

## Working Together to Shape the New Millennium

by Gary Corwin, Editor (Winter, 2000)

Yes, the title is a bit presumptuous. Cast in its worse light, it might even conjure up images of the prideful efforts to erect the tower of Babel. But understood in its context, this unifying theme effectively set the stage for the Triennial Missions Leadership Conference which has been co-sponsored by the EFMA and IFMA for over three decades. This last conference took place September 20-23, 1999 at the beautiful Founders Inn and Conference Center in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

For the years of its existence, the Evangelical Missiological Society has chosen to meet together in this way every three years with the leaders represented in these two great North American mission agency associations. Doing so has been both proper and wise, for unlike most other disciplines of study, missiology is by its very nature a science of application. While it is grounded in theology, it is activist theology employed on the horizontal plane. Though history is its tutor, its goal is far more profound than simply understanding. While it relies heavily on anthropology, sociology, communication theory, and other social sciences it is more than any of them, or all of them combined. Missiology is a healing science, and like medicine, is meaningful only as it engages and transforms the lives of those it touches.

The roots of the EMS in the Association of Evangelical Professors of Mission bespeak its origin in the academy, and the importance of missiology fulfilling its irreplaceable role in any higher educational enterprise which calls itself Christian. By the same token, its long association with the leaders in mission practice, bespeaks its essence as a professional society focused on the most important human endeavor there is -- partnering with Christ in establishing His Church among every nation, tribe, language, and people in this world.

The recent meeting in Virginia Beach provided excellent opportunity for thoughtful interaction and reflection together about how we can best work together with God, and with each other, in this new millennium. All agreed that it will be a time of incredible changes and enormous challenges, but also that the immutable Creator God has provided and will provide all that is required for us to faithfully do his bidding.

Plenary sessions included powerful and insightful presentations from the likes of Leighton Ford, Tom Sine, and our own Chuck Van Engen, as well as wonderful worship times led by Henry Blackaby and Dave Hall. Our own EMS track sessions, combining presentations with lively discussion, focused in threefold fashion on working together theologically, worshipfully, and strategically. Excellent presentations, responses, and a panel by Chuck Van Engen, Tite Tienou, Ed Rommen, Jim Stamooolis and John Nyquist rounded out a full agenda in the first session on theological cooperation. Byron Spradin and David Hall plowed new ground for many with thoughtful papers on the role of worship in mission in the second. And the contagiously enthusiastic Luis Bush took us on an expansive exploration of strategic initiatives and options as we move forward in the third.

Finally, even the EMS business session was inspiring. We commend for your careful reading the Presidential address by Ken Mulholland, as well as Mike Pocock's address as outgoing Executive Vice President for Administration, both found elsewhere in this Occasional Bulletin. In short, much important ground was very thoughtfully and well covered in Virginia, and we're sorry for any of you who had to miss it. We're determined, however, to capture enough of it in this year's

EMS annual volume that its content value, at least, need not be lost to any. To gain the networking and interaction value, though, plan now to attend next time yourself.