

POSTINGS

articles for missions mobilizers



May 2023 | Vol. 18 | Issue 5 | by Ellen Livingood

Heard the Good News about our Global Family?

7 developments in the worldwide Body your church should celebrate

The people who attend your church likely are hearing a lot of *bad news* these days about the Church—statistics of decline, moral failures, persecution, and more.

But have they heard enough of the *good news* about their global brothers and sisters? For instance, do they know that the Church is vibrant and growing in many of the most unlikely places around the world? Are they aware of the incredible new ways that God is working? Are they energized by celebrating both the tremendous growth of the Body of Christ and the fact that a truly global force is leading powerful missions advance today?

This month's *Postings* highlights 7 good-news factors about the global Church that will give your congregation reason to celebrate. Then keep reading for ways to share this information as well as to connect your church to this new "from everywhere, to everywhere" global missions movement.

GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE GLOBAL CHURCH

1. **Exploding growth.** In many parts of the world, the number of true believers in Jesus Christ has been multiplying exponentially. The vibrant, global Church is growing, not shrinking! In multiple cities around the world, the number and size of megachurches surpasses those in many Western nations. Around the globe, house churches are being birthed and multiplying. Both the Center for Global Christianity's **annual statistics** and Operation World's **Prayer Map** demonstrate this incredible growth. While a bit dated, this **infographic** has a powerful message. Do you have a graphic designer in your church who could help your missions team take statistics and create some powerful infographics? If so, please share them with us.
2. **Mature leaders.** In many places, the global Church now has multiple generations of godly leaders, pastors, and teachers. An increasing number have seminary or other advanced degrees. These capable, mature leaders are developing their own perspectives on theology and missions, not just copying the Western models of the past two hundred years. With fresh eyes, leaders from the Global South are analyzing the history of the Church in their context and leading forward in their own culturally appropriate way. As they assume key leadership roles, these men and women

With fresh eyes, leaders from the Global South are analyzing the history of the Church in their context and leading forward in their own culturally appropriate way.

are asking for more specific types of Western workers—particularly those who are gifted and experienced to be able to assist them in training an army of pastors and workers who can nurture new churches and expand their gospel impact to the unreached.

3. **Globally connected.** Many Christian leaders, even in some of the least developed countries, are quickly becoming well networked around the world. These networks allow them to step into increasingly strategic leadership roles. Part of this global networking is driven by younger leaders who desire to find godly men and women to be their role models. Increasingly they are looking for these mentors not in the West but in places as disparate as Brazil, Egypt, Sri Lanka, and Mongolia. Christian Mungai, an African who now leads global networking in an American megachurch, gave us a **glimpse of these new connections** in a previous *Postings*.
4. **A new missions force.** A tremendous wave of **new missionary "harvesters"** has been quietly moving out across the world. Nations like South Korea, China, Nigeria, the Philippines, Brazil, and Indonesia are launching workers into unreached peoples both in their own country and increasingly into

Without fanfare they take their family and their marketplace skills to a location where the gospel is unknown.

other parts of the world. One example: The member organizations of an Indonesian mission association have more than 800 workers serving in unreached people groups scattered across this huge nation.

In many countries where it is increasingly difficult for Westerners to live, much less evangelize, Majority World people have easier access. In addition, because they are often near-culture in their perspective, they fit into the context more seamlessly and relate more easily than their Western counterparts.

5. New modes of going. The global Church has developed creative, more efficient ways of sending workers. Most of these indigenous workers go as tentmakers like Paul did—without fanfare they take their family and their marketplace skills to a location where the gospel is unknown. Because many are not connected to a mission agency, it is almost impossible to accurately tabulate the number and location of workers serving cross-culturally today. Many of these workers face severe difficulties and many are inadequately trained, prepared, or cared for. Regardless, they are effectively infiltrating many “ends of the earth” places and peoples.

6. New sending wineskins. In many parts of the world, God is raising up indigenous missionary-sending organizations. While these agencies have some commonalities with their Western counterparts, they often function with

much simpler structures and administration. A small but expanding number of Western workers are choosing to serve under these indigenous agencies.

7. Expanding resources. The world over, God provides His people with various resources to give, including finances. Today the global Church is beginning to focus on what they already have at their disposal, not on what they don’t have and must depend on the West to provide. One famous example is the **handful of rice project** that launched many years ago in India. And this **missions infographic** could be a helpful tool in educating your congregation that many nations labeled as “poor” have manpower, expertise—and, yes, also financial resources. As Paul commended the Macedonians in 2 Cor. 8:2 ESV: “for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part,” so God calls His children even in poverty to be generous, and He blesses them as they give. This does not mean that Western funding and other resources are not needed at all. However, a new generation of Majority World leaders, sensitive to the control and dependency that may come even with well-intentioned Western gifts, are looking to be independent of Western finances.

By highlighting these positive factors, we do not minimize the difficulties or the fact that the global Church is still young and immature in many

We must help our people both celebrate and encourage the growing Church in Africa, South America, and Asia.

places. However, in this new day, we must help our people both celebrate and encourage the growing Church in Africa, South America, and Asia as those believers heed the call to sacrificially join and take leadership in fulfilling the Great Commission.

BUILDING GLOBAL FAMILY AWARENESS

How can church missions leaders expand their congregation's understanding of their global family and begin to establish or deepen global relationships?

- **Celebrate the vibrancy of the global Church.** Share the good news that Islam and other opposing forces are not annihilating Christianity. Craft messages that allow your people to celebrate God's invincible Church that is impacting more people than ever before in history! Perhaps you can develop a communications task force to brainstorm creative ways to communicate key information.

Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church in Knoxville, TN, is constantly looking for where God is moving in the global context and focuses their involvement in those places. The City-To-City Networks in Africa and Asia are examples of powerful movements led by incredible national leaders that give Cedar Springs a front-row seat in watching and contributing to what God is doing today.

- **Launch a small group study.** Offer a six-week study of Paul Borthwick's book, *Western Christians in Global Mission*. It's a powerful perspective-changer that explains how missions has shifted from Western driven to globally driven. The podcasts available from **Mission Shift** are another great resource.

- **Get acquainted with a nearby diaspora church.** Begin to learn about some members of your global family now living near you by attending one of their worship services. Perhaps you could sponsor a joint picnic or potluck, enjoying foods from their culture as well as yours. Relationships may develop very naturally from there at individual and/or church-wide levels.
- **Invite an indigenous church leader to speak at your church.** If funding doesn't allow you to pay for such a trip, find out if another congregation in your area is hosting a leader or worker from the global context. Would it be possible to invite them to your church while they are in your area? An alternative is to play a live or prerecorded Zoom interview you conduct with a global leader or worker.
- **Attend a collaborative network meeting that includes indigenous leaders.** Robust networks exist for global regions like Central Asia, the Middle East/North Africa, and the Indo-Malay world. **Linking Global Voices** can point you to many others. It's definitely worth the price of airline tickets to attend a network gathering in the ministry region because you will meet numerous key indigenous leaders. Some networks also have conferences in Western locations.

Salem Baptist Church in McDonough, GA, has hosted two gatherings of the Impact Network. This year, promotion of the conference began months in advance. The senior pastor gave enthusiastic support, and people were encouraged to host visitors in their homes as well as help with meals, transportation, and other details. Evening sessions on both campuses brought together all ages from middle schoolers through adults to hear powerful testimonies by

Indonesian leaders. One hostess expressed the response of many: "We hosted two visitors from Indonesia. What a joy it was to get to know fellow believers from the other side of world!"

BROADENING YOUR MISSIONS TENT

Accepting family members from another culture requires adjustments. In your church you may find that some of those most committed to missions have a fierce loyalty to seeing missions as solely sending out and caring for missionaries who look like them, speak their language, and share their culture. Adopting a new picture of 21st century missions can feel threatening. Be patient, but keep emphasizing the bigger global family your church is now part of.

Given the explosion of our global family, your local church's greatest missions impact can still lie ahead if you can embrace what God is doing in this new day. Let's ask Him to birth in our churches a stronger-than-ever commitment to His mandate matched by a new vision to humbly serve in tandem with our global brothers and sisters.

■ **Visit indigenous leaders in their ministry location.** It is usually wise to begin your visit by talking to someone at a regional or national leadership level who can provide the big picture and guide you into contacts with grassroots workers. Go initially as learners and encouragers, not as teachers or funders.

■ **Pray often for specific workers and specific needs of the global Church.** Include petitions for them in pastoral prayers, in requests shared online with your congregation, and as you pray in small groups or Sunday school classes.

*Orchard Hill Church, Grand Rapids, MI, finds that one of the major benefits of participating in **Secret Church** is the powerful introduction it provides each year to what God is doing in a particular area of the world. This year's focus opened the eyes of their people to the growth of the Church in Iran and provided a moving challenge to pray for these persecuted fellow believers.*

Catalyst's *Postings* e-newsletter is a free, monthly publication of practical articles highlighting what churches and agencies are doing to mobilize un-tapped potential for global impact.

SUBSCRIBE at catalystservices.org/postings
READ past *Postings* articles at catalystservices.org/postings-gallery-of-archives