

## 7. Innovation in Mission<sup>1</sup>

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### I. Introduction

It is an honor for me to speak on this pulpit this morning. I can imagine if my late husband Dr. Philip Teng were still here, he would be so proud of all your endeavors to keep Asia Mission Association ministries growing larger, broader and deeper as what we have seen today.

As I'm reaching 65 and am nearly retired, I think I may be quite outdated to talk about "innovation."

Also, I come from a small city, Hong Kong, which sent only 563 missionaries last year (2015). Compared to the 410,000 missionaries serving worldwide, it is really a tiny

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1 The above article was published in Timothy K. Park and Steve K. Eom ed., *Globalization and Mission* (Seoul: East-West Center for Missions Research & Development, 2017), <[http://ewcenter.org/?mbt\\_book=globalization-and-mission](http://ewcenter.org/?mbt_book=globalization-and-mission)>.

figure. Although Hong Kong became a special administrative region of China 19 years ago, due to the one-country two-systems policy, it is still hard for us to collect precise data on Christian believers and missionaries in China. Since the AMA committee assigned me this topic “Innovation in Mission,” I will just try my best to share something from my very limited understanding.

Before we are swept up by all new ideas, new strategies, new methods, new tools, etc. for keeping up with the pace of post-modernity, I think it is worthwhile to examine our old mindset, pondering more on conceptual renewal.

## II. Timely Innovation

As stated in the abstract of this paper, our question is: What are the innovative, new and advanced mission strategies for this drastic changing world? When I pursued my MA in Mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Chicago more than two decades ago, I challenged my American professors from Intercultural Studies (one of them was my respective mentor, the late Dr. Paul Hiebert) that the western definitions of missions were outdated. The topic of my MA thesis was “Re-examine the Definition of Mission from the Hong Kong Chinese Evangelicals’ Perspective.” Those theories of M1, M2, M3, or E1, E2, E3 should be redefined by where you call your “Jerusalem,” your starting place. We sent out missionaries from here to there, from the Reached to

the Unreached. The category levels only reflect the degrees of cultural differences that need to be crossed.

I was glad that western missiologists have already realized that cultural differences should override geographical differences. In fact, over the past twenty years, this theology or theory has helped the Chinese churches settle some arguments around questions like: “Who should be called missionaries?” “What places should be called our mission fields?” “What should be included in our missionary works?” These answers helped us to be able to raise mission funds and mobilize our mission force.

However, after twenty years, M1, M2, M3, or E1, E2, E3 can no longer cover all mission dimensions. The globalization of the late twentieth century that swept the world overwhelmed us with rapid urbanization, glocalization (globalization plus localization), postmodernity, and high-tech communications, etc. Home or foreign, vocational or professional, cultural mandate or redemptive mandate are no longer issues. Christian missions have been developing theologies and strategies to face the challenges, such as urban missions for vulnerable peoples, local cross-cultural missions for multi-cultural minorities in megacities, holistic missions that concern a whole person in both cultural and redemptive mandates, cyber missions which break through the political and religious restrictions, etc. However, from time to time, those questions I challenged my western professors with two decades ago, challenge me today: Where are our mission fields? Who are our missionaries? What are our missionary works...? We are all assured that the content

of the gospel cannot be changed, but our mission strategies, methods and tools etc. should be relevant to the context of our modern world. Innovative missions are those creative ideas and new things that we have to learn on the path of mission.

### III. Where are our Mission Fields?

According to Joshua Project Global Statistics 2016, there are 16,464 people groups in the world. 6,659 people groups (40.4%) are still unreached with the gospel.<sup>2</sup> To be unreached means that the percentage of Evangelical Christians in a given population is less than 2%, the proportion thought to be needed to reach their own people.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, our strategy is to send missionary pioneers to these unreached people groups. As Paul said in Roman 10:14-15, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”

Nevertheless, globalization and urbanization produce a global village in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where multi-cultural ethnic people groups, for political, economic, religions, and other

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2 Joshua Project Global Statistics, <[https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/statistics](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/statistics)> (accessed 26 February 2020).

3 Definition of Unreached or Least Reached, <<https://joshuaproject.net/help/definitions>> (accessed 26 February 2020).

reasons, migrate and live together in cities of various sizes. According to *Demographia World Urban Areas (Built-Up Urban Areas for World Agglomerations)* 12th Annual Edition, published in April, 2016, “In recent years (the end of 2008), the world has become more than one-half urban for the first time in history, 54.5% in 2016 (Calculated using United Nations data).” (Figure 1)<sup>5</sup>

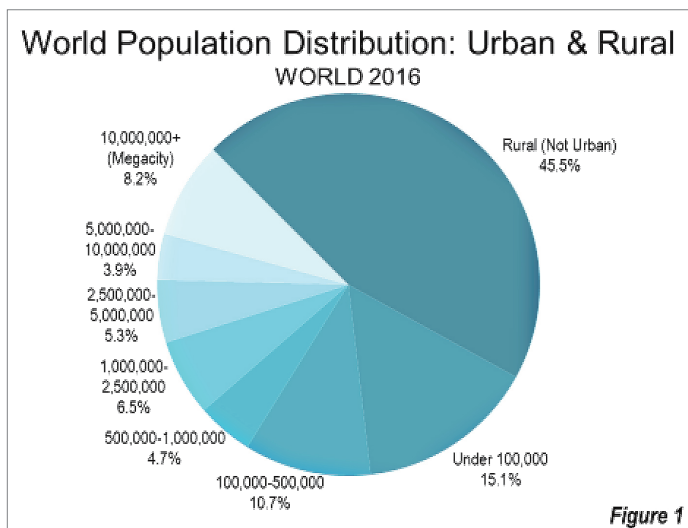


Figure 1: World Population Distribution: Urban and Rural World, 2016

- 4 “‘Built-up urban area’ is the new urban area term now used by National Statistics in the United Kingdom. It may be the most descriptive short term for urban areas.” *Demographia World Urban Areas (Built Up Urban Areas or World Agglomerations)*: 12th Annual Edition (2016.04): 4, < [https://www.academia.edu/29456064/Demographia\\_World\\_Urban\\_Areas](https://www.academia.edu/29456064/Demographia_World_Urban_Areas)> (accessed 26 February 2020).
- 5 *Demographia World Urban Areas*, 3.

Table 1: Largest Built-up Urban Areas in the World, 2016<sup>6</sup>

Population	Cities
20,000,000+	12 (9 in Asia)
10,000,000+	36 (21 in Asia)
1,000,000+	507
500,000+	1,022 <sup>7</sup>

12 Megacities	Population
Tokyo, Japan	37,750,000
Jakarta, Indonesia	31,320,000
Delhi, India	25,735,000
Seoul-Incheon, Korea	23,575,000
Manila, Philippines	22,930,000
Bombay / Mumbai, India	23,200,000
Karachi, Pakistan	22,825,000
Shanghai, China	22,685,000
New York, USA	20,685,000
São Paulo, Brazil	20,605,000
Beijing, China	20,390,000
Mexico City / Ciudad de México	20,230,000

6 *Demographia World Urban Areas*, 19-33.

7 “Built-Up Urban Areas by Urban Population Density,” *Demographia World Urban Areas*, 50-65.

There are 36 megacities (21 in Asia) with 10,000,000+ people. Examples include: Canton / Guangzhou, China; Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto, Japan; Moscow, Russia; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Cairo, Egypt; Bangkok, Thailand; Los Angeles, United States; Calcutta, India; Buenos, Argentina; Tehran, Iran; Istanbul, Turkey; Lagos, Nigeria; Shenzhen, China; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Kinshasa, Congo (Dem. Rep.); Tianjing, China; Lima, Peru; Paris, France; Chengdu, China; Lahore, Pakistan; London, United Kingdom; Bangalore, India; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Nagoya, Japan.

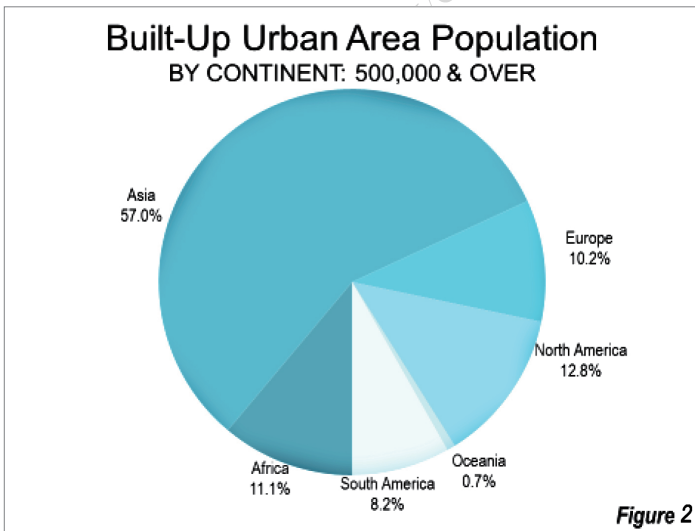


Figure 2: Built-Up Urban Area Population by Continent: 500,000 and Over

More than one-half of the population (53%) of large built-up urban areas (500,000 and over) are in Asia, living in

542 of the 1,022 largest urban areas (Figure 3). The Asian areas comprise 57% of the world's vast urban area population.<sup>8</sup> As cities become our major mission fields, urban missions will no longer be as it once was—focusing on the grass-root people groups like the poor, the homeless, the drug addicts, the troubled, the outcasts of the societies, etc.; but now, it will also include multicultural ethnic minorities.

In Hong Kong, besides teaching in seminary, I am on the boards of two international mission organizations. Both of their goals are to serve the least evangelized people groups in those restricted areas. However, in all these years, most of the problems we faced were visa problems. Recently, one missionary went through the full procedure, including raising enough funds and finishing a missionary commissioning service. Unfortunately, her visa was not granted, and her name was even blacklisted although she had stayed in that country for over half a year previously. Regardless of all kinds of difficulties, we are glad that there are about 30,000 of her targeted minority living in Hong Kong<sup>9</sup>, so she can still

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8 *Demographia World Urban Areas*, 4-5.

9 According to the results of the 2011 Population Census, there were a total of 451,183 ethnic minorities residing in Hong Kong in 2011, constituting 6.4% of the whole population in Hong Kong. *Hong Kong 2011 Population Census Thematic Report: Ethnic Minorities*, <<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201212/20/P201212200227.htm>>, <<https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp170.jsp?productCode=B1120062>> (accessed 26 February 2020).



actualize the cross-cultural missions in her home city. Due to the cultural and language barriers, only 21.1% of Hong Kong churches have certain levels of involvement in local, cross-cultural missions,<sup>10</sup> but this is an endeavor which, I hope will be strongly supported.

Particularly, Hong Kong has about 270,000 Muslims, of whom 30,000 are Chinese, and 140,000 are Indonesians (many domestic helpers). The rest are mainly non-Chinese born in Hong Kong, and others from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, African and Middle Eastern countries.<sup>11</sup> Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world.<sup>12</sup> There, Christians and Christian churches are often attacked<sup>13</sup>. However, in Hong Kong, Indonesian domestic helpers with their Islamic faith enjoy freedom of religion. During weekends and holidays, they customarily gather together, worship and perform rituals in open areas. They gradually come to live

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10 Wu, David C. W. and Eric T. H. Lau, *Report on 2014 Hong Kong Church Survey* (Hong Kong: Research Group on 2014 Hong Kong Church Survey, 2015), 56.

11 “Hong Kong: The Facts—Religion and Custom,” The Information Services Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, November 2015, <<http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/factsheets/docs/religion.pdf>> (accessed 26 February 2020).

12 Top Ten Countries with Largest Muslim Population is based on the total Muslim population in a country. Top countries include Indonesia, Pakistan, and India, <<http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/muslim-population-by-country>> (accessed 26 February 2020).

13 “Indonesia Closing Churches, Yet Faith Still Grows,” CBN News, 1 Feb 2016, <<http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2015/October/Indonesia-Church-Flourishes-amid-Muslim-Persecution>> (accessed 26 February 2020).

harmoniously with people of different faiths in a free city. Some mission organizations have relocated their resources to train Hong Kong Christians and Christian employers to share the gospel with their Muslim friends and domestic helpers. I myself have employed an Indonesian Christian maid to do half time domestic works and half of time sharing the gospel with her Muslim country folks in their own language, a task in which she would be more effectively than I could do cross-culturally. She has been very faithful and productive in this “special assignment.”

#### IV. Who are Missionaries?

Regarding the visa issues among restricted countries, Howard Culbertson, professor of missions and world evangelism in Southern Nazarene University provides some good suggestions:

There are countries where it is not possible for an expatriate (or foreign) missionary to get a visa. There are countries where church activities are greatly restricted and some countries where open evangelism by Christians is completely prohibited. Churches in areas where they have to meet in secret are sometimes referred to as Underground Churches. Some people have been tempted to think these countries—many of which have Islamic governments—are unreachable. While fulfilling the Great

Commission in those countries can be challenging, it is not impossible. Closed to missionaries does not mean closed to the gospel, and that's where the phrase 'creative access' is utilized. Because the Good News spreads most easily through relationships, there are opportunities for evangelism in even the most difficult of circumstances. Relationships in which the gospel can be shared are developed through:<sup>14</sup>

Students from those countries who study in another country

Christian business people whose job has taken them to those countries

Teachers whose particular specialty is in demand in those countries

Christian students who go to those countries to study

Tourists who develop contacts during brief trips to those countries

Internet contacts

Literature

Christian workers imported from third-world countries to provide service labor

Christian radio and television broadcasting from nearby countries.

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14 Article adapted by Howard Culbertson, <<https://www.ibmglobal.org/creative-access-nations>> (accessed 26 February 2020).

Therefore, we may no longer stereotype missionaries as traditional preachers, missionary pioneers, church planters, and the like. Instead, they may be businessmen, teachers, students, tourists, writers, workers, mass communicators, etc. Furthermore, the “Business As Mission” (BAM) model has developed not only for tent-making missionaries some strategic roles to stay in the Creative Access Nation (CAN) and to reach local people in a natural way, “BAM Global” has also been mobilizing business Christians to involve into God’s missions via their businesses.<sup>15</sup> As William Jones, President of Columbia International University said, “Not all Christians are called to ‘full-time ministry,’ but all are called to minister full time. The growing global ‘Business As Mission’ movement increasingly engages today’s Christians—like the Moravians of old—in God’s global mission, creating opportunities to minister full time and to make a difference in the lives of people and societies—spiritually, economically, socially and environmentally.”<sup>16</sup>

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15 “Our mission continues to be to enrich and invigorate the business as mission movement, resulting in a significant increase in the quantity and quality of businesses and business people involved in God’s mission to the world—the whole church, taking the whole gospel, to the whole world,” <<http://bamglobal.org/about/>> (accessed 26 February 2020).

16 William Jones, “Christian Leaders on Business As Mission,” <<https://bamglobal.org/>> (accessed 26 February 2020).

As a matter of fact, if we equip and mobilize local Christians to carry on Marketplace Missions in their cities, they are all potential tent-making lay missionaries who can participate in BAM globally. This will channel the maximum human resource of lay Christians for global missions in this closed and hostile world.

Who are missionaries? What are their missionary works? Howard Culbertson mentioned “Internet Contacts.” Today, we have many social networking tools: personal computers, iPads, cellular phones, mobile phones, smartphones; Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Skype, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp, QQ, WeChat, and other apps. Furthermore, around 40% of the world population has internet connection today. In 1995, it was less than 1%. The number of internet users has increased tenfold from 1999 to 2013. The first billion was reached in 2005, the second billion in 2010, the third billion in 2014, with 3.4 billion (46.1%) of the population (7.4 billion) in 2016.<sup>17</sup>

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17 Internet Users in the World, <<https://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/>> (accessed 26 February 2020).

Table 2: Internet Users by Country (2016)<sup>18</sup>

Country	Internet Users (2016)	Penetration (% of Population)	Population (2016)
China	721,434,547	52.2 %	1,382,323,332
India	462,124,989	34.8 %	1,326,801,576
Japan	115,111,595	91.1 %	126,323,715
12. Indonesia	53,236,719	20.4 %	260,581,100
13. Vietnam	49,063,762	52 %	94,444,200
15. Philippines	44,478,808	43.5 %	102,250,133
16. South Korea	43,274,132	85.7 %	50,503,933
20. Pakistan	34,342,400	17.8 %	192,826,502

Communication technology enhances our world as a global village. Hence, cyber mission becomes a crucially important strategy. For example, Satellite TV networks like “Sat 7” has been doing a great job of illuminating countries in the Middle-East and North Africa with God’s love since 1996.<sup>19</sup> And websites like “Answering Islam: A Christian-

18 Internet Users by Country (2016) , <<https://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users-by-country/>> (accessed 26 February 2020).

19 Sat 7: <<https://sat7.org/our-history>>

Muslim Dialog”<sup>20</sup> are very effective for reaching Muslims. In China, Christians use WeChat Groups and QQ Groups to share their faith, spread out spiritual materials, and even save those in “Suicide Groups.”<sup>21</sup> We ought to develop more cyber missionaries to meet this huge need, biblically, technically, theologically, and sometimes regarding counseling.

Globalization has catalyzed cyber-mission and cyber-missionaries, a new category. Ageing is also a solid global trend. If mission organizations joined hands with churches and seminaries to equip these retired, but healthy, experienced volunteers, they can be built up as Senior Christian Soldiers, creating a new phenomenon of church or mission field human resources.

Although my study in recent years focuses more on the Survey of Hong Kong Young Missionaries,<sup>22</sup> they are far from being the only group to focus on. The world is ageing rapidly. People aged 60 and older make up 12.3% of the global population, and by 2050, that number will rise to almost 22 %.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, we should ask: How can we release the

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20 Answering Islam: <<http://www.answering-islam.org/>>.

21 CCLiFe Suicide Groups Ministry: <<https://www.cclifefl.org/View/Category/3557>>.

22 K. Y. Cheung Teng, “A Study on the Shortage of Young Missionaries in Hong Kong,” *Asian Missions Advance* 47 (April 2015): 8-13, <[http://www.asiamissions.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/ama\\_47.pdf](http://www.asiamissions.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/ama_47.pdf)> (accessed 26 February 2020).

23 United Nations Population Fund: “Ageing,” <<https://www.unfpa.org/ageing>> (accessed 26 February 2020).

seniors' experiences and energy to walk with the young and to build up them to be a great blessing for the Church?

In 1998, Nelson Malwitz, a 70-year-old brother of C&MA in the States, founded the “Finishers Project” as a national ministry for the Christian early retirees or evangelical baby-boomers for their second careers in missions, and it has now been expanded as the “Mission Next Movement” internationally.<sup>24</sup>

## V. Mission Partnership as a Team

The Apostle Paul did not work alone, but with a missionary pastor like Epaphras from the church in Colossae (Col 1:7-8), with a messenger like Tychicus from the church in Ephesus (Eph 6:21-22), with a supportive missionary like Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25, 4:18), and with a missiological historian like Dr. Luke who wrote the Book of Acts. Whether one is a missionary pioneer or a missionary pastor in the church, long-term missionary or short-term missionary, full-time vocational missionary or part-time bi-vocational/supportive/lay missionary, no matter old or young and the like, we all work for Jesus Christ's Great Commission. We are partnering and synergizing as a mission team for His Kingdom.

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24 Christine J. Gardner, “Finishing Well: After achieving success, early retirees are finding significance in second-career mission assignments,” *Christianity Today* (5 October 1998), <<http://finishers.org/index.php?id=75>>; <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1998/october5/8tb072.html>> (accessed 26 February 2020).



As the Joshua Project analyzes that as the percentage of believers among certain people groups grow over to 2%, it is considerably a suitable time to plant churches, send out missionaries, and develop Bible schools, systematically training national leaders and passing the baton. Interestingly, it's quite a different case in C&MA China Missions. According to Tiedemann's *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, "In 1894 (only a few years before the Boxer Rebellion in 1900), two Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) missionaries went to Gansu (甘肅), choosing the southern part for their field, as the China Inland Mission (CIM, now OMF) was in the north."<sup>25</sup> And Alliance Bible Seminary was established in 1899 in Wuzhou (梧州), Guangxi (廣西), China, by Dr. Robert Glover. That means that after only about 5 years of pioneering missions, C&MA began to develop native leaders, which radically shortened the sender and receiver relationship, parental and childhood period, simultaneously accelerating the independence of the native church to plant local churches, participate in building up native leaders, and send out their own missionaries.

Today, Alliance Bible Seminary and other Hong Kong theological seminaries ride on the convenient "one week visa

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25 R. G. Tiedemann, *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2009), 140, <<https://epdf.pub/reference-guide-to-christian-missionary-societies-in-china-from-the-sixteenth-to.html>> (accessed 26 February 2020).

free tourist” policy to provide intensive courses for Christian workers from Mainland. At the moment, Alliance Bible Seminary has more than 700 Mainland pastors from different parts of China enrolled in our Putonghua programs, mostly Master of Ministry, some Master of Divinity, Master of Theology, and even a few Ph.D. programs.

Many of them spelled out their interest in missions. We are going to develop a major program in intercultural studies for them. Our strategy is 1) to equip them to be teachers and trainers of their churches in their areas, 2) to trust that they will integrate what they have learned from outside world, 3) to develop more contextualized mission schools, mission agencies, and more integral mission programs, and 4) to send out local missionaries more effectively. By national leadership development, our baton can be passed with acceleration.

## VI. Conclusion

Our world is changing drastically, and as we asked similar questions to our teachers in the past, we shall be asked one day by our students and the younger generation: Where are our mission fields? Who are missionaries? What are their missionary works? And when should we pass the baton? Through the process of constant questioning and seeking answers, we may be able to find out some innovative ways to do God’s mission.