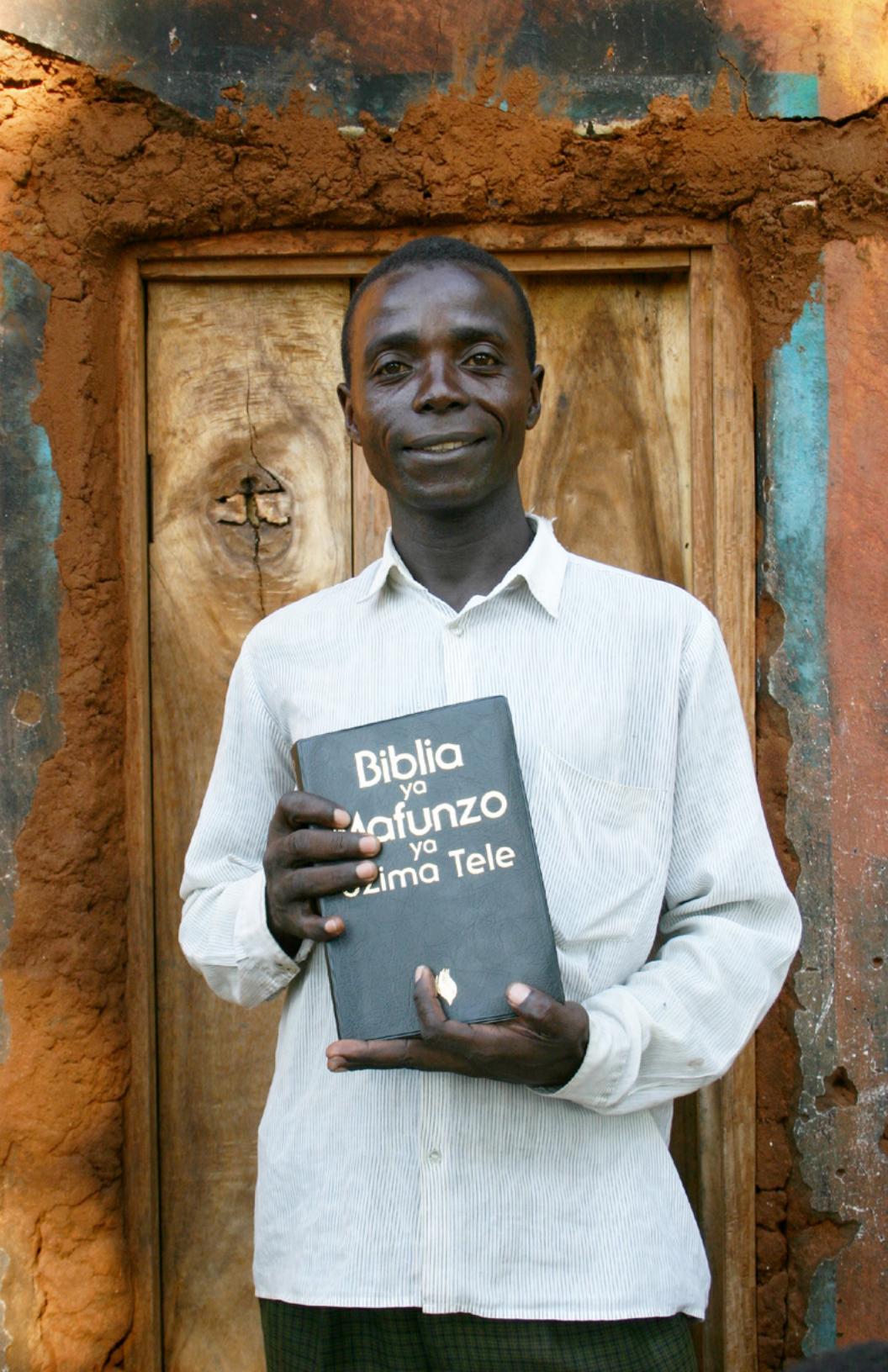
It is important to remember that the Spirit-empowered life does not guarantee escaping danger. Paul's visit to Philippi ended with a severe beating, time in prison, and eventual expulsion from the city. The Spirit-empowered life brings followers of Jesus to a place of fruitfulness in establishing God's kingdom, but not always to a place of personal safety. The Spirit-empowered life has a price tag that others often do not understand.

CONCLUSION

The Spirit-empowered life is valued because it was the biblical foundation for the apostles who went out in the Book of Acts, and has been the driving force of Assemblies of God missions for over a hundred years. The Spirit-empowered life is likewise pivotal because it is what equips His servants to complete the unfinished task.

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Indigenous Church Principles and Partnership

Greg Beggs

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

With more than 67 million people in the world today who call themselves Assemblies of God, and over 366,000 AG churches across the world,¹ the question could be asked, “How did this growth take place?” One answer is through the missionary methods of the early Pentecostal forebearers.

In a time when colonialism and totalitarianism were the order of the day, the Holy Spirit directed early AG missionaries to plant indigenous churches. Rather than pioneering churches that were dependent on the West for governance, finance, and reproductive vision, these Pentecostal forefathers initiated churches that could, with the Spirit’s help, stand under their own strength. Since 1914 the members of our Fellowship have “committed ourselves and the Movement to Him for

¹ For the latest statistics, see Assemblies of God World Missions, AGWM Vital Statistics; and Assemblies of God, Statistics of the Assemblies of God (USA).

the greatest evangelism the world has ever seen.”² The Assemblies of God has been fruitful for three reasons: first, being totally dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit; second, the practice of effective missiology in the intentional planting of indigenous churches around the world; and third, a clear focus on church planting. J. Philip Hogan³, a former executive director of Assemblies of God World Missions (under the former name, Division of Foreign Missions or DFM), said, “Success . . . would be measured by our gains in churches, not endeavors” (quoted in Petersen 2006, 14).

THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH

Donald Gee notes that “the word *indigenous* . . . simply means—‘*originating, or produced naturally, in a country; not foreign.*’ Or more briefly still—‘*Native; born in a country*’” (Gee, n.d., 2, italics original). Early in its history, the AG missions strategy endorsed the principles of the Three-Self Formula to guide the formation of indigenous churches. As an expression of this emphasis in AG missions and church planting, the indigenous church principles focus on three primary areas:

- *Self-governing.* In a *self-governing* church, nationals, empowered by the Holy Spirit, provide leadership for the church, rather than rely on outside agencies for governance structure and decision-making.
- *Self-supporting.* A *self-supporting* national church needs to support itself financially and does not rely on outside funding to carry on its work, but rather encourages its people to give in devotion to Christ and the work of ministry.

² General Council of the Assemblies of God, Nov. 23, 1914, 12.

³ A summary of his life is found at McGee and Pavia, “Hogan, James Philip,” 725-726. See also the important work by Everett Wilson, *Strategy of the Spirit*.

- *Self-propagating.* A *self-propagating* national church needs to reproduce itself by growing and planting other churches, and it effectively evangelizes on its own within the surrounding region and beyond. A self-propagating church should by nature be *self-missionizing*. There may be no greater indication of indigeneity than when a national church establishes a sending structure to mobilize workers to reach beyond its own people.⁴

In 1921, Alice Luce, who was the first Assemblies of God missiologist, composed a series of three articles for the *Pentecostal Evangel*⁵ that represent “perhaps the most noteworthy statement on missiology penned by a Pentecostal in the first half of the century” (McGee, 2010, 168). While she failed to recall his name,⁶ Luce clearly pentecostalizes Roland Allen’s writing, arguing, “Spirit baptism offered the means to empower believers for witness and to transform relationships necessary for creating indigenous churches.”⁷ Perhaps Luce was correcting some missiology that had potential to be ineffectual. Later that very year, the 1921 General Council enthusiastically adopted the Three-Self Formula and set its future course: “It shall be our purpose to seek to establish self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing native churches” (General Council, 1921, 61). It should also be noted that this was a change of missiological course. Prior to the 1921 decision, the General Council

4 Many missionaries have realized that it is not enough to characterize a church as indigenous only because it is self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. As a national church grows and matures, it should also learn to appropriately apply the Word of God to the lives of its members in light of the unique issues, situations, and experiences of the local people, as the Holy Spirit illuminates and quickens a community of faith. Hence, *self-theologizing* and *self-caring* represent additional elements of indigeneity; see, Newberry, “Contextualizing Indigenous Church Principles: An Africa Model,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 8, no. 1 (2005): 95-115.

5 Luce, “Paul’s Missionary Methods,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (Jan. 8, 1921, 6-7; Jan. 22, 1921, 6, 11; and Feb. 5, 1921, 6-7).

6 Luce, “Paul’s Missionary Methods, Part 1,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 8, 1921, 6.

7 McGee, *Miracles, Missions, and American Pentecostalism*, 168. See Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?*

had been developing international districts, including those of Egypt, Japan, Liberia, and North China, among others.⁸

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR PLANTING INDIGENOUS CHURCHES⁹

AGWM's indigenous church principle is styled after the missionary ministry of the apostle Paul. In simple terms, his missionary methodology can be described as a passion to reach all peoples with the gospel, a zealous focus on the local church, and utter dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit in life and ministry.

Paul seemed to move constantly (Romans 15:19). After his Damascus road experience, he possibly went to the Arabian Peninsula, to Palestine, back home to Tarsus, to Antioch (Syria), through Asia Minor and Europe, back to Palestine, and eventually to Rome.¹⁰ Paul traveled with and worked with teams of people (Acts 13:1–3; Romans 16; 1 Corinthians 16:17; Ephesians 6:21), founding churches, training believers (Acts 19:9–10), moving from one church and location to another with a goal to go to the regions beyond (Romans 15:23–24). An ambition “to preach the gospel where Christ was not known” (Romans 15:20, NIV) characterized and motivated Paul's passion and his actions.

8 From email correspondence between Steve Pennington and Glenn Gohr, reference archivist, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, October 8, 2010. The Egyptian District Council progressed at least until 1937 as evidenced in a photo of the council in Edith Blumhofer's *The Assemblies of God: A Popular History*, 312. The caption to the picture reads, “Missionaries sometimes formed national district councils of the American Assemblies of God in their adopted countries.” Unhappily, full membership of the foreign districts was only open to missionaries, *ibid.*, 294.

9 This section, apart from the Pauline epistles and the Book of Acts, is indebted to Allen and Luce's work.

10 Some scholars believe that Paul was released from Rome the first time, went on to Spain, and returned via the Mediterranean islands (e.g., Crete, Cyprus). This is why the pastoral epistles seem to refer to Paul's visit, which is evidenced by his desire (Romans 15); see the NASB study Bible.

The Pauline epistles overflow with an unquestionable belief in the local church. He uses metaphors such as the body (1 Corinthians 12:12–31), the temple (1 Corinthians 3:16–17; Ephesians 2:19–22), and the household of God (Ephesians 2:19) to frame his understanding of the local church. Paul founded many of the churches he wrote and as such had wonderful relationships with them, even referring to them as partners in the gospel (Philippians 1:5). His favorite term for the church, *ekklesia*, describes believers as being called (1 Corinthians 1:2). They worked together to take the gospel to all nations.

Paul's methodology was relatively uniform: he traveled to a location, he preached the gospel there, gathered the believers together where he taught them, trained leaders, and then moved on to the next area. Paul stayed connected with these local churches through correspondence and visitation—as can be seen by his New Testament writings.

Because Paul utterly depended upon the Holy Spirit for his marching orders, including where to go or not go (Acts 16:6–7), he consistently asked for prayer (Romans 15:30; Ephesians 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:25). The church at Philippi began in a direct response to a redirection by the Holy Spirit, a vision from God, and prayer (Acts 16). His pleading for prayer and his team's flexibility in methodology testify to Paul's understanding of mission as Spirit-empowered and Spirit-driven.

CURRENT EXAMPLES OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH PRINCIPLES

In East Africa there is a good example (which will remain anonymous) of how indigenous church principles resulted in a strong and robust church that is self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting. The church started in the early 1970s. Assemblies of

God missionaries came from several other African countries to find a small group of independent Pentecostal churches. These independent churches called upon the missionaries to come, expecting them to “help” them with buildings, salaries for pastors, bicycles for pastors, full scholarships for Bible school students, and an excess of other perceived needs. Much to the disappointment and chagrin of the local church leadership, the missionaries actually told them, “We didn’t come to give you money; in fact, we are going to take offerings.” The missionaries told them, “We are going to give you two things, the Word of God and a Constitution and Bylaws that is yours.” The missionaries refused to give in to the pressure to support pastors and provide scholarships to Bible school students. They went all over the country teaching on tithing and giving to support the work of the ministry. They started women’s, men’s, and children’s ministries. African Christians, who in many cases made less than \$100 per year, supported all of these departments. They also supported their own pastors and gave to plant new churches.

Recently, at a General Council meeting, the general superintendent of this church was heard to say, “When the American Assemblies of God missionaries first came, we asked them for bicycles. If they had given us bicycles, we would still be riding bicycles today and asking them for more. But rather than acquiring bicycles, today many of our pastors have large churches that are able to purchase cars for them to drive. We are grateful to our missionaries for teaching us to support ourselves and not to depend on the West.” He has been the leader since the first national church election and has seen the church grow from a few struggling churches asking for handouts to a thriving national church system with close to 5000 churches plus strong, fully functional departments. He will, if asked, tell you the reason for the triumph of the national church is that the mission taught them to be self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting.

This church has become indigenous and has grown to maturity because it has trained leaders in Bible school systems, has a passion and plan to plant churches, and is fully African in all of its expressions.

PARTNERSHIP AND INDIGENOUS CHURCH PRINCIPLES

The work of planting indigenous churches must transform into partnership when new communities of faith take root and begin to mature into a national church. The strategic partnership between a national church and an on-field missionary team certainly generates unique challenges. Yet the act of partnership also provides rewarding opportunities through incarnational presence, strategic contribution, and modeling kingdom ministry.

Partnerships reflect intentional depth of relationship (Acts 20:37–38). The word *partnership* captures how we relate to one another in mission. The indigenous church principle and partnership do not represent contrary systems of missionary operation; rather, they flow one into the other, creating the possibility of reaching all nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The basic concepts of partnership arise from a believer's relationship with Jesus and then with each other. These relationships shape every believer. Partnership changes the missionary; it makes missionaries and nationals what they become so that they are becoming together. Partnership is neither contractual nor time-bound; it is not merely goal-oriented nor easily revoked. In partnership, participants are family (missionary and national). Like family, this partnership runs on love: love for Jesus, love for one another, and love for the lost.

CONCLUSION

Today nearly 4 billion people have yet to receive an adequate witness of the gospel. These spiritually lost people have no vibrant and sustained local community of faith among them. Going forward in this century, AGWM must maintain a commitment to the “greatest evangelism the world has ever seen” by planting local churches and training local leaders who are continuously guided by indigenous church principles and partnership.

Our mission continues to value the approach of planting indigenous churches, and future success will be predicated in part by our continued commitment to planting new indigenous churches and valuing historical partnerships (Easter, 2014, 97).

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Understanding Culture

David Ellis

“Culture is one thing and varnish is another.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

INTRODUCTION

In 1914, the Assemblies of God responded to the fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit and unanimously agreed to the familiar charge: “We resolve to do the greatest work of evangelism the world has ever seen.”¹ Each generation since has renewed that missionary pledge to go to every lost person, neglecting none, no matter what the cost.

The Assemblies of God and its missionaries committed (and continue to commit) themselves to make disciples in every tribe and in every language and to reach every people and every nation. With this spiritual heritage, the essential need of incarnating into

¹ General Council of the Assemblies of God, Nov. 23, 1914, 12.

the cultural context to which missionaries are called becomes of utmost importance. Understanding the adopted culture is a critical competency for every missionary if the message of the gospel is to be clearly communicated.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CULTURALLY INCARNATE

While language learning is important for missionaries to proclaim the gospel, it is equally imperative for missionaries to go beyond that and also learn the culture. More than anyone else, Jesus is the example for us to follow, “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6–7, ESV). The incarnate Christ modeled how to be a culturally incarnate proclaimer of the good news. Further, the apostle Paul similarly set the example when he wrote, “To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22, ESV). Sherwood Lingenfelter and Marvin Mayers, who highlight the Incarnation as God’s metaphor for ministry, explain, “The first significant fact about the incarnation is that Jesus came as a helpless infant. . . . The second significant fact about the incarnation is that Jesus was a learner” (Lingenfelter and Mayers 2003, 16). Jesus and Paul teach the importance of incarnating—to learn and understand the culture of the people to whom one is called.

To enter a different culture, the missionary must do so with a humble spirit and a sincere desire to learn. This humility to learn, as well as demonstrating a desire to learn from the recipient culture, communicate God’s love and the love the missionary has for the people to whom he or she is sent.

ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

Assimilating or incarnating into another culture has often been misinterpreted as simply living in another country and learning another language. It must be understood that the same time and effort given to language acquisition should also be given to fully understanding the recipients and their culture. Culture, which can be defined as “the sum of the distinctive characteristics of a people’s way of life” (Lingenfelter and Mayers 2003, 17), encompasses so much more than words—it is a conglomeration of customs, knowledge, beliefs, worldview, understood patterns of behavior, body language, greetings, and more. Therefore, understanding societal culture is just as crucial, if not more so, as learning vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Although one may be familiar with the Spanish language, while moving between Spanish-speaking countries, one must also be sensitive to the differences that exist between each respective culture. As an increasing number of Latin America missionaries are approved to serve in other Latin American countries, they often assume that since they know the language they will easily assimilate into other Spanish-speaking cultures. They find out quickly that this is not always the case, and some have experienced frustration as they face situations they do not understand nor expected to struggle with that are cultural in nature.

People born and raised in one country start learning about that country’s culture at birth. They even learn the variations within a culture (subcultures), such as between different regions of one’s own country. Additionally, differences arise based on family and personal history. Just thinking about the variables that make each person unique, one begins to realize the complexity of learning a culture that is different from one’s own.

Adapting and communicating within one's own cultural context is natural and relatively easy. It is human nature for people to value the history and symbols from their personal culture—laughing at the same things and sharing common expectations. However, when God calls the hearts of men and women to leave their familiar culture to serve people in a different culture, the implications of leaving family, friends, and comfort zones and learning a new language begin to become a reality.

It is critical to the future of the work that missionaries understand the importance of incarnating Christ within a culture. The learning of another culture is a process that can take many years, because it's impossible to anticipate the variety of differences they will observe and learn in a culture outside their known experiences, being careful to discern cultural, familial, and personal elements in the process.

Understanding cultural differences is essential in international relationships in order to develop positive outcomes in politics, business, economics, and the military. How much more this is true for missionaries. Incarnation is the best way to develop meaningful relationships and the best method of sharing God's message within a new culture. "Every person carries within him or herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting that were learned throughout the person's lifetime" (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010, 4). Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov compare culture to a computer software of the mind. As they explain, culture affects all areas of life within the context of a person's being, including greetings, eating, expressing feelings, physical distance when communicating, and bodily hygiene. They illustrate culture by assigning concepts to the layers of an onion: personal values are at the core, with lifestyle practices, rituals, heroes, and symbols representing layers. While practices of a culture "are visible to an outside observer, their cultural meaning, however, is invisible and lies precisely and only in the way these practices are interpreted by the insiders" (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010, 9).

Values, the core of the onion, are the aspects of culture that are the hardest and slowest to change. Values give stability to a culture and are the aspects of culture that also need to be understood. Understanding a culture's values will help missionaries understand the practices of its people and how best to develop mature and healthy relationships. Healthy relationships are key to earning the right to communicate the message of Christ.

MISSIONARIES ON THE FIELD

For many missionaries, cultural adaption in the incarnational model leads to stress, confusion, and frustration. The term for these emotions is *culture shock*, but the goal is to move beyond these feelings of distress and loneliness to acculturation and a position of stability. So while these feelings can be powerful, usually others are nearby who can help those in this circumstance make the necessary adjustments and keep on the task of learning to understand a new culture.

When missionaries arrive on the field, they express great excitement and anticipation to engage in the new culture, but when the stress of cultural adjustment sets in, they must overcome it by seeking and learning the values of that culture. When full acculturation does not occur, the result is not only an enduring frustration for missionaries, but lack of effective communication to the very people they have been called to serve. Without acculturation, missionaries will probably transfer to another field, terminate their missionary assignment, or stay, but be isolated and ineffective.

With the help of colleagues and friends made in the new culture, it is possible to move from culture shock to acculturation. A key element

in acculturation is guarding against comparisons between cultures. A missionary should avoid expressing frustrations and anger or making fun of the other culture. A negative approach will hinder cultural understanding and the development of healthy relationships. Comparing one's own home culture with the target one is usually like comparing apples and oranges!

Duane Elmer, in his book *Cross-Cultural Connections*, discusses culture in terms of right, wrong, and the differences between them. "When we encounter cultural differences, we usually make an immediate judgment. When we judge quickly, we usually place that cultural difference in the category of wrong, not in the category of differences. As soon as we label it as wrong a new series of responses begins. First, I want to correct it" (Elmer 2002, 29). If missionaries can avoid these judgments and label the encounters as "differences" instead of "wrong," the process toward acculturation becomes much easier.

As painful as the experience of culture shock may be, Elmer rightly points out, "Actually, experiencing culture shock has some good news. It can be a means of knowing God better" (Elmer 2002, 45). Recognizing that God works His will in and through different cultures provides the opportunity to know Him better. The road to cultural understanding is paved smoothly when it is covered in prayer and healthy expectations of cultural engagement. Periods of adjustment are to be expected, but with God's help, acceptance, friendship, and love of this other people and culture is possible. "Practicing openness, acceptance and trust will give you a big advantage in building wonderful relationships in your new cultural venture and will enrich your life wherever you are" (Elmer 2002, 87). The benefit of full adjustment to the culture is deep meaningful relationships and an open door to communicate Christ's love across cultural boundaries.

“Each cultural community rewards individuals for certain kinds of behavior” (Lingenfelter and Mayers 2003, 113). Understanding another’s culture is important in developing relationships, because rewards are granted when cultural rules are followed and penalties incurred when they are not. Developing a relationship with someone within his or her own culture will earn acceptance, approval, and the right to be heard.

Beyond language, culture is a critical tool for communication and interaction. Lingenfelter and Mayers write that the “essence of the incarnation is entering the cultural prison of others and submitting to it for the sake of the gospel” (Lingenfelter and Mayers 2003, 117). The missionary’s choice to leave his or her own cultural prison and enter that of another person can lead to good relationships and an opportunity to communicate the gospel meaningfully.

James Plueddemann writes, “The image of God can be found in every culture, but the effects of our depravity are also evident” (Plueddemann 2009, 65). God is at work in every culture. It is God and only God who can give discernment to missionaries living in foreign cultures to determine which cultural beliefs and practices are acceptable as followers of Christ and those that are not.

CONCLUSION

When a missionary intentionally focuses attention on and prioritizes the learning of the culture of those to whom he or she is called, that missionary will gain favor and the right to be heard, especially when given the opportunity to challenge beliefs and practices of the culture. Further, that missionary will be able to engage the target people and appropriately proclaim the gospel and challenge sin.

“Missionaries and others who accept the challenge of cross-cultural ministries . . . must, by the nature of their task, become personally immersed with peoples who are different” (Lingenfelter and Mayers 2003, 117). Anything short of this will fall well short of understanding culture and will be just varnish on God’s missionary call, and the people to whom God has called them deserve nothing less than the best (and not just varnish).

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Spiritual Disciplines and Formation

Paul Trementozzi

INTRODUCTION

One of the great challenges all missionaries face is to discover and apply spiritual disciplines to their busy daily lives. There is little that can be added here that is not already known, so this essay will be more of an encouragement.

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL FORMATION?

When it comes to the topic of spiritual formation, it seems there is a vicious cycle that vacillates from freedom to legalism, and finding that place of balance can be most elusive. Acts 2:42 tells us that from the beginning, the Early Church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (NIV). They were linking the desire for more of God to deliberate practices and experiences, making their relationships profoundly united and intimate. They were learning that the “communion of the

Holy Spirit”¹ was innately connected to intentional personal disciplines and the development of meaningful community relationships. The individual and corporate experiences of worship cannot be separated while having an authentic spiritual formation.

Spiritual formation is a never-ending eternal work in progress. Learning to surrender oneself to Christ is in essence what spiritual formation is all about. That means engaging in the most intense battle a believer can have in life—taking on the flesh! No one can “try hard enough” to become spiritually healthy and sound. The foundation must be to surrender to Him, recognizing that our present and future reality—and the only truth that will help us overcome the flesh—is indeed, “*There is therefore now no condemnation*” (Romans 8:1–2). It is also the best approach toward developing spiritually. “The love of Christ compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14), not guilt. There is no more condemnation, and His followers’ appreciation for such a gift should be sufficient motivation to grow in Him!

From its beginning the church linked the desire for more of God to intentional practices, relationships and experiences that gave people space in their lives to “keep company” with Jesus (Acts 2:42). It is not spiritual disciplines per se that transform us into the likeness of Christ. Without the work of God’s Spirit within, practices guarantee nothing. Paul says, “Such regulations [disciplines] indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence” (Colossians 2:23). Disciplines done for the wrong reasons actually sabotage transformation and numb us toward God and the truth. When we use spiritual practices to gain secondary things like spiritual cachet, success, approval and respect, we rob the discipline of its God-given grace. Jesus

1 2 Corinthians 13:14. Scripture references from here forward are from the NKJV unless otherwise stated.

said of the most spiritually disciplined people of his day: These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men. (Matthew 15:8-9) Spiritual disciplines give the Holy Spirit space to brood over our souls.²

THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES AND PURSUING SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Each believer and missionary should become well-versed in spiritual disciplines.³ To assist, Christian history includes a plethora of excellent works to explore and apply to the Christian life.⁴

In my own personal journey in spiritual formation through the study of these works, I would say a common, familiar strand of truth has been this: *God is more concerned with who we become than what we accomplish.* He is most concerned with the health of our soul. The question that motivates me most personally today is, How is my soul? Soul health is significantly strengthened through the intentional inculcation of spiritual disciplines into our daily lives that are, practically speaking, making space for God from moment to moment.

Now as much as studying and reading are loved and important, spiritual formation does not come from here. It is that daily dying to self and getting rid of the “noise” of the day-to-day existence long

2 Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*, Kindle Edition. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 18.

3 A helpful source is the classic Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 3rd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1998); also see works by Dallas Willard and Henri Nouwen.

4 Two important resources on this are Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith, eds. *Devotional Classics*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2005), and Richard Foster and Emilie Griffin, ed., *Spiritual Disciplines: Selected Readings on the Twelve Spiritual Disciplines* (New York: HarperOne, 2007).

enough to listen and hear His voice. Developing a relationship with the Lord that makes communion together something sacred and longed for each day is a good *beginning* point. It is here where the missionary realizes that to grow spiritually has nothing to do with how “smart” one is but rather has everything to do with how *yielded* one is becoming. For this reason, spiritual retreat must be part of every missionary’s yearly calendar.

Historically one way Christians persevered in the battle was to regularly retreat from the front lines of attack and spend solitary time with God. Times of retreat brought perspective to the mind while strengthening and nourishing the soul. Without retreat, followers of Jesus tired and became ineffective in the struggle. They needed to be alone with God and apart from others if they wanted to reengage the battle on different ground.⁵

This concept of spiritual retreat has lost its attraction and appreciation over time. The current idea of retreat is action-packed, with vibrant speakers, constant movement, and engagement with one another. All of this is good, but it is not retreat! Calhoun states,

Retreating, in the traditional sense, is not about gaining more information. It is not getting away to get things done. It is not a way to catch up on our reading or e-mail. Retreats are ways we pull back from the battle and rest. We take naps and go to bed early. In the presence of the holy One we enter into the silence and solitude and rest in God. Resting gives us the energy it takes to build our relationship with God one on one. When we are rested, we listen better. When we are rested, we notice desires as well as lies buried in our souls.⁶

5 Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 67.

6 Ibid., 67-68.

This is a good way to make sure of good soul health!

At times, spiritual formation seems unattainable. We may pass every test for days and weeks, then at times (especially when overworked and exhausted) flunk every exam and be forced to repeat the lessons.

C. S. Lewis said, “We must train the habit of faith.”⁷ Faith is the disciplinarian and teacher of our emotions, instructing them where they belong. This truth is quite profound and hopeful, yet also troubling. It is profound because it moves faith from being a purely abstract or theological concept to a concrete, lived-out one. Faith is hopeful because it can be controlled regardless of outside influences. Finally, faith is troubling, since it seems easier to form bad habits than to take the time, exert the effort, and develop the discipline to form lasting good habits. If faith is therefore a good habit, then time, effort, and discipline are not optional, but a mandate for any genuine follower of Christ, especially those who lead others in the walk of faith.

It is a fair assumption that all missionaries desire to know and love God deeply so their lives can be examples to those God gives them to lead. This example is all about how to persevere in life until meeting Jesus in death. The journey is not easy. Therefore, it demands that faith be appropriately, effectively, and consistently trained. What is it, then, that hinders missionaries, leaders, and Christ followers to grow spiritually? First, as mentioned earlier, it is the tendency to give in to the lie that busyness *for* God trumps being *with* God. After all, leaders are supposed to produce and gain great returns on what others have invested in them. Yet look at Jesus and His example to His disciples. “The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said

7 C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952; Harper Collins: 2001), 140-141. Here Lewis follows Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*) and Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica*), which highlight the importance of habits in ethics and disciplining oneself in order to form good habits.

to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest’ ” (Mark 6:30–31, NIV).

Second, as important as it is to hear and learn from God individually, there is also a deep need to be vulnerable enough to ask for spiritual accountability. Henri Nouwen stated,

I have found over and over again how hard it is to be truly faithful to Jesus when I am alone. I need my brothers or sisters to pray with me, to speak with me about the spiritual task at hand, and to challenge me to stay pure in mind, heart and body.⁸

Inviting others into the spiritual growth process is a God-given educational tool. This can be especially difficult to master when missionaries find themselves in conflict with their colleagues. However, these times of conflict need to be seen as part of the spiritual tests Christ is providing. It is not about studying spiritual disciplines in a book; it is applying the principles even when it is uncomfortable, even when it may mean laying aside questions about who is right in order that Christ (not the believer) may be glorified. While spiritual formation begins with the Christian as student and Christ as teacher, a greater level of spiritual enlightenment can only come by including others to practice jointly what has been learned.

CONCLUSION

As a personal admonition, remember the Pentecostal heritage and its lessons. When I was a young man of 23, I had graduated with a degree

⁸ Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), 107.

in psychology and counseling and our church had begun a counseling center I was to direct. Richard Dobbins (founder of EMERGE in Ohio) came and spent a week with me. The day he was leaving, he pulled me into the back office, sat me down, and gave me words of great wisdom. He told me counseling is one of the most spiritually and emotionally draining ministries one can do. He advised me that at the end of each session, I should close the door; dim the lights; put on some quiet, sacred music; close my eyes; and pray in tongues for 15 minutes. This has proven to be one of the most practical and life-giving spiritual truths I have ever received. This is the exact advice I desire to leave with you. I do not believe there could be a better remedy for soul health and spiritual

formation than to start and stop each day with time to pray in our heavenly language.

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The Team Concept

Omar Beiler

INTRODUCTION

Assemblies of God World Missions was formed so all can hear and respond to the gospel. Historically and biblically, this means AGWM prioritized places that had no church, no Christians, no witness. Christians' collective call is to make disciples and plant churches where there are none. Everyone commissioned through AGWM needs to show how their personal call contributes to this uniting mandate. This collective call is accomplished in partnership. Some work with national churches, and others work directly with unreached peoples, but the goal is the same—that Jesus be glorified by every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. In that sense, all believers, and more specifically all AGWM personnel, are on the same team.

In AGWM the word *team* has been used in multiple ways. Sometimes *team* has referred to every missionary across the globe (the AGWM team), sometimes to an entire region (the Africa team), sometimes to all AGWM missionaries in a country (the Thailand team), sometimes to a working group (the missiological team) or leadership council (the Executive Leadership Team), sometimes to the eclectic group

of workers from all agencies in a city (God's team), sometimes to a church planting team in a defined location (the Alexandria team), and sometimes to some other assortment of missionaries or local ministers who are loosely related. Scottish missionary and historian Stephen Neill famously said, "If everything is mission, nothing is mission" (Neill 1959, 81). The same could be said of teams: If everything is a team, nothing is a team. In order to simplify the issue, this chapter will suggest a working definition of what a team is, lay out a rationale for working in teams, and list dynamics of healthy teams.

DEFINITION OF TEAM

Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith define *team* as "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they are mutually accountable" (Katzenbach and Smith 2015, 41). In this sense, the word does not really apply to organizations, countries, or large collections of individuals who are friendly, but without interdependent work. *Team* best means a group of up to about a dozen missionaries who are working on the same project (or for the same specific goal), with each part of their labor integral to the success of that project/goal. Legitimate teams also meet regularly, usually at least once a week—even if that is by Skype or other electronic means. Accountability is mutual in the sense that if one member of the team falters, the whole endeavor halts or flounders. Thus, there is constant exhortation and expectation for productivity. Healthy teams have clear leadership (whether that is singular or plural) and a defined purpose that is delineated with goals, benchmarks, and objectives.

THE RATIONALE FOR WORKING IN TEAMS

The primary reason AGWM is committed to working in teams is because it is seen as following the biblical model. Jesus and His disciples were a team that would fit Katzenbach's definition. Paul is thought to have traveled with an "apostolic band" (e.g., Acts 20:4) sometimes comprised of as many as 30 people. Barnabas brought the gift of encouragement, Silas brought the gift of prophecy, and Timothy had pastoral capacities. Different team members contributed as they were gifted toward the goals and purpose of the team.

Mark Renfro¹ gives five additional reasons besides the biblical foundation why working in teams is AGWM's preferred methodology:

1. Working alone can get very lonely. If a missionary moves somewhere and is the only believer or missionary there, the loneliness and isolation can eventually wear that person out and destroy hope. In situations of prolonged isolation, missionaries tend to wear down emotionally and, ultimately, either quit or flounder.

2. Work satisfaction is greater on a team. Fulfillment does not always equate to success or measurable fruitfulness, but it is certainly encouraging and fulfilling when one accomplishes—even in part—what he or she was sent to do. Teams increase the possibility of accomplishing the mandate as well as providing joy in the journey. Complementary gifts afford greater opportunity of success in the mission goals; there can still be rejoicing in the victories and strengths of peers and colleagues when their own capacity, production, or strength is low. What cannot be achieved alone—for no one has all the gifts—can be achieved together in a team, to collective encouragement.

¹ Originally published in "Our Big Dream" by Omar Beiler.

3. Teams promote the sustainability of the work. In the AGWM system, missionaries regularly have to leave the field for itineration and support-raising, conferences or other ministry opportunities, and sometimes for health, family, or unexpected contingencies. When the approach to missions is as a team, missionaries can cover for one another and schedule transitions to ensure that leadership and service gaps are covered.

4. Teams are natural greenhouses for leaders. Teams are a natural environment for team members to develop into team leaders. Teams are better positioned to offer on-field training, mentoring, accountability, and leadership opportunities. Many of AGWM's best leaders have been groomed during their time as team members.

5. Teams model biblical principles of community. The Great Commission's goal is to make disciples, disciples that relate to one another and the world in a Christ-like fashion. It cannot be expected that missionaries' disciples will live a life the missionaries themselves do not live and model. Living and serving in community requires team members to submit to one another and trust each other with their brokenness, limitations, and vulnerability. Teammates all bring a degree of sin and unhealthiness to the table, and working through these issues models the community of Christ to the broader community in which they work.

The reality is that mission in teams is difficult. In this current age, God has awakened the Global South, and missionary teams are increasingly multicultural. This diversity has ushered in both beauty and challenges. One area director learned from experience that "multicultural teams look like heaven, but can feel like hell! They become mirrors that reveal not only our preferences but also

our prejudices, not only our methods, but also our motives.” It is, in truth, difficult and sometimes laborious to work in teams, but if missionaries will be patient and merciful to one another and be lowly and sacrificial, the team will indeed be more effective. As the old African proverb says: “If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together.” Daniel Sinclair highlights Rick Love’s four stages of team development, that teams tend to transition through the phases of (1) forming (coming together), (2) storming (adjusting to one another through necessary conflict), (3) norming (arriving at a place of cohesion and clarity), and (4) performing (effective, fruitful ministry) (Sinclair 2005, 36–37). Working in teams is not easy and requires hard work and commitment, but if members will dedicate themselves to work in teams, they (individually and collectively) will be better for it.

HEALTHY TEAM DYNAMICS

Live Dead is an AGWM ministry that focuses on planting churches among unreached people groups through teams. Using Katzenbach and Smith’s above-cited definition of a team, a Live Dead team is an example of “*A small number of people [usually between 4 and 12] with complementary skills [some are evangelists, some are disciplers, some are good at business, some are administrators, some have the gift of help, some do member care, some are intercessors, some are musicians, etc.] who are committed to a common purpose [planting the church among unreached peoples], performance goals [learning language, sowing broadly, finding a person of peace who can influence others for the gospel, working toward a church planting movement], and approach [contextual, indigenous] for which they are mutually accountable [prayer, mentoring, and follow-up systems]*” (Katzenbach and Smith 2015, 41, emphasis added).

The following contribute to healthy Live Dead teams:

- A memorandum of understanding (MOU) that clearly frames values, philosophy of mission, principles of ministry, goals, and objectives.
- A team leader who understands when he or she has to make a unilateral decision, build consensus, or submit to the wisdom of the team. A good leader is quick to delegate and is steady in coaching, leading every member of the team into a legitimate and fulfilling team role.
- A schedule that allows multiple touch points weekly. Minimally, healthy teams tend to meet once a week, but often they meet two or three times for activities such as prayer, missiological study, strategic discussion, testimony, fellowship, worship, Bible teaching, and ministry to one another. Some have a team day once a week and divide the above activities into blocks throughout the day. Other teams meet three times a week: once for prayer; once for missiology and strategic discussion; and once for worship, teaching, and fellowship. The principle is consistent and regular team interaction on a range of important issues.
- Mentoring and accountability relationships so new missionaries are apprenticed over time and veteran missionaries are encouraged and disciplined.
- Ministry done together. Evangelism, discipleship, and church planting are group activities and include feedback and testimony time that fosters learning and corporate celebration.

- Members that play hard together. Retreats, holidays, sports, outings, and special events are enjoyed with vigor. Healthy teams both pray hard and play hard in community. Healthy teams genuinely enjoy one another's company, constantly affirm, tease, laugh, hug, and encourage one another.
- Regular retreats or conferences (usually two a year) outside of the local ministry context where children are "loved on"; seminars and learning experiences are provided for adults; and evenings of worship, teaching, and seeking the Lord around the altars are organized. Healthy teams encourage this use of finances and time so the whole team can renew and recharge for the next season of ministry. These retreats are a major contributor to longevity.

SUMMARY

AGWM is committed to sound missiology at all levels. One of the primary aids to missions orthopraxy (right action²) is mutual submission to a communal approach, first, because it is biblical; second, because it is fruitful; and third, because it is rewarding and enriching. The team concept is best understood and applied in a local and intimate application: "A small group of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they are mutually accountable" (Katzenbach and Smith 2015, 41).

² For more on *orthopraxy* and its relationship to *orthodoxy* see Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality* and Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation*.

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Proclamation to the Unreached

Russ Turney

INTRODUCTION

In 1914 the founders of the Assemblies of God pledged themselves to the “greatest evangelism the world has ever seen.”¹ These early Pentecostals understood their experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as the divine empowerment to take the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). Now in its second century as a missions agency, world evangelization remains at the center of AGWM identity.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, virtually anywhere Pentecostal missionaries went, there were few churches and the need for gospel proclamation was clear. By 1921 the Assemblies of God affirmed and clarified the extension of the original vision when they declared that the Foreign Missions Department would be guided by the following: “The Pauline example will be followed so far as possible, by seeking out neglected regions where the Gospel has not yet been

¹ General Council of the Assemblies of God, Nov. 23, 1914, 12.

preached, lest we build upon another's foundation (Rom. 15:20)" (General Council 1921, 61).

In the Asia Pacific Region, the fruits of evangelism from seeds planted by our missionaries and the national churches over the years have multiplied. In the past 25 years, the Assemblies of God has grown from 7500 churches to over 30,000. Many of these churches are among people groups with very little access to the gospel. This growth, seen in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, calls AGWM to a fresh reflection on our role as a missions agency in taking the gospel to the world. Even with rapid growth, the challenge of those who have no witness in their society stirs the heart. In Asia Pacific alone, close to 500 million people lack adequate witness of the gospel in their cultures.

The AGWM purpose statement, "so *all* can hear," is backed by the truth that God so loved the world that *whoever* believes in Jesus can have eternal life, and our core values are integrated with this truth is well. Thus, the evangelistic task in light of current missions realities is shaped by the commitment to develop indigenous church movements. The indigenous church principle means that national churches have a missions mandate to reach their own people, culture, and nation, and to send cross-cultural workers.² Our missions history demonstrates the evangelistic power of an indigenous national church, given that the broader World Assemblies of God Fellowship now numbers over 67 million believers.³

WHO ARE THE UNREACHED?

While there are people among every nation-state, tribe, and tongue who are eternally lost, God be praised that there are also vibrant church movements around the world, many of them AG, evangelizing

² For more on the indigenous church principle, see the chapter by Greg Beggs.

³ For the latest statistics, see Assemblies of God World Missions, AGWM Vital Statistics and Assemblies of God, Statistics of the Assemblies of God (USA).

and discipling the people of their societies. However, it should challenge and stir the heart of every believer that over a fourth of our world still does not have adequate access to the saving message. This means they have no near neighbor who can share the story of Jesus, no culturally relevant church to visit, not a single verse of Scripture in their language in many cases, and little or no Christian media. Christian demographers and missiologists use the term *unreached people* for those with little or no access to the gospel message, and the Joshua Project additionally defines this as a group with 2 percent or less evangelical Christians and 5 percent or less who profess a Christian faith (Joshua Project).

In light of this, when we look at the whole world with our commitment to proclaim the gospel, we see a great need for Spirit-empowered missionaries. The AGWM missiology group addressed the issue of the unreached in one of its papers and showed that in every region of our world, a critical need remains for missionaries to proclaim Jesus Christ to those who lack access to the good news. “Researchers estimate that in the three great world religions of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism that 86% do not know a single Christian” (Johnson and Ross 2009, 316). In Europe, 20 countries are less than 1 percent Christian, and in Latin America, there are many remote peoples without the gospel and geographic areas with very little Christian witness in countries that have strong national churches.

Many countries of the world have sociological subgroups that remain untouched with the good news even when surrounded by strong Christian communities. Often, the urban or rural poor, drug-addicted, gender-confused, victims of human trafficking, widows and orphans, homeless, university students, elites, and affluent are cordoned off from the church and from those who will go to them with the gospel. Jesus’ call to pray for workers to be sent into the harvest fields is still relevant today because truly, the harvest is great, but the laborers are few (Matthew 9:37).

WHY THE UNREACHED?

With AGWM's historical commitment to world evangelization, the question is sometimes raised about why there is a special focus on unreached and least-reached peoples. AGWM Asia Pacific missionary Alan Johnson, who has served in Thailand for many years, helped articulate for us why the mission is compelled to pour out prayer, workers, and finances toward those with the least access to the gospel.

First, the Church must go to the unreached because the task is unambiguously part of God's redemptive mission. In Genesis 12:2–3 God promised Abraham that he would be blessed and that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him. There is a universal vision of the diverse peoples of the earth responding to the Living God in Scripture. There is a prophetic vision of the nations streaming to worship Yahweh (Isaiah 2:1–5, Micah 4:1–5, Zechariah 8:20–23). There are five commissions from Jesus in the New Testament to disciple, preach, go as the Father sent Him, and bear witness to Him to the uttermost parts of the earth (Matthew 28:18–20, Mark 16:15–16, Luke 24:46–49, John 20:21, Acts 1:8). Finally, the magnificent vision of Revelation, where representatives from every tribe and tongue and people and nation stand in worship before the throne (Revelation 5:9 and 7:9), shows how God's purpose embraces the whole world.

Second, the Church must go to the unreached because the prophetic voice of the database of unreached people is clear; believers now know where the Church is unrepresented or underrepresented. There is an imbalance in our world, where some have abundant access to the gospel message and others do not have any access. As a missions agency committed to world evangelization, we feel a compulsion of the Spirit to address that imbalance. The lessons of the history of Christian missions also have led AGWM to focus on the needs of those with least access to the gospel. It is a fact that the Christian

faith spreads fastest among people who share language, culture, and worldview. This is the power of near-neighbor witness. But by the same token, this means relatively small cultural differences can become barriers to both the proclamation and acceptance of the gospel. The unreached and least-reached often live right near churches and Christians from other (sub)cultural backgrounds who are unable or unwilling to cross cultural boundaries to share the good news in a relevant and understandable way. Local Christians naturally default to the easier task of reaching their own people. This reality highlights the need for Spirit-called and Spirit-empowered cross-cultural workers who go to plant the Church of Jesus Christ among such peoples.

Finally, the AGWM missions philosophy of planting indigenous churches and partnering with established indigenous churches carries some significant implications. Primarily, it means that in places where Pentecostal indigenous national church movements are growing or strong, AGWM's missionaries work in strategic support roles in education and training to facilitate continued growth over time. Because national churches have their own mandate in missions from the Lord of the Harvest, it means AGWM as a missions agency can send more workers to unreached and least-access peoples. This can be done with confidence, knowing that the gospel continues to go forward in those locations through national church movements.

HOW DOES MINISTRY TO THE UNREACHED RELATE TO WORK AMONG EXISTING NATIONAL CHURCHES?

At the heart of Pentecostal missions is evangelization and the making of disciples among the nations (*ethne*). This is the biblical trajectory of our work, and to accomplish it requires a wide variety of gifts and ministries all pointed toward God's glory among the nations. Thus, while all of AGWM's missionaries share the same goal,

each missionary works in different aspects towards its completion. Here are three observations about how this core value plays out in the life and ministry of missionaries.

First, proclamation to unreached peoples is on a continuum from direct ministry to more indirect forms. Some missionaries work directly in evangelism and church planting in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, discipling and gathering new converts into churches. Others work in modeling for and equipping Christians from one people group to share life with another culturally-near group that has no witness. Still others train local evangelists, church planters, and missionaries. Each missionary should be able to draw a line from what they are doing to how it ultimately impacts proclamation to those with least access to the gospel.

Second, the value of building indigenous churches includes those churches sending their own missionaries to unreached peoples. AGWM's value of partnership means that missionaries working among the church do not simply fill ministry slots that locals could fill; rather, they work in areas of need among the church to equip them for and instill the vision of God's mission. Thus, the missionary role of training new missionaries of these local indigenous church movements is critical in getting much-needed workers to the harvest fields of the unreached.

Finally, the key missions elements of reaching, planting, training, and serving are not to be compartmentalized from each other as if they each stood alone. An integrated approach means that individuals and teams seek to live out these core elements under the leadership of the Spirit to meet the needs of the ministry setting.

CONCLUSION

Missionaries in Asia Pacific who work to strengthen and serve the national church as their primary task are asked to have a secondary focus toward an unreached people group. Their tangible actions include focused prayer, advocating for the needs of the unreached, and raising vision among the national church for the pioneering task. Together with the national church, our vision is that these groups will be unreached and forgotten no longer.

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Holistic Missions in Word, Deed, and Spirit

JoAnn Butrin

INTRODUCTION

One of the core values of Assemblies of God World Missions is, “We are committed to holistic missions in word, deed, and spirit.” This value is part and parcel of the whole missions enterprise.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Early in His public ministry, Jesus announced the presence of the kingdom of God by reading the words of the prophet Isaiah and pronouncing its fulfillment that day: “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” (Luke 4:18-19, NIV; quoting Isaiah 61:1-2).

Jesus' ministry embodied the meeting of spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. His parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) provides a picture of God's Kingdom ethic and gives meaning to the concept of holistic ministry:

- No cultural distinction of the one needing care
- No thought for personal danger or inconvenience of the caretaker
- Concern for the overall well-being of the care recipient
- Intentionality in meeting the immediate need
- Demonstration of justice
- Restoration of recipient's dignity
- Provision for follow-up
- Command for replication by others

As Spirit-filled believers and as “sent ones,”¹ missionaries are (or at least should be) empowered with the same anointing of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had during His earthly ministry. God's Spirit compels us to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus (Luke 24:46–49, Acts 1:1–8).

To follow Jesus' teaching and example, the community of faith must actively engage the spiritual, personal, social, economic, and physical needs around it (Matthew 25:35–40). In such a manner, the church offers a visible representation of what life in the Kingdom should look like within its own community and in its ministry to the world. As the Holy Spirit guides us in mission, the needs of the whole person—physical, emotional, and spiritual—can be met and an eternal relationship with the Lord established.

¹ The term *missionary* is derived from the Latin, used for the Greek term that in English is “apostle” or “sent one.”

Compassion for those in need is not an add-on task for those who are in Christ or for the Church as a Kingdom organism. It is part of the very nature of the Church of Jesus Christ. To be incarnational is to be truly compassionate about the needs of others. If one is giving glory to the Father (i.e., in vertical relationship to God), then the outward (horizontal) extension of that relationship is love and service to others, and that service is motivated by compassion (1 John 3:17, James 2:14–17).

Since AGWM's inception, our endeavors have included a response to human need. Serving those in physical and emotional distress has been a pattern of our mission's practice. This is due to biblical evidence which demonstrates that word (proclamation) and deed (action directed toward meeting needs) exist in an intrinsic and inseparable relationship and together form the scriptural mandate of ministry for those who walk with Christ (Colossians 3:17, James 2:14, 1 John 3:17). Our faith and action are rooted both in God's self-revelation in Scripture and in the value and worth of all persons because they are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD HISTORY AND MINISTRY TODAY

In the early years of Assemblies of God (USA) missions, nurses were sent to establish clinics, provide health teaching, and engage in other health-related activities. One such clinic—established in what was then Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo—saw up to 100 outpatients a day. A full-time hospital pastor was engaged by the clinic to testify to the waiting crowds, offer prayer for healing, and counsel for families who lost loved ones. Nearly every day, patients prayed to receive Christ.

Establishing health-promotion programs; health education; and medical, dental, and optical care is a hallmark of AGWM's HealthCare Ministries, now part of CompassionLink: Serving a World in Need.²

Many stories could be told. One glowing report from the late 1990s comes from Zambia, where community health evangelism training had begun. Lay community workers were trained in the basics of clean water, sanitation, nutrition, and simple treatments of common diseases, as well as how to incorporate a gospel message. They in turn trained community health evangelists who worked in their own communities, improving health and sharing the good news. Since those early years, the program has been led by Zambian nationals and has spread through the entire country and into surrounding nations. Hundreds have come to faith through these efforts.

Other community-development ministries provide training and support in water purification, solar energy, and agricultural techniques. All continually integrate a spiritual message of the saving power of Jesus Christ whenever possible. Because of the relational aspects of community development, an expected result—in addition to improved quality of physical life—is a community of faith. In essence, community development is an excellent church-planting method, often providing an entry point to least-reached or unreached peoples.

Another notable characteristic of AGWM's holistic ministry is care and concern for children. Worldwide efforts include sponsored education for children, particularly in Latin America. Latin America ChildCare sponsorships usually include a schooltime meal and medical care. In other parts of the world, AGWM personnel provide shelter and protection for children orphaned or those of trafficked and/or prostituted women. Ministry to disabled or marginalized children can be seen in every AGWM region.

2 See ministry website addresses in the bibliography.

When disaster strikes, AGWM, Convoy of Hope, and national church partners respond with appropriate aid and intervention. These entities are presently ministering to thousands of refugees fleeing ISIS-supported war and fighting. Many refugees are coming to faith in Christ as humanitarian aid is coupled with a clear message of the gospel. Demonstrating the love of Jesus in tangible ways touches the hearts of those whose lives have been turned upside down by crisis.

In addition to meeting immediate and critical needs, AGWM offers pastoral care and crisis debriefing for missionaries and nationals who are personally affected by a crisis and are experiencing secondary post-traumatic stress from caring for those affected by the crisis. Meeting emotional needs is carried out in many different ways but has become a focus of AGWM's Member Care program and CompassionLink's Pastoral Care International team.

Social issues such as human trafficking, sexual abuse, drug addictions, and HIV/AIDs are being addressed via prevention and intervention strategies in many parts of the world. In all cases, this is done in partnership with local and national churches. An anti-trafficking ministry of AGWM called Project Rescue has been involved in helping to extricate women and children from trafficked and prostituted situations.³ Safe houses and shelters have been established, offering holistic care and vocational training to help provide victims the hope of release and a better life. Another ministry, ProtectMe Project, is working with churches in Latin America to raise awareness of sexual abuse and trafficking in Latin America.

Retaining the dignity of individuals by enabling and empowering their capacity is a crucial part of justice for the poor, as well as best practice for response to the impoverished and suffering. It is essential that we consider the dignity of every person, understanding that everyone has something to contribute, no matter their station in life.

³ See Grant and Grant 2009; 2013 and Beth Grant 2014.

AGWM compassion ministries seek to offer a hand up rather than a hand out. In keeping with best practices, and wishing to “walk with” rather than “do for,” AGWM looks for opportunities to work on holistic solutions together with those affected. Rather than assuming what is needed, there is an intentional effort to carefully assess the need together with those expressing a need (Corbett and Fikkert 2012). Offering specific training often enhances the capacity of those served to help themselves. Using appropriate technology and locally available resources increases the probability that those served will be able to care for their own needs and even reach out to others.

CONCLUSION

While ministering in word and deed to those we serve, it is AGWM’s utmost desire to do so with excellence and a sincere regard for the recipient. When compassionate care is administered in a holistic manner, Kingdom values are upheld and the love of Jesus communicated. Therefore, AGWM intentionally purposes to follow best practices reflecting the biblical model in compassionate, holistic ministry.

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A P P E N D I C E S

AGWM Vision Statement, Mission Statement, and Purpose Statement

AGWM Vision Statement

Christ will be proclaimed and His Church will be established in all nations through the power of the Spirit.

AGWM Purpose Statement

So *all* can hear

AGWM Mission Statement

Our mission to all nations is to reach the lost with the message of Christ, plant churches, train believers, and serve the poor and suffering.

A S S E M B L I E S O F G O D
W O R L D M I S S I O N S

CORE VALUES

1. We are committed to a biblical understanding of the mission of the Church.
2. We are committed to fulfilling our mission in the power of the Holy Spirit through Pentecostal practice and teaching.
3. We are committed to the principles of the indigenous church and partnership.
4. We are committed to understanding the culture and worldview of those people with whom we work.
5. We are committed to practicing spiritual disciplines for the development of personal spiritual formation.
6. We are committed to the team concept of working together as missionaries.
7. We are committed to proclaiming the gospel to unreached people.
8. We are committed to holistic missions in word, deed, and spirit.

RPTS

REACH · PLANT · TRAIN · SERVE

*"Our vision, purpose,
mission, and core values
provide for us a compass
to point to the true north,
to the goal of our journey."*

GREG MUNDIS

Executive Director of Assemblies of God World Missions

