

INTRODUCTION

Alan McMahan, General Editor

Even a casual look at today's headlines reveals that we live in a rapidly changing world. Unprecedented urban growth, exploding migration, shifting political and social contexts, and a decline of Christian values in the West all work to create new challenges (and opportunities) for the proclamation of the gospel. These new realities call for a review of what we have learned over the past few decades about how effective evangelism is carried out, followed by fresh approaches that fit with the new ministry environments in which we find ourselves.

The articles and book reviews in this issue of the Great Commission Research Journal speak well to these issues by providing historical, contextual, and biblical perspectives, as well as research on the strategies being used to minister effectively in these times of crisis and change.

Leading off this issue are three articles that describe some of the emerging challenges and opportunities the church now faces in an increasingly pluralistic, multiethnic, and culturally diverse society. Chris Clayman, with whom I have personally had the privilege of working in New York City, is on the forefront of a bold new endeavor to plant churches among the world's unreached peoples by engaging them in the urban context where they are assembled from among the nations. He shows how the forces of globalization, migration, and urbanization converge to produce receptive people through whom the gospel can flow to accomplish church growth locally and in distant lands. As a scholar/practitioner who has personally invested

himself in this unique ministry endeavor, he has invaluable insights that should command our attention as we think about how we should leverage our resources to accomplish what traditional missions efforts might have struggled to achieve.

Increasingly, churches have responded to the pluralistic ministry context in which they now find themselves by becoming multicultural in one way or another. Bob Whitesel's article looks at the emerging expressions of multicultural churches and classifies them into five categories or models that he then examines from ten different perspectives. In so doing, he is able to evaluate each model's strengths and weaknesses as they relate to the issue of reconciliation, both between cultures, as well as spiritually. He then proposes some blending of the models to produce a hybrid that captures the best each model has to offer.

Highlighting a problem typical in many immigrant and bicultural churches, Matthew Todd examines why so many English-speaking adults are being lost from Western Canadian Chinese churches. While some may join or form other churches, many others become disillusioned from the church altogether, and the momentum of church growth suffers. His research indicates the problem may lie in "in the transmission of religious and ethnic identity from one generation to the next," as well as the ministry models that are being employed by the bicultural churches with which they are first associated. The study concludes with recommendations for reversing this trend through leadership models that empower those at-risk members as they move into young adulthood.

The next two articles engage in biblical and theological reflection on the need to plant churches and how that should happen in a way that is consistent with the biblical teaching. Charles Van Engen goes back to look at motivations for planting more churches, especially in areas that already have many churches. In this study, he separates false or carnal motives for church planting from those that flow out of the missional intention of God himself. In doing so, he reminds us of the urgency and centrality of church planting in order to accomplish the Great Commission. This article should help clarify our mission as well as give us the confidence that God himself will work through us to accomplish it.

The next article tackles a more controversial question related to the strategies being employed internationally (and to a lesser extent domestically) under the paradigms presented by the advocates of "Church Planting Movements" (CPM) and "Training for Trainers" (T4T). John Henry Serworora examines the strategy of utilizing young believers as pastoral leaders in rapidly reproducing churches and comparing that to a theological study of I Timothy 3:6. His conclusions, based on his study of Scripture, as well as his personal experience in equipping pastors in Jakarta, Indonesia, lead him to conclude that the practice of placing immature disciples into pastoral leadership is dangerous and unbiblical. His findings, though developed within

the framework of Baptist ecclesiology, should provide provocative dialogue for those promoting strategies related to CPM and T4T.

Providing historical perspective from the life of one of modern missiology's most influential thinkers, Gary McIntosh surveys the family heritage of Donald McGavran. On this leader who was so significant in shaping the present evangelistic and missionary strategy of the Western evangelical church, little research has been conducted. In this article, Gary shows how the early, foundational influences of McGavran's family influenced the thinking and worldview of this great missiologist. Later excerpts from this biography on McGavran's life will appear in future issues of the Journal.

As an added feature for this issue of the Journal, and one that we plan to repeat from time to time in upcoming issues, Ray Ellis, one of the past leaders of the Church Growth Movement, offers a short account on how church growth thinking impacted his life and ministry. Thank you, Ray, for capturing this story in written form, as we consider our own efforts to win the lost for Christ.

As John Henry Serworwora reflected above on church planting strategy from the perspective of the Baptist ecclesiology, Duane Boady reflects on the importance of the Church Growth Movement for the Church of the Nazarene with whom he works. Recognizing that some in the movement promised more than could be delivered, Duane nevertheless expresses appreciation for the tools of critical inquiry that the Church Growth Movement brought regarding the health and growth of the church. For those who find themselves working among plateaued and declining churches, Duane Boady's reflections will be instructive.

As we do in every issue of the Great Commission Research Journal, we are pleased to offer a series of critical book reviews of publications, some new, some older, that are significant to sharpen our thinking about how to engage in effective evangelism, church planting, church renewal, and mission. In this issue, we are thankful for the work of Paul Gritz, John Sun, Ivan Yu, Joseph Mun, Garrett Eaglin, and Peter Vavrosky to review these works and bring them to our attention. Their efforts help each of us to locate and utilize valuable publications in our ministry and scholarship.

Much appreciation goes out also to our fine editorial team—Gary McIntosh, who as the Article Editor works to collect insightful articles for publication, and Mike Morris, who serves as our Book Review Editor. Both of these men do an excellent job. Similarly, this would not be possible were it not for Joy Bergk, who serves as our Publications Manager, her assistant Stephanie Faulkner, our Technical Editor Laura McIntosh, and my office assistant Michael Teng.

May God give us the grace and wisdom to utilize the lessons from this issue in our leadership, teaching, consulting, and direct ministry efforts as we try to make the gospel speak to the issues of our day.