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## Sacramental Missiology: Translating Transcendence in the “Haunted” Secular Context

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### ABSTRACT

Sacramental Missiology is proposed by evangelical co-authors of this article in the context of “post-Christian West” in general and secular New England in particular, characterized by “immanent frame” and expressive individualism. Sacramental Missiology is an integration of the theology of Dynamic Trinity and the theoretical framework of Relational Interactionism.<sup>1</sup> This article is an attempt to contribute to global missiological discourse by showing how Sacramental Missiology, based on sacramental paradigm, can translate transcendence in places, spaces, and contexts where transcendence is obscured, suppressed or contested.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose

The purpose of this article is to introduce Sacramental Missiology as a contextually grounded framework for mission in secular environments when engaging postChristian, secular societies, using New England as an example. These exclusive humanistic<sup>2</sup> contexts are buffered<sup>3</sup>, no longer interested in, or even asking the “God question.” God and the supernatural had not been eliminated from the social conscience; they are

just being regarded as no longer relevant<sup>4</sup>. However, despite the forceful tides of secularism pushing against the social conscience, people in secular contexts like that of New England, find themselves

4. Often times the Secular Context is viewed as a distillation of what is left after transcendence, religion, and superstition is eliminated. Charles Taylor calls these “Subtraction stories” and argues that secularism is produced not distilled. James K. A. Smith. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 143.

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1. Relational Interactionism a narrative approach describing interactions between personal Beings/beings that form relational networks between Triune God, angelic and human beings.

2. Exclusive humanism is a worldview that is able to account for meaning and significance without any appeal to the divine or transcendence. James K. A. Smith. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 141.

3. Charles Taylor describes the “Buffered self” in secular contexts as, “the self is sort of insulated in an interior ‘mind,’ no longer vulnerable to the transcendent or demonic. James K. A. Smith. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 140.

porous<sup>5</sup> and “haunted” by transcendence which is impressively in search of transformation through academic achievements, social activism, or ascension through New Age spirituality.

Programmatic, functional or popular missiological approaches are rooted in a closed-system where transcendent divinity is being regarded as irrelevant in the post-Christian and secular contexts of contemporary New England. Sacramental Missiology is a missiological paradigm of open system that views sociocultural reality as dynamically shaped through consequential interactions between *Beings/beings*, i.e. relational interaction between the Triune God (theo-culture), angels and demons (angel-culture), Christians, and non-Christians (human-culture). Some of these interactions are transformational and others are transgressional.<sup>6</sup> The consequence of these interactions contributes to the experiential “haunting” of transcendence which requires translation. In this paper, Sacramental Missiology is being employed as lens that are helpful in translating transcendence.

Relational Interactionism provides the theoretic scaffolding for Sacramental Missiology, explaining how transformation occurs personally and institutionally through vertical interaction with the Triune God and horizontal interaction within persons, communities and places within the created order. Conversely, transgression occurs personally and institutionally through horizontal interactions with the enemy of the Triune God. Sacramental Missiology reframes mission as being a matter of encountering and bearing witness to the Dynamic Trinity’s ongoing relational activation in every aspect of the public square, and in the ordinary of life. This article offers insights for other secular, or post-Christian environments in Asia and the global West where transcendence must be translated rather than assumed. Sacramental Missiology offers a distinctive, Trinitarian, sacramentally grounded approach for mission practitioners, scholars, and church leaders seeking to navigate the challenges of global contexts shaped and influenced by secularism and expressive individualism.

### Definition of Key-Terms

- Sacramental: The experienced presence and grace (salvific and effectual) of the Dynamic Trinity mediated through ordinary elements and relationships in which God encounters human beings granting blessing, healing and transformation.

5. Charles Taylor describes the “Porous self” in secular contexts as, “the self in open and vulnerable to the enchanted ‘outside’ world— susceptible to grace, possession. James K. A. Smith. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 142.

6. See detailed discussion in two prior publications:

- Enoch Wan and John Raibley, *Transformational Change in Christian Ministry*. Western Academics, 2022: 6.
- Wan, Enoch, Mark Hedinger and Jon Raibley. *Transformational Growth: Intercultural Leadership Discipleship Mentorship*. Western Academics, 2023:6.

- Missiology: The integrated academic discipline that seeks to answer the question of, “how can the gospel of Jesus Christ be incarnated in human contexts so that people understand and believe, societies are transformed, and the kingdom of God is made manifest on earth as it is in heaven.”<sup>7</sup>
- Sacramental Missiology: The missiological framework that seeks to focus on how we encounter the Dynamic Trinity through ordinary elements, places, relationships and human beings in order to experience God’s blessing, healing and transformation.
- Place: Physical space endowed with meaning and familiarity in which we experience and encounter sacramental moments.
- Space: A neutral abstract or physical place that is dispossessed of meaning and familiarity and which can be encountered by Beings/beings.
- Relational Interactionism: “An Interdisciplinary narrative framework that develops from practical considerations of dynamic interaction of person Beings/beings, forming realistic relational networks in multiple contexts and with various consequences.”<sup>8</sup> This framework is rooted in the Dynamic Trinity and essential understanding the open system required for Sacramental Missiology.
- Dynamic Trinity: “The Three Persons internally within the Trinity interacting in mutuality (fellowship, love, glory) and reciprocity (sending and witnessing) and externally in creation, salvation, and glorification.”<sup>9</sup>
- Transformational Change: “The dynamism and process of positive change, originating vertically from the Triune-God and ushered in the relational reality horizontally, through the process of interaction between personal Beings (the Triune God) and human beings, at the micro and macro (personal<sup>10</sup> and institutional<sup>11</sup>) levels and multiple dimensions.”<sup>12</sup> The desired implications of Sacramental Missiology are transformation through relational interaction with the dynamic Trinity.
- Transgressional Change: “Change caused by the dynamism from the enemy of the Triune God and by nature that is contrary to the attribute of God and His will, His revelation in Jesus Christ and the Scripture— the opposite of

7. Hiebert, Paul G. *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009. 33

8. Enoch Wan and John Raibley, *Transformational Change in Christian Ministry* (Western Academics, 2022), 6.

9. “Understanding Oral Hermeneutics and Relational Hermeneutics” p 2

10. For the purposes of this research the abbreviation of TP will refer to “Personal Transformational Change”.

11. For the purposes of this research the abbreviation of TI will refer to “Institutional Transformational Change”

12. Enoch Wan and John Raibley, *Transformational Change in Christian Ministry* (Western Academics, 2022), 7.

‘transformational change.’”<sup>13</sup>

- Transformational Thin Space: A sacramental space where positive and wholistic transformation occurs due to an encounter with personal Beings (divine Trinity)/beings (angelic and human).
- Transgressional Thin Space: A profane space where the enemy of the Triune God interacts with created beings. This is opposite of Transformational Thin Space.<sup>14</sup>
- Transformational Place: A place or places that are transformed as a result of sacramental encounters with Beings/beings.
- Transgressional Place: A place or places that are transgressed as a result of profane encounters with beings.
- Contested Zones: Transformational or Transgressional Places and Spaces in which relational interaction takes place with Beings/beings.
- Immanent Frame: “A constructed social space that frames our lives entirely within a natural (rather than supernatural) order.”<sup>15</sup>
- Immanentization: “The process whereby meaning, significance, and ‘fulness’ are sought within an enclosed, self-sufficient, naturalistic universe without any reference to transcendence. A kind of ‘enclosure’.”<sup>16</sup>
- Cross-pressure: “The simultaneous pressure of various spiritual options; or the feeling of being caught between an echo of transcendence and the drive towards immanentization.”<sup>17</sup>

### The Context

The New England context is a historically rich place littered with monuments of Christendom yet is trapped in the immanent frame. Immanentization, in the pursuit of authenticity and transformation apart from transcendence has created a secularism that contests belief in a Transcendent God and the supernatural. James K.A. Smith practically explains what immanentization looks like and so describes the missiological challenge in the secular New England context when he states,

“(People) are no longer bothered by ‘the God question’ as a question because they are devotees of ‘exclusive humanism’ — a way of being-in-the-world that offers significance without transcendence. They don’t feel like anything is missing.”<sup>18</sup>

The immanent frame brings forth immanentization that results in an exclusive humanism, a mechanistic moral paradigm that is apathetic to God, but open to

13. *Ibid.*, 7.

14. Wan, Enoch and Mark Hedinger and Jon Raibley. “Transformational Growth: Intercultural Leadership Discipleship Mentorship.” *Western Academics*, 2023, 6

15. James K. A. Smith. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 141.

16. *Ibid.*, 141.

17. *Ibid.*, 140.

18. *Ibid.*, vii.

the ‘curated’ supernatural, insofar as it harmonizes with ones ‘authentic self’ and contributes to relativistic personal flourishing. Any direct attempt in an immanentized culture to individually share one’s faith, rooted in transcendence and absolute truths, is considered taboo, private, mythology, and in some cases personally and emotionally damaging to the other.

The New England context, while entrenched in the closed system of the immanent frame is “haunted”<sup>19</sup> and hungry for significance and transformation. The cross-pressure between the malaise of immanence and the memory of transcendence<sup>20</sup> leads to tension which requires translation. Instead of seeking translation, the cross-pressure has led to seeking significance and transformation in things apart from transcendence, it seeks a secular mysticism. Andrew Root describes the secular mysticism pathways as: (1) Mystical pathway of the inner genius; (2) Mystical pathway of heroic action; (3) Mystical pathway of surrender/confession.<sup>21</sup> These secular mystic pathways adapt to place and manifest differently in secular contexts.

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**Sacramental Missiology is a missiological framework that focuses on encounter and witness of the Triune God in every aspect of life. It seeks to “translate transcendence” and break down the “secular sacred divide” that Christendom built. Sacramental Missiology is a framework that seeks to encounter the Dynamic Trinity and partner with the missio Dei in the ordinary to bear witness to the extraordinary gospel of the Kingdom. This is needed in the secular Greater Boston context.**

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In New England the first secular mystic pathway of unlocking the “inner genius” is the pathway of academia. New England is one of the most educated regions in the world and has some of the most prestigious academic institutions. New England’s high academic ethos is many ways is radicalized by immanentization. The secular mystic pathway of unlocking the “inner genius” is a quest for security in identity. However, this secular mystic quest has

19. “Haunted” is a term used to describe the inner-nagging pull and need for transcendence.

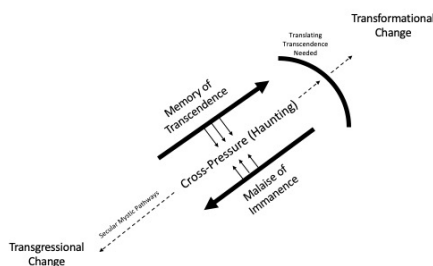
20. A theological assumption is what John Calvin calls the *Sensus Divinitatis* – the given human capacity to perceive there is a God. The Sacramental Missiological approach of “translating transcendence” intentionally speaks to that epistemological truth.

21. Root, Andrew. 2023. *Church in an Age of Secular Mysticism: Why Spiritualities without God Fail to Transform Us*. (Baker Academic, 2023).

no room for the imago Dei and becomes excarnated<sup>22</sup> which functionally results into neo-Gnosticism.

The second secular mystic pathway of heroic action is the pathway of activism. From its inception, New England has always been an activist region. New England's activist ethos in politicized by immanentization. The secular mystic pathway of heroic action is a quest for purpose. However, this secular mystic quest has no room for the missio Dei and seeks purpose through politics which functionally results into radical provincialism.

The final secular mystic pathway of surrender and confession is the pathway of ascension, void of a Transcendent God. New England has a history of new age, cultic, and occultic movements. This pathway of ascension radicalized by new age spirituality



and social action seeks to unlock inner healing and freedom that is hidden from within.<sup>23</sup> The secular mystic pathway of surrender and confession is a quest for community. However, this secular mystic quest has no room for the missio Ecclesia and seeks community through affinity which functionally results into secular tribalism.

The cross-pressure that leads the secular context to seek secular mysticism is the missiological proving grounds for Sacramental Missiology. It is in the cross-pressure of the immanent frame, where tension is experienced, belief and doubt exist simultaneously, where the "haunting" is too much and transcendent language is considered a "dead" language. The Sacramental Missiological framework seeks to "translate transcendence" and answer the questions people are asking but do not have language for. Translating transcendence is needed to facilitate transformational change. Whereas the path to transformation is contextually contested, the path to secular mysticism that leads to transgressional change is contextually uncontested.

Figure 1: Transformational Change and Transgressional Change

Note: Secular immanentized contexts find themselves caught between the memory of transcendence, the sense that there is a God, and the malaise of immanence, the sense of a lack of purpose and emptiness. This created a cross-pressure, a haunting that seeks relief. The uncontested path is the path

22. Excarnated (Excarnation)- "The process by which religion (and Christianity in particular) is dis-embodied and de-ritualized, turned into a 'belief' system." James K. A. Smith. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 141.

23. Ibid, 105.

of secular mysticism that leads to personal and institutional transgressional change. The contested path that leads to personal and institution transformation requires someone to translate transcendence.

## DYNAMIC TRINITY

Sacramental encounters are the result of the Dynamic Trinity interacting in time, space, and place with beings. Wan and Hedinger define "Trinitarian Paradigm" as, "a conceptual framework that understands reality to be primarily based on the vertical relationship between God and the created order and secondarily on the horizontal relationship within the created order."<sup>24</sup> The dynamic Intra-Trinitarian relational interaction, our vertical relational interaction with the Trinity, and the horizontal relational interaction, in a place, that proceeds from the love of the Trinity is the foundation for personal and institutional transformation. These Trinitarian interactions are sacramental encounters, which require translation and result in transformational change.

The following are key characteristics of the Dynamic Trinity which provide the theological foundation of the sacramental missiological framework:

- **Missional: God is a Missionary God-** The mission originates in the heart of the Triune God. The Father sends the Son into the world, and together the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit. God then invites the Church to participate in the missio Dei. Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 18:18; Genesis 22:18; Exodus 9:16; Deuteronomy 4:6-8; Joshua 4:23-24; Psalm 67:1-3; Psalm 96:1-3; Psalm 117:1; Isaiah 2:2-3; Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:6; Isaiah 60:1-3; Jeremiah 12:15-16; Micah 4:1-2; Zechariah 8:20-23; Malachi 1:11; John 3:16-17; John 20:21; John 14:26; John 15:26; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8
- **Scriptural: God Reveals Himself Through His Word-** God makes Himself known through Scripture. In the biblical story, God's self-revelation and our human story converge. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; Romans 15:4; Luke 24:27
- **Emotional: God is Emotional and Perfectly Relational-** He is relationally and emotionally sufficient in and of himself. God is not lonely and each member of the Trinity knows who they are and how they feel in the context of one another. Genesis 6:6; John 11:35; Zephaniah 3:17; John 17:21-24; John 14:10-11
- **Incarnational: God is present in the Flesh-** The zenith of the revelation of the Trinity is Jesus Christ. Jesus is flesh and will remain so forever. Presence, "in the flesh" matters in mission. Mission demands proximity. John 1:14;

24. Enoch Wan and Mark Hedinger. *Relational Missionary Training: Theology, Theory & Practice*. (Urban Loft, 2017), 14.

Colossians 1:19; Luke 24:39; Acts 1:11; John 20:19-21; Philippians 2:5-8

- **Sacramental: God encounters us Through Ordinary Things-** God encounters us in bread and wine. He encounters us in the depths of the baptismal waters. In an ordinary yet extraordinary way. God encounters us through real people and things. Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 10:16; Romans 6:3-4; Titus 3:5; Acts 19:11-12; John 9:6-7
- **Inspirational: God Empowers His People Through the Holy Spirit-** The Holy Spirit empowers believers for life, witness, spiritual warfare and mission. Acts 1:8; Ephesians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 6:10-12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-4
- **Functional: God functions practically and mysteriously-** The members of the Trinity have a distinct role and mysterious harmonious function. Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Matthew 28:19; Romans 11:33; Deuteronomy 29:29

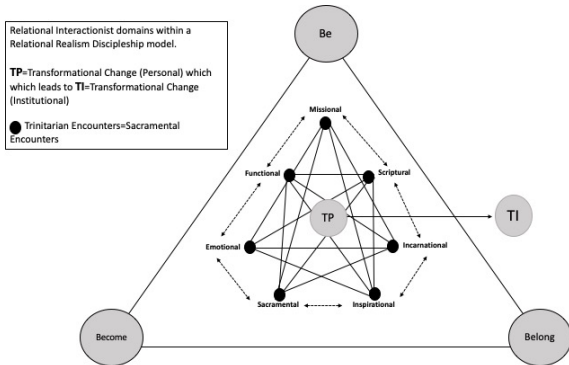


Figure 2: Dynamic Trinity: Theological Foundation of Sacramental Missiological Framework  
 Note: This shows how someone "in Christ" experiences TP through the interaction and Intra-Trinitarian participation. The intersection of Trinitarian interaction is a sacramental encounter where God's grace is experienced in the ordinary of life. TP leads to TI as a person participates with the mission Dei.

## RELATIONAL INTERACTIONISM

The theoretical framework for Sacramental Missiology is Relational Interactionism. Relational Interactionism is an open-system, interdisciplinary, narrative approach describing interactions between personal Beings/beings that form relational networks, in multiple contexts (e.g. theo-culture, angel-culture, and human culture), at multiple levels.<sup>25</sup>

Relational Interactionism seeks to describe and synthesize the grand narrative (i.e. macro-level story of God's redemptive plan) with the narrative at micro-level of individuals, in community, within God's overarching meta-narrative.<sup>26</sup> The Relational

25. Wan, Enoch, Mark Hedinger, and Jon Raibley. *Relational Intercultural Education for Intercultural Ministry*. Western Academic Publishers, 2024, 39.

26. Wan, Enoch, and Jon Raibley. *Transformational Change in*

Interactionism framework sees:

- Society as a consequence of patterned interaction of personal Beings/beings, leading to the formation of a social entity.
- Culture as the context and consequence of patterned interaction of personal Beings/beings.<sup>27</sup>
- Relational Reality as the complex of networks formed by the patterned interactions of personal beings at both micro and macro levels, in multiple contexts of social-cultural variations.<sup>28</sup>

The definition of "culture" as "the context/consequence of patterned interaction of personal Beings/beings" contrasts the functional, popular usage of culture applying to the presumed closed system of homo sapiens. This definition of "culture" can freely be applied or referred to angelic (fallen or good) beings of the angel-culture and the dynamic interaction of the Three Persons of the Triune God within Theo-culture<sup>29</sup>

The Relational Interactionism paradigm is especially powerful in the secular social imaginary<sup>30</sup> where a narrative approach to reality resonates. Specifically, from a Sacramental Missiological approach, this helps provide an open-system, dynamic, lens that describe the macro-context or the "Clash of the Kingdoms" and the interaction of macro-cultures (theo-, angel-, human-). The consequences of the interactions at macro level within the macro-context are contested in the secular context and resulted either in transformational change or transgressional change in real spaces and places. It is important to acknowledge that there are no neutral interactions with Beings/beings with neutral consequences within a Sacramental Missiological perspective; they are either transformational or transgressional.

Finally, the contested zones, the transformational/transgressional thin spaces and transformational/transgressional places that exist personally and institutionally within every sphere of the private and public life, require the macro-cultural points of interaction to be translated. Sacramental and profane encounters need to be placed in the right macro-context. The Sacramental Missiological task of translating transcendence in the "haunted" secular context is not about removing the enclosure of exclusive humanism. Instead, translating transcendence in the secular context is narratively exposing that the transgressional enclosure, part of

*Christian Ministry*. Western Academic Publishers, 2022, 17.

27. Enoch Wan & Mark Hedinger, *Relational Intercultural Communication for Relational Intercultural Education*, Western Academic Press, 2025:5.

28. Wan, Enoch, and Jon Raibley. *Transformational Change in Christian Ministry*. Western Academic Publishers, 2022, 9

29. Enoch Wan, "The Theological Application of the Contextual Interaction Model of Culture." *His Dominion* (Canadian Theological Seminary) 9 (1, October 1982).

30. The "social imaginary" is a non-intellectual framework in which people in a secular context imagine their social surroundings. It is expressed in stories, images and legends. In other words, narrative instead of propositional or theoretically descriptions of reality resonate in a secular context. James K. A. Smith. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 143.

the Kingdom of Darkness, designed by the enemy of the Triune God, was never there and witnessing the transformational encounter of the Dynamic Trinity and the Kingdom of Light.

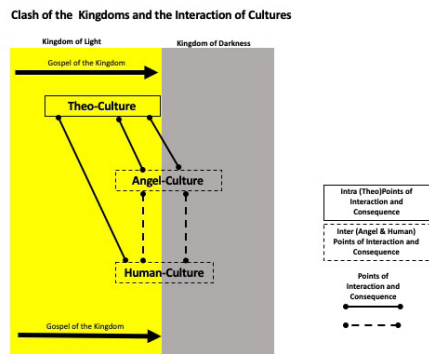


Figure 3: Clash of the Kingdoms and Interaction of Cultures  
 Note: this is a way to frame the open-system reality. The points of interaction between Theo-culture, Angel-culture, and Human-culture result in transformational or transgressional consequences. Additionally, there are also Intra-Theo/Trinitarian and Inter-Angel and Human points of interaction that have either transformational (always for Intra-Trinitarian) or transgressional consequences. The "Gospel of the Kingdom" is the good news of the in-breaking of the Kingdom of Light into the Kingdom of Darkness as we encounter and bear witness about the points of interaction and consequence of the Dynamic Trinity.

## MISSIOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS

The practical application of Sacramental Missiology is a result of encounter and witness. Encountering the Triune God (Beings with belonging) leads to doing (witnessing), which includes translating transcendence. These points of encounter are sacramental. With the secular New England context in mind, and the three major secular mystic pathways (Academia, Activism, and Ascension) the following are four sacramental opportunities to encounter, witness and translate transcendence in a secular New England context.

### #1 Bear witness to the Regnum Dei-The Sacrament of the Ordinary

The secular New England context is entrenched in the "Secular-Sacred" Divide (SSD). The myth of the sacred secular divide must be addressed in the secular context. The secularism pushes faith to the margins. It is culturally okay to have personal faith and a worshipping community, but the culture encourages people to keep those things private and express faith only at church or at home. This reinforces SSD, the belief that some things, not all things, really matter to God. However, Christ died to reconcile all things to himself, not just some things (Colossians 1:16-20). Therefore, everything is important to God and there is no divide between what is popularly thought of as "sacred" and what is "secular".

This practically means the task of translating transcendence is in the ordinary places and spaces of life. The task is to bear witness to the Kingdom of

God, the Regnum Dei, the way life should be. This witness is a whole-life paradigm that encounters God's sacramental grace in the everyday things and people in life and bears witness of it. It is not overt evangelism, or a program, it is just worship of the Triune God expressed through gratitude, conversation, story, hospitality, and narrative.

### #2 Engage the imago Dei-The Sacrament of Identity

The secular mystic pathway of unlocking the "inner genius" through academia is often one of discovering identity in order to experience security. Often times missiological engagement with this form of secular mystic results in propositional sparring and reinforces relational walls. Translating transcendence requires to engage everybody as someone made in the image of God. It requires dignity and respect. Succinctly, it requires someone to speak to the imago Dei that is "haunted" and seeking relief. Translating transcendence is bearing witness to and being a conduit of an encounter with the Triune God.

### #3 Be the missio Ecclesia: Sacrament of the Church/ church

The secular mystic pathway that pursues transformation through surrender and confession, the pathway of ascension, apart from transcendence, is already practically operating within a transcendent framework. They seek freedom and absolution. The members of this secular mystic pathway often gather in places in the public square. In order to translate transcendence, the Church/church must be the missio Ecclesia as the gathered and scattered, local, and transcendent Church. These secular mystics will not come to the church, the church must go to them. This requires real friendship and a ministry of presence. Any hint of relational transaction will chase this type of secular mystic away. They often have been hurt by the established Church. Translating transcendence often requires real Christ-centered community to be explained and experienced. It requires vulnerability to bear witness through testimony to the freedom and absolution experienced in Christ.

### #4 Participate with the missio Dei: Sacrament of Mission

The final secular mystic pathway of heroic action through activism is one of pursuing purpose for the common good. Engaging with this secular mystic requires relational trust. Political activism in the secular New England context is religious. There are real churches dedicated to this religion. Common ground for the common good for that sake of human flourishing is the way to engage this secular mystic. Staying a-political and remaining kingdom-centric is essential with this secular mystic. The reality is this secular mystic has engaged in mission better than the church in the secular New England context. Sometimes it is about participating with this secular mystic as an ambassador of the Kingdom of Light.

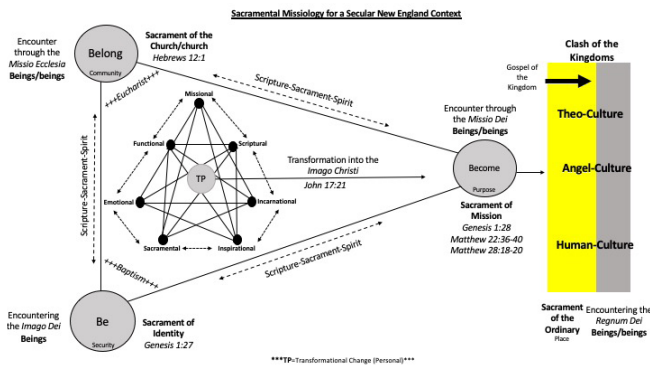


Figure 4: Sacramental Missiological Framework and Relational Interactionism

Note: This is the entire Sacramental Missiological framework as a person experiences the TP through relational encounter with the Trinity via sacramental encounters that address key tensions the secular context reveals. These sacraments flow from the Gospel Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. All of this happens in the course of ordinary life with the macro-context and cultures.

### CONCLUSION

Sacramental Missiology is a missiological framework that focuses on encounter and witness of the Triune God in every aspect of life. It seeks to “translate transcendence” and break down the “secular sacred divide” that Christendom built. Sacramental Missiology is a framework that seeks to encounter the Dynamic Trinity and partner with the missio Dei in the ordinary to bear witness to the extraordinary gospel of the Kingdom. This is needed in the secular Greater Boston context. As the popular phrase goes, “Once in Mordor you can’t go back to the Shire,” the same is true for a missiological approach in the post-Christian West and the secular context like that of Boston.



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# I Am Changing The Face Of Global Mission

Ryan Shaw

## A Prophetic Impression

In November 2011, shortly after moving from Izmir, Turkey to Chiang Mai, Thailand, I experienced a moment of profound clarity. While driving, I sensed the Holy Spirit impress a phrase upon my heart with authority: *"I Am Changing the Face of Global Mission!"*

In the 14 years since, this phrase has been confirmed by scholars and practitioners alike, from both western and majority world backgrounds. While "global mission" is often viewed through the lens of history, God is wanting to bring shifts in how the Church – particularly in the Global South – perceives and engages in His Great Commission.

## Interpreting The Statement

While there may be many ways to interpret this statement, because of my ministry context of mission mobilization primarily among Global South churches, I understood and applied the statement to that particular context.

It's important to interpret the words *"the face of."* What does the Lord mean by that? I immediately sensed, back in 2011, the words referred to how mission looks at face value, or is perceived, by believers and the Church globally. The face of something is what it looks like to an onlooker. What does global mission look like to most in the body of Christ globally, particularly the Global South?

Let's unpack some of the areas of change the Lord may be referring to.

### 1. De-coupling Mission From Colonialism

First, a major area that seems to influence many other areas. God seems committed to seeing the perception and experience amongst the Global South Church of global mission being a western, colonialist, empire-dominated endeavor, drastically changed.

This requires an open acknowledgement by those of us from a western background of the mistakes and failures in the history of global mission related to the use of wealth, power and even military might to further the gospel around the world. Such an acknowledgement tells our Global South brothers and sisters we recognize and empathize with the history as they and their forefathers may have experienced it.

This in no way means every western missionary or society during the colonialist era made these mistakes. Yet, it does admit the mission system itself was inherently influenced by a colonialist culture prevalent among the western governments and their empire-

building ambitions, including an often-unconscious superiority complex.

A perception of global mission sending as being from those who possess wealth and power was unknowingly communicated to the rest of the world and still taints mission mobilization and sending in the Global South today.

How often have I been told *"global mission isn't for us, we're poor"* or *"mission is from those who have to those who don't have."* Both assessments betray a perspective influenced by history, not God's heart in global mission.

A deeply unfortunate legacy of the colonialism of Latin America, Africa and parts of Asia from the 1500's-1900's, for some in the Global South today, is that global mission equals the powerful to the powerless, the rich and wealthy to the poor, is focused on humanitarian efforts to "uplift" and is based in "civilizing" others. These false perceptions of global mission are hindering mobilization in many non-western, Global South churches today.

How will pastors and ministry leaders prioritize the Great Commission within their churches and denominations as God intends when deep down, they struggle with outlooks informed by global mission history connected to the painful era of colonialism? The perception of global mission needs a shift.

The historic mission movement from the West undoubtedly produced much fruit around the world for the Gospel. Yet, the models often used have been perceived as the only ongoing standard for doing mission. This has made it difficult for churches in the Global South to re-imagine global mission and mobilization from their own cultural contexts, free from the influence of the western, colonialist ties of mission history.

Mobilizing, sending, financing and other categories of global mission should not look as they have historically, or how western missions did them, but should be informed and imagined by the New Testament, along with Spirit-inspired models, not by historic, western models.

A return to a Scripture-informed understanding of global mission means remembering Jesus gave the initial Great Commission to poor, relatively uneducated, disciples who were living under the oppression of a foreign power and who obeyed it thereby turning "the world upside down" amid that same powerful empire.

They possessed no wealth and no state power. Yet, God used them to multiply churches and demonstrate the power of the Gospel among the unreached of the biblical era, like no other generation since. This was

done by a powerless people (humanly-speaking) within the context of a global superpower (the Roman Empire).

This is a model needed today. The Global South Church re-imagining and re-defining global mission within their national Churches. Completely separated from wealth, power and military might. Not trying to imitate western examples, while possessing little wealth and no state power, but instead following the examples of the early Church to reach near and distant culture unreached people groups.

## 2. Re-imagining Mission Funding

This one area of change being realized across the Global South Church would produce a ripple effect related to other areas too. For example, a change in what believers perceive about how those involved in global mission are funded. This is tainted by the historic western example of mission funding and the western wealth that backed it.

The biblical example, however, reveals that the early Church obeyed Jesus' Great Commission with little money. They certainly didn't use the traditional western support model of a church, family and friends financially supporting them. If you are from an economic context that allows for it, it works; but it is extremely limiting if you are not.

Instead, the early Church (and most mission endeavors until the dawn of the modern missionary movement in the 1790's), used various jobs, careers, occupations to financially sustain themselves, while doing the work of the Kingdom among unreached peoples.

The perceived financial stumbling block of finances in global mission could be overcome through this significant change the Lord appears to be emphasizing. I have personally seen the calling and desire to obey God across the global south Church, yet the perceived lack of finance keeps them from responding.

If the financial strategy in global mission was adjusted and a full commitment by church and mission leadership to mobilize the Global South Church toward being financed in mission in this way, we would see a dramatic increase in sending.

## 3. Activating The Whole Body (The 20% Scattered Vision)

That leads to another area the Holy Spirit seems to want to bring change. The false perception that only a few are meant to be involved in global mission. It is biblically and theologically accurate to say every believer is meant to be involved in the Great Commission in some way. Identifying and being activated in a particular Great Commission role.

One of these roles is those who go. Based on the early church model and where the Holy Spirit seems to be leading, it may be possible to assume God intends a much larger percentage of believers (maybe up to 20% of every local church) going to the unreached, relocating jobs and families, and incarnating the Gospel.

Most of these (maybe 15%) will not cross geopolitical borders but go to "near culture" unreached peoples within their own nations. They speak the same language and understand the general culture and customs, while still crossing ethnic lines.

While the other 5% will potentially go to "distant culture" unreached people groups. Crossing language borders as well as embracing cultural and customs differences.

What if leadership of every local church across the Global South developed mobilization goals within their fellowship, pursued over time, to scatter 20% of their members to both near and distant culture unreached peoples?

Not in the traditional "missionary" model way, but in the early church, Spirit-inspired "scattering" way. Multitudes deliberately going out, living among the unreached for long-term, with jobs and families, being salt and light and bringing to bear the Kingdom of God among them.

## Imagining A New Future

Let's acknowledge that most human beings don't like change. In fact, we readily resist it. Change means disruption. While God may be seeking to bring change to enable widespread mobilization, many (if not most) will not respond very well to it. Change happens a little bit at a time.

If we take the Lord's sentiment that "*I Am Changing the Face of Global Mission*" seriously and little by little adopt these three changes in outlook, perspective and practice, I am convinced we will see significant acceleration in mobilization toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Imagine a future where global mission is no longer seen as a Western-dominated, wealth-dependent activity for the elite few. Instead, it becomes a Spirit-inspired movement of the global body of Christ, free from unhealthy power differentials, operating in the power of the Spirit rather than the power of the purse. We would truly have a new day in global mission – just as the Lord has revealed He intends to do.

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# Gender Equality and the Role of Women Leaders in the Philippine (Local) Church

Donna Castillo-Tan

**“I do not wish them [women] to have power  
over men, but over themselves.”**

— Mary Wollstonecraft,

*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

Gender equality is an enduring issue that spans generations. It’s crucial to recognize the equal worth of women and treat them with respect and dignity. Various forms of gender inequality exist, some more overt than others. Addressing all these forms is essential. We must build a society and culture where women are valued and provided equal opportunities as men. Remember, women and girls comprise nearly half of the world’s population<sup>1</sup> and hold significant potential.

The United Nations (UN) affirms that gender equality is a fundamental human right and is essential to achieving peaceful societies that promote full human potential and sustainable development.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it has been presented and often stated that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth.<sup>3</sup> Yet despite how important women’s role is for the betterment of society and what empowering them can do to the world, nothing much is being done to give her the opportunities to participate. Women worldwide are generally not given equal opportunities and are subject to violence and abuse to this day. When there is improvement, it is extremely and painfully slow. According to the Global Gender Gap Report (or GGGR) 2023, it will take 131 years to close the gap and reach full parity.<sup>4</sup>

## THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

“The indignities inflicted on women  
around the globe, intentionally or otherwise,  
is a moral burden we all must bear.”<sup>5</sup>

The issue of gender equality, specifically women’s rights, can be traced back to 1792 with its first

advocate, Mary Wollstonecraft<sup>6</sup>. Since then, there has been notable progress in improving gender equality, but not at the pace we would like it to go. In the 2021 GGGR report, where the number of years to close was 135.6, it stated that “closing the global gender gap [in 2021] has increased by a generation from 99.5 years to 135.6 years.”<sup>7</sup> This implies that “[A]nother generation of women will have to wait for gender parity.”<sup>8</sup> This is if gender parity continues at the current rate. But what if it drastically slows down again due to another global pandemic, famine or war?

We simply cannot ignore the issues of gender inequality. It is embedded in almost every global issue the world faces.<sup>9</sup> This shows just how widespread the global issue of unequal treatment and/or mistreatment of women is.

We still have countries like Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, Iraq, South Sudan, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Chad, and DR Congo that are listed as “Worst Countries to be a Woman in 2021”<sup>10</sup> The women in these countries, including South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, suffer abuse and violence in and outside their homes.<sup>11</sup> In sub-Saharan Africa, “the lifetime risk of dying in childbirth is 1 in 22 (compared to 1 in 4,800 in the United States); in China 39,000 baby girls die every year because they do not receive the same medical care that boys receive; ... a new bride is ritually burned to death in India approximately every two hours.”<sup>12</sup> While poverty is an independent, and significant global issue, it does affect women and children more than it affects men. “Women living in poverty are at an increased risk of experiencing gender-based violence, lack access to sexual and reproductive health care, and millions of girls are currently out of school.”<sup>13</sup>

6. University of Exeter, “A brief history on gender (in)equality,” Future Learn, <https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/understanding-gender-inequality/0/steps/66837>, accessed April 14, 2022.

7. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021>.

8. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021>.

9. Gender equality and women’s rights are embedded in the global issues of poverty, hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable energy, decent work, and economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, sustainable consumption and production including climate action, and peace, justice, and strong institutions. In “What does gender equality look like today?” *UN Women*, October 6, 2021, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/10/feature-what-does-gender-equality-look-like-today>

10. Leah Rodriguez, “The 10 Best and Worst Countries to be a Woman in 2021,” *Global Citizen*, October 22, 2021, <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/best-worst-countries-for-women-gender-equality/>

11. Rodriguez, “The 10 Best and Worst.”

12. Mahone. “Half the Sky.”

13. Rodriguez, “The 10 Best and Worst.”

1. As of October 4, 2023, World population live reported 4.98 billion males in the world (50.5% of the world population) and 4.02 females (49.5%). <https://countrymeters.info/en/World>, October 4, 2023. This would be an estimated gender ratio of 101 males per 100 females.

2. “Gender Equality,” *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/gender-equality>, accessed April 14, 2022.

3. “Gender Equality,” *United Nations*.

4. The Global Gender Gap Report 2023, June 2023, *World Economic Forum*, p. 5, [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf).

5. Regina Mahone, “Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunities for Women Worldwide,” review of *Half the Sky*, by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. *Philanthropy News Digest*, April 15, 2016, <https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/features/book-reviews/half-the-sky>.

Even in a developed country like the United States, where there is vocal advocacy for gender and racial equality, gender inequality remains a persistent issue in the headlines. The challenge becomes more complex when considering the inclusion of non-binary and LGBTQ+ identities to the gender equality and women's rights table. What's even more puzzling is the irony that, while the U.S. supports women in their pursuit of equal rights, it allows a trans woman (formerly male) to compete in women's national swimming competitions and win, creating a controversial situation!<sup>14</sup>

The news got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic. Women faced disproportionately high job losses, disruptions in education, and increased unpaid care responsibilities. Women's health services, already underfunded, suffered significant disruptions, affecting their sexual and reproductive health. Despite playing a central role in responding to COVID-19, including frontline healthcare work, women continue to be overlooked for the leadership positions they rightfully deserve.<sup>15</sup>

More than equal rights, women worldwide simply desire equal access to the opportunities that men get. "Women see hard work and equal opportunities as the most important aspects (88 percent and 85 percent respectively) to getting ahead in life"<sup>16</sup>.

## IMPLICATIONS TO SOCIETY

### Gender Bias with Women in the Workplace

While the global issue of gender equality and women's rights affects all sectors of society,<sup>17</sup> one area to highlight is how the better and equal treatment of women has an ongoing effect on the economic development of the country. Kristof and WuDunn, in their book *Half the Sky* report that both the UN and the World Bank openly recognized the "potential resource that women and girls represent,"<sup>18</sup> with the World Bank particularly stating that "Investment in girls' education may well be the highest-return investment available in the developing world."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the World Bank's 2001 study, *Engendering Development Through Gender*

14. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/college/2022/03/18/lia-thomas-trans-woman-win-ncaa-swimming-championship/7088548001/>

15. "What does gender equality look like today?" *UN Women*, October 6, 2021, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/10/feature-what-does-gender-equality-look-like-today>

16. Limos, "Remote Work."

17. The GGGR measures gender equality in four areas: *political empowerment, economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and health and survival*, with the gender gap on political empowerment as still the largest of the four gaps tracked, with only 22.1% closed to date and health and survival being the closest to parity at 96%. Of the 146 countries covered by the 2023 index, the Health and Survival gender gap has closed by 96%, Educational Attainment by 95.2%, Economic Participation and Opportunity by 60.1% and Political Empowerment by 22.1%. In [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf), p. 9-12

18. Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryll WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunities for Women Worldwide* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), p. xx.

19. Lawrence Summers in Kristof and WuDunn, p. xx.

Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice, stated "that promoting gender equality is crucial to combat global poverty"<sup>20</sup> with UNICEF concurring this in its major report arguing that "gender equality yields a 'double dividend' by elevating not only women but also their children and communities."<sup>21</sup>

Clearly, women empowerment is believed to accelerate the economic development of a country and, in effect, globally. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) further summed up all research in this way: "Women's empowerment helps raise economic productivity and reduce infant mortality. It contributes to improved health and nutrition. It increases the chances of education for the next generation."<sup>22</sup>

Yet sadly, these reports still need to have an impact in society. E. Bayeh in a study on the correlation of gender equality to the economic development of Ethiopia, shares that,

*...the role of women across different dimensions of sustainable development is less reflected in the country. The use of a women's labour force in the economic development of the country is minimal. The political sphere of the country is, by and large, reserved for men alone. The place of women in society is also relegated to contributing minimally to the social development of the country. In addition, women's rights are not properly being protected in order for women to participate in various the issues of their country but are subjected to abysmal violations.*<sup>23</sup>

In South Asia, fewer than one in four women hold a paying job, which is less than half of the global average.<sup>24</sup> In the United States, it is reported, "Overall, women who were full-time, year-round employees made 83 cents for every dollar men made in 2020, based on median earning data from the Census Current Population Survey. That means women are paid about 17% less than men."<sup>25</sup> We also need to factor in how culture may dictate that certain jobs are better suited for men and certain jobs better suited for women. For example, nurses and babysitters are expected to be women, and firemen and construction workers are expected to be men.

In the past two years of the Global Pandemic alone, women suffered steeper job losses than men, with the number of women in the workforce down by 54 million in 2020 and a total of 45 million women who left

20. Kristof and WuDunn, p. xx.

21. Kristof and WuDunn, p. xx.

22. Kristof and WuDunn, p. xx.

23. Endalcachew Bayeh, "The role of empowering women and achieving gender equality to the sustainable development of Ethiopia," *Pacific Science Review B: Humanities and Social Sciences*, Volume 2, Issue 1, 2016, Pages 37-42, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psr.2016.09.013>.

24. Rodriguez, "The 10 Best and Worst."

25. Sonam Sheth, Madison Hoff, Marguerite Ward and Taylor Tyson. "These 8 charts show the glaring gap between men's and women's salaries in the US," *Insider*, March 15, 2022. <https://www.businessinsider.com/gender-wage-pay-gap-charts-2017-3>.

the labor market altogether<sup>26</sup>. A survey done in the Philippines showed that “22 percent of female professionals agree that they have fewer career advancement opportunities, and 14 percent claim they are paid less than men in their profession...[while] half of working women in the Philippines have experienced that their being a woman played a role in missing out on opportunities, promotion, and pay.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, due to the global lockdown, “88 percent of Filipinos have started working from home”<sup>28</sup> and among them are many working women, but they face more barriers than usual. Most of the respondents named the lack of time as the top barrier for women in achieving opportunities, and this is likely due to having to juggle remote work and family responsibilities.<sup>29</sup> “Close to half of the working mother respondents (47 percent) said they are struggling to balance their work and household responsibilities, with 42 percent saying their duties at home are getting in the way of their career development.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, the reality is women are still at a disadvantage in the workforce. One reason is that opportunities are still limited and, in some cases, even scarce; another reason is the need to be full-time on the domestic front and the challenge to balance both. “Women are still disadvantaged by their greater domestic labor commitments and impaired access to well-paid jobs; and, in extreme cases, denied the right to live.”<sup>31</sup>

### Gender Bias with Women and the Justice System

Gender inequality is a significant predictor of poverty and injustice in our world today.<sup>32</sup> Justice involves fair, equal treatment in all aspects of life, regardless of one’s background. Women often experience marginalization and are frequently victims of discrimination, persecution, abuse, and violence.

Violence has such a strong connection to women that when one thinks of a victim of violence, most would assume it is a woman. Violence against women and girls not only devastates their lives but, even more, undermines the building of strong democracies and just societies.<sup>33</sup>

26. “What does gender equality look like today?” *UN Women*, October 6, 2021, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/10/feature-what-does-gender-equality-look-like-today>

27. Mario Alvaro Limos, “Remote Work Is a Heavier Burden on Filipino Women Than Men, According to Study,” *Esquire*, March 3, 2021,

[https://www.esquiremag.ph/life/women/filipino-women-work-opportunities-linked-in-a00293-20210303-lfrm?utm\\_source=Facebook-EsquireMoney&utm\\_medium=SiteShare&utm\\_campaign=20220414-fbnp-life-filipino-women-work-opportunities-linked-in-a00293-20210303-lfrm-fbold&fbclid=IwAR1z-rpKrnCksvh-GmSkTeFY63YaZvrVdh0FQG1u2awwk-PjMXw6n079B3sE](https://www.esquiremag.ph/life/women/filipino-women-work-opportunities-linked-in-a00293-20210303-lfrm?utm_source=Facebook-EsquireMoney&utm_medium=SiteShare&utm_campaign=20220414-fbnp-life-filipino-women-work-opportunities-linked-in-a00293-20210303-lfrm-fbold&fbclid=IwAR1z-rpKrnCksvh-GmSkTeFY63YaZvrVdh0FQG1u2awwk-PjMXw6n079B3sE)

28. Limos, “Remote.”

29. Limos, “Remote.”

30. Limos, “Remote.”

31. Dilli, Carmichael, and Rijpma, “Introducing the Historical Gender.”

32. “Women’s Rights and Gender Justice,” Oxfam, <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/issues/womens-rights-and-gender-justice/>, accessed April 22, 2022.

33. “Women’s Rights,” *Oxfam*.

### Gender Bias with Women and the Dilution of the Issue

Despite societal progress through various eras and cultural shifts, women still bear the burden of devaluation, albeit in different forms. The fight for women’s equality remains a profound struggle in many countries. However, today, the focus on women’s rights and gender equality seems to be overshadowed by the ideologies of the postmodern and even posthuman generation. Gender bias is no longer solely about women; it now includes trans-women, trans-men, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, queer, and fluid identities. Multiple advocacies have joined the conversation, extending beyond women’s issues.

Real women may never reach the end of their quest for equal rights, fair treatment, and appropriate value due to the additional issues and baggage now being added to their struggle.

### THE PHILIPPINE SETTING

The Philippines has a history of strong women warriors and leaders like Urduja, Gabriela Silang, and Melchora Aquino (Tandang Sora). It has also had two women presidents: Corazon Aquino and Gloria Arroyo, and women senators as early as 1947 (Geronima Josefa Tecson)<sup>34</sup>. The Philippines could indeed be a leader in gender equality. After all, it has been said,

*At the core, Philippine society is a matriarchal society...women directly and indirectly run the family, businesses, and institutions. Women also, most [sic] often than not, by default, become the family’s treasurer... The underlying power and strength of Pinays is rooted in pre-colonial indigenous Philippine society where equal importance was given to women and men. Women were traditionally entitled to property, to engage in trade, and, in the absence of a male heir, hold the position of village chieftain. Women were also powerful and esteemed high priestesses and healers known as babaylans or catalonans. Such was the power of women in pre-colonial Philippine society that they also had the right to divorce their husbands if they chose to do so.*<sup>35</sup>

It is on a high note that the country can boast of its ranking 16th in the Global Gender Gap Index 2023, with a gender gap score of 0.791 and an improvement of +3 points since 2022.<sup>36</sup> The Philippines is the lone Asian country on the top 20 list!

According to research, women’s status in the

34. Nigel Tan, “Filipinas who were first in Philippine History,” *Rappler*, March 21, 2014, <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/53470-filipinas-first-ph-history/>

35. Wilfred Gacula, “The Power of Pinays – A Short Essay,” *SOMA Pilipinas*, accessed October 4, 2023 at <https://www.somapilipinas.org/community-1/powerofpinays#:~:text=At%20its%20core%2C%20Philippine%20society,default%2C%20become%20the%20family%27s%20treasurer.>

36. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf), p.11.

Philippines can be seen as highly advanced compared to women in other nations, particularly regarding education, professional opportunities, political representation, and legislative involvement.<sup>37</sup> Even within the country, a consensus exists among people regarding this perception, with 51% of Filipinos believing that gender equality has improved in the country and is not as significant an issue as it was during their parents' time.<sup>38</sup> This represents a significant achievement, as Ryanne Co of Tatler Asia points out. Co attributes the Philippines' strong position in terms of gender parity or equality to its matriarchal system, which has elevated it above the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia in this regard—an institution rooted in the pre-colonial era.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the Philippine Constitution recognizes the vital role of women in the country's well-being and ensures their equal treatment.<sup>40</sup>

Rank	Country	Score		Score change	Rank change
		0-1	2022	2022	2022
1	Iceland	0.912		+0.004	-
2	Norway	0.879		+0.034	+1
3	Finland	0.863		+0.003	-1
4	New Zealand	0.856		+0.014	-
5	Sweden	0.815		-0.007	-
6	Germany	0.815		+0.014	+4
7	Nicaragua	0.811		+0.001	-
8	Namibia	0.802		-0.005	-
9	Lithuania	0.800		+0.001	+2
10	Belgium	0.796		+0.003	+4
11	Ireland	0.795		-0.010	-2
12	Rwanda	0.794		-0.017	-6
13	Latvia	0.794		+0.023	+13
14	Costa Rica	0.793		-0.003	-2
15	United Kingdom	0.792		+0.012	+7
16	Philippines	0.791		+0.009	+3
17	Albania	0.791		+0.004	+1
18	Spain	0.791		+0.002	-1
19	Moldova, Republic of	0.788		-0.001	-3
20	South Africa	0.787		+0.005	-
21	Switzerland	0.783		-0.012	-8

Figure 1: Screenshot of TABLE 1. The Global Gender Gap Index 2023 rankings, page 11 of the Global Gender Gap Report 2023. Source: [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf)

However, some sectors have concerns about the current state of gender equality and women's rights in the Philippines.<sup>41</sup> There are disparities on the

37. Gender Profile of the Philippines [https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/gender/reports/ku57pq00002hdv3w-att/phi\\_2008\\_summary\\_en.pdf](https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/gender/reports/ku57pq00002hdv3w-att/phi_2008_summary_en.pdf)

38. Limos, "Remote Work."

39. Ryanne Co, "Gender Parity In the Philippines: Is the Country Truly As Progressive As It Seems?" Tatler Asia, August 7, 2021, <https://www.tatlerasia.com/power-purpose/ideas-education/gender-parity-in-the-philippines>.

40. The 1987 Constitution states two prominent provisions. The first is in the Declaration of Principles Article II Section 14 which asserts that, "The State recognizes the role of women in nation-building and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men." Additionally, according to the Article XIII-Labor: Section 14, "The state shall protect working women by providing safe and healthful working conditions taking into account their maternal functions, and such facilities and opportunities that will enhance their welfare and enable them to realize their full potential in the service of the nation" from Carlos Antonio Anonuevo, "An Overview of the Gender Situation in the Philippines," *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Philippine Office*, September 2020, accessed October 4, 2023 from <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/philippinen/50069.pdf>.

41. Co, 2021.

ground, with women experiencing domestic violence, sexual abuse, economic disadvantages, workplace discrimination, exploitation as migrant workers, prostitution, and displacement due to conflict.<sup>42</sup> A 2022 report states that "One in four Filipino women experienced gender-based violence, and 41% of victims did not seek help."<sup>43</sup> One would think that such would be unheard of in these postmodern times!

In the early months of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, a local birthing center reported an alarming spike in pregnancies and the shocking reality that four of ten women who came to the clinic for prenatal checkups were between thirteen and eighteen years old.<sup>44</sup> This would be the reality that barely verifies the studies. There is a strong disparity between what is reported and what is real.

Meanwhile, the survey respondents who acknowledged improvement in gender equality also recognize the persistence of gender bias in the workplace, with about 31% who believe gender equality is challenging to achieve.<sup>45</sup> Despite the country's high rank in gender equality, the road to full parity seems to be long from seeing fulfillment. However, research indicates that this perspective may arise from broader societal views on gender. According to the same survey, 74% consider gender equality an important value for a fair society; however, more than half of the respondents believe that it has already made satisfactory progress.<sup>46</sup> This mindset may lead to complacency, even though the Philippines is leading in this area, in Asia and globally. Such a prevailing mindset could significantly delay women's quest for equal opportunities and fair treatment, rendering them voiceless and helpless.

I recall the 2019 incident involving Gretchen Custodio Diez, a transgender woman denied access to the women's restroom by a janitress.<sup>47</sup> Her experience gained significant attention on social media, and unfortunately, the janitress faced much criticism while people rallied to defend Diez. I wondered where the defenders for the janitress were. It seemed like no one, including women's rights groups, stood up for her. Everyone seemed to prioritize Gretchen's "rights" over the rights of the janitress who was simply doing her job. It was political correctness that overshadowed the injustice, with society seemingly more willing to criticize a woman just doing her job than a man insisting on using the ladies restroom.

42. Gender Profile of the Philippines [https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/gender/reports/ku57pq00002hdv3w-att/phi\\_2008\\_summary\\_en.pdf](https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/gender/reports/ku57pq00002hdv3w-att/phi_2008_summary_en.pdf)

43. Isabel Kristine M. Valdez, et al. "Violence against women in the Philippines: barriers to seeking support." *The Lancet regional health. Western Pacific* vol. 23 100471. 3 May. 2022, doi:10.1016/j.lanwpc.2022.100471

44. From a Messenger Chat conversation with Dr. Ces Estera, Medical Director of Shalom Paanakan Birthing Center in Antipolo.

45. Limos, "Remote Work."

46. Limos, "Remote Work."

47. Rambo Talabong, "Trans Woman Arrested after Being Blocked from Using Women's Restroom in Cubao," *Rappler*, August 13, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/237698-transgender-woman-arrested-after-blocked-using-women-restroom-cubao/>

Meanwhile, signs of inequality continue to persist in the form of devaluation, racy jokes, stereotypical portrayals in movies, and the way women present themselves to others. These factors continue to show that women and men are not treated and valued equally.

### **No Longer a Matriarchal or Patriarchal Society, but a Gender Equal Society**

Addressing this disparity might involve acknowledging and discussing both “matriarchal” and “patriarchal” perspectives in our conversations. These discussions often perpetuate the divide. As mentioned earlier, many historians and sociologists believe that “The Philippines has indigenous roots in matriarchal systems”<sup>48</sup> dating back to the pre-colonial period. The shift from equality between men and women to a patriarchal culture occurred with the arrival of colonizers. The long history of colonialism subjected women, teaching them to be subordinate to men and limiting their roles to homemaking.<sup>49</sup> However, remnants of our heritage of gender equality still surface in the current society. Consequently, there continue ongoing debates and arguments about gender equality, with representatives from both sides asserting and defending their due positions in society. Further, there may be no need to use “matriarchal” and “patriarchal” terms because that has to do with kinship lineage, which is another topic.

After all, numbers don’t lie. The Philippines ranks 16th on the Global Gender Gap Parity report, surpassing countries like Switzerland (21st) and the United States (43rd), highlighting the country’s treatment of both men and women. Despite personal observations suggesting otherwise, Filipino women face few or no restrictions in pursuing their ambitions or careers. The police force, for instance, has seen an increase in the number of women applicants, and there is a noticeable increase in women CEOs, CFOs, and business owners. Women have taken on prominent roles in government, including the Senate, Congress, and positions such as governors, mayors, and even the presidency. Women holding leadership positions is not uncommon in the Philippines.<sup>50</sup>

### **MISSIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND CHURCH APPLICATION**

*The Lord announces the word, and the women who proclaim it are a mighty throng. Psalm 68:11*

In Genesis 1:27, God created both man and woman in His own image, emphasizing equality from the

48. Clarissa Delgado, in Co, 2021.

49. Carlos Antonio Anonuevo, “An Overview of the Gender Situation in the Philippines,” *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Philippine Office*, September 2020, accessed October 4, 2023 from <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/philippinen/50069.pdf>.

50. “Filipino Women in Leadership: Government and Industry,” *Investing in Women*, accessed October 5, 2023 from <https://investinginwomen.asia/knowledge/filipino-women-leadership-government-industry/>

beginning. They were intentionally made equal in God’s eyes, possessing equal value (“And God saw all [including man and woman] He had made, and behold, it was very good.” Genesis 1:31 NASB), equal tasks (“God blessed them, and said to them...” Gen 1:28), and equal benefits (both had the same freedom and restrictions in the garden of Eden, Gen 1:29-30). Neither was created as having more (or less) value than the other.

The creation of Adam before Eve does not imply positional status before God. It is evident that even if Adam was created first and Eve second, she was not a second thought. Eve was created as an intentional act. God saw that Adam would not be able to do the work alone, and therefore he needed a “suitable helper,” a Kenegdo Ezer. The word kenegdo implies someone who completes the other half; thus, creating Eve was meant to complement Adam.<sup>51</sup> It also implies someone who stands in front, to protect Adam, and not just alongside as an assistant nor at the back as a subordinate.

Conversely, the term “Ezer,” which means “help,” takes on a different connotation when considering its other usages outside of the two instances in Genesis 2:18 and 20 that specifically refer to the woman God created. In these other references, “Ezer” is a reliable warrior or dependable defender. These instances include God acting as Israel’s ally in war and other nations coming to Israel’s aid.<sup>52</sup>

When God created man and woman, He established distinct roles for them, but their intrinsic value remained equal in His eyes. The subordination of women in other Bible stories stems from cultural influences of the people, not from God’s intentions. This is why God often made deliberate efforts to emphasize the importance of women, such as when He revealed Himself as “El Roi” to Hagar, a woman and a slave. (Genesis 16). God highlighted women like Rahab in the Hall of the Faithful (Hebrews 11:31), enabled Deborah to serve as a Judge in Israel despite societal norms (Judges 4), revealed His identity as the Messiah to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:5-30), and first appeared as the risen Lord to Mary Magdalene (John 20:14-16).

We also encounter significant examples of influential women in the early church, such as Junia, acknowledged as an outstanding apostle (Romans 16:7). Additionally, we see the husband-wife duo of Pricilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3), with Pricilla being mentioned ahead of her husband, suggesting a more prominent leadership role. Dorcas was also noted as a disciple of Jesus in Acts. These women’s names underscore their importance and leadership positions in early church history. In his letters, Paul demonstrates respect for women, recognizing their roles as ministry partners and their contributions to the church. He honors notable women like Lydia,

51. Carolyn Custis James, *When Life and Belief Collide: How Knowing God Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), p. 182.

52. James, p. 181.

Phoebe, Junia, Priscilla, Euodia, and Syntyche. It is essential to understand that the passages where Paul seems to address women's roles "are not general statements about women in the church. Paul actually loved and valued women, and they were among his ministry partners."<sup>53</sup>

As women hold half the sky, so also do they make up half the church. In her book, *Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women*, Carolyn Custis James shows us how as a church, we are guilty of discriminating women. We delegate to her the menial jobs like kitchen work, and back-office work; while the "more important" matters of the church, like evangelism, outreach and leadership are tasks often given to the men.<sup>54</sup> The men go out to the streets to evangelize while the women should only be tasked to meal preparation for the men when they return. And yet, women compose half of the church! And so, if this is the case, then the church is wasting away more than half of its important resources (women) by not releasing them to exercise their gifts and capacities!

### On Women in Church Leadership Roles in the Philippines

The pressing question that demands an answer is: why does the treatment of women as equals change in the church setting? If, based on the evidence presented earlier, the Filipino woman is not only capable but often exceeds expectations in various areas of society, why are women confined to very specific roles, responsibilities, and tasks when it comes to church ministry?

One colleague shared that she is a trained military officer in the Armed Forces of her country, possessing leadership experience, but when it came to her church situation, she was not allowed leadership roles. Instead she was suggested only to certain roles that women are expected to fill.

Tira and Wan, in their paper on a Filipino case study of diaspora, say, "Filipino women have a vital role in fulfilling the Great Commission [with particular reference to]...the thousands of household maids deployed in high places in the Buddhist, Jewish, and Islamic world."<sup>55</sup> These women are strategically placed inside homes of people of influence in these cultures, with great opportunities to influence the lives of their employers and their children with the gospel, something for which "Western conventional missionaries do not have the privilege."<sup>56</sup> While at first we might not think too highly of these women since

53. Marg Mowczko, "Partnering Together: Paul's Female Coworkers," *Marg Mowczko: Exploring the Biblical Theology of Christian Egalitarianism*, May 1, 2019, <https://margmowczko.com/paul-romans-16-women-coworkers/>

54. Carolyn Custis James, *Half The Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

55. Sadiri Joy Tira and Enoch Wan, "The Filipino Experience in Diaspora Missions: A Case Study of Christian Communities in Contemporary Contexts," *Commission VII: Christian Communities in Contemporary Contexts Edinburgh Commission*, June 12-13, 2009, p.9.

56. Tira and Wan, p. 9.

they are, after all, "just maids," in God's kingdom building what they do for God is of utmost honor! Tira and Wan even liken the influence and position these Filipino women are in to the likes of Jochebed, who raised Moses, though her own child biologically, but officially belonging to the Pharaoh's daughter, to become an important figure in both Egypt and Israel.<sup>57</sup>

It would be detrimental for the church to underestimate women and restrict their contributions to advancing God's Kingdom. For example, in preaching and teaching, the church often receives only wisdom from male educators and preachers, resulting in a one-sided perspective. The church is at a disadvantage when it fails to recognize and utilize the gifts and capabilities of all individuals, including women, in spreading the gospel. God Himself confirms the significant potential of women as bearers of the Good News when the Psalmist declared, "The Lord gives the command; The women who proclaim the good news are a great army" (Psalm 68:11 NASB).

God created women with a purpose, and when the church restricts their participation and voices, it falls short of fulfilling God's intended purpose. Even more concerning, it could be interpreted as questioning God's design of women. When we doubt a woman's capabilities, skills, and worth, we doubt God's plan in creating her. Are we implying that God made an error when He created women? Are we suggesting that they do not play a vital role in advancing the gospel or building up the church? However, it is evident that God did not create Eve, whom He declared to be made in His image, as an inferior being.

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Gender equality and women's rights are deeply ingrained issues not only in society but sadly, also within the church, where it should not be an issue. However, the responsibility for advocating for the equal treatment of not just women but of all people falls heavily on the church itself, which proclaims believers to be "one in Christ" and to be free in Christ. Accordingly, we must act on what we proclaim when we say "there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. For you all are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28, NLT).

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Further, it is even ironic that Philippine missions recognize the "trend in Philippine feminization in

57. Tira and Wan, p. 9.

missions continues,"<sup>58</sup> meaning that most Filipino missionaries, whether as full time career missionaries or tentmaking missionaries or OFW kingdom workers, are women. There is no problem with women being missionaries. In fact, there is excitement. But the tide shifts for her in the church setting. It simply does not make sense.

If Filipinos readily acknowledge women in leadership positions in areas outside of the church, such as government, business, and companies, then the same recognition should extend to their leadership roles within the church. When a woman serves as the CEO of a business or a lady mayor, her stature and leadership abilities grant her a platform. However, this recognition often does not carry over to the church setting. While such prominent figures may be invited to give special lectures, serve as guest speakers at women's events, and occupy prominent seats in the church, they are rarely granted the privilege to stand on the same platform as the pastor and deliver the Word of God.

My point here is not primarily about granting women grand titles or the highest positions but rather about enabling women to minister in the same capacities as men, giving them the space and freedom to exercise their spiritual gifts within the safe confines of the Body of Christ. Gender should not be a factor when it comes to utilizing spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church. Imagine telling someone they cannot exercise their gift of hospitality, giving, or mercy based on gender. When did spiritual gifting become gender-based? It's not about gender; it's about the appointment of the Holy Spirit.

Gender equality and women's rights are deeply ingrained issues not only in society but sadly, also within the church, where it should not be an issue. However, the responsibility for advocating for the equal treatment of not just women but of all people falls heavily on the church itself, which proclaims believers to be "one in Christ" and to be free in Christ. Accordingly, we must act on what we proclaim when we say "there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. For you all are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28, NLT).

### **Let the woman be the Image Bearer she was created and designed to be**

Amidst the chaos and confusion from discussions on gender equality, many women have found themselves lost, afraid, and uncertain about their identity and potential. Where can women discover a safe space to be themselves and fulfill their God-given purpose? Where can they speak without judgment, act without criticism, laugh without misunderstanding, and love without fear of hurt? The answer lies at the feet of Jesus.

At Jesus' feet, there is always a reserved place for women, as Mary of Bethany confirmed. Even if taking our place at His feet might lead to trouble, where

people may judge, ridicule, criticize, or attempt to confine us to certain roles, at Jesus' feet, women will find safety, acceptance, and the assurance of being His beloved daughters. Therefore, we who also sit at Jesus' feet should welcome her as equal. We, who also sit at Jesus' feet should make sure her place there is safe, affirming, loving and empowering.

And until the day comes when the world fully recognizes women's roles and contributions, those who understand the importance of women's voices in the church and society must serve as their willing advocates. We must be their voice, tirelessly advocating for their worth, visibility, and full acceptance as equally valuable heirs to the kingdom of God. We must fight for them to be heard and listened to as equally valuable spokespersons for Jesus Christ and proclaimers of the Good News (Psalm 68:11).

We must see more and more women confidently stepping into what God has called them and designed them to do in all areas, not just teaching or preaching, but in whatever good work God has created them for (Ephesians 2:10). And let us not forget that for the global church to effectively and significantly move forward, it is increasingly important that Christians, men and women, brothers and sisters, work together.

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<sup>58</sup>. Ibid.

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## Persistent Prayer -

### A Global Christian Response to the Challenges of Our Times

*Jason Mandryk*

As we look around our world at the array of disasters, disorders, and disintegration, it is easy to become discouraged. At the time of this writing, conflict in the Holy Land has murderously escalated and much of the Middle East and North Africa region has become a theatre of proxy wars. Russia is accused of over 50,000 war crimes in their invasion of Ukraine. Myanmar keeps bombing its own citizens. A series of coups has rocked the Sahel—a region already traumatized by poverty and Islamist violence. Mexican cartels attempt to outdo one another in horrifying violence. Tens of millions around the world have fled their homes because it was no longer safe to stay there. Hundreds of millions more are likely to have to flee in the decades to come due to severe climate and environment issues. Corruption and systemic dysfunction grotesquely enrich the few while many struggle to endure economic crisis after crisis. Scandals continue to rip apart what we thought were strong and effective Christian ministries, even as droves of people—especially the younger generation—disassociate themselves from the Church. There is no need to add to this sad litany, although it would be painfully easy to do so.

In response to all of the above, we pray and pray and then pray some more. But so often, it feels like our prayers are in vain. Times such as we are experiencing require us to repeat as often as necessary three important reminders.

First, is that we must remember that news organizations are mighty engines and that their fuel is conflict and disaster. Reading the news, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that human lifespans are longer than ever in recorded history. Other historic markers? Global health outcomes are better, poverty is less ubiquitous, literacy is higher, and rates of violent crime are lower. All of the woes reported can be 100% true, even while the positive progress that humanity is experiencing goes largely unreported. Bad news sells. Good news? Not so much.

Next is the fact that the best of the good news—the properly Good News—continues to make inroads around the world. Perhaps it is not happening at the rate we would wish, but spread it does. In every country in the world, even those closed to the gospel, there are groups of Jesus followers gathering together to worship Him. In a surprising number of cases, the places that are most hostile are the very places where those who follow Jesus are multiplying most rapidly.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the global Church is gaining the understanding that the second factor occurs in response to prayer. And, as a result, Christians are praying at a scale previously unheard

of. Some may dispute the claims that prayer is the cause of these missional breakthroughs. But as the widely-quoted and succinct saying of Archbishop William Temple goes, “When I pray, coincidences happen, and when I don’t, they don’t.” Places where Christians are poor and powerless have long known this. Places where the Church is seeing its wealth and influence decline are learning it quickly. Prayer—not military hardware, economic imperialism, nor diplomatic policy, but prevailing, persistent prayer that aligns with the Lord’s revealed purposes—is our best answer to every crisis. The secret to understanding how our prayers and God’s answers link up is all in the timing.

Occasionally, a servant of the Lord turns up somewhere and immediately ministers in the power of the Spirit such that thousands turn to the Lord, or spiritual strongholds are broken. Every so often, a prayer gathering is held and by morning, the reason for the praying is gloriously resolved. But such wonderful occasions are not the norm. It seems that the economy of God’s kingdom works, at least in part, on accrual. The slow, steady accumulation of interest, earned through faithful intercession, acts of Christlikeness, and gospel witness, builds up. It is imperceptible to us—until the breakthrough comes.

Sometimes people live to see the fruit of their own investments in prayer and good works, perhaps after years or even decades. This may be the return of their own prodigal child to their upbringing in the community of faith. It may be the revival in their own community for which they prayed for decades. It may be a missional breakthrough among an unreached people group or the end of an oppressive totalitarian regime.

Yet, often the outcome for which we pray doesn’t happen until later we have passed on. And although we don’t like to admit it, the hard reality is that sometimes the longed-for breakthrough never comes at all. We do not have a complete explanation of why this is, but it is. God’s power and will are seemingly thwarted by those opposed to Jesus’ reign. The distraction and disobedience of the saints delays the accomplishment of God’s purposes. Why? We still don’t fully understand the dynamics of the interactions between our prayers, God’s sovereignty, and the free will of both human beings and the powers. We never will fully understand, at least not in this lifetime. But we have assurances from the Maker of the universe that our prayers and our choices do make a difference. They aren’t merely shoehorned into the Lord’s plan. The plan is in fact dynamically impacted by them.

God is at work, all according to His cosmic intentions. He is not a step ahead of the rest of us. He stands outside of time and space and all the billions of years of the universe are like a speck. But the schedule for this master plan appears to be a flexible one. We read from Scripture, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9 NIV). God’s flexibility with the timetable is based, not on a lack of resolve, nor a lack of resources, but on the truth that he has chosen to partner with humanity to accomplish these plans and purposes. Peter makes this clear two verses later when he writes, “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God” (2 Pet 3:11-12a ESV, emphasis mine). The very notion is staggering—how we as disciples live our lives has an actual impact on when God’s plans are fulfilled!

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Once we accept that this principle is true, we see that it applies even more broadly. Across the sweep of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, we see God waiting for things to reach their fullness before acting.

Anyone involved with global mission will hopefully be familiar with Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” It stands to reason that Part B of this arrangement (the end) will only happen after Part A (world evangelization) is done. God seems almost scandalously willing both to partner with those humans who serve him and also to wait patiently for those who do not to repent.

In Genesis 15:16, God promises that Abram’s

descendants will emerge from slavery to Egypt and return to the land God was giving to him. But it would only be able to happen generations later, “for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure” (NIV). In Galatians 4:4, we learn that “when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship” (NIV). Paul instructs the faithful in Rome that “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in” (Rom 11:25 NIV). In Revelation 6:10-11, the martyrs cry out to God, asking “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” What is heaven’s response? “Each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been” (NIV).

Again and again we see that God’s plan is contingent on human choices. This, I believe, is one major reason why we can be assured that our prayers and our actions actually make a difference. We can accelerate the timeline by our obedience or delay it by our waywardness. We add to the accrual of prayers, even as others around the world add their own contributions. Though it is barely perceptible on a grand scale, our intercession accumulates. And in time, when the full deposit is made, answers come in a way that would seem very sudden if we didn’t know any better. When we at Operation World share about the impact of intercession on global situations, as well as the need for persistent prayer in the face of implacable resistance, we often share a series of three water-based analogies. The first is that of an iceberg. While the largest icebergs loom over ships like mountains, most of the iceberg’s mass is underwater and unseen.— So it is with spiritual realities — the invisible realm is far larger than we perceive. The West’s secular materialist worldview blinds us to this, but it is evident in Scripture that there is much more going on than what our human eyes can see.

On occasion, God pulls back the curtain and allows His servants a clearer picture of the forces in play. Our prayers may often feel like mere words, but the reality is that they can have profound effects in the spiritual world. The second picture of is that of a river flowing through a rocky canyon. What possible effect can a meandering stream of water have against the durability of a stone? A few drops will make no mark. Neither will thousands or even millions of liters. But given enough time—as long as the water keeps flowing, even the hardest of rock gives way. We’ve all seen photos of the Grand Canyon or of Big Bend National Park. The persistence of a river’s impact on stone is undeniable. Prayer, as with water, may take time, but with time, it has the power to reshape the world. The final analogy is drawn from personal experience. On the grounds of our mission base in the UK, there was a particularly magnificent specimen of oak tree.

It towered above other trees; it must have been well over 30 meters tall. It looked invincible. But on a rare January night when the temperatures dropped below freezing and a heavy snow fell, the woods resounded with an almighty crash. The morning light revealed that the mighty oak had shattered near the base and toppled, taking a couple of trees with it on the way down and obliterating an unfortunate section of fencing. A brief examination revealed that the core of the trunk was broken. The change in temperature rendered the dead heart of the tree brittle and weak. The cumulative weight of the snowflakes piling up on bough and branch eventually brought the giant down. How much does a snowflake weigh? Which one of them was it that felled the mighty oak? Our prayers may seem insubstantial, but cumulatively, they have the power to bring down giants.

The promises of Scripture give us the confidence to pray with authority for what seems impossible. And the principles spelled out above help us not to panic or lose heart when we speak to the mountain and nothing happens. It would seem to me that such notions apply not only to prayer, but to missionary work as well. Those who have been chipping away at the rock face of the Great Commission over the course of a lifetime can attest that this is often the case. Sometimes we labour for years—decades, even—with no evident fruit. Missions history is littered with testimonies of faithful Kingdom workers who felt that they had failed because they saw few or none come to faith in Christ during their long years of service. Whether they were aware or not, the tenet of accrual and the tenet of fullness eventually converge, and, under God’s sovereignty, the longed-for change comes.

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“Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together.”<sup>1</sup> Vincent van Gogh was a deeply philosophical, and at many points of his life, religious man. Troubled though he was, he understood this fundamental principle. In keeping with the spirit of the age, the tempo of our expectations seems to be aligned with the speed that it takes to microwave our food or perhaps order takeaway using whichever app is popular in

1. Vincent van Gogh. Vincent Van Gogh, The Letters, Letter 274. The Hague: Van Gogh Museum: Van Gogh Letters Project. <https://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let274/le:er.html>

our region. So it should come as no surprise that the greatest of all things, the fulfilment of the Great Commission, may require the Lord’s own patience. Over a century ago, John P. Jones, in part as a response to the enthusiastic urgency of the Student Volunteer Movement, shared this conviction in *The Modern Missionary Challenge*: “This enterprise is not only the greatest that the world has ever known; it is also the most difficult of achievement. Let us not fall into the error of thinking that Christianizing the nations and bringing the world to the feet of our Lord is the task of a day or of a generation.”<sup>2</sup>

The need for such patient persistence is why I have great admiration for those who have served long in the Lord’s harvest fields and prayer closets. Whether the breakthrough has come, or is still to come, through their faithfulness they have made tremendous deposits into accounts that one day will be wonderfully redeemed. Be it a missionary couple who remain on the field for a lifetime, an intercessor who prays without ceasing until they are promoted to glory, an Overseas Filipino Worker who never stops shining the light of Jesus in a dark and difficult situation, the local evangelist who outlasts disinterest and stone-faced rejection every single week, or anyone else who endures until the end, their persistence in taking no rest and giving heaven no rest will be rewarded in due course. Of that we have God’s own assurance.

\*This paper is included and published from the book “Beautiful Feet, Following Christian Missionary Footsteps, edited by Sadiri Joy Tira, Page Master, Canada. 2024. Permission to re-publish was granted by the editor.

2. Jones, John P. *The Modern Missionary Challenge: A study of the present day world missionary enterprise: its problems and results*. (New York, Revell, 1911), 251.



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Jason Mandryk was born, grew up, and studied in Canada before moving to the UK to join the Operation World team. For over 20 years, he has served through multiple editions and publications of this ministry, as researcher, editor, author, and co-director. He and his wife Becky are currently based in Seoul, South Korea.

# One Meal, One Prayer, One Neighbourhood at a Time

## - A Supper Club Case Study

*Tonyoic Tira*

### **WHERE MISSION BEGINS: Stories from the Table**

Supper Club is a demonstration of missional discipleship in a context of hospitality taking place in Alberta, Canada. It was not built around a program, but rather, around a table. Most of our key moments happened in living rooms and public parks, not on stages. These aren't stories of big campaigns but of everyday people living as relational missionaries.

Keith didn't plan to stand up. At a regular Supper Club potluck, when I invited anyone needing prayer to stand—with eyes closed—he thought, "Why not?" Then came the curveball: "Open your eyes." Keith was the only one standing. That vulnerable moment became a turning point, where Keith realized that "Church isn't a stage, it's a table."

That table kept showing up. As students at the University of Alberta, Keith and Kessiah began attending Thankful Thursdays—a weekly meal shaped by gratitude and open fellowship across cultures and faiths. About 15 students joined each week, many from Muslim backgrounds. It started as pizza and conversation but became a place to be real. Eventually, they began leading—offering halal and gluten-free meals and creating space where people felt safe to share. During Ramadan, they over-ordered halal food. Students took it home to break their fast, and one returned just to say "thank you." "The table might've looked like just a meal," Kessiah said, "but it became a space where people shared their struggles and gratitude."

Stories like these aren't exceptions—they're examples of how the Spirit uses availability over ability, and how weekly faithfulness becomes witness. They involve their story is more than hospitality. It reflects a sustained presence, where weekly faithfulness helped rebuild trust across cultures and offer a living witness of Jesus through care, not coercion.

Joey and Steph are another example. In 2022, they faced the heartbreak of an infertility journey and a devastating miscarriage diagnosis. But their Supper Club community,— a relational network of gatherings centered on meals, prayer, and mission, didn't pray just once. They persisted—laying hands on them and checking in often. When a follow-up scan revealed their baby was alive, it wasn't just only a medical miracle; it was a shared testimony of God's presence. Their daughter was born that December, a tangible reminder of what happens when community doesn't look away from suffering but instead invites Jesus into it.

While some stories begin in crisis, others start with a simple "yes" —where obedience meets opportunity

in the ordinary. Eleesha was —a young dentist who grew up in the church but began to see incarnational presence differently through Supper Club. What struck her was how simple evangelism and mission could be, i.e., hospitality instead of a script. She started by joining prayer walks and serving meals to international students with her husband. Over time, she began taking more initiative; inviting students to eat meals in a home and eventually responding to a need for free dental services among refugee families—complete with a meal from Supper Club. Her story shows how mission grows through availability, not expertise.

Supper Club also sends. Joshua and Susan, supported spiritually and financially by Supper Club, now serve students at UBC. They lead small groups, disciple others, and baptize new believers. Our prayer coach, Dr. David Chotka, recently partnered with us to distribute 5,000 prayer books in Vietnamese to networks across Vietnam and Cambodia. Whether across the street or overseas, the DNA remains: presence, prayer, and faithful friendship.

### **BARRIERS TO BELONGING: What We Encountered**

Each story began with a challenge. Students faced loneliness. Young professionals lacked models of lived mission. Couples needed more than sympathy. Our neighbourhood, reeling from pandemic disconnection, longed for community.

In more traditional church expressions, challenges like these are often addressed through structured programs—sermons, events, and institutional models of care. There's value in those systems. But Supper Club was born from a conviction that the church can also be lived differently: not from a stage, but from a table. This is what we call a table-shaped way of being the church—where people are not passive attendees but active participants in prayer, presence, and shared life. Instead of waiting for the perfect plan or position, Supper Club affirms a context where everyday believers can act on mission now. Through simple rhythms like shared meals, honest conversation, prayer walks, and consistent hospitality, people begin to practice the way of Jesus with others—right where they are.

### **PRACTICING PRESENCE: What We Did**

Rather than launch another church service or curriculum, Supper Club invites and equips people to start meals where they are—with what they have.

Some were students on campus, others were families in townhouse or new developments. Some met in homes, others in university lounges or public parks. A core rhythm emerged: eat together, share honestly, listen for God's voice, pray simply, stay curious. We call these "table groups" (our term for intentional, recurring meal-based gatherings that nurture faith and friendship), —a simple framework for gathering that involves sharing a meal, engaging in open conversation, praying together, and remaining curious about each other's stories and journeys. It was designed to be flexible enough for newcomers to faith, deep enough for mature believers, and safe enough for those with questions or doubts. Far more than the name of a church, it is a method of evangelism, a discipleship pathway, and missional expression.

In 2024 alone, Thankful Thursdays continued weekly. City-wide prayer walks covered 13 Edmonton neighbourhood. Bible studies took root not because of pressure but because of prayerful discernment. People began leading their own Bible studies, without waiting for permission.

Our approach isn't perfect. But it's personal. And that's the point. Each small act—bringing soup, asking a good question, inviting someone back next week—has become part of a larger organic story. These rhythms of hospitality aren't just activities—they have become the training ground for transformation.

#### **FROM BELONGING TO SENDING: Transformation Through Community**

Discipleship, for us, starts not at belief—it starts with belonging. Often, people begin their journey by participating: bringing something to a meal, joining a prayer walk, serving others, or simply showing up. Through these rhythms, transformation unfolds.

We think of this as a discipleship pathway—a relational journey that begins with presence, grows through participation, and leads toward leadership and eventually sending. Along the way, people encounter Jesus not only in Scripture, but in community and in service.

Eleesha's story captures this beautifully. Long before she saw herself as a leader, she showed up—to serve meals, walk and pray, and welcome others. Over time, her eyes opened to what God was doing through her availability. This past summer, when she saw a gap in dental care for refugee families, she didn't just notice the need,—she acted. As Steph once reflected, "[This way of church] has really affirmed mine and [my husband's] calling to use our house as a refuge for His people. When we first got our place, we knew that this house was God's house and not our own."

In this way, we're not just discipling believers—we're forming everyday missionaries, often long before they would use that word to describe themselves.

These small acts have added up. In 2024, over 50 international students participated in meals and

spiritual conversations. As one student reflected, "This is the first time I've felt like I belonged in Canada." Several began asking questions about Jesus, reading Scripture, and sharing with friends.

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We've experienced spontaneous baptisms, during one of our annual end-of-summer celebrations—unplanned but embraced with joy and tears as the community witnessed life-changing commitments. Young adults took incarnational mission steps, often without formal titles or training. Prayer became less a programmed and more a presence,—felt in everyday moments, from campus prayer walks to Spirit-led conversations—those spontaneous moments of connection or insight that emerge through shared meals and prayerful attentiveness on doorsteps. In August alone, prayer walks spanned 13 Edmonton neighborhoods, involving over 60 participants from different congregations in Edmonton praying for peace, healing, and open hearts in their communities.

Joey and Steph's daughter is one of the clearest signs of transformation. But transformation doesn't always look like a dramatic miracle. It's also Eleesha stepping up to serve both meals and dental care to refugee families. It's a newly baptized believer now leading a small group Bible study with friends. And it's a child in Central McDougall receiving a backpack and a hot meal. That kind of transformation doesn't always make headlines, but it changes lives,—as well as the communities around them.

During our second summer in Central McDougall—a diverse, low-income neighborhood in Edmonton—Supper Club hosted weekly meals in the public park and gave out school supplies to over 40 children. A volunteer recalled, "One mom said this was the first time her kids were excited to go back to school, wondering when we would return. That meant

everything.”

These aren't flashy numbers. They're deeply personal moments—markers of transformation that go beyond data points. They're signs of faithful presence, spiritual hunger, and practical love in action. They reflect what theologian Lesslie Newbigin called a “hermeneutic of the gospel”—a lived witness that helps people interpret the good news not only in word but in deed. In this way, Supper Club contributes to community resilience: cultivating relationships, restoring trust, and offering stability through hospitality. These aren't metrics. They're people. And their lives have changed—and with them, their communities are being reshaped. This is the slow, faithful work of the gospel lived out, —a lived theology that mirrors global models of mission while remaining deeply local.

### IN STEP WITH WAN : A Shared Heart for Mission

Dr. Enoch Wan's paradigm of Relational Realism equips missionaries for long-term cultural immersion. Supper Club offers a local complement: short-term spiritual hospitality that prepares people to live missionally in their own neighborhoods. You don't need a visa —just a table; no program, —just a meal.

Through our Vision 2030 framework, we provide simple tools, coaching, and encouragement to help people start Table Groups in their homes, dorms, or neighborhoods. Whether through starter kits, prayer guides, leadership pathways, or one-on-one mentoring, Supper Club equips people to practice presence, listen well, and respond to the Spirit's leading in everyday life.

If Wan's approach is long-term cultural embedding, Supper Club's is near-term spiritual hospitality. Wan's model equips people to move deeply into new cultural contexts, often across significant language, religious, or ethnic boundaries, staying long enough to build deep trust and sustained discipleship. Supper Club aligns with that same missional impulse, while providing an accessible, entry-point expression for people right where they are. Through shared meals, simple prayers, and intentional friendship, Supper Club creates opportunities for spiritual conversations and gospel presence that are immediate, local, and deeply relational. In that way, we're cultivating the same soil—just starting with what's already in our hands. Both are slow. Both require presence. And both are essential. Wan's model equips people to cross cultures. Ours invites people to cross the street.

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS: Scripture at the Table

Underpinning all of this is a scriptural vision of missional discipleship and hospitality rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus. In Luke 14, Jesus tells a parable about a great banquet where the invited guests fail to come, so the host sends his servant to invite “the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame”

and compels people from the streets and alleys to fill the table (Luke 14:15-24). This picture of mission is radically inclusive, persistent, and generous—a banquet where everyone is welcome and no seat stays empty for long. Supper Club lives this out around real tables in real neighborhoods, where invitation is a spiritual act and meals become moments of grace.

Romans 12:13 urges believers to “practice hospitality,” while Hebrews 13:2 reminds us that by doing so, “some have entertained angels without knowing it.” The early church in Acts 2:46-47 “broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,” and it was in these everyday rhythms of worship, fellowship, and meals that “the Lord added to their number daily.”

This isn't a new strategy. It's a return to the table, to shared lives, to the very places where Jesus so often ministered. And it's here that we've seen the Spirit move—quietly, faithfully, powerfully.

What we've seen is this: mission doesn't require extraordinary people. It requires ordinary people willing to open their lives. You don't need to be trained to be kind. You don't need a platform to be present.

Our meals are more than nourishment. They're both evangelism and discipleship. Our prayers are not just strategic programs—they are our dependence. Our neighborhoods aren't projects—they're our calling.

### A GROWING TABLE: The Ongoing Invitation

Supper Club isn't a launchpad—it's a long table. It may start with one meal, but over time, it nurtures deep trust, spiritual growth, and multiplying relationships. And through this slow, faithful presence, we've seen neighbors become friends, friends become family, and guests become hosts.

This is how discipleship multiplies. Not through programs, but through people. One meal. One prayer. One neighbourhood at a time.

\*This article was first published in MAP: Missionary Anthropologist and Professor a Festschrift for Dr Enoch Wan, Editors Jacky Lau, Mark Hedinger and Sadiri Joy Tira (2025. PageMaker Canada)



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# Mission Trends and Church Growth in Nepal: 2025-2026 Report

*David Debilal Prasain*

## INTRODUCTION

Nepal is a diverse and historically religious nation located between India and China. Long known as a Hindu kingdom until the early 21st century, the country now exists as a secular republic with constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion. Over the past few decades, Christianity has been one of the fastest-growing faith communities in Nepal, with thousands of churches and numerous local believers active in mission and ministry. This report outlines the latest trends in church growth, mission work, challenges, social dynamics, and opportunities for continued ministry in Nepal.

message, with several thousand choosing to follow Jesus and nearly sixty new churches established in just one reporting period.

A common mission strategy among many networks is church planting and leadership training. These efforts emphasize raising up local pastors and ministries, with targeted plans to plant dozens of new house churches or fellowship groups, especially in rural and unreached regions.

Importantly, this growth is shaped primarily by indigenous ministry and Nepali believers, rather than solely by foreign missionaries. Local Christians deeply rooted in their communities are leading outreach, discipleship, and church multiplication, which has contributed to organic expansion throughout urban



## CURRENT STATUS OF MISSION AND CHURCH GROWTH

In recent years, Nepal has experienced significant expansion of Christian faith expressions and church communities. Unofficial sources report that there are now over 12,000 churches and around three million Nepali Christians across the country, a number that continues to grow beyond official census statistics.

Organizations involved in mission work, such as Global Mission Nepal, report that large numbers of people have been reached with the Gospel. For example, recent ministry reports indicate that tens of thousands of Nepali people have heard the Christian

and rural Nepal.

## DYNAMICS DRIVING GROWTH

Several key factors are influencing the trend of church growth and mission activity in Nepal:

### **Indigenous Evangelism and Local Leadership**

Most Christian growth in Nepal today comes from local believers—often first-generation converts—who are passionate about sharing their faith in their own cultural contexts. These leaders train pastors, coordinate fellowships, and serve communities without reliance on external structures.

### **Social and Cultural Needs**

Christian communities in Nepal have often been seen responding to social needs, providing support to marginalized groups, creating safe fellowship spaces, and offering community programs for youth, women, and families. Many new believers report that the message of dignity and belonging resonates strongly with those who feel marginalized in traditional social hierarchies.

### **Media and Digital Outreach**

Technology has become a major tool in mission work. Christian media such as Bible apps, online worship music, and digital teaching are widely accessed in Nepal, especially among youth. These tools help share biblical teaching beyond physical church walls and continue to support spiritual growth among believers.

### **Global Connections and Humanitarian Support**

Some mission work is connected with international churches and ministries that partner with Nepali Christians for humanitarian response, training, and outreach. These collaborations often bring resources that support both spiritual and physical needs, such as disaster relief, education, and community development.

## **LEGAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT**

### **Religious Freedom and Legal Status**

The 2015 Constitution of Nepal guarantees freedom of religion, but until recently churches lacked a clear legal framework for formal registration. This changed as guidelines have progressively been developed, enabling many congregations to register as recognized religious trusts or nonprofit entities. As of the latest reports, dozens of denominations and hundreds of congregations have obtained legal status, granting them greater security and the ability to own property.

### **b. Mixed Reactions and Challenges**

Despite legal protections, mission activity and church growth in Nepal are not without controversy. Some segments of society express concern over the pace of religious change and its cultural impact. Surveys and news reports point to public debates and occasional conflicts, including incidents of harassment or attacks on church leaders and buildings by extremists or critics opposed to Christian expansion.

Laws related to religious conversion also influence mission work. Although religious freedom is respected, Nepal's legal framework includes restrictions against aggressive proselytizing and conversion through coercion or inducement. Mission leaders and churches are increasingly aware of these legal boundaries and strive to operate respectfully and lawfully within them.

## **CHURCH RESPONSES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

### **Leadership Development**

A major trend in Nepal's Christian community is equipping local leaders. Many networks are focusing on pastoral training, discipleship programs, and leadership retreats to strengthen the church's ability to minister effectively in diverse contexts.

### **Youth and Community Engagement**

Youth and children's ministries are also growing. Churches are developing programs that reach young people through fellowship, Bible study, and practical skills training. These ministries often serve as entry points for families and communities to encounter faith in Christ.

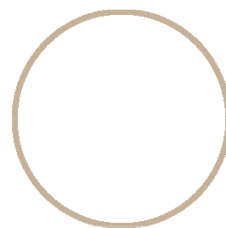
### **Collaboration and Unity**

Church leaders frequently emphasize unity among different denominations and mission organizations. By working cooperatively, they can share resources, reduce redundancy, and increase impact in both urban centres and remote villages.

## **CONCLUSION**

The mission landscape in Nepal today reflects dynamic growth, deepening indigenous leadership, and strategic adaptation to cultural and legal environments. While challenges remain—such as social tensions and the need for careful, respectful outreach—there is a strong emphasis among believers on building communities of faith that are stable, locally grounded, and focused on service.

As churches continue to grow and adapt, prayer, wisdom, and community engagement remain central to mission efforts across Nepal. The trend suggests that Christian communities will continue contributing to the spiritual and social fabric of the country through discipleship, compassion ministries, and faithful witness.



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It is with great joy that we announce the upcoming **15TH TRIENNIAL CONVENTION OF THE ASIA MISSIONS ASSOCIATION (AMA)**, to be held at Onnuri Church, Incheon, Korea, from September 14~18, 2026.

The theme of the Convention is "*Gospel and the Future of Humanity.*"

This timely theme invites mission leaders, scholars, and church leaders to discern how the Gospel speaks to a rapidly transforming world shaped by Artificial Intelligence and technological innovation, and to seek together new strategies for the future of global mission in this emerging era.

The Asia Missions Association (AMA) was founded out of a vision to unite Asian churches for the advancement of the Gospel.

In 1971, Dr. David J. Cho initiated a series of consultations across Asia that led to the historic All-Asia Missions Consultation in Seoul, 1973, and the formal establishment of the AMA in 1975, representing fourteen nations. Since then, the AMA has hosted Triennial Conventions across Asia, fostering unity among churches and mission agencies through shared resolutions and cooperative action.

The 14th Convention, held in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2023, celebrated the 50th anniversary of the AMA – a milestone marking five decades of collaboration in advancing the Gospel across Asia.

Now, as we look toward the 15th Triennial Convention in Seoul in 2026, we stand at a pivotal moment in history – a time to reaffirm our calling, renew our strategies, and reimagine the future of mission together.

We warmly invite you to join this historic event, to celebrate God's faithfulness, and to participate in shaping the Gospel and the Future of Humanity.

We pray and hope that you will be able to come and join us for this significant gathering.

VISIT <https://ama2026.asiamissions.net/>

# ASIA MISSIONS ASSOCIATION



## GOSPEL & FUTURE OF HUMANITY

The 15<sup>th</sup> Triennial Convention



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The 15<sup>th</sup> AMA Triennial Convention | September 14-18, 2026, Incheon, South Korea  
Website: [www.asiamissions.net](http://www.asiamissions.net) | Email: [ama2026convention@gmail.com](mailto:ama2026convention@gmail.com)

### The Theme of the 15<sup>th</sup> AMA Convention

#### ***“The Gospel and the Future of Humanity”***

In the 21st century, we are entering a great period of transition in which existing values and social orders are being reorganized amid unprecedented changes such as those brought on by artificial intelligence, digital civilization, transnational economic systems, and the climate crisis. These changes are not merely a part of a temporal trend but part of a great wave that may fundamentally reconstruct the future of humanity.

At such a time, the Asian Church—which stands at the center of the world in terms of population, economy, politics, and religion—must once again reflect on the essence of the Gospel and raise serious missiological questions regarding how the Gospel can present hope and answers to humanity within our rapidly changing society. The Gospel does not remain merely at the level of individual salvation but is the power of God that heals, restores, and transforms every area of human life. Therefore, based on the wholeness of the Gospel, the Asian Church must reestablish gospel-centered missiological theology and strategies suitable for the coming age.

The 15th Asia Missions Association Convention, under the theme “The Gospel and the Future of Humanity,” seeks to explore together the missiological alternatives for the rapidly changing society of Asia. In particular, this convention will discuss the missional calling of the Asian Church for the future centered on the following seven core areas.

#### **a. AI and the Future of Asian Missions**

What changes will the development of AI and advanced technology bring to the Asian Church’s mission paradigm? And what creative and innovative mission models and strategies can the Asian Church imagine in this era?

#### **b. Diaspora and the Future of Asian Missions**

What missional potential do diaspora communities—such as refugees, migrant workers, and other immigrants—spreading across Asia possess? And through them, what new horizon of mission can the Asian Church envision?

#### **c. Religious Pluralism and the Future of Asian Missions**

What changes and challenges will the multi-religious society of future Asia (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Shamanism) face? And in such a society, how can the Church maturely and wisely proclaim the Gospel beyond exclusivism and syncretism?

#### **d. Justice and the Future of Asian Missions**

In the face of social justice issues emerging in Asia—such as the gap between rich and poor, inequality of resources, stateless persons and refugees, oppression and human rights violations of minorities and the socially marginalized—how can the Church raise a gospel-centered voice and practice the righteousness of God?

#### **e. Healing and the Future of Asian Missions**

To Asians living amid deep wounds such as depression, anxiety, and trauma caused by pandemics, wars, disasters, and social violence, how can the Church fulfill the mission of holistic healing and restoration?

#### **f. The Created World and the Future of Asian Missions**

In an era of intensifying climate crisis and environmental destruction, what is the gospel-centered

response to God’s created world? And how can the Asian Church practice sustainable creation care and proclaim the vision of restoration?

#### **g. The Next Generation and the Future of Asian Missions**

What are the ways to continuously pass on the Gospel to Generation Z and Alpha—the digital-native generations—and furthermore, to mobilize them for missions and nurture them as mission leaders?