

Theme: The Arts, Cross-cultural Planting & Global Missions



The Procession to Calvary by Peter Bruegel the Elder (wikipedia.org, public domain)

The Church, the Arts, and Shaping the World for Christ

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Several of the girls in our youth choir gasped when they entered the Notre Dame Cathedral in Montreal. The colors, the lights and the architecture were breathtaking, and several of our chattiest young ladies stood in amazed silence. Boys too slowed down and took in the spectacle. Coming from a Baptist Church, most of our youth had never seen such beauty in religious art. One girl told me that if she went to this church, she would never be able to listen to the sermon. Others said that the cathedral made them feel the overwhelming presence of God. Time seemed

to stop, but soon we had to go.

Serving in the Army and living throughout the United States and Europe, I have walked the Stations of the Cross at the Kreuzberg monastery, marveled at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and enjoyed the peace and beauty of the garden and cloister of Mont Saint Michel. Alone or with others, I have toured the Benedictine Abbey of Frauenworth, explored the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and studied masterpieces at the Louvre. Our youth were right; beauty can be distracting, but it also be profoundly worshipful. Beyond doubt, the arts can reveal God.

Coming from a Protestant tradition, I am accustomed to churches with little notable architecture and even less art. For us, the performing arts were sparse and dance was forbidden. Only in music, with such glorious works as Bach and Handel, did my home churches approach artistic

Word from the Editor

It is with a sense of excitement and anticipation; EMS members are invited to attend the 2017 national conference of EMS @ GIAL (Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics), Dallas, Texas, September 15-17, 2017.

The theme of this issue of the *Occasional Bulletin* is: "The Arts, Cross-cultural Planting & Global Missions" with three papers which were presented at the regional and national conferences of EMS, peer reviewed then revised for *OB*.

– Enoch Wan, Editor of the *Occasional Bulletin*

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grandeur. In some parts of the Protestant world, many arts have been neglected or even despised for centuries. Musicians have been encouraged to use their gifts for the glory of God, while other artists have been told to practice their craft elsewhere.

Meanwhile, many feel that the Western World is losing its Christian traditions. More people than ever don't know the gospels, and may not even have heard the name of Jesus. Humans throughout the world are pulled between secularist philosophies, world religions, and a host of splinter groups. Local churches often feel powerless. This paper will describe the arts and summarize their history in Christian work. Then it will describe how the arts help teach ethics and morality, meet human physical and psychological needs, build communities, and reveal the person of God. Finally, it will discuss how churches and parachurch organizations today are using the arts to effectively shape their world for Christ. The article is divided into sections as follows:

1. What are the definition and divisions of art?
2. What are religious and Christian art?
3. How have Christians used the arts to shape the world for Christ in the past?
4. How do the arts help shape the world for Christ?
5. How can local churches use the arts to shape the world for Christ today?
6. What other groups support local church endeavors in the arts?
7. What are some potential pitfalls in using the arts in the local church?

As Christians throughout the world ponder and pray about how to shape the world for Christ, we would do well to remember the arts. From tabernacle to television, children of the Living God have used visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory arts to change the world.

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What are the Definition and Divisions of Art?

While objects like a tree can be precisely defined within and between cultures, concepts such as art defy definition. To many, art is “the quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance.”¹ While this aesthetic focus may please a Westerner, it may be unintelligible to someone from a culture that uses art as liturgy. While Americans may confine the use of art to contemplation², in the truest sense, art acts. It is used to worship God, praise great people, express emotion, communicate information, make money, and accompany other actions from building furniture to flying airplanes.

We historically differentiate between categories of art in the West. Works of fine (or high) art are enjoyed by the cultural elite in a society, works of popular art are shared broadly by the elite and the non-elite, and “works of the tribe” are shared by subgroups within a given society. Each



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individual may use one or more of these categories. An unemployed single mother may only use popular art like television shows, mainstream music, and commercial visual arts like magazine advertisements. A middle class suburban Christian may enjoy such popular art but also Christian music and fiction (works of the tribe). A secular wealthy art collector with a passion for baseball may appreciate all three categories.

This Western differentiation is foreign to many traditional cultures. Sanni tribesmen of Sri Lanka use masks in a ritual designed to heal disease, with each mask corresponding to a specific symptom.³ The masks are of the highest quality available in the culture and the ritual is common to every Sanni social group. The Papuan Gulf people of New Guinea use art in a similar healing ritual.⁴ In these cases, as in most cultures, fine art, popular art and works of the tribe are the same.

Now that people from Sao Paulo to Lagos can tour the Louvre or see a rock concert with their smart phones, almost all types of art are readily available to almost everyone any time, and these distinctions are fading. At the same time, other divisions have arisen. High art, popular art and tribal art merge and then subdivide into generational and cultural

groups. Young Hispanics listen to young Hispanic television and young Hispanic radio. They read books and magazines written by and for young Hispanics. Members of other economic classes, generations and cultural groups do the same. People remain within their group, rarely experiencing much less enjoying anything outside.⁵ Art has therefore splintered just like food, education, and so many things in the modern world. Christians often find themselves culturally in a “Christian ghetto”, without artistic impact on the larger society.

Patronage heavily influences what art gets produced.⁶ In the Middle Ages (500s-1300s) and Renaissance (1300s-1600s), the church and wealthy individuals sponsored artists to produce art for their pleasure and enjoyment. Pope Julius II (1443-1513) ordered the rebuilding of Saint Peter’s basilica and commissioned Michelangelo (1475-1564) to paint a fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.⁷ In the Modern Era (1700-1950), governments, large philanthropic organizations, and individuals commissioned arts. The early American painter Gilbert Stewart (1755-1828) produced portraits of the first six Presidents of the United States, as well as celebrities from John Jacob Astor to Martha Washington. Today commercial interests sponsor a wide variety of art. For example, the global accounting firm Ernst and Young sponsored the exhibition “Monet in the 20th Century” at the Royal Academy of the Arts in London,⁸ while the Dutch company, Shell Oil, sponsors art festivals in Ireland.⁹

Art is universal; there is no country or culture in the world, or in history, that does not have music, fiction, poetry, sculpture, visuals, or other art forms.¹⁰ It is hard to identify anyone who experiences no art at all.

What are Religious and Christian Art?

Just as it is difficult to define art, so it is challenging to define Christian art. Some may consider Christian art to be art produced by professed Christians, others may opine that it is art with Biblical or Christian themes, while a few may think that it is art created for a Christian audience. This paper will combine these three definitions. A broader perspective is to define Christian art as art which reveals God in a way consistent with Christian theology, regardless of the beliefs of the artist, the theme of the piece, or the characteristics of the audience. Such classic works as Picasso’s *Guernica* and Henry Moore’s *Mother and Child*, both of which have powerful spiritual overtones, could then be included.¹¹ I invite the reader to decide which definition is best in his or her ministry context.

Christian art was the primary art in Europe until the Renaissance, and featured such masterpieces as Leonardo Da Vinci’s (1452-1519) *Last Supper*, Raphael’s (1483-1520) *Deposition of Christ*, and Handel’s (1685-1759) *Messiah*. Other examples include the *Book of Kells*, an illuminated manuscript of the Gospels from the Kells monastery near Dublin (c 550), and the Cathedral at Chartres (1134).

Christian art also had many purposes beyond aesthetic

contemplation. The Reverend Regan O' Callaghan wrote "Icons have many functions across different traditions. They enhance the beauty of a church and instruct the faithful. They illustrate the sacred scriptures. They serve as reminders of Christ's crucifixion, his death and suffering. The icon as an aid for prayer can be part of the whole experience of the Eucharist and liturgy."¹² What applies to Orthodox icons also applies to all other types of art.

How have Christians used the Arts to Shape the World for Christ in the Past?

The Roman Empire (30 to 400s)

Cultures since the dawn of time have used space to assign and allocate power. During a tour of Washington DC several years ago, I asked the guide why the Supreme Court was so grand. He replied that the power of the Supreme Court, or any government, comes from the trust of the citizens to whom that government is responsible. Without it no government can function or even survive. The Supreme



Early Christians recognized the POWER OF MUSIC

and continued many of the Jewish musical traditions.

Court building is grand because people coming into the Court must believe that the Court itself is grand, and that it has the power to provide justice.

The Jewish Temple is an outstanding example of how architecture assigns and allocates power.¹³ The Temple emphasized the power of God by including an area strictly for Him, the Holy of Holies, and forbidding anyone to enter it at any time. The only exception was the High Priest, who could enter the Holy of Holies once per year, and each high priest could only enter it once in his lifetime. Thus the Hebrews learned that God Himself was in the Temple. The Temple had power insofar as God dwelled there (Ezekiel 10:18), and also had power due to the peoples' perception that God dwelled there. In every religion, at least part of the power of a sacred location lies in the perception that the divine dwells there.¹⁴

The Temple also assigned and allocated social power, with the inside of the building exclusively for priests, the inner courtyard restricted to Jewish men, the middle courtyard limited to Jewish women and children, and the outermost area for Gentiles. Finally, the Temple assigned and allocated personal power. Much of the power enjoyed by the priests in Jewish society derived from their freedom to move between areas in the Temple court and their knowledge of

Temple rituals.

The early Church used paintings and icons to communicate their understanding of and love for Christ. The houses of Christians that were used for churches often had fish, bread, and other images that they borrowed from the Jewish culture.¹⁵ The paintings in the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome featured Christ as the Good Shepherd (c 300).¹⁶ Notably, Christ in this work has the same features as the Roman god Apollo in classical art. From the beginning, early believers have transformed common symbols and images with Christian themes to minister to the world.

After the Edict of Milan (313) which legalized Christianity in the Roman Empire, believers had to decide how to deal with the non-Christian arts. Theater played a major role in pagan worship in Greece and Rome, and some elements of the Church tried to ban dancing, mysteries, the wearing of dress of the opposite gender, and the masks of comedies and tragedies.¹⁷ Others co-opted pagan festivals, temples, sanctuaries and plays for Christian ministry. The *Byzantine Christos Paschon (Passion of Christ)* is a play that borrows half of its text from dramas written by the pagan Euripides.¹⁸

Early Christians recognized the power of music and continued many of the Jewish musical traditions. In church and synagogue, the standard liturgy included Scripture reading, teaching, baptism, prayer, fasting, and the singing of psalms and hymns.¹⁹ Instrumental music and dancing however, were associated with pagan ritual, immorality, ecstasy and consequent loss of self-control. They were generally shunned by Christians and Jews.²⁰

The Middle Ages (500s to 1300s)

People constantly have their minds fixed on the here and now, rarely taking time to consider the eternal. One of the most important functions of religious ritual is to focus attention on what is cosmically significant.²¹ Especially in the Middle Ages, art and architecture functioned as part of the ritual practice.

The Book of Kells (c 550) is an outstanding example of art that encourages worship. The book is a Latin translation of the Four Gospels from the monastery at Kells, Ireland. While readers study the words of God, the book's rich illustrations delight with complexity and beauty.²² The Lindesfarne Gospels (c 700) from Northumbria is another classic illuminated manuscript.

Architecture allowed the believers to communicate truths about Christ to churchgoers as well as to the outside world.²³ Bibles and other literature were extremely expensive and therefore in short supply in the medieval world. As a result, most people and even many priests were illiterate. There was no central theological school to train priests and other religious teachers, so Biblical literacy was poor in all classes in European society, including the clergy.

Faced with this dilemma, the Church encouraged standardized architecture to highlight the glory of God and the sinfulness of man. The generic basilica church, for

example, included an atrium (open area near the entrance), a narthex (between the atrium and the nave, and separated from the nave by a railing), a nave (including the center aisle and seating), an ambo (pulpit), and an apse (chapel off the nave). These basilicas sprouted up everywhere, their design modifying the ritual to conform to the intentions of Church leadership. Gothic churches were built and furnished to convey the mystery of the divine, producing visual and tactile effects that would inspire awe in local gentry and peasantry alike. They evoked the power of the divine and of the holy life, often through the skillful manipulation of natural light through stained glass.²⁴

Despite this rich tradition, ever since God told Moses at Mount Sinai not to produce any graven images (Exodus 20:4), Christianity and art have been tense brothers. The Byzantine Emperor Leo III (685-741) outlawed Christian imagery and his government destroyed many works of art (726-787). Not until the Council of Nicea and the accession of Empress Eirene (AD 797-802) was art reinstated in the Empire. Iconoclasm resurged from 814-843 and art subsequently returned to being a vital part of Christian worship.²⁵

One wonders how much Christian iconoclasm was encouraged by Muslim iconoclasm. Naqib al-Misri's (d 769) *Reliance of the Traveler*, a compilation of sacred Islamic law, states that that makers of pictures will go to the fire.²⁶ By the time of Leo's death Islam had spread from Persia to Spain and Constantinople had been saved by a hair from Muslim armies (674-678 and 717-718). Christian chroniclers of the day wondered why God gave them so often into the hands of their enemies. Undoubtedly many felt that Christian idolatry was to blame.

Another important facet of the arts in churches in the Middle Ages was theater. Secular Greek and Roman plays remained popular in Europe through the period, but the medieval church nurtured the theater, using it for training in theology as well as political advantage.²⁷ Performances were often liturgical dramas based on Bible stories or the lives of saints, and they were very popular. *The Holy Resurrection* (1179) and Hildegard's *Order of Virtues* (1140s) are famous examples.²⁸ The stage, the set, the costumes, and the actors provided a powerful way to get Bible truths to illiterate people.

The Gregorian chants, named after Pope Gregory (540-604), are the most famous example of Christian music in the Middle Ages. Initially associated with the monastic movement, these chants were monophonic (no harmony, only melody) and acapella, emphasizing power, purity and simplicity to their hearers. The schedule in Benedictine monasteries was arranged so that all 150 psalms would be sung each week.²⁹ Gregorian chants, perfectly suited to the superb acoustics of many cathedrals, quickly made their way into mainstream Catholic life. They contributed to a powerful worship experience.

The Renaissance and Reformation (1300s to 1600s)

Sculpture and art were especially helpful to teach illiterate worshippers Biblical truths.³⁰ Michelangelo's *Pieta*, showing Christ's body in the lap of Mary His mother, invites viewers to join in her grief.³¹ Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) placed all of his characters on one side of the table in *The Last Supper* (1495-1498), inviting the viewer to look in at the proceedings or even to step into the picture. Imaginatively entering a scene helped lay worshippers perceive extraordinary access to spiritual power.³²

The earliest Catholic services emphasized the Eucharist. Under the influence of the Reformation, the Council of Trent increased the focus on preaching at Mass. However they discouraged the use of music.³³ While medieval Christendom emphasized the glory of God and the mystery of the Eucharist, Catholic Christendom in this period emphasized the mind. Sculpture and art after the Reformation served to stir the intellect in its search for God.³⁴ Pieter Brueghel's (1525-1569) *The Procession to Calvary* challenges the viewer to find Jesus amidst a throng of people oblivious to His agony, and then challenges them to consider their own oblivion to the work of God. *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God), by Francisco De Zurbaran (1598-



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1664), pictures a lamb, legs bound for slaughter, lying on a dark background. It is a potent and painful image of what Almighty God sacrificed for us.

Theater was still controversial. Samuel Wesley delivered his *Sermon Preached Before the Society for the Reformation of Manners* at the St. James's Church in Westminster (1698). In it he exclaimed "our infamous theaters seem to have done more mischief to the faith and morals of the nation than Hobbes;...with as much reason we may exclaim against our plays and interludes as did the zealous fathers against the pagan spectacles, and justly rank those, as they did the others, among those pomps and vanities which our baptism obliges us to renounce and abhor."³⁵ Nonetheless, theater was transformed during this era, with innovations in acting, scene design, and play-writing.³⁶ Much new material appeared, but as in medieval times, the Church often "Christianized" classical tragedy.³⁷ The Spanish Mystery of Elche is a Renaissance liturgical drama performed at Easter which remains popular

today.³⁸ UNESCO named it one of the masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

The Reformation had its own period of iconoclasm.³⁹ Constantinople, the “impregnable” Christian city, fell to the Turks (1453). Muslim armies had humbled Hungary (1526) and besieged Vienna (1529). Europe was terrified but their power seemed unstoppable. Simultaneously, the Catholic Church used images in the veneration of saints, a practice the Reformers strongly opposed. Against this backdrop, Martin Luther (1483-1546) allowed images for education but Martin Bucer (1491-1551), a mentor of John Calvin, wanted them destroyed. As a result, Calvinist churches frequently displayed inscriptions of the Law of Love. Similar to mosques, they used stylized writing rather than images.⁴⁰ Henry VIII (1491-1547) split from Rome and formed the Anglican Church in the Act of Supremacy (1534). As a result, the English destroyed images, statues, and abbeys.⁴¹

The Modern Period (1700s to 1950s)

The Thirty Years War (1618-1648) marked the last time that religious conflict tore Europe asunder. Instead, skeptics like Voltaire (1694-1778) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) questioned the validity of any and all religions, especially in the wake of such tragedies as the Earthquake of Lisbon (1755). As a result, by the mid-1700s, churches found themselves competing for worshippers in a religious “marketplace”.⁴² Protestant groups still avoided the visual arts, now less because of the Catholic and Muslim influences and more because the visual arts became tied to the rise of liberalism.

Music remained important, and dance, in some circles, was widespread. Church music like that of Bach transformed but also lengthened services. Such music was often written by local artists and performed by local choirs.⁴³ Some nineteenth century groups like the Shakers used dance extensively in their worship services.⁴⁴

Theater remained significant, but still controversial. The coming of moving pictures transformed the role that drama played in the witness of Christ. For the first time, audiences and performers did not need to come together at the same place and time. Sidney Olcott’s silent film *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912) was the first large scale movie portrayal of the story of Jesus. Many more followed, from the epic *The King of Kings* by Cecil B DeMille (1927) to the Biblical epics *Quo Vadis* (1951), *The Robe* (1953) and *Ben Hur* (1959).⁴⁵

How do the Arts help Shape the World for Christ?

The Arts in Teaching Ethics and Morality

In his study *Literature, the Arts, and the Teaching of Ethics*, Wilson Yates identified two ways in which literature and the arts function didactically in moral education. First, they engage, through greater use of the imagination, our

intuitive and affective modes of knowing. Second, they provide concrete, narrative experiences (stories) through which we are able to understand and enter into the life and character of moral experience.⁴⁶ By inviting us into the life of a drama character, into a painting, or by beckoning us to touch a sculpture and thereby enter its world, the arts help us personalize the moral and ethical struggles of our subjects.

Consider the story of Susanna and the Elders, based on the apocryphal chapter of Daniel 13. Two elders spy the beautiful Susanna bathing nude. The men demand sex, and when Susanna refuses, they accuse her publicly of adultery. Susanna is about to be put to death but Daniel questions the elders, who are found guilty of falsely accusing her. The men are executed and justice is done. From 1470, many paintings have portrayed this famous story, always challenging the viewer to ask who they are in the drama. Are



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they the lecherous elders, the innocent bather, or the one who will deliver her from them? The paintings invoke our wisdom, our folly, our emotions, our reason, and our self-interest as we contemplate these issues of lust, virtue and justice. The viewers’ response is not academic and sterile but deeply personal.

The emotional impact of the arts also improves our long term memory for lessons learned. Science has long understood that emotional verbal and pictorial stimuli are remembered better than non-emotional stimuli.⁴⁷ Thus we are more likely to remember the lessons that we learn through the arts.

Pieter Brueghel’s (1525-1569) *Procession to Calvary* shows Jesus carrying His cross, small and hard to see in the center of the painting. No one else is really watching; they are all absorbed in their lives and are missing the greatest event in human history. Stanley Spencer’s (1891-1959) *Resurrection at Cookham* shows people coming out of their graves, no longer fearing death.

The Arts in Building Communities

People who engage in similar activities tend to congregate; musicians hang out with other musicians, sports fans cheer with other sports fans, and doctors gather with other doctors. The same is true for visual and other arts. Churches that have music programs meet the communal needs of music

minded people. However, where do the people interested in painting, sculpture, or drama go? Unbelievers who visit a church may enjoy the preaching or the programs but if they do not find a like-minded social group, they are unlikely to stay. Furthermore, if an amateur musician wants to use her gifts to the glory of God in her local church, she very likely can. If an amateur painter wants to use his gifts to the glory of God in his local church, he very likely cannot. The Fellowship for the Performing Arts (FPA) and Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA) are two parachurch organizations that serve local bodies of Christians and help build such communities.

The Arts in Revealing the Person of God

We have already discussed how Gothic cathedrals used light and Gregorian chants used sound to reveal the glory of God to the people. Such spectacular sights and sounds fill us with a sense of the numinous, something most people rarely feel in the workaday world. Many more modern churches, such as the Notre Dame Cathedral in Montreal mentioned above, do the same. Francisco De Zurbaran's (1598-1664) famous painting *Agnus Dei*, which portrays a lamb fully awake and yet bound for slaughter, poignantly reflects Jesus' sacrifice. The Stations of the Cross at the Kreuzberg Monastery in Germany, like the more famous stations in Jerusalem, help viewers reenact the Passion of Christ. Sainte Chapelle in Paris overwhelms people with its grandeur, with towering walls and windows bringing in natural light augmented by candles, and cavernous interior amplifying Gregorian chants.

The Arts in Meeting Human Physical and Psychological Needs

Leo Tolstoy wrote the "people who really participate in real art are morally improved", and Thomas Jefferson opined that beautiful cities make for better citizens.⁴⁸ While there are counterarguments to these statements, there remains a sense of self-evidence about them. The Apostle Paul wrote that our minds should dwell on whatever is true, noble, right, good, lovely, and admirable. Modern medicine suggests the same.

Journaling and storytelling have shown promise in the self-management of chronic pain symptoms, as has listening to music.⁴⁹ Listening to music also improves mood and arousal, which may augment performance on cognitive tasks.⁵⁰ Playing music ("active music therapy") improves function in brain injured patients.⁵¹ Other studies demonstrate the efficacy of listening to music in improving patients with cancer, heart disease, and even those on mechanical ventilators.^{52,53,54,55} Nature art decreases stress in children⁵⁶ and creative arts improve overall well-being in children with cancer.⁵⁷ The Cleveland Clinic found that their environmental art, predominately nature-based, decreased stress and improved moods in patients and others who visited.⁵⁸ Restated, just walking through hospital halls with

beautiful pictures makes those who see them healthier. The same is true of the Fort Belvoir Community Hospital, which I helped design 2007-2009, and the National Intrepid Center of Excellence for brain injured soldiers. One study found that green spaces (such as parks and gardens) in communities improved physical activity and even decreased overweight and obesity.⁵⁹

One review article of the effect of the arts in medicine found many benefits:⁶⁰

1. Music improves heart rate, respiratory rate, anxiety, relaxation, and decreases the amount of oxygen needed by the heart.
2. Visual arts improve people's sense of well-being, stress, and anxiety. They decrease depression and negative thoughts.
3. Movement arts improve physical symptoms, ambulation, and joint range of motion. They augment overall quality of life and personal adjustment.
4. Expressive writing helps people manage anger, benefits interpersonal relationships, and decreases pain and fatigue.

What do all these medical findings have to do with local churches? First, parishioners at churches often have the same kinds of medical and personal issues as do patients in a clinic or hospital. The same kind of factors can help them feel better. Second, these interventions were often environmental music and art rather than formal therapy. Just as discouraged people sitting in a clinic waiting room feel better when they see lovely paintings, so discouraged people sitting in a church foyer feel better when they see lovely paintings. The concept of biophilia suggests that people who experience a natural environment, whether a forest, lake, beach, or something else, gain better health, even if they only see a photograph.

In summary, churches can use the arts to effectively teach ethics and morality, build communities, reveal the person of God, and meet human needs in their ministries. They can incorporate windows, gardens, and photographs to maximize their members' exposure to the natural world. They can use art works, whether paintings, statuary, or the like to elicit positive emotions. They can provide music and dance ministries to help heal their congregants with a variety of medical and personal problems. None of these interventions are panaceas, but each has been demonstrated to improve many aspects of peoples' lives.

How can Local Churches use the Arts to Shape the World for Christ Today?

If we return to our definition of Christian arts, meaning arts that are created by Christians, have Biblical or Christian themes, or are produced for Christian audiences, our brief historical survey has revealed that God's people have used the arts in a wide variety of ways since the days of Christ, and

even earlier if we include our Hebrew heritage. Christians have used the arts to inspire, to teach, to encourage, to warn, to heal, to unite, and for a host of other purposes. In a process called historicization churches use art to build a link between themselves and Christians in the past, thus increasing legitimacy.⁶¹ Some would say that the arts have been indispensable in the growth of the church from three thousand members in Acts 2 to over two billion today. Others may contend that the arts have had a negative influence; all that is needed is the preached Word of God. Even these people, however, usually admit the efficacy of music in reaching the human heart with the gospel. Overall, it seems prudent to conclude that Christian arts have had a net positive impact on shaping the world for Christ.

Today the Church in Europe and the United States seems to be retreating. While Western believers thrill to stories of revivals in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, we despair at falling attendance, empty sanctuaries, and hostility in our own societies. Pastors have told me that since they cannot compete with movies, music, smart phones and



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the internet, they no longer even try. The shopping mall seems better able to connect with Americans, Europeans, and other secularized urban dwellers, than the church does.

As early as the 1950s, Reverend H Boone Porter lamented that the church was relinquishing its cultural leadership to the secularists. Feeling that mental images, not theological formulae, make up human spiritual experience, he advocated using fine arts to “stimulate, harmonize and integrate the imagination.”⁶² Lloyd Arnett, professor at Trinity Western University, wrote that theater is a God-given gift, recognizable in all cultures and of benefit to all mankind.⁶³ It is the place for ideas, philosophies, and discussions of man’s fate.

Happily, there seems to be a revival in Christian use of the arts to reach others for Christ in the 21st century.⁶⁴ According to the National Congregations Study, 57% of congregations do social services and 42% do political activities in a given year, but nearly 100% provide live music every week.⁶⁵ Eighty percent of those that offer music also have nonmusical activities such as drama or dance in their ministries. In 1998, more than 60% of Americans participated in or heard congregational singing, while

17% attended a classical music concert, 39% attended a pop music concert, 25% saw a musical theater production, 12% saw a jazz performance, and 5% attended live opera. Thus church music is the most prevalent form of live music in the United States.⁶⁶ Music undeniably shapes the world for Christ.

My home church, the First Baptist Church of Alexandria, Virginia, combines drama and music in its annual Living Christmas Tree. While we have over 900 members, over 6,000 people attended at least one performance, largely from the surrounding community. We also use music and interpretive movement on our youth choir mission trips, performing on street corners, town squares, and churches throughout North America.

Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Virginia, opened an Institute of Fine Arts in 1993. Since then it has provided private lessons and classroom instruction in music, dance, and the visual arts. Faculty and students perform during worship and for outside venues.⁶⁷ This institute serves as professional training as well as outreach to the unchurched community.

Antioch Baptist Church in Fairfax Station, Virginia, has five choirs, including a praise team, a gospel choir, and a male chorus. It also hosts dance, mime and puppet ministries for members and the community, especially for women and children.⁶⁸ A robust media ministry supports their artistic and worship programs.

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church in Herndon, Virginia, offers youth and adults the chance to perform liturgical dance in *Dancers of Faith*. The church also offers drama and mime ministries. These ministries perform for other churches and worship events throughout the region by request.

Convergence Church, also in Alexandria, Virginia, has an innovative and multifaceted arts program. They have an art gallery which exhibits work from church members but also from the local community. In April 2016, for example, the church will be showing art from four local private schools and one local public high school.⁶⁹ This reaches the students, their parents, their friends, and hundreds of others. Convergence Church hosts studios in which resident artists create art and train other artists. Music Together Alexandria and Encore Chorale highlight music for all ages while the Brave Spirits Theater and Port City Playhouse feature drama. Convergence rents studio space, including a recording studio, to anyone who needs it.

Churches are involved in cinema. Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, GA has made top Christian films including *Facing the Giants*, *Fireproof*, *Courageous*, and *Flywheel*. So many churches have begun making movies that a Christian Film Festival has developed.⁷⁰ Whatever one says about the films, these groups are trying to use the arts to shape their world for Christ.

What Other Groups Support Local Church Endeavors in the Arts?

The examples above might seem overwhelming to a pastor of a local church hoping to use the arts to shape his community for Christ. All too often, pastors feel isolated in their responsibility to care for their congregation, rather than part of a worldwide network of believers. Fortunately there are organizations throughout the United States, some local, some regional, and some national, that can help churches all sizes increase their arts ministries.

Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA) is based in Madison, Wisconsin. CIVA members include artists who provide original work, institutions such as colleges and universities, and organizations such as churches, galleries and museums. CIVA matches artists' work with organizations' needs to produce traveling visual arts exhibits for rent. Exhibits are juried to guarantee quality and include historical pieces in addition to original art. CIVA exhibits include painting, photography, sculpture, ceramics, and a wide variety of other forms. Exhibits rent for as little as \$450 per month, plus shipping and insurance.⁷¹

The Christian Performing Arts Center (CPAC), based in Keller, Texas, produces drama for senior communities, children's homes, hospitals, shelters, churches, schools, parks, malls, festivals and special events all over the DFW Metroplex.⁷² CPAC also holds summer music and drama camps for children.

DramaShare provides royalty-free Christian drama scripts, skits, sketches, and sermon starters.⁷³ They sponsor workshops and conferences to train and encourage churches in the dramatic arts. Finally, DramaShare produces scripts on demand to help churches and other groups. Christian Dramas provides similar services.⁷⁴

The I'll Fly Away Foundation, named after the famous Southern Gospel song I'll Fly Away by Alfred Brumley, encourages music in the home, school and church. They sponsor a "You Can Fly" Student Songwriting Workshop and a "You Can Fly" Songwriters Studio.⁷⁵

Fellowship for the Performing Arts (FPA) is an evangelical non-profit organization which produces professional theater with Christian themes for a diverse audience. FPA has produced shows such as *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Most Reluctant Convert*, *The Gospel of Mark*, and *Martin Luther on Trial*. Founded by actor Max McLean, FPA's plays have received outstanding reviews from Los Angeles to New York.⁷⁶ Many Christians in D.C. and other areas invite their non-believing friends.

What are some potential pitfalls in using the arts in the local church?

First, mankind has too often transferred their allegiance from the Maker to the image. Islam and Protestant Christianity have been unwilling to trust the visual arts, and this fear has sometimes been justified by the abuses of

idolatry. Pastors must constantly remind their congregants and themselves that the arts are only good insofar as they point to the God who created them. Just like everything else in the material world, everything that leads to the Lord is good, and everything that leads away from Him is bad.

Second, there will be conflicts over paintings, sculptures, photographs, dramas, dance, and other arts just like there is over music, preaching, and everything else. Just as churches have split over the color of choir robes, they will split over the selection of paintings. Someone will always be offended. Churches who embrace visual and other arts must accept the controversy that will inevitably come, knowing that the gain is far greater than the loss in shaping the world for Christ.

Third, pastors are often not the best judges of art and may be uncomfortable entering this arena. Pastors can talk to artists, take classes in art, and read reliable Christian books, such as those mentioned in the bibliography. This is not unique to the visual arts, however. Pastors may not be the best judges of music or video, and yet these are commonly used in churches. Members of the congregation, other pastors, and seminary art professors are good resources.

Fourth, churches must always remain churches, even though they may feel pressure to become art studios.

Conclusion

In summary, local churches can and should use the arts to shape the world for Jesus Christ. Our forebears have used them effectively in the past and have left us a rich legacy. Christian arts, those by or for Christians or highlighting Christian themes, have helped grow the Church from thousands to billions over two millennia. Science and experience reveal that the arts help teach ethics and morality, build communities, reveal the character of God, and meet human needs. Many local churches throughout America use the arts to shape their world for Christ, and there are many parachurch organizations that help them do it. There are pitfalls to increasing ministries involving the arts in churches, just as is true of any initiative, but the potential gains far outweigh the costs. In a world that, especially in the West, seems increasingly hostile to Jesus and His people, the arts provide a powerful way to shape our cultures and societies for Him. Our forebears used them long ago, and so must we.

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Is Cross-cultural Church Planting a Biblical Mandate or a Western Imposition

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*If you want to grow something to last a season, plant flowers.
If you want something to last a lifetime, plant trees.
If you want something to last through eternity-plant churches.
(The Free Church-Going to Seed: A Prophecy 1976)*

Talking to pastor Hasan about our church planting project, I received this response: “You foreign workers just want to start new churches making us feel that we are not doing ministry until we start new churches.” His words took me by surprise since we were both serving in a land where 99.9% of the eighty million people are Muslims and the church is tiny. Yet his remarks provoked me to think deeply about my motivations and understanding of church planting and to wonder if his comments had a basis of truth.

This paper grapples with the tensions that arise when



**It is a principle well founded
in Scriptures that God
INTENDED TO USE THE CHURCH
as a key tool in carrying the
Kingdom values to a needy world.**

the understanding of the national leaders regarding the nature of the church and its great commission clashes with their perception of how the expat professional missionary machinery carries out the church planting endeavor.

The content of this presentation is divided into three main areas of discussion: Is church planting a biblical mandate? Is church planting a program to be imposed on the national church by the expat missionary force? Finally, do expat workers bring agendas that have negatively impacted the national church's understanding of church planting?

In the conclusion, there will be recommendations that attempt to bring some resolution to the issues raised in this paper. The sections of this paper will also be addressing the assumptions and definitions under which I present this

discussion. This paper is based on real facts from the field in Turkey and some bibliographical sources.

Assumptions, Delimitations and Limitations:

I am addressing this issue in regards to the Turkish context where I work; situations might change in other latitudes of ministry.

I am using the terms “foreign church planter” or “expat worker” in general but more specifically to refer to the Western-trained church planter.

I am not a native English speaker, but I have tried my best to express my thoughts as simple and clear as I could.

Is Church Planting a Biblical Mandate?

“For God to build his church he must plant his church-churches must be called into existence. Christ must build his universal church by planting and building local communities of believers” (Ott and Wilson 2011, 21).

The Bible states that Christ loves and desires to build his church: “...I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...” (Eph. 5:25-32). But some scholars understand that since the term church planting is not in the Bible as such, it is difficult to derive a whole branch of ecclesiology on this topic. They argue that even the concept of church in the New Testament needs to be revisited, understood adequately, and then explained. This would also be true of what church reproduction is all about. They understand that it is a technical term coined to explain church growth. Let's consider what Dr. Reitsma¹ says: “A careful academic reading of Scripture will show that church planting does not have a biblical foundation. Which means it is impossible in a thesis to give a biblical view of church planting. That relates on the one hand to what exactly does a passage/bible book/author say. It does however also relate to the second issue B. Hermeneutics. For the question of ‘Church planting’ is not a biblical concept, but is a modern idea, with many different aspects, with many different meanings” (Reitsma 2015).

Authors Ott and Wilson, in their book *Global Church Planting*, present the biblical understanding of what a local church is and then go on to explain what church planting is: “A local church is a fellowship of believers in Jesus Christ committed to gathering regularly for biblical purposes under a recognized spiritual leadership” (2011, 7). From this definition derives the understanding of church planting: “Church planting is that ministry which through

evangelism and discipleship establishes reproducing kingdom communities of believers in Jesus Christ who are committed to fulfilling biblical purposes under local spiritual leaders (I Corinthians 3:6, Romans 15:20)" (Ott and Wilson 2011, 8).

In view of the prophetic fulfillment of God's plan that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and that in the end times there will be people from every tribe, tongue and nation; Ott and Wilson expand the understanding of church planting in the following manner: "Church planting is the ministry of proclaiming the gospel and forming kingdom communities among every nation, tribe, people, and tongue to glorify God in time and eternity" (Ott and Wilson 2011, 21).

In these last two definitions Ott and Wilson introduce an interesting topic, kingdom communities. This is a concept that qualifies the church, since at times people seem to misunderstand the depth of this old term. The kingdom community concept emphasizes the values in the lives of the members of God's Kingdom expressed by Jesus in Matthew 5-7. Usually church planting is seen as something that looks mainly at numerical growth, but a Kingdom Community emphasizes how believers should live among themselves and in the world.

A. Is church planting found in the Bible?

The term church planting as such is not found in the Bible, but the image that we find in the Bible is one of a plant that is being looked after from its birth until maturity: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building." (I Corinthians 3:6-9).

Paul is speaking to emphasize that the One who gives the growth to his work is God; He may use certain people, but at the end of the day it is up to God to bring the growth. This passage is curious because the Greek term used is one that shows the action of planting a seed that will give birth to a plant or tree (φύτεύω) and later placed on a plot of land used for agricultural purposes ("Strong's Greek: 5452. φύτεύω (*phuteuō*)—to Plant" 2016). So, the passage is referring to a plant that grows, or maybe to a tree. From this we see that the church planting terminology is not so far-fetched as some make it.

I am not implying from the imagery used here that the term church planting is biblical, but just like the term discipleship is not in the Bible, it does not mean that it cannot be used to refer to making disciples, which is in fact a biblical commandment. By the same token church planting can be used for explaining the action of starting new churches that would reproduce into others. This is also a biblical principle seen throughout the book of Acts,

referred to through the whole New Testament in all of its Epistles and other letters and even in the culmination of times in the book of Revelation with the Seven Churches.

Throughout the book of Acts, we see the apostles and other church planters not only proclaiming the gospel by word of mouth and doing miracles, but also gathering the believers and organizing them under elders wherever they went (Acts 14:23). In the Bible, the term church is not given to a building, but to those called out by God to conform a new family in relationship to God (Romans 1:7, I Corinthians 1:2). The apostle Paul, after establishing a group of believers in one specific place, would often call on some to leave that congregation and accompany him to reach out to others where the gospel had not been heard or to strengthen a church (Acts 16:1, Acts 20:4, Acts 18:2). These teams would then start the new work by evangelizing and disciple making; as the new church was established then the cycle would start all over again. In this environment,



The life of the church was a dynamic coming and going of

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

and in constant dependency on the Holy Spirit.

the words of Paul to Timothy resound with greater strength: "and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2).

The Pauline Epistles are filled with exhortations to the churches in many areas of need, but evangelism, disciple making and the training of leaders stand out (I Timothy 3, Titus 1). These steps are foundational in starting new congregations. The introductions in many of the Epistles with the terms peace and grace create a kingdom community flavor which is also a key factor in the church planting endeavor (Romans 1:7, I Corinthians 1:3, Galatians 1:3). Indeed, the Pauline letters portray vividly the interaction in the lives of many women and men who are involved in expanding the Kingdom of God all over through the starting of new churches (Romans 16:1-15).

In this endeavor human relationships were vital, and Paul and the others would keep close relationships through visits, prayers, letters, messengers, teachings, offerings and other events. The life of the church was a dynamic coming and going of interpersonal relationships and in constant dependency of the Holy Spirit.

As we started our last church plant, I remember reading

a book on Church Planting written for the English urban context, where they recommended mass promotion of the church opening with flyers, newspaper ads, and a big party atmosphere during the event. I thought to myself “How will we do this in Turkey?” This illustrates the importance of contextualization; we need to think of the culture where we are serving. But the eternal perspective of the Word of God gives us the unshakeable need of human relationships. They will always be the foundation upon which God will establish His work.

B. Church planting as practical methodology for expanding God's work.

Church planting is a way by which the Kingdom of God is expanded in different places, even where the name of God has not been named. But beware not to make church planting just a dry strategy. I believe that this could be part of the problem as foreign missionaries come into the fields and are so sold out to see results, but do not make the process one that is honoring to the values of the Kingdom and the culture of the people. This is why Stuart Murray says the following:

“(Church planting) may be a significant means of advancing the mission of God. It may facilitate evangelism, peace-making, action for justice, environmental concern, community development, social involvement and many other mission ventures. But it is likely to function in this way if it is set within the right framework. Church plant seen as an end in itself, or simply an evangelistic methodology, may fall short of its potential and distort our understanding of God's kingdom” (Murray 2001, 26).

On the practical side, there are many reasons why church planting is a good way of doing God's work. Authors Sanchez and Smith as well as Ott and Wilson mention a few of them (Sanchez and Smith 2011, 6–7; Ott and Wilson 2011, 32).

- New churches grow faster and reach more non Christians.
- New churches are more flexible and adaptable.
- New areas of population need new churches.
- All churches eventually plateau in growth.
- New churches can reach people groups not reached. Still 2 billion people in the World don't have a viable church.
- New churches are necessary to saturate regions and cities with the gospel. A church can only effectively evangelize 1000 people and then the need to re-vitalize the church still exists since generations vanish.
- New churches are necessary for growth and discipleship of new believers. The church stays with people from birth to death.
- New churches encourage established churches to greater evangelistic activity.

- New churches develop new leadership
- New churches mobilize more workers.
- New churches are key to social change.

Note that the above items include quantitative and qualitative aspects. The kingdom communities love evangelism but also love the fellowship, the growth in character, the development of leaders and the service to the community and the world. These aspects are essential in the healthy, natural, godly development of the church.

C. Should we be committed to it?

There are many ministries and gifts in the Body of Christ, but I believe that they should somehow be aligned to expand the Kingdom of God through church planting as a strategy. Even in discipleship, I understand that many times we have won someone to Christ and discipled that person but we may fail to introduce them to the larger body of Christ and left that individual without a community of believers to be accountable to and continue to grow in the faith so he/she can become all that God intended him/her to be. It is understandable that not all disciples will be church leaders nor church planters, but each one should aim to fulfill their part in God's plan and part of this is to support the expansion of the Kingdom of God and place those who come in into kingdom communities that will be reproducible.

An aspect of the making disciples, which is a clear mandate in the Bible in the Great Commission, is to gather people into communities like Jesus did with his own. The command to baptize and to teach to obey are almost difficult to fulfill apart from planting communities (Matthew 28:18-20). The logical questions arise: who will baptize? obedience in relationship to who? it must be done in relationship to community.

In the country where I serve it is interesting to observe that believers want to naturally gather with other believers and have fellowship, in part is the nature of the culture but I it is how the Holy Spirit moves people to a deeper commitment to one another and to God.

Is Church Planting a program to be imposed on national churches by foreign missionaries?

Is church planting a program to be followed?

The Webster English dictionary defines program as: “a plan of things that are done in order to achieve a specific result or a set of instructions that tell a computer what to do” (“Thesaurus Results for PROGRAM” 2016). In this sense church planting is not a program; any activity that involves the lives of human beings and their present and eternal needs can never be something programmed. Human life is too messy and complicated to be put in a formula or set of steps.

There are principles in the Bible, in the experiences of life and in the Social Sciences that enlighten us to understand

the church planting process (Hesselgrave 2000, 35) but we need to know that over all, the giving birth to eternal life and the complexities of the church planting endeavor at the end belong to the work of the Triune God. This is why the book of the Acts of the Apostles or the book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit witnesses to this fact.

May God help us to realize that we can never put His ways into a magic formula that brings about the results of new churches planted around the world. If this would be the case the work would have been done long ago. Yes, God will use men and women; He will bless the principles of His Word and the truths found around us but ultimately the growth and miracle of life planted in every latitude will depend on Him. This is why the need to pray at all times is of such an importance as we deal with this topic. Paul reminds us of this spiritual warfare that takes place in the establishment of God's work on this earth and helps us to understand that we can only forward it in His power and with His supplied weapons (Ephesians 6:10-20). This has been our experience in a Muslim context where the Bible is rejected and ridiculed; the idea of planting churches sounds like a joke, but God is doing it! If people would ask me what methods have you used or seen in church planting? I could give practical tips that have helped but the greatest word of advice would be to walk with your team in humility, love and prayerful dependence on God. He will show the way and use different methods and strategies in agreement with the particular situation.

So, can foreign missionaries impose such a mandate in the lives of the national church? Such work needs to be understood biblically and contextually by foreigners and nationals, accepted, assimilated and obeyed as being from God. The foreign church planter can model it, encourage it in his teachings but in the end, it needs to be the Lord of the harvest the one who can move the hearts of the national laborers.

What should be the motivation for church planting?

Human beings are complex beings, and there needs to be a great deal of soul searching in how this work ought to be done. I believe there are certain motivational aspects that need to be present in order for this work to be God honoring.

The glory of God versus the glory of Man:

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Being a church planter in a foreign land can be quite tricky since the same subsistence and identity of the church planter as well as his/her family are wrapped around the ministry. Sometimes to discern the difference between the church planter's will or God's will can be difficult and motivations can get confused. This is when good friends/advisers outside of the team, books written with the cross-cultural perspective

help by bringing objectivity to the situation. The degree of vulnerability, humility and teach-ability of the church planter will in many ways determine the outcome.

The glory of God is a good measuring rod, that keeps the church planter dependent on God and level headed. The outcome of the worker's hard labor will be to God's glory and the worker does not have to worry by the little or large amount of fruit. Because ultimately it is up to God to bear it or not to bear it. God has left His Church with the purpose to be Salt and Light on this earth and through those good works the peoples of the world will glorify Him (Matt. 5:16, I Pet. 2:9-12). A second motivation for church planting follows.

To Show God's love in meeting the needs of those who the church planter serves:

People will always have needs and the church is God's presence on this earth: His feet, His eyes, His hands, His mouth. So, in many ways God wants to use the Church to be His expression of love to a needy world.

This is why the Church must be a testimony within and to herself first of all. This does seem a bit strange but



People will always have needs and

**THE CHURCH IS GOD'S
PRESENCE ON EARTH:**

**His feet, His eyes, His hands,
His mouth.**

Jesus as the bridegroom, gave his life to present his Church without wrinkle and blemish so she would be holy. The analogy of his relationship with the church just as the groom with his bride is to show how Jesus will provide for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of his people (Ephesians 5:25-33). In the same ways believers must love the church body and provide for its members, this is where our responsibility starts (Romans 12:10). We also see this responsibility in the exercising of the spiritual gifts for the church's own edification (I Corinthians 4:12).

This aspect is so important in the growth and maturity of the Church. Through our love people will know that we are His disciples (John 13:34-35). This love is the greatest tool to witness to a needy world that needs to see as well as hear the of the Love of God shown by his children.

In August of 1999, an earthquake hit the city of Izmit, Turkey leaving thousands of fatalities and areas in rubbles. The evangelical Christian church was able to serve during

those months after the tragedy. The neighbors were so impressed that Christians would give them a hand, and stood by them in those difficult days that a fruit of that love still remains through a small fellowship that was started in that area.

The Church is a witness of God:

One of the major reasons for the Church to exist is to present a clear witness of who God is and to attract the world to the only One who can give life and meaning to its existence (Acts 1:8, I Peter 2:9,10). The Old Testament speaks of the salvation that God desired to give and meant this salvation to be brought through Israel (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6) but they rejected this opportunity and God raises his Church as a witness to all the world of his love, grace and mercy. The New Testament testifies to this fact starting with the coming of the Jesus, the Savior of the world. Jesus stated that his message would be proclaimed in all the world through his followers (Matt 28:18-20, Mark. 16:15, Lk. 24:46-49). The book of Acts tells the stories of God's church expanding, and living as a people who were distinct in their life styles and words even in their sufferings. By the way, the word used for witnesses in



Witnessing, discipling, and MULTIPLYING CHURCHES in a pioneer field like the Middle East is no game.

Acts 1:8 means martyrs. Finally, we have the prophetic word that describes the last times on earth with the church being taken to heaven after it has given full testimony even through martyrdom (Revelation 19:6-10).

Witnessing, discipling and multiplying churches in a pioneer field like the Middle East is no game. The examples of rejection, mistreatment, threats, beatings to the point of martyrdom is part of today's church history in this region. Turkey witnessed the murder of three men due to their Christian faith, on April 18th 2007. Two of them were Turks and one was German, they were asked to renounce their faith but they decided not to go back. Today the church in Malatya, where they were murdered, continues to stand firm in the midst of difficult times and thousands have heard the gospel of love and forgiveness on the lips of two of the widows and their children (You Tube, n.d.).

Motivations may vary in the church planting effort some are good some not so good, yet God wants us to be motivated by the ones stated above. But there is a factor that is forever present in this endeavor and is the money issue, so it needs to be addressed briefly.

The Power of the Purse

I worked for eleven years with a Western organization that helped support national ministries around the world. One of the main values of this organization was cooperation with accountability without dependency, they called this partnership ("Mission & Vision" 2016). For this purpose, they worked alongside ministries with strong national governing boards that lead ministries that would carry the work forward without dependency on foreign funds. The foreign funds would enhance but not cripple the work. This organization had a way of phasing out financially when the ministry would come to a good level of health. This was not always an easy goal to obtain but in the end, it brought lots of benefits.

When foreign workers come into pioneering fields or fields where the economy is bad or where the national church does not have the means to even support their pastors; there needs to be caution exercised by the foreign church planters on how they go about doing their work. Should they pay national church planters to participate in the work?

The fact that a foreign missionary entity be it a church or agency supports financially the church planting ministry has ramifications. Generally, nationals will tend to do what the foreign entity says in order to keep the funds coming. This may happen even at the expense of what the nationals understand needs to be done or instead of depending on God for his provision which will curtail the maturity of the national church. On the other side, some funds may be necessary to further the work and let's be aware that Scriptures illustrate how churches sent aid to other churches in need at certain points in time (Acts 11:30). So, as we see there is a fine line to walk concerning the area of finances.

My purpose in this paper is not to discuss how church planting should be supported but to raise awareness that finances play a sensitive role specially when foreigners are involved, this will always be a reality. The work of Ministry will require finances and stewardship. Foreign church planters may be seen as potential providers for the financial needs of God's work since they usually come from more developed countries or from countries that have sent them with their expenses covered and where churches have come to the maturity of understanding the mandate to do God's work worldwide.

Do foreign missionaries bring agendas that may impact negatively the national church?

We have seen that church planting is a ministry that is approved and encouraged by God in the Scriptures, but this does not mean that we have to do it by forcing people or churches to become involved even to the point of manipulating them financially. In these last years there is a stirring to reach the unreached people groups using church planting movements as a means to reaching thousands or millions of peoples and this is commendable.

I see God's hand moving in the New Testament using

peoples from different backgrounds, races, genders, ethnicities participating in God's work. But it took years and years, it took sacrifice, suffering even to the point of death. It was not a fad or a wave of recipes written in books that drove this, it was the Spirit of God through broken normal people, who in obedience and filled in the power of the Holy Spirit as their guide dedicated their lives to this endeavor of gathering the saved in kingdom communities (Allen and Newbigin 1962, ii)

I tremble when I hear of foreign workers trying to bring about church planting movements. Maybe because I have seen so many human efforts, that have been well intended but after a while have ceased due to tiredness or disillusionment. No, I don't want to be a part of that, nor I think it is fair for us to ask the national churches to become involved in our own little trips. Foreign workers must come to them with the model of the Scriptures in what they say and how they lived those principles. Sharing with them humbly that this is a difficult process, but that they more than anybody else are better equipped for this ministry in their own locations since they know their people and their ways better than anybody else. The national church planters may need for a while the maturity and experience of foreign church planters who can model godliness and team work, but after some time they will be able to take the calling of church planting to higher levels than what the foreign missionary force ever dreamt. This is the story lived in places like Latin America, some parts of Africa and Asia.

A Call to Missionary Sending Agencies

Missionary sending agencies usually set the pace in the vision, mission and policies of ministry on the fields they serve. I will address the agencies that have as their reason for existence the church planting activity.

First of all, the agencies are to be knowledgeable of the area where they serve. This is understanding the cultural traits of the people and how they do things. These are important factors to guide their missionaries in the training prior to entering and as the missionaries engage in ministry on the field.

The agencies need to advice regarding the rules of engagement with the national local churches and their leaders, in the case there is a church in existence. This is important to take into consideration since there are already assumptions in the area of church planting that will need to be addressed by the foreign church planters in relation to the national church for example in the case of pastor Hasan in the introduction. The national local church can be a great ally in the church planting ministry if it is consulted and engaged with cultural sensitivity and respect.

A Call to Sending Churches

There is a saying that "churches reproduce churches" this is true and I have heard it mentioned in the environment

where there are pastors who do not want the participation of agencies. But it is also true that agencies are specialized entities who have as a focus the cross-cultural church planting aspect of the mission. All its resources are aligned to this activity, which is not usually the case of local churches who are sending their workers. Unless the sending churches have a very strong missionary department with appropriate resources to face the needs of the missionaries they support in various parts of the world or they have decided to specialize in one specific region of the world. If this is the case the same words of precaution should be given to the local churches as to the missionary sending agencies.

A Call to the Missionaries

The missionaries are the boots on the ground of those churches who have sent them usually through missionary agencies. The church planting missionaries will tend to reproduce what they have seen in their places of ministry prior to arriving to the place of service. There will be good things and not so good things that they need to evaluate and decide if, what, when and how to apply in that specific culture.



**The foreign worker needs to
BECOME A LEARNER FIRST
and this may take years.**

The getting those assumptions straight and starting afresh is usually difficult and requires honest introspective work that needs to be accompanied by the observations of others on the church planting team. I suggest strongly as another important factor the aid of nationals who are able to speak directly in all honesty to the reality of their own context to the foreign workers. All of this consulting needs to be in direct connection to the guidance of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. I must add the need of taking time and allowing for maturity so the process will be done in better terms and bear good fruit. This implies that the foreign worker needs to become a learner first and this may take years.

Foreign church planters should have the trust of the national leaders, and this will take time, a humble attitude, a good testimony and a teachable spirit in order to create an environment of trust and cooperation. I remember when we started our church plant in Turkey, after 8 years of living among them, we went around visiting every one of the seven local churches in existence then; and we asked for their blessing on this new adventure. We also talked before-hand with the only other church in our specific area of the city and openly interacted with the pastor and heard

his perspective, advices and blessing. Our church planting team also participated of the city- wide pastors' meetings and asked for their blessing as we struggled in this process. I believe all these steps granted us favor before a national local church which later granted us to be under their wings and gave us a legal status before the government. By the way this church is where Hasan was the pastor.

Conclusions

Those knowledgeable in the topic of church planting would agree that unless the national church gets involved in church planting, the gospel will not take root in that culture. This is due to the effectiveness of the local people since they know their own, their culture and how to approach their needs.

Even though the term "church planting" does not appear as such in the Bible, we find many examples in the New Testament of how new churches got started in different latitudes. It is a principle well founded in Scriptures that God intended to use the church as a key tool in carrying the Kingdom values to a needy world. In this paper, I present



**Church planting as a strategy
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practical reasons why planting churches is vital in the world today and how it is a strategy that God has honored and will continue to honor until the end of times since He loves his Bride.

Church planting as a strategy should not be imposed, like a boss requires of his workers because he pays them a salary; but it should be modeled, taught and encouraged with the right motivations; these are: the glory of God, the edification of the church and the blessing for the peoples of the world.

How the foreign church planters come across in relationship to the national church affects the fulfillment of the Divine Commission. Foreign church planters should take into consideration how the national church perceives church planting and the reasons behind those perceptions and find ways to encourage a greater participation from the national side. The gospel has enough obstacles in the penetration of these fields already, and foreign church

planters should be sensitive to the situations they will face in the host culture.

God has given the West many years of experience in the missionary endeavor, including a richness of structures like missionary sending agencies, church alliances, and denominations that are represented on the fields through the service of individual church planters or teams who are trained as professionals in their work. These specialized structures are usually unknown to the national churches, and the foreign methodologies may come across as an imposition. This is why the attitude of a learner is so important. On the field, we need church planting learners who contextualize, who take into consideration the advice of trusted faithful national partners, who walk in the Spirit, and who will share their own experiences with a humble attitude.

I later found out that pastor Hasan felt condemned by the foreign church planters since he was not doing church planting. While serving as a pastor, he worked on the side in order to support his family and barely had time for other activities. This perceived disapproval of himself by foreign workers could have been real or created in Hasan's mind. But there is no doubt that foreign church planters had transmitted to him a message that is worth reviewing.

Endnote

1. Dr. Bernhard Reitsma is professor of Missions at the Free University in Amsterdam, Holland. His expertise is Islamic studies. This was a discussion in the area of church planting.

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A Framework for Engaging the Local Church in Global Missions

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***Randy Ehle** grew up in a missionary home and has served in the military, business, and as an Associate Pastor. His passion is to help local churches impact their communities and the world for God's Kingdom.*

As the 20th century wound down, missiologists wondered what the third millennium would hold for the task of world evangelization. Conversations among pastors, missionaries, and mission agencies revealed a shift of power and control, leading many to one conclusion: "... the center of gravity in missions has moved from the agency to the local church."¹

A decade and a half later, we are beginning to see and understand the implications of that shift; we see its strengths and weaknesses, benefits and challenges; we see momentum that should be encouraged and continued; and we see things that need to be corrected or ceased outright. But where the shift has been done well, we find a more fully engaged, passionate, globally-minded missions church. I want us to do it well.

Background

During the 20th century, missions evolved into a dichotomy between local church and missionary agency. Missionary societies of the previous century, closely affiliated with religious denominations, gave way to separate mission agencies "founded for the express purpose of promoting certain mission specialties" such as medicine, translation, radio, and aviation.² These "parachurch" organizations recruited, trained, sent, supervised, and cared for their own workers. Missionaries were the professionals, agencies took the lead in deciding where and how to serve, and local churches were seen as—and often content to be—primarily the source of people and funding.

Churches measured their missions impact by the number of missionaries they supported, how much money they gave in that support, and how many places the gospel was going because of their support. Direct involvement in global missions was left to the professionals, while back at home in the local church, involvement was concentrated among those whom I affectionately call "the missions zealots."

The paradigm is changing. Local churches are no longer content to merely support missionaries and agencies; they are increasingly taking the lead in both activities and priorities, training and sending their own people. Short-term missions are booming and churches are developing strategic partnerships with both agencies and indigenous churches.

But these shifts are not always easy. New churches focused on impacting their local community are hesitant to commit resources to global missions; established churches often battle the mindset that says, "we've always done it this way." Nor are the shifts always done well: inexperienced and culturally-unaware short-term mission participants can leave behind exhausted hosts, hurt and demeaned national churches, and a damaged reputation for the Church of Jesus Christ.

Addressing the challenges of getting involved cross-culturally—whether in our own communities or around the world—is a subject for another time. In this paper I will present a way forward for a local church to become a fully-engaged missions church. This is not so much a ministry model to be followed, but a framework that can be applied in any church context, and the principles that hold the frame together.



We needed to change HOW WE VIEWED MISSIONS and our role in God's global task.

This framework was constructed during my tenure as Associate Pastor of Cold Springs Community Church, a medium-sized, 68-year-old Baptist church set in a community that is neither urban nor rural; an average church in an average area, led by an average group of men and women who simply wanted to obey Christ's call to love God and love people, and in so doing, to impact our community and the world.

Originally the First Baptist Church of Placerville, California, Cold Springs Church had a long history of missions involvement, marked most noticeably by a small group of grey-haired women who rolled bandages, knit helmet liners, and held an annual craft fair to raise money for various worthy causes. Ten percent of the annual budget was committed to ministry outside its own walls, financially supporting a dozen different missionaries and ministries in Poland, Congo, Ethiopia, Utah, and locally. Yet there was little active relationship with most of those missionaries; fewer than half were known in any way to more than a few individuals, and even most of the Leadership Board

members could not identify who the missionaries were, where they worked, or what they did. If missions at Cold Springs Church was going to be more than just a budget item and a cadre of little old ladies, something needed to change. We needed to change how we viewed missions and our role in God's global task. The principles and framework in this paper laid the foundation for that change.

Principles

Undergirding our missions strategies and activities were four principles impressed upon me by my friend and former pastor, Steve Harling. At Cold Springs, we summarized those principles in this way:

Our missions involvement will seek to engage the **whole church** (all ages and stages), will be **focused** rather than scattered, will be **glocal**—i.e., connecting global and local outreach wherever possible—and will be implemented through **partnerships** with agencies and national churches in the areas we serve.

Principle 1: Whole church

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) was given to eleven men, but is a charge for all disciples. If you are a follower of Jesus, then you are a disciple; if you are a disciple, then you are to be a disciple-maker; the call does not discriminate based on age, gender, marital status, or



Witnessing, discipling, and MULTIPLYING CHURCHES

in a pioneer field like the
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life calling. The challenge for most churches, however, is to engage those at the ends of the age spectrum: young children and senior adults.

With children, the most basic place to begin for some churches may simply be a change of perspective from “childcare” to “discipling.” From the youngest ages, children can and should be taught about the world and God's passion for its redemption. Children's Church, Sunday School, and Vacation Bible School are all ideal contexts for this. Children can learn about the world, be introduced to global missions and missionaries, and begin to grow a world-class heart. Missionary biographies, books like *Window on the World*³, and stories such as Paul White's *Jungle Doctor* series can be used at church and at home to teach children about missions, other peoples, and how to pray.

The physical surroundings also have an impact; children's classrooms can be painted, decorated, and furnished

to broaden the vision of these young disciples. At Cold Springs Church, we changed the name of our children's ministry from “KidZone” to “KidsWorld,” then decorated one classroom with the sets and backdrops from an ancient Egypt-themed Vacation Bible School, papered the wall of another with a world map, and transformed a third into an African savannah, with a built-in thatch-roofed mud hut, a wooden market cart, and lifelike elephants and giraffes painted on the walls.

At the other end of the age spectrum the challenges are different and not necessarily easier. American culture does not value elders as much as other cultures do. We do, however, value retirement: an extended weekend of much-deserved rest and leisure. The problem is that the retirement mindset has slipped into our spiritual lives, where it has no place and no precedent in Scripture. Biblical retirement looks more like 120-year-old Moses dying opposite the Promised Land, with “undimmed eye and unabated vigor” (Dt 34); or like Enoch, who “walked with God and then he was not, for God took him” (Ge 5:24). Biblical retirement might look like John the Baptist's beheading or Paul's death under house arrest, but seldom like golfing in West Palm Beach. There is no retirement from discipleship.

Retirement from work has its advantages, though. Leaving the workforce can mean more time and resources available to actively participate in overseas missions. It can provide the opportunity to invest in the lives of younger disciples, or the freedom to pray, write, or teach. The activities we are able to do will certainly change with age, as both physical and mental capacities diminish over time. For some seniors, prayer will become their greatest and most effective ministry; it is only unfortunate that they—and we—will have waited so long to realize the need for and power of that ministry.

The Great Commission was given to the whole church, and we need to involve the whole church in our global missions efforts, whether praying, giving, or going. What no church can do, however, is engage the *whole* world; our efforts must be focused in order to maximize both involvement and impact.

Principle 2: Focused

Churches, like people, talk about what is important to them. Many churches talk about missions; they tout how many missionaries they support, short-term trips taken, the percent of budget dedicated to missions, and the number of places around the world that are being impacted. But talk to people in the congregation and you are likely to find that few know any of those missionaries; few know anything of significance about the places being served, or the activities and opportunities there. Missions—as a concept and an activity—may be a stated value for the church. But for most people in the church, missions is only a concept. *Focus* helps us to move missions from concept to passion.

Flood Church in San Diego was born out of one such missions-minded church. But while still an embryo, Flood's

leaders had focused their sights through a simple question: “what can one church in San Diego do about the AIDS crisis in Malawi?” Over the next several years, every time I visited Flood I heard something about Malawi—a team that was going or had just returned, a report from the Bible college they partnered with, or a message from the Malawian seminary student who had joined the pastoral staff. Flood Church’s laser focus allowed them to keep Malawi in front of the entire congregation every week. As the church has grown, its missions efforts have expanded to include Uganda and the Dominican Republic—but the expansion has flowed out of the relationships and activities of that initial focus on Malawi.

When I came to Cold Springs, the church already had relationships in Ethiopia; one of our Lead Pastor’s seminary classmates was serving there and a team had just returned from a two-week trip. No other supported missionary—and there were many—had as strong a connection among our leaders or congregation.

Adopting Ethiopia as a strategic focus made sense, but it wasn’t easy. It meant cutting support to a number of missionaries—always a difficult task in an established church with a history of supporting many. But the process, as George Miley writes, was “centered in mission rather than missionaries; [it moves] from asking, ‘What missionaries are we going to support?’ to asking, ‘What mission has God called us to undertake together?’”⁴

One of the significant benefits of a missions focus is communication; you can speak regularly, often, and naturally about that focus. Missionaries, who desperately desire real connection with the people of their supporting churches, don’t have to compete for attention. If the focus has been well chosen, then any visiting missionary’s message can be easily and naturally tied into the church’s broader vision and mission.

Choosing a focus should be a process of prayer, discussion, and discernment. It may be a clear and easy process, or it may be months or even years in the shaping. It should flow out of your church’s passion, vision, and mission. It may come through existing relationships, a compelling burden, or a divine appointment. It may grow out of experimentation, sometimes with things that later seem to have been more distraction than discernment.

For John Rowell and Northside Community Church in Atlanta, “prior experience and established relationships [pointed] the way” to a focus on Bosnian Muslims in war-torn Sarajevo.⁵ Imago Dei Community in Portland, Oregon, recognized they were an urban church in the heart of a relatively unreached city, so as they developed a regional focus, they chose to partner with Vietnamese churches in Hanoi, another unreached urban core.⁶

The focus a church chooses may be rooted in its demographic makeup: is there a large number of teachers in the church? Law enforcement? Military? Or the focus may flow out of its setting: urban, rural, agricultural, etc.

The focus may be a nation or a people group, health issues or a pioneer ministry, or some combination of these. Many resources to help with the process of choosing a focus are available through organizations like Sixteen:Fifteen, Dual Reach, and Catalyst Services. Leaders need to take time to talk and pray for God to unite the church around a central focus, and then connect that focus both locally and globally.

Principle 3: Glocal

The late missiologist David Mays, at a missions conference in 2010, began his keynote address with these provocative words: “Make disciples is NOT the core of the Great Commission.” A Greek grammar lesson later, Mays offered the thesis of his address: “the core of the Great Commission is not ‘make disciples’ but ‘disciple all nations.’ There is a great deal of difference between ‘making disciples’ and ‘discipling all nations.’”⁷ The call of a disciple is to disciple all peoples, to the ends of the earth. If we are truly about the business of discipling all peoples at home, then what we do globally can be simply an extension of what we are doing locally. In this way, our efforts in both areas are strengthened, and our congregations are more easily and wholly engaged.



**Choosing a focus should be
A PROCESS OF PRAYER,
discussion and discernment.**

Some of these connections are easy because of the number of immigrants living in the United States; we are able to serve the same people over here that we do over there. Each year, tens of thousands of immigrants come to the U.S. seeking refuge from violence, war, or religious persecution.⁸ New York and San Francisco boast the largest communities of ethnic Chinese outside of Asia⁹; Washington, D.C. is home to more Ethiopians than any urban area outside Addis Ababa.¹⁰ More than a million international students study at American high schools, colleges, and universities.¹¹ All these populations present connecting points for a congregation.

Not every church, however, will be able to find a local immigrant community from the region of the world it wants to focus on, so other connecting points will need to be found. Those may come through a demographic in the church, such as law enforcement, medical professionals, or teachers; through a key area of ministry like children or the homeless; or through a passion such as human trafficking.

The challenge of going glocal—connecting local and global ministry—demands something of the western church we have not always done well: collaboration, true partnership. We need to work together well.

Principle 4: Partnership

A local church cannot—indeed, dare not—go it alone in missions. In the 21st century, the ideal paradigm for effective cross-cultural ministry will involve a three-way partnership between local church, missionary agency, and national church.

Such partnership between churches is not a new thing. Paul and Barnabas were sent from and accountable to the church at Antioch. Churches in Asia Minor provided financial aid for the Jerusalem church in need. Disputes over practices and theology in Galatia were addressed by the Jerusalem church, and those decisions were dispersed throughout the region. Several of Paul's letters were shared among churches in Asia. Just as in the first century, churches around the world still need each other for ministry, growth, and mutual learning. Christianity is no longer a primarily Western religion, centered in Europe and North America;¹² we in the West need to recognize, honor, and submit ourselves to the growing church in Africa, Asia, and South America.



The image of the “UGLY AMERICAN”

is not a caricature limited to our
military men and women overseas.

It is not only churches that need each other; churches need mission agencies and agencies need churches. Engel and Dyrness call it a “mutual exchange between multiple centers of influence and varieties of gifts...”¹³ One of the benefits of a century of professional missions is the breadth and depth of experience, knowledge, and wisdom held by missionaries and their agencies. Local churches do well to learn from these professionals, especially in the challenging realm of cultural intelligence. The image of the “Ugly American” is not a caricature limited to our military men and women overseas; it is all too often the image portrayed by short-term western missionaries carelessly representing the God who loves all nations.

Cross-cultural partnership isn't easy. Values differ, as do the concepts of commitment, time, leadership, authority, submission, honor, shame, and more. Even the idea of partnership is itself burdened by the history of Christian missions, which has often looked more like colonial imperialism than gospel-centered service. Beth Birmingham and Scott Todd describe the challenge this way: “Partnership takes work... skills... [and] a willingness to patiently learn, communicate, adapt, and grow.”¹⁴ But the hard work will pay off in kingdom impact as this triad of local church,

national church, and mission agency recognizes and builds on the unique strengths and resources of each partner in relationships of mutual honor and submission.

These four principles—focused, whole-church, glocal engagement carried out in partnership with others—undergird the framework for our local church's missions efforts.

The Framework

Planting a new church with a missions passion embedded in its DNA need not be difficult, but moving an existing church from *missions as program* to a *missions as passion* will involve hard work, lots of conversations, Spirit-led discernment, and much prayer. In either case, an intentional pathway is needed: a framework for engaging the whole congregation.

At Cold Springs Church, we wanted our missions involvement to engage the whole church, be strategically focused, connect the global and local, and work through partnerships. This led us to a framework that any church could adopt:

- **Expose** the congregation to the vast diversity of God's work and his people
- **Equip** the congregation both as disciples and to disciple
- **Engage** the congregation in the task of discipling all peoples
- **Establish** disciples of Christ and disciple-making churches

Frame 1: Expose the congregation to the vast diversity of God's work and his people

After calling his first disciples, but before turning them loose on the world, Jesus simply let the twelve men join him as he taught in the synagogues and on the hillsides, healed the sick and cast out demons. They followed. They listened. They watched. They learned. Long before he sent them out, Jesus exposed them to the world outside: “Look at that rich harvest!” he told them (see Mt 9:37-38). Men whose concerns had previously been focused on the size of the catch in their nets, the reports required of tax gatherers, or the nuisance of the beggars on the temple steps began to see with new eyes and hear with new ears.

Our first task in missions is no different: to expose the congregation to the vast diversity of God's work and his people around the world. The exposure grows and stretches us; as Paul Borthwick puts it, “Growing as a globally aware Christian stimulates our faith to develop, as aerating soil stimulates growth in plants. It stirs us up.”¹⁵

The need for this type of exposure today is counterintuitive; we live in the most globally-connected, information-laden time in history. We watch in real time as Syrian refugees walk hundreds of miles to escape their war-torn homeland. We

have conversations with friends around the world through social media, and talk face-to-face through the wonders of Skype™.

Yet in spite of all this technology and the speed of information, an alarming number of people sitting in western churches each week have little connection with or concern about what is going on outside their own community or state. Apart from wars, terrorist attacks, or natural disasters, many Americans are largely unaware of the world around them. A 2005 survey by the National Geographic Society found a majority of 18-24 year olds to be globally illiterate, unable to locate on a map the places that were dominating the news at the time: Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Sudan.¹⁶ How can we justify this illiteracy in light of our calling as followers of Jesus Christ to disciple all nations? How can we expect to reach the world with the gospel if we cannot even locate the world on a map? Our task as pastors and church leaders is not only a call to evangelism, it is a call to global awareness. The blessing of Abraham was not just a family; it was that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Ge 12:3). But we cannot bless what we do not know.

Exposure is easier than we may think. As Borthwick writes, “...world-class Christian involvement does not start overseas. It starts by looking for and reaching out to the world that God has brought to us.”¹⁷ It begins at home. Ministries to the homeless in our communities introduce us to people living in poverty, struggling for daily food and warmth. Sharing a meal with an international student, talking with a Syrian refugee, or eating at a Chaldean restaurant offer insight into life far beyond our borders—and will begin to change our words, actions, and beliefs. I have struggled with using the generic, dehumanizing label, “the homeless” ever since meeting Elliott, Tom, Cherish, and others through our church’s homeless ministry. Every makeshift shelter I see under a bridge in California reminds me of those I saw living on the streets of Ethiopia’s capital.

Beyond these local activities, the expose piece of missions at Cold Springs involved short trips to northwest Mexico, working with Amor Ministries (www.amor.org) to build homes for poor families. These trips gave our teams a glimpse into what life may be like for the 2.6 billion people in the world living below the median poverty line of \$2 per day.¹⁸ Crossing the border from San Diego into Tijuana, the cars invariably grew quiet as children, youth, and adults took in the stark differences assaulting eyes and noses. Less than a mile south of our prosperous homeland, we found hillsides dotted with homes built of plywood and concrete, block and stucco. Farther east, but still within sight of the border, we came upon even more dismal dwellings: walls made of shipping pallets, roofs of weather-worn plywood and wind-whipped tarps. Into these homes we brought our goodwill and energy and wealth, only to be humbled by the tireless co-laboring and thankful generosity of those we were ostensibly here to serve.

Through these short excursions, our congregations are

exposed not only to real people, but also to their own great wealth. It is not unlikely that some of the children participating in these trips may receive an allowance that exceeds the income of the families they’ve come to serve.¹⁹ Few return home unchanged; none are unaffected.

But exposure itself is insufficient. Experiencing the disparity of wealth can lead to a skewed perspective of both blessing and curse; it is too easy develop an inflated sense of the joy and contentment that people in poverty may feel. Our own cultural arrogance can be fed—evidenced through such responses as, *we’re so blessed to live in America; or, they were so happy to have us there; or even, we brought Jesus to a people living in darkness.* (Hint: Jesus was there long before our plane touched down.) Indeed, exposure alone can be a disservice if we do not at the same time equip our people to respond in Biblically- and culturally-appropriate ways to what they have experienced.

Frame 2: Equip the congregation both as disciples and to disciple

Disciples are followers, students, learners. Jesus invited a dozen men to “follow me,” then led them, taught them, ate with them, lived with them. He called them disciples, and at the end of his time on earth, he told them to do with others what he had done with them: disciple. Our task as followers of Jesus Christ, then, is a reproductive one: we are first of all to *be disciples*, and then to *disciple...or to make disciples*.



**Experiencing the
DISPARITY OF WEALTH**
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of both blessing and curse.

If we are about the business of making disciples at home, then missions should be simply an extension of what we are already doing locally. Most of the churches I have been involved with, however, have poorly defined what discipleship is and what it looks like. We have relied on vague notions, wishfully thinking that disciples are made through Sunday morning sermons and mid-week Bible studies; or we have formalized it through classrooms and textbooks. We try to define what a disciple looks like; we make a checklist: ten characteristics of a disciple, seven things a disciple does. Then we create a process explaining how to get there—take these classes, complete this manual, learn this information—and we call it discipleship. If we are brutally honest, we will admit that we have measured discipleship more in terms of accepting certain truths and participating in church activities than by a transformation

of hearts and lives that results in families, communities, and nations being transformed.²⁰

When I was a young Airman, a man named Mark invited me to be discipled. He never handed me a manual, though; instead, he sat with me, asked me questions, and trained me how to study the Bible; he taught me how to find answers both on my own and in community. He invited me into his life and his family. We went camping together, attended conferences together, went to church together. I watched as he loved—and occasionally argued with—his wife. I ate with them. I babysat his kids. We did life together. Short of actually inviting me to live in his home, it was the most Jesus-like model of discipling I have seen. Much of what I have sought to practice as a husband and father I learned from watching Mark. Much of what I have passed on to others about reading and studying the Bible, I learned from Mark. Much of what I think about discipleship, I learned from Mark. Such imitation is the sincerest form of discipleship.

Six times in his letters, Paul encouraged his readers to “imitate me.” What if we stood up on Sunday and said, “the goal of discipleship is to be able to say, ‘imitate me as I imitate Christ’”? This would be a clear call for life transformation—not just your life, but another person’s through yours. It would simplify every aspect of discipleship.



**One of the cardinal values
in the West is efficiency, but
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flies in the face of biblical
discipleship.**

The problem is, we are doing so many things that look so very little like either Jesus or Paul. Discipleship in America tends to be marked more by church-centered activities than by transformed life imitating transformed life. This is where we can learn from the global church.

In Ethiopia, Cold Springs Church partners with SIM and the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church (EKHC) denomination, which worked together to create “Disciple-Making Pastors Training” (DMPT), through which pastors throughout Ethiopia are being trained to make disciples who make disciples. The two-year program involves intense, two-week training periods every three months, as well as one-on-one and small-group mentoring both during the two weeks and throughout the two years in the pastors’ home areas. Nearly a thousand pastors have taken this training back to their churches, discipling ten and fifteen other disciples, and ultimately impacting tens of thousands

of Ethiopian believers.

When these pastors were asked about the most fulfilling time in their life, the event they pointed to was having grandchildren.²¹ This metaphor of spiritual children and grandchildren is a profound picture of discipleship, combining reproduction and imitation. It is a decidedly Biblical picture. After Acts 21, the word “disciple” never appears again in Scripture; the language shifts to family terms. Paul—one of our two primary models of discipling—never uses the term disciple. He calls both Timothy and Titus his “children in the faith;” he says of his relationship with the Thessalonians that he was “like a nursing mother taking care of her own children” (1 Th 2:7).²² Discipleship as spiritual parenting is a model the Western church needs to learn from the church around the world, adopting principles we learn over there to our churches here in effective, culturally-appropriate ways.

One of the cardinal values in the West is efficiency, but the drive for efficiency flies in the face of biblical discipleship. Understanding discipleship as reproduction, not production, is an initial step in overcoming this challenge. Reproduction in both the natural world and the spiritual world is terribly inefficient. It is inconvenient. It is difficult. It is counter-cultural. Discipleship often results in breaking social and religious taboos: Jesus talked alone with a Samaritan woman and healed on the Sabbath; Rabbi Paul discoursed with pagan philosophers; Peter visited a Gentile butcher’s home. Discipling today may involve welcoming and advocating for Syrian refugees or Mexican immigrants; it may mean hosting a foreign-exchange student for a year, playing dice in a bar, or inviting the neighbors over for a big family breakfast...on Sunday morning...instead of going to church!

Discipleship as reproduction makes the most sense when helping parents disciple their kids. When we make it about training programs and church activities, we lay an extra burden on parents; but when we help them say, “imitate me as I imitate Christ,” we are simply asking them to do intentionally what they already want to do: live a life of faith in front of their kids, involving their kids in their own lives as disciples.

We need to equip—and permit—our congregations to disciple in these “life together” ways. We help men, women, and children to imitate Christ, and to invite others to imitate them. In so doing, we take discipling out of the realm of the religious professional and put it in the court of the congregation.

Frame 3: Engage the congregation in the task of discipling all peoples

Over the past thousand years or so, a distinction has arisen within the church between clergy—the person in the pulpit—and laity—the person in the pew. Some churches cry out against the distinction, touting slogans like “every member a minister” and erecting signs at the parking lot exits saying, “now entering the mission field;” yet the chasm

is real and must be bridged. The disciple-making command was given to all disciples, and we need to intentionally and actively engage the whole congregation in carrying out the command.

When Jesus said, “follow me,” it was an invitation, not a command. The invitation can be accepted or rejected, but it cannot be ignored. But the invitation comes with a call and a cost: “If you want to be my disciple,” Jesus said, “then....” To accept the invitation is to accept both the call (“be my disciple”) and the cost (the “then...”). The call for a disciple is to disciple, to “make disciples.” It is not optional.

That does not mean every disciple will leave home, move to New Guinea, and live in the rain forests. More than once, Jesus told people who wanted to go with him that they needed to go home. But as Pastor John Piper has said, “When it comes to world missions, there are only three kinds of Christians: zealous goers, zealous senders, and disobedient.”²³ In Acts 13, the church at Antioch gives a beautiful picture of this:

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3, ESV)

Those “prophets and teachers,” together with the rest of the church, were the zealous senders; Barnabas and Saul—and later, Timothy, Silas, Luke, Mark, and others—were the zealous goers. We want to build zealous goers and zealous senders—of all ages, ranks, and abilities.

One of the reasons Cold Springs Church chose to work with Amor Ministries in Mexico was their passion to involve all ages in the process of building houses. We took seven- and eight-year-olds with us, and they cut boards, pounded nails, and played with children. We took 60-year-old retirees who mixed concrete and spread stucco.

Carolyn caught the bug, too. Confined to a wheelchair since a freak accident in her postal jeep more than twenty-five years ago, she still has a deep passion to serve and she talked with me a couple times about what it might look like for her to go with us, either to Mexico or to Ethiopia. I love Carolyn’s heart—she’s not about to let a little thing like a lower spinal cord injury stop her! Although so far she has only been able to go in heart and mind, she is still a vital part of every team through praying, giving, and encouraging. She is a zealous sender.

At the other end of the age spectrum is Jean Marlow, one of my heroes of faith and faithfulness. When I met her at Cold Springs in 2009, she was eighty years old—and had spent almost every Friday evening for the past twenty-five years in jail, loving and teaching the inmates about Jesus until 11:00pm. “Marlo,” as she preferred to be called, came to faith at age 56 after a life she would describe simply as

“rough.” When a fall and rapidly-declining health kept her out of the jail, she faithfully prayed for and corresponded with hundreds of men and women whom she had served, and whose names she always remembered. Marlo passed away just before last Christmas, leaving a gaping hole at Cold Springs Church and the El Dorado County Jail, and several pages of names in God’s Book of Life. She was a zealous goer, though she’d never crossed an ocean.

Not long before J. Oswald Sanders died at age 90, John Piper wrote of him that his was “a life poured out for the gospel without thought of coasting in self-indulgence from 65 to the grave.”²⁴ Billy Graham, Bill Bright, Henrietta Mears, Jean Marlow, and countless others have demonstrated discipleship to the very end; as their physical abilities diminished, their ministries shifted to new ways of discipling. They should be models for the seniors in our churches.

Frame 4: Establish disciples of Christ and disciple-making churches

Missions for the sake of missions is not what we are about. We do not go to Ethiopia or Mexico or the county jail so we can mark a box on the discipleship checklist or



**We go because we are
COMMANDED TO GO;
we go because we want
to make God’s name great
throughout the world.**

add a page of self-congratulations to our church website. We do not even go for the sake of the needy; as Oswald Chambers writes, “There is a passion for souls that does not come from God, but from our desire to make converts to our point of view.”²⁵ We go because we are commanded to go; we go because we want to make God’s name great throughout the world; we go to bless all peoples. We go to disciple all nations.

Regardless of what a church does or where it focuses, the *why* of missions flows clearly out of Jesus’ commission: to reproduce disciples among all peoples, everywhere; and to gather those disciples together as a body to grow, be nurtured and nourished, and mature. This one purpose—to *establish disciples of Christ and disciple-making churches*—is the single, unifying, transferable aim that provides both the basis of and the glue for the triadic partnership between a Western church, a national church, and a missions agency.

It is not difficult to expose, equip, and engage a church in missions, yet remain largely unchanged and ineffective

in bringing about God's Kingdom reign "on earth as it is in heaven." But establishing disciples and disciple-making churches in another country and another culture demands far more more than some one-day trips to Mexico or a two-week trip to Africa each year. Global discipleship does not happen through short-term commitments any more than reproducing a disciple at home can be accomplished through a 16-week manual. Global discipleship demands "a long-term strategy...that builds on short-term impact."²⁶ It takes long-term commitment and long-term partnership: five years, ten years, decades. It is not something that will be accomplished primarily by western missionaries, but by indigenous leaders reaching their own communities and their neighbors.

Our goal is not to reproduce Western Christians or export Western Christianity, but to work together with our global brothers and sisters in order that God's name "will be exalted among the nations" (Ps 46:10). We go in order that we may stand with John and "behold a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Rev 7:9-10, ESV).

Synthesizing the Principles and the Framework

In these pages I have written about a framework, the walls of church's missions house; I have written about principles that form the foundation upon which those walls are built; and I have touched on Christ's Great Commission, the bedrock underneath the whole house. All three are necessary—all three must be securely linked and bolted together—if we are to effectively carry out our mission.

When we are sure of that bedrock—the why of missions—then we lay the foundation upon it: the how. The principles I have presented in this paper—engage the whole church, be strategically focused, connect the global and local, and work through partnerships—provide this foundational how. I have attempted to show that these principles are rooted both scripturally and practically, and that any local church can adopt them as a strong basis on which to build or strengthen their missions ministry.

Just as the framing of a house needs to fit well and distribute its weight evenly across the foundation, so too the framework of our missions needs to be built securely on its foundational principles. The framework answers the *what, where, when, and who* questions of missions: What do we do? We *expose, equip, engage, and establish disciples*. Who does it? The *whole church*, through *partnerships*. Where do we do it? We engage and establish *locally and globally* with strategic *focus*. When do we do it? Always; in every setting and context.

What does this look like specifically? That depends on the local church. Just as it is the homeowner, not the builder, who chooses the paint, window coverings, and furnishings, so it is the task of each local church to determine the specifics of what shape their missions impact will take. Just as two homes with identical floor plans can look vastly different according to the designs and furnishings of their owners, so two churches can build on the same foundations and yet implement vastly different missions strategies.

Conclusion

Kingdom-building, discipleship-centered missions in a local church will engage all ages and stages within the whole church, will be focused rather than scattered, will connect global and local ministry wherever possible, and will be effected through church-centered partnerships with missions agencies and national churches.

The center of gravity in missions has moved from the agency to the local church. The question is, is the local church ready? Getting ready will demand shifts in our thinking, in our paradigms, in our activities. It will take humility and partnership. It will require strong leadership at every level. And it will result in a more fully engaged, passionate, and globally-minded missions church of disciple-making disciples.

Note: I am deeply indebted to my friend and former pastor Steve Harling, now President of ReachBeyond in Colorado Springs, Colorado, for sharing with me his heart for the centrality of *missions* to the local church's *mission*. Many of the principles and other elements I have presented in this paper were born out of conversations with Steve and under his leadership. My life and ministry have been profoundly shaped by him, and my hope is to have the type of influence on pastors, leaders, and churches that Steve has had on me.

Endnotes

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Relational Missionary Training: Theology, Theory, and Practice

Enoch Wan and Mark Hedinger. *Skyforest: Urban Loft Publishers*, 2017. Print. (www.amazon.com/Relational-Missionary-Training-Practice-/dp/00997371765).

Reviewed by **Geoff Hartt**. Geoff serves as executive director for *Hispanics for Christ*, a Hispanic church planting network working throughout the Americas.

Enoch Wan has already made an enormous contribution to missiology with his work on Diaspora Missiology, and with this book (along with Mark Hedinger) he makes another valuable contribution to the field. *Relational Missionary Training* incorporates and applies his work on the paradigm of relational realism to the field of missionary training. If the reader is not frightened off by the abundance of diagrams and charts, she will be challenged and informed by an entirely different approach to missionary training (in the West), a cross-cultural approach that is focused on relationships not methods.



**Relational realism would
REQUIRE FLEXIBILITY
rather than using pre-programmed
courses of study.**

The book is well organized and easy to use. The reader will find in part one a presentation of their theoretical framework based on the paradigm of relational realism. The authors have defined this as, “Ontologically, . . . the systematic understanding that ‘reality’ is primarily based on the ‘vertical relationship’ between God and the created order and secondarily ‘horizontal relationship’ within the created order” (17). Here Wan and Hedinger use Scripture to demonstrate relational realism as seen in a number of examples (both vertical and horizontal). They move from biblical and theological arguments to present a theoretical and practical model of relationships within Intercultural Ministry. They consider the relational dynamics within seven unique missionary relationships. Their explanation of these relationships is central for understanding and applying relational realism to missionary training.

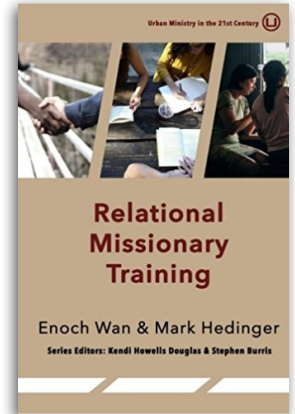
The second part of the book focuses on educational the-

ory. Here the authors survey various schools of thought on education, beginning at a general level. Although some of the numerous diagrams in this section are somewhat unclear (especially figures 3 and 4), the authors identify four relevant educational theories that relate to the paradigm of relational realism in missionary training. From here, chapter five focuses on specialized educational forms relative to preparing missionaries. The reader will benefit from the authors concise overview here of many aspects of missionary training, such as: types of training, length of training, location of training, etc.

The third part of the book considers practical application. The author’s emphasis on relationships and de-emphasis of cognitive approaches will appeal to many readers and make some uncomfortable. They offer four “implications” for applying relational realism to missionary training. The first is to move from thinking in terms of “methodology” based on programs and procedures to a “paradigm” based on relationship. Next, they suggest using relational realism for problem solving and analysis, and as an organizing principle for outcomes. Finally, relational realism would require flexibility rather than using pre-programmed courses of study.

These implications are fleshed out in chapters six through ten. They first consider the paradigm of relational realism within the seven missionary relationships of Intercultural Ministry Training. From there they look at specific training methods used for *Relational Missionary Training*. These are summarized in a very helpful table on page 250. The final chapter before their summaries and conclusions in part four is focused on the content of missionary training, using Paul and Timothy as their source.

Anyone involved with training missionaries or cross-cultural workers will benefit from this book, but probably more so trainers in the west, as the relational paradigm is much more familiar to Christians in the Global South. Wan and Hedinger have not only provided missiologists with a concise overview of existing missionary training but have presented a new paradigm of approaching missionary training, an approach that better reflects the kingdom of God and the context of the world we now find ourselves.



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