

1 *The cultural challenge:* While the Gospel message is universal, its presentation might be tailored to peculiar features of the culture in which it is preached. What cultural elements should be taken into account, and how can this be done without distorting or weakening the Scriptural message?

- Must Christian missions change a culture? If so, how and how much?
- Social and cultural features of [location] that affect Law/Gospel proclamation
- What problems of language translation arise in mission outreach in [location]?
- What can we learn about teaching Bible lessons from traditional story forms in [location]?

Gonzalo Delgadillo wrote:

What is culture?
 What is sociology?
 Can I describe my entire culture?
 Can I describe my entire family culture?
 Do we know the hidden culture?
 Are we really able to know and understand the cultures of the world?
 Culture is changing: for example nations or groups declaring themselves gay.

How are the following verses expressed in other cultures		
	NIV 1984	Other cultures
Rm 3.23	for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God	
Mr. 16.16	whoever does not believe will be condemned	
Jn 3.16	“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.	
Mt 9.2	Your sins are forgiven	

Language translations require wide and deep knowledge of the whole Bible, the original language, and the native language.

Ugis Sildegs wrote:

The problem of Christian media in Latvia is best illustrated by a recent study dealing with the role of a Christian message in popular culture. The study concluded that a serious Christian

discourse in the secular media is not to be found. If Christianity is mentioned there at all, usually it is something odd and scandalous (financial problems, homosexuality, women pastors etc.), or it is connected with some populist pastors, their personalities or families (for example, a yellow press photo of archbishop's daughter who acts as Marilyn Monroe in a TV commercial!).

So the starting point is a recognition that we (at least in Latvia) have to face a culture with a popular consensus that it is possible to discuss in public space anything you like, except God and Church. It's a sort of general agreement that the Christian religion must be kept as a private matter and imposing faith on others is taboo.

In such a culture and environment we decided that our best option was to go public with a newspaper, *Latvian Lutheran*. We wanted to go against the flow. We hoped to create our own Christian discourse, not only directly proclaiming Christ, but also conveying a wider outlook on life. And the newspaper provided us a necessary context that gave an opportunity to express our faith in public. As one of our ad slogans said: "Latvian Lutheran is a world through the eyes of a Christian."

In essence, we did the work of journalists, observing what was going on in the world around us and trying to report on it. We worked hard through the contemporary Latvian realities to be able to spell out the Gospel message in a way that would apply to our people – if you will, an incarnational ministry. As writers we were always searching for a common rhetorical ground and meeting points with the audience.

Latvian Lutheran in many ways tried to provide an alternative to the shallow popular media. But, of course, our aim was not to create a claustrophobic sub-culture or Pharisaic ghetto. No. We wrote about a wide range of topical

issues from different spheres, we interviewed the best experts from various fields and wrote about our common life, trying to speak it all "under the aspect of eternity".

A good deal of our work was a persistent practice to learn the art of turning a secular conversation into a spiritual one, and trying to step down into the "abyss of human existence" to help our people on a deeper spiritual level. We did our best to use all means available to us: our Lutheran doctrine, our Church history and Christian heritage, art and literature, even films and pop-culture phenomena to start a conversation about faith.

Question:

We know that our contemporary culture is quite fragmented. How do we deal with that? Do we craft our message in a way that targets a certain segment of our culture? The sociological make-up of our congregations (in the West) mostly consists of white people with university degrees. Do we have to stick with this audience or try to change and reach other cultural segments?

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Terry Schultz wrote:

Leogane, Haiti. The twelve Haitian orphanage directors of my Bible class sit in a semi-circle, eyes fixed on the laptop. On the screen is the evangelism DVD, *The Jesus Film* (dubbed in Haitian Creole), depicting Jesus' life according to the Gospel of Luke. After the showing I ask, "What was your favorite part?" Nearly every director instantly responds, "Jesus casting the demons out of that man!"

An analysis of a society's worldview—the cultural filter or lens through which the culture perceives reality—is critical in preparing effective evangelism materials. For example, God's Word provides several pictures of Jesus' work of atonement. John the Baptist joined Old Testament writers in portraying Jesus as the sacrificial lamb. Paul used courtroom vocabulary to excitedly announce that we have been declared not guilty. The atonement analogy that resonates deeply in the hearts of animists

(those who practice animism, the belief system of forty percent of the world's population, which presupposes that all of life is controlled by spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces), is that of Jesus defeating the devil and the demons. After the showing of the film, our evangelism work with the directors focused on contrasting Christian worldview with Haitian Vodou worldview.

Research similar to anthropological fieldwork is of great benefit when preparing evangelism materials. We need to produce culturally sensitive material which focuses on a particular people in a particular place in a particular culture. May the Holy Spirit guide and empower our efforts!

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Paul Hartman wrote:

The gospel by its nature changes the culture, in the sense that the values and mores of those who become disciples of Jesus Christ are changed. As the Apostle Paul writes in Romans, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (12:2,3). Other aspects of culture, such as language, food choice, dress are not necessarily impacted. Some aspects of family life and relationships in society (monogamy, caste system) are affected while other aspects (type of government) are not. Christian churches survive and grow under dictatorships, oligarchies and Marxist systems.

The production of good translations in some languages is very challenging, because the languages are so different from English and the writing systems are complex. Written Chinese and Japanese are obvious examples in our fellowship. Cognate languages like Spanish present a different set of challenges. "Abandonar" in Spanish means leave; "abandon" in English has much more drastic implications.

Much of the unreached world population is illiterate or "functionally illiterate." Roughly, the

latter means people who read and write at a very low level, who access and process information orally through story-telling, songs, poetry and proverbs. Therefore serious attention in many areas should be given to telling Bible stories (history) and drawing the big truths from those stories.

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Jon Lonnquist & Mike Klebig wrote:

It's believed that early Samoans, responding to the cultural threat of the first Christian missionaries, promptly ate them. Later missionaries fared better. They shared the gospel, developed the written Samoan language, taught literacy, and translated the Bible. Today, the highest person in the Samoan social order is a pastor.

Cross-cultural exchanges challenge the status quo with alternative ideas about religion, literacy, technology, health care, gender roles, politics, and other facets of a culture. To some, Christianity is associated with American culture. This can either open doors or create barriers. In either case, a mission should do its best to separate the two so the focus remains where it belongs –providing opportunities to hear the teachings of Christ.

Ideas to consider: (a) Offer the **gospel**, nothing added or subtracted. (b) **Collaborate** with locals to develop a worship style that incorporates their music and customs. (c) **Meet physical needs as an extension** of meeting spiritual needs. (d) Empower and **equip people** to become self-sufficient church groups, able to reach out to others.

SAMPLES OF WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING (For information only – not an endorsement of services or content)

- **Kwintessential**
www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html

Free guides on language, etiquette, customs, business localization. “Whether it’s a website, app, social media campaign, Facebook page, online

content, video, software or e-commerce platform – we can localize it.” Affiliation: Secular

- **The Joshua Project**
<http://joshuaproject.net>

Statistics, info on penetration of religions worldwide. “A research initiative seeking to highlight the ethnic people groups of the world with the least followers of Jesus Christ.”

Affiliation: Evangelical

- **Missions Atlas Project**
<http://worldmap.org>

A mission atlas and educational tool. “The information is helpful in assessing the current status of Missions progress throughout the world.”

Affiliation: Evangelical

- **Global Mapping International**
www.gmi.org

Global mapping. “GMI is an international team of evangelical research, GIS and IT professionals passionate about informing, equipping, and connecting the Church for more appropriate and effective mission.” Affiliation:

Evangelical/Lausanne Covenant

- See also **Polynesian Cultural Center** on Creative Challenges page: Unusual approach. Leverages profits from a center for cultural appreciation and preservation to benefit the LDS church.

CULTURAL CHALLENGES WORKSHEET: MEDIA TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

1. To what degree has technology reached and permeated this culture?
2. What are the primary ways people seek news and information (person-to-person, radio, newspaper)? Do they trust the information?
3. Where do people congregate for commerce or to exchange news?
4. What is the degree of literacy?
5. Who are primary thought influencers?
6. How do merchants reach this population? How do politicians reach out?
7. What is the best way, with cultural sensitivity, to foster relationships?
8. What steers the local economy and what demands (physical, time) does it place on the people?
9. What forms of entertainment do the people enjoy? (music, film, storytelling)

10. What media resources are currently in place?
(Radio stations, newspaper)
11. What non-media resources (church bodies, humanitarian aid) are in place?
12. How is Christianity perceived in this region?
13. What other religious or humanitarian aid organizations work in this region and how do they operate?
14. Does the population include people persecuted or oppressed by the government or as part of the social norm?
15. What do you need to learn (e.g. etiquette, customs) to communicate effectively in this culture? For example, does this culture respond to approaches in an agreeable way to be polite?

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John Lawrenz wrote:

To be positive, culture is everything in us as Christians that flows from the new man, which after Christ is molded in righteousness and true holiness. Christian culture can be described by quoting the gifts of the Spirit. Paul points out in Corinthians that the Spirit distributes different gifts to different people. All are part of Christ's body, the church. All are needed. All are to be honored. Yet not all are the same. In another place Paul speaks of the manifestations of the Spirit, such things as wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, discernment, plus speaking languages and understanding languages. All of these, Paul says, are for strengthening, encouraging and comforting. Overall we are to cultivate those gifts which build up the church. The church is anywhere where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name. In Galatians Paul talks about the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

To be negative, human culture is everything which has deformed and continues to deform the image of God in which God made mankind. Love of self and assertion of the self is at the center. The selfish person questions God and his Word. His own ideas supplant God's creation of human culture. Culture can be a faux unity that links "me" with those who are like me and

simultaneously excludes those who are not like me in attitudes and conduct. How is deformed human culture manifest? Through folly, ignorance, superstition, violence, lies, doubting what God says, and touting all the abuses of the human nature, using words that defy, cloud, or challenge God's love in Christ.

For Lutherans it is axiomatic that the old man and new man are locked in a struggle. Our life in Christ trumps what arises from our old man every day. It is Christ in us by the Spirit's power to the Father's glory. No two of us are at the same point at the same time with the same issues. Cultures—even Christian cultures—morph and change constantly, yet curiously they also reinforce and perpetuate. The worst and best in Christians find solace and affirmation when people with similar parentage, history, life experience, education and adiaphoristic choices come together to form congregations, synods, and other manifestations of the visible church. A parallel phenomenon occurs in godless cultures, but with one important difference. Christ and his love are absent leaving the "me" in control.

Indeed Christ has the power to overcome culture. He does so through his love in action through the process of repentance and forgiveness that emerges as Godly love. A reading of 1 Corinthians 13 is always in place. Where the old man has held sway for decades, centuries, even millennia, there will be things about a culture that the love of Christ must overcome. Foremost is the overall guiding spirit. Closely following will be all those cultural characteristics which come from the sinful flesh. At the mission frontier, those who are new in Christ are going to find themselves to be "Christians in spiritual formation." This term was coined by a colleague of mine in Hong Kong to define our own struggle with East Asian culture. Paul's description of the conscience of Gentiles who are a law unto themselves with consciences accusing and excusing pretty well sums up what a missionary in East Asia encounters. I suspect this is true everywhere. New Christians struggle to follow Christ. At the same time they want to be true to their heritage as Chinese.

We must be always aware that “Christians with a strong heritage of spiritual/doctrinal formation” are not above culture. Missionaries have always struggled mightily to separate their “druthers” from “Christ’s message.” Application of doctrine—as opposed to the simple teachings of the Savior—can at times overshadow the teaching of Christ without even knowing it. Cultural sensitivity is required of those to whom much has been given.

Here a study of Christian freedom, and the vigorous practice of the same, is essential in the mission field. Do not bind what is not bound. Do not treat lightly what is not “light stuff” for new brothers and sisters locked in terrible struggle. Do not insist on your way of doing things when God has not spoken. Do be all things to all men that by all possible means some might be saved.

In East Asia saving face is an overriding cultural trait. A person coming from the ELS/WELS knows how hard applying Christian discipline in the United States is. Our WELS seminary held a symposium on brotherly admonition this fall on September 17-18. Why study such a thing? It’s a hard go for the new man in Christ to apply the principles of Jesus that he articulated in Matthew 18. It is hard anywhere! It is even harder in East Asia where bending the truth in love to avoid losing face is a cultural norm. Giving face may mean papering over issues that need to be faced. Saving face may be living in denial as a way of life that fools no one, but avoids the devastating consequences of unrepented sin. “Going around the corner” to a third party deflects personal embarrassment, but it raises gossip to a virtue, an outcome that undercuts trust and can result in a paralyzed church. Far better to speak the truth in love!

In East Asia the applications of fellowship and the roles of gender are shaped by culture. Asians are inclusive. It is hard in America to say no to an unworthy communicant. It seems only fair to let women take an equal turn in everything. Both run counter to the cultural grain in modern East Asia.

On the other hand I suspect that a century or more of all-male ministerial education in WELS

has left its “cultural” mark on what we men in the WELS ministry believe God intends for the role of a woman within the body of Christ. It is therefore refreshing in East Asia to observe women in a rich and full partnership with men in congregational life without transgressing the headship principle which Scripture requires.

Fellowship among American confessional Lutherans is misapplied and imperfectly practiced when it drifts into isolation or virtual shunning. Such practice robs those who are spiritually deficient of a robust testimony through which the Holy Spirit may work. The inclusive side of East Asians at their best allows public testimony to “other Christians” without sheep-stealing or doctrinal indifference. But the lines can be porous and sometimes are. The opposite is a trap door so tightly shut that testimony fails to escape.

In either of these two examples the extremes are to be avoided and the middle road the preferred destination. Yet it is a struggle!!! Engaging in the struggle may mean living “on the edge,” which, after all, is just another way to describe the narrow road on which our Savior bids us to walk.

What can we do about culture? Learn about it. Study it. Know ourselves. Read the opening verses of Galatians 6 often. There we are told to bear one another’s burdens and admonish with a healthy awareness that admonition is likely to come our way all too soon. Christians remember that Jesus warned against preemptive judgment. Take the words and actions of the other culture in the kindest possible way, neither excusing or ignoring, but dealing with cultural tensions in a way that mirrors what we see in the daily life of Jesus as he dealt with human culture of every kind.

Where do we find culture invading the translation of sound Christian, Lutheran written material? What I have learned—and I am certainly open to debate and clarification on the issue—is that Chinese thought, as it is expressed both in spoken and written form, has “built-in ambiguity.” My confessional Lutheran culture abhors ambiguity as a general rule. In America

we properly oppose post-modern “whatever!” responses to what is right and wrong. We confessional Lutherans won’t buy into the concept that every person has his/her own spark of truth about God and that no judgment is to be made beyond what is politically correct inoffensiveness. Sound doctrine ought to be clear! And it should be confidently asserted where people who need it have ears. Lifestyles clearly condemned by Scripture are sin. Ecumenism without the truth of the Word as a foundation is wrong. Baiting the sinner is also wrong. And so is hiding one’s candle under a bushel.

The century old disagreements in Chinese Christianity over the terms to be used for such things as God, the Holy Spirit, and baptism are widely known to church historians. These controversies have died down. What goes for Gospel in East Asia, however, is rife with synergism. Christ died for you, but you have to come up with the faith! What fosters this in East Asia? What I know about the Chinese written character for “faith,” is that it can be easily rendered “do faith” in places where the Scripture says “justified by faith.” That plops synergism into many texts where it has no right to be. So, it will take a special effort on the part of translators to make certain passages of Scripture absolutely clear lest Christ be robbed of his glory and man be credited with a work that is not there.

Culture is also coping with history, some of it painful and indelible. When Christians were tortured in the Roman world, it was hard for some in the church to find equilibrium when peace was restored. In East Asia much of the Christian clergy of China were wiped out under Mao and it was the women who kept house churches going. Encountering “women pastors” on the mainland requires a special measure of understanding and mature judgment to move toward the restoration of scriptural practice. In China 19 seminaries produce no more than 1500 graduates for Christians numbering in the tens of millions. A colleague has encountered several women in pastoral roles who long for the reassertion of male headship, while they do what

they believe they must do to keep pastor-less fellowships from disintegrating.

Taiwan is a special case in East Asia. The people there speak Mandarin like the mainland. They did not experience the cultural devastation of Mao’s Cultural Revolution. Thus the old religion with its spirits and superstition are still deeply rooted in Taiwan. Sometimes upheavals provide opportunity. For some time now mainland China has been hungry for a spiritual message to replace what was brutally stamped out. That hunger does not exist in a similar way in Taiwan. It may not last on the mainland past our present generation.

One last item about culture. We get our culture in large part because God gives us parents. We did not choose our parents. We look the way we do, and we were raised to adulthood because of the good and bad sides of our personal parenting experience. Culture wars are anathema to the Christian who acknowledges God as the giver of all good things. Overcoming culture is sorting out our earthly inheritance and coming to the conclusion that the inheritance that really counts is the one laid up by Christ in heaven for us.

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2 *The technological challenge:* What media will be available in various mission situations that can be used to reach large audiences with the Gospel message? What means of message distribution are available?

- What is the best medium for outreach in [location]? What will it take to employ it?
- How can we achieve maximum output in regions with limited power sources?
- A basic production or distribution set-up for video/ or radio/ or print/ or internet/ or (?) in [location]?
- New technology on the horizon with promise for Gospel outreach applications.

Paul Hartman wrote:

Access to the Internet has transformed communication in developed countries in North America, the European Union and far eastern countries along the rim of the Asian continent. Now the usage in developing countries, such as China, India and Latin America is growing so rapidly that their numbers surpass the number of users in the developed countries.

Even so, the proportion of the population using the Internet in developing countries is still low. Whereas nearly four of every five people in the United States get onto the Internet, only 40% access it in Latin America, while only one fourth of the population in Asia has access and the percentage in Africa is little more than half of Asia.

On the other hand, much cheaper cell phones are universal. In developed countries there are more subscriptions than people. In developing countries that include many of the places where the WELS is proclaiming the gospel, subscriptions equal nearly 80% of the population. As Gonzalo says, "It's hard to find a person today that does not have access to a cellphone." Areas that have little access to electricity, such as in the Himalayas, use solar-powered generators to recharge batteries.

Smartphones with access to the Internet offer a way for people in developing countries to access the Internet without having to purchase a computer. Nearly 10% of the population in developing countries now has mobile phones with access to the Internet. Used smartphones can be loaded with applications and publications for use among people who would not use smartphones to access the Internet.

Digital tablets combine the smart phone with a scaled down computer. Television, movies, music, blog messages and books can be accessed. Information can be processed by the user and incorporated into sermons, Bible studies and other messages in order to proclaim the gospel and teach the Word of God. Globally the sales of tablets will probably surpass 100 million this year. In four years the quantity sold per year may double again. At that rate one fifth of the world population may have a digital tablet by 2020. Will the tablet coupled perhaps with a projector replace the television and a VCR in the developing world?

These developments have immense implications for cross-cultural publishing. For instance, it might cost well over \$400,000 just to reprint 41 volumes of the revised edition of the Spanish *People's Bible*. Storage and shipping to Latin American countries can double the cost. Here's another problem: the *People's Bible* is intended primarily for national church workers. The comparatively small number of workers who need materials like the *People's Bible* means that some volumes will be stored for many years. Why not distribute on digital tablets the *People's Bible* together with many other Spanish translations, such as the *People's Bible Teachings*, *God so Loved the World*, *Our Great Heritage* and even items intended for a broader audience, such as *Bible Stories in Pictures*, the *Bible Teachings Series* and the *Road to Emmaus* film? Compared to the cost of printing and shipping, the savings would be huge, and the uploading of new publications or revisions of existing publications would be far cheaper.

The source re: internet usage:

<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

The source re: mobile phone subscriptions and tablet sales: <http://mobithinking.com/mobile-marketing-tools/latest-mobile-stats/>

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Gonzalo Delgadillo wrote:

How we define outreach?
Is outreach done only by paid people? Is it done only during working hours? Is it a law?
Retired people don't do outreach.
What is the definition of technology?
Do we have an exhaustive technology inventory?
What do we mean by media?
How we definite and understand the term large audiences?
There is not such a thing as the best medium.
The maximum output in regions with limited power sources can be achieved using THE BTS Books.

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Terry Schultz wrote:

Deep in the Peruvian Amazon, tribal pastor Tangoa sits on the thatch roof of the school house cleaning the briefcase-sized solar panel. A wire from the roof connects below to a truck battery connected to an inverter, a DVD player, and a screen. At night, Spanish language Bible story DVDs are played while the entire village (population 50) sits around the small screen. As the DVD plays, an elder translates the film's dialogue into the tribal language.

The technological challenge of putting an image on a large screen in remote areas of the world is being met. Two energy sources are most commonly available for powering projectors and laptops: solar-panel-charged batteries and gas-powered generators. While these two power sources are usually adequate they do have disadvantages. During the wet season in tropical climates, villages may go days or even weeks without seeing the sun, rendering solar panels useless. The obvious drawbacks to gas generators are fuel expense, maintenance, noise, and pollution.

Ideally, a solar-panel-charged battery and DVD player would be found in each village of an

evangelist's circuit. Solar-charged laptops with satellite Internet hookup open a huge array of evangelism possibilities. Tablets are beginning to appear. Affordable new technologies will take us beyond the media systems currently found in remote, often impoverished areas.

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Ugis Sildegs wrote:

In the fast paced and highly technological environment in which we live today, it is not easy to decide which medium is the most beneficial for the Gospel. One cannot do it all. Inevitably the decision has to be made, which way to go: TV, radio, internet or printed media?

When we had to make our decision in 1996, the internet was not yet an option. Since TV was too expensive, we had to choose between radio and print. We tried both. We made some radio programs, but discontinued it, because we felt our incompetence and that our voice got lost without any real impact.

Newspaper at that particular point seemed to be the most appropriate means of communication. Since papers in Latvia were widely read and there was a good niche for such a paper, we decided in favor of newspaper. We intended it not only as a paper for Church folks, but also as an outreach tool.

We were quite content with our choice. Even though it demanded pretty big efforts, we quickly acquired skills of production and distribution. Most of the work was done by our staff, except the printing itself.

In visual form and content we did our best to look up-to-date and contemporary. At the same time the newspaper gave us enough space to shape, articulate and formulate our message in such a way that allows avoiding traps of superficiality and reductionism, which are so wide spread in media today.

We also considered it important that a newspaper is a comparatively "slower" media which makes people to slow down as they read and think about the message. It is generally

acknowledged that in the process of reading, people perceive a great deal more and are more deeply involved than, for example, when watching TV.

Several times we contemplated the idea to change our newspaper into a magazine (according to the general tendency of the media business). Possibly, it would be an even better fitting form for our medium, simply because a magazine looks more solid, but it is also more expensive.

As the internet got more wide-spread and advanced, we made older issues of our paper available online. But we recognized that most of our audience is older people and they were not big online readers. Maybe now the situation is gradually changing.

Today as web technologies develop at a very rapid pace and most people become internet users, the online presence becomes more important. In the future, I predict, there will be a unification of all electronic media. TV, radio, internet and all printed sources will be available by way of one centralized medium, which will be easy to access and operate. And, of course, it will be much more easy and cheap to distribute throughout it.

Questions:

The Internet gives seemingly unlimited possibilities. But are those possibilities real or illusionary? Isn't the world wide web similar to the general world we know so well, where everybody wants to speak, but nobody listens? And what, for instance, does the popularity of *Facebook* and *Twitter* tell us about the mindset of contemporary people? Pictures, very short messages, lots of noise. How does the Gospel fit in such an environment?

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Jas Lonquist and Mike Klebig wrote:

During WWII, Hitler built a massive radio transmitter in Monte Carlo and pointed it at the USSR. The goal: broadcast Nazi propaganda. But no transmissions were ever sent. By the time it was completed, the Third Reich was in its

death throes. A few years later, the transmitter was purchased by Trans World Radio. Still pointed at the USSR, it began transmitting Christian programming. The station built to spread fear and hate spread peace and hope instead. Uplifting twist – and a smart use of technology.

Technology goals: This is a moment in time with unprecedented potential for messages to be *massively* and inexpensively shared. Ignoring today's technology is like scribes continuing to copy Bibles by hand once the printing press was invented. A few goals: (a) **Stay up-to-date** and equipped to seize new opportunities technology offers. (b) **Train** people so they can be independent, and use technology to create and distribute their own media. (c) Adequately **fund** technology as part of missions. While there may be initial hurdles, it's safe, cost-effective, efficient, and allows for ongoing communication and relationship building. (d) Provide ongoing **tech support** to missions.

Ideas to consider:

- **ONLINE FORUM:** Create an online forum with experts providing technology answers, troubleshooting, and problem-solving.
- **IT VOLUNTEERS:** Let IT people know they're needed and ask them to volunteer on a regular basis. Ask skilled professionals to "tithe" career skills – 4 hours of volunteering for every 40 hours in the workplace.
- **TRAINING:** Create detailed, thorough technology training DVDs for laypeople. Use (free) screen capture software like Microsoft's Windows Media Encoder 9 to demonstrate apps and capture training.
- **LIVE TRAINING:** Have regular conferences to discuss technology and media strategies, train, and provide fellowship for tech workers.
- **HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE VENDOR FORUMS:** Opportunities for training directly from manufacturers.

SAMPLES OF WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING (*For information only – not an endorsement of services or content*)

- **International Conference on Computing and Mission (ICCM)** www.icm.org
www.iccm-asia.org

Tech conference with industry pros. Affiliation: Non-denominational

- **YouVersion** www.youversion.org
Free online Bible, multiple translations, for smartphones and iPads – read scripture, create groups, share messages, answer questions. Established by Lifechurch.tv Affiliation: ECC (Evangelical Covenant Church)

- **Galcom** www.galcom.org
Tools and partnerships in global Christian radio. Remote radio stations that fit in suitcases. Solar powered and fixed tune radios. Affiliation: Statement of faith on website

- **Bomgar** <http://bomgar.com>
Remote helpdesk tools. Affiliation: Secular

- **TWR** (Trans World Radio) www.twr.org
Christian radio network reaching four billion people worldwide. Affiliation: Doctrinal statement on website

- **Teaching Challenge** page contains resources for specific devices

TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES WORKSHEET: MEDIA TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

For information, try: UN Least Developed Countries Report 2011 - www.unctad.org/en/docs/ldc2011_en.pdf as well as resources provided in Culture Challenges paper

1. Is electricity readily available to most of the people in this region?
2. What other sources of energy (solar, wind, hydro, generators) are used in this region?
3. Are vehicles used as a source of DC power for cell phones or other devices?
4. Is cell phone service available? What type? If not, how close is the nearest cellular service?
5. Is it possible to operate a radio station in this region? Is it possible to operate a TV station in this region?
6. What are the local standards for television and video? (www.countrycode.org/tv-standards)
7. Do people use social media in this region? To what degree?
8. Is the internet available and accessible in this region? Is it restricted?

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John Lawrenz wrote:

The mission field of East Asia embraces a third to a half of the world's people. As such it is a microcosm of the whole. In large cities the technology is equal to, or exceeds, that of large cities in the United States. In rural areas, of course, the opposite is true. The technology is perhaps equal to, but likely falls short of, what is available in the most rural portions of America.

We all know that technology leapfrogs. We have seen the TV rabbit ears sprout on grass huts in central Africa. Countries without land-line telephones are today awash in hand held devices. Technology spawns flash mobs. Technology links together strangers regardless of space, but it also reduces the majority of messages and interpersonal relationships to sound/visual bytes. Emotion rides high. Meditation and reflective thought fall casually to the 24/7/365 pulse of instant connectivity. The trivial triumphs.

All media are potentially available in East Asia. What we Christians need to employ re: the modern media is (a) training, (b) insight into what is cost/benefit effective, (c) the resources to deploy the media of our choice, and, above all (d) good content that honors our calling as Christ's ambassadors.

First of all, let's examine training. No one person can aspire to be a "universal man" though I have seen a few gifted individuals who stand out as impressive. It will take a tech team. If biblical believers needed scribes to make the scrolls that the Apostle Paul requested from his pupil Timothy, we will need "tech scribes" on our team to help us prepare the media that fit our audience. It will take research to learn what media are in use. In Hong Kong all media are present. Parts of rural China are not like Hong Kong. We can be ready to leapfrog if the culture is less advanced. Yet I would caution against adopting the latest tech gadget if our target audience isn't where we are. Where literacy is low, the spoken word remains the best technology. Where people are highly visual, we will employ pictures. At the same time, if we

have been sent to people who are downloading apps, we will find a way to create an attractive and informative Lutheran app as soon as possible. We may find that a failure to do so will drive our audience into the fellowship of those who have stolen a march on us. We have the spoken Word, the inspired Word, the translated Word, the worship Word in Word and sacrament, the printed Word, and the radio/TV/digital Word. Each of these is a different “technology.” Each requires planning, production, and marketing to roll it out and do it right. The more complex the technology, the more extensive and intensive the training.

Second, we must ask what is cost/benefit effective? A major caution is not to try to do everything at once. It’s a formula for doing nothing well. Pick the medium that reaches the most people in the clearest way. Match it with capable people to shape and deliver the message. Follow up! Keep at it until the Lord provides additional insight, peoplepower, and finances. Make sure that the tried-and-true media don’t hang around long after their effective time is over. Make sure to bridge the old and the new. Be absolutely sure that the content overshadows the “wow factor.”

Third, resources are people. . . the team! Without people you don’t have sufficient time to assign to needed tasks. People using media should be Christian when you look at the team overall. Outsiders can help, but should not drive the enterprise. If they do, opt for something simpler. Resources are also the dollars to buy good equipment. Equipping includes maintenance. Using a system that breaks down and can’t be fixed for lack of time and money is demoralizing. Settling for a tech system that is outdated or out-moded—because it’s cheap—is a trap certainly to avoid. Again, I believe it is better to pursue a lesser technology and do it well, than to aspire to a higher-level technology and do it badly.

In regard to all media, the most important thing for me is content. Clear, simple, and direct are basic if God’s truth is to be known. I’ve also found that new or emerging Christians can be, and will be, touched by emotions. If the teacher

is not excited about the content, he soon will be found out. We need to coach each other to tap into the full range of emotions that communicate conviction, urgency, love and joy. More than that, we need to know enough about our target audience to know what taps into their emotions. The Holy Spirit doesn’t need emotion. Nor does he need lack of emotion. Both, however, can stand in the way of the Spirit whose process of conversion, spiritual sanctification, and growth must remain mysteriously wonderful and unique for each of us. Thus neither the teacher’s spirit, nor the learner’s spirit should overshadow God’s spirit. We ought not design things around “hype” or “excitement,” but rather let the excitement of the Gospel in us show through and press the urgency of what God has to offer without getting in the way!

What new technology offers great promise in 2012? If I would venture a guess to say what looms large it is the emerging digital world that will allow us access to everything, everywhere, all the time. Here’s a staggering statistic from China. There are 538 million Internet users today in China. Half of them have access to the Internet only via a smart phone. The first clunky mobile phone made its appearance in 1973. The clamshell phone came in 1996. I-phones debuted a year later. Computer power doubles every eighteen months! Satan will surely make use of such miracles to his glory. Can we equip ourselves to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ instead, putting the same miracles to a far better use?

We can and we will, if we bind ourselves to two necessities. First, we need to embrace the fact that the tech world is our world today and cannot be ignored. Second we need to cultivate discernment in ourselves and in our mission audience to sift what is good from what is bad. The first is attitudinal. The second is all about being mature Christian brothers and sisters through faithful use of Word and sacrament. The challenge is huge. But the one who can work miracles is behind us.

##

3 The creative challenge: How can messages be crafted that will deliver the Gospel via technology to large audiences in a way that will draw attention, and will be of the high quality worthy of the task? What forms can media messages take, and who will create them?

- A Gospel story/screenplay for the [location] culture
- What artwork can be used (and what cannot) in videos for the [location] culture?
- What music can be used (and what cannot) in video/audio for the [location] culture?
- Graphic design in videos for the [location] culture
- A format for regular Christian programming for the [location] culture

Jas Lonquist and Mike Klebig wrote:

What do these things have in common? An interpretive dance. A painting. A flannel graph. An outdoor play in South Dakota. A Bollywood movie. A rock opera. Puppets. A TV drama. A bathtub toy. A symphony. A board game. An iPod series. Plaster figurines. A comic strip. A parable. A radio program. An accordion concert. A carved grain of rice. A text message. A song. A parade float. An interactive online class. A theme park. Action figures.

All have served as creative vehicles for religious messages. Some are sophisticated. Some border on sacrilegious. But do they succeed? Do people actually explore the New Testament on a grain of rice? Do religious conversions take place during an accordion mass? Do souls sing at the sight of a nativity made of *cat figurines*? Paul speaks of becoming “all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” But the first and most important thing is to deliver the message if the goal is outreach.

This is a vast topic, but here are a few ideas to ponder when you consider creative strategies for outreach. (a) Notice how others successfully reach out to your **target** group. (b) **Localize** teaching materials. (c) **Compel** with outstanding creativity and quality production values. (d) **Think beyond** traditional approaches. (e) Give TV and videos **longer shelf life** by avoiding fads in clothing, slang, music, etc. (f) Plan for **distribution**, not just production, in the budget. Find out **what others pay** for air time for radio and TV time so you’re not overcharged. (g) Always **observe the law**, honoring copyrights and obtaining releases. (h) Be creative, but never compromise the message.

SAMPLES OF WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING (For information only – not an endorsement of services or content)

- **Trans World Radio** www.twr.org
Global Christian radio network. Its “China Church Kits” include a radio (fix tuned to TWR station in Guam), a Bible in Chinese or Mandarin, sermon outlines, teaching materials, and ongoing education via radio. Affiliation: Doctrinal statement on website
- **The Jesus Film Project** www.JesusFilm.org
Distributes “Jesus”, a two-hour docudrama about the life of Christ. Released in 1979, the film has been seen in every country of the world and translated into hundreds of languages. Affiliation: 150 Christian church bodies, details on site
- **Spark and Echo Arts** www.sparkandecho.org
Illuminating passages of the Bible through visual, literary, and performing arts. Affiliation: See website
- **JCTV** www.jctv.org
Christian TV stations. Youth-oriented TV and streamed programming. Many outreach efforts. Affiliation: Non-denominational
- **Polynesian Cultural Center** www.polynesianculturalcenter.com
Leading with a Luau. In 1865, LDS missionaries purchased a 6,000 acre plantation on Oahu. In 1955, they added a college, a BYU extension, and began presenting a “Polynesian Panorama” show to the public. The show grew to a theme park complete with 2,800 seat amphitheater and 1,000 seat restaurant. The profitable PCC employs and provides student aid for hundreds of BYU students. Most employees are Mormon. Admission prices range from \$48.95 (adult) to \$228.95 (VIP experience with dining). While acknowledging the PCC is affiliated with LDS on

its website and at the (alcohol-free) luau, promotional materials focus on the Polynesian shows and cultural attractions and target the general public. The LDS message is not overt in the park. One exhibit, a replica of an early LDS mission church, is a place Mormons offer to share teachings with guests. Affiliation: LDS

CREATIVE CHALLENGE WORKSHEET: MEDIA TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

Be sure your project is:

- **Targeted:** The right creative approach, medium, and technology for the audience.
- **Clear/accessible:** Don't create barriers. Avoid or explain expressions and metaphors that a person new to the gospel may not easily understand (e.g. "bathed in the blood of the lamb" "uncircumcised hearts")
- **Respectful:** This is God we're talking about. Provocative, edgy, and funny are great, but not at the expense of the message if the goal is outreach.
- **Substantive:** The main take-away is the message, not anecdotes or melodies if the goal is outreach.
- **Localized:** Music, art, and teaching styles of the region, e.g. a Hmong story cloth.
- **Creative:** See approaches at top. One person's puppet show may be another's *Small Catechism*.
- **Excellent:** Excellent quality to compete with other media, capture interest, and be worthy of the subject.
- **Actionable:** Should always include the opportunity to make contact and learn more.
- **Free:** Mission materials should be free. Cost shouldn't be a barrier to hearing the gospel.

**

Terry Schultz wrote:

Why not create evangelism films that depict real-life situations from within the target culture? Why not use stories that portray social practices and tribal beliefs that Satan uses to keep the entire village in bondage?

For example, many animists are astounded to discover that a life free of fear of evil spirits is

possible, and that such a life is being lived right now by those who follow the one true God. What an exciting challenge: Researching and scripting tribal life situations (with the help of cultural insiders), perhaps shooting a film on location for authenticity, then returning to the studio to add special effects that portray supernatural beings or forces. Of course the film would climax with a presentation of the only cure for every fear: the one who has already defeated the devil and the evil spirits, Jesus Christ. What an exciting night in the community when a story based on village life appears on the large screen!

Regarding music: Selecting appropriate music for cross-cultural media productions is critical. What is considered sacred music in the host culture? For example, right now one finds reggae, calypso, and other Caribbean rhythms incorporated into Haitian worship music.

There is often the difficulty of finding local composers to produce music at affordable rates. In Haiti we are using the powerful melodies of public domain African American spirituals set to Caribbean rhythms to create Creole worship songs. Song verses containing additional doctrinal content are often added to the original songs. One of the most amazing musical experiences of my life occurred while standing with a roomful of Haitian Bible students, whose ancestors came to Haiti in the slave trade, singing a Creole version of "Soon I Will Be Done with the Troubles of the World." Unbelievable!

**

Ugis Sildegs wrote:

If we play by the rules of the modern media world, we will be forced to present our message as entertainment, amusement, distraction. Of course, we cannot go that way. The Gospel can't be changed in order to please people. Therefore all our creative efforts should be strictly made subservient to the message. Our Master Communicator Jesus himself was an artistic genius teaching his parables, but at the same time all of his parables served one single purpose, the revelation of the Kingdom.

From our newspaper experience we learned that the real problem is not getting attention but keeping it. Artistic tricks, noisy ads and creative approach can draw an immediate attention, but eventually we should recognize that the message we preach will not be welcomed by most people.

I remember a highly successful ad campaign when I went on TV and offered a cheap subscription. ("Call us today and you have it!") It worked. People just love getting cheap stuff. That day we received about 1000 new readers. Unfortunately, most of them were not keepers and after a year we didn't hear from them any more.

I believe that a great deal of our creative energy should be devoted to the crafting of our discourse not "according to this world" (which is sensational, fragmented, impersonal), but according to the spirit of "the Christ, crucified", "the Savior of sinners" - a "foolishness" and "scandal" by the worldly standard. The glory of Christ certainly is different from the glory of this world. It means that our story will have to be shaped by "his cross," and not by some kind of "glory story."

Our *Latvian Lutheran* stories took a variety of forms. In our paper we tried to make use of different artistic and communicative means to tell the same Gospel story over and over again. Directly and indirectly. In teaching and preaching. In prose and poetry. In discussions and interviews. In paintings and photos. Using all kinds of visual artworks, both ancient and contemporary. We did our best to subordinate all our means of expression to one single purpose.

We found that there are plenty of good references we can use as contact points and conversation starters (for example, many Christian references contained in our language; introducing former and present cultural personalities confessing their faith; publishing Christian art and literature which has been forgotten or lost through the years, etc.). But in all those efforts it is important to make sure that standards of good taste and quality are upheld.

The artistic quality of media is crucial. The public often seems to care more about style and form than about subject matter and content. The style is the first thing that is noticed, giving the initial impression. The quality of language is absolutely essential for any medium, especially the printed one. Very important is also design and art work. It would be best that these things would be done by professionals, if possible.

Question:

What kind of people attract the greatest public attention? Celebrities. The crowd arguably takes them as the most creative people. Do we have to learn from them? Do we promote our own media personalities? Or do we seek a different kind of distinction and attention? How do we use human sentiments that are widely exploited by the secular media?

**

Paul Hartman wrote:

The *Road to Emmaus* film has had some impact. Of the more than 200,000 DVD's distributed, about 57% have gone to the WELS, 31% to the LCMS congregations and 12% to others. It has been published in six foreign languages and has been translated into two more. The film was designed to go across cultures by presenting a biblical story rather than a contemporary story which is necessarily more culturally specific and which becomes dated. Make up and cinema-photography ameliorates somewhat the problem of dubbing, since lip-syncing is not practical. On the other hand, the film is aimed for a literate audience that is willing to think analytically. It will be less successful in highly oral cultures.

We are experimenting with the filming of a story from *Bible Stories in Pictures*. Using the "comic book" format and written by Dr. Beck after WW 2, the stories teach law and gospel clearly and show how the entire Bible teaches salvation through Jesus Christ. Each story is four pages long; most are in full color. The filmed version might reduce the verbiage displayed on the screen, while the recorded narrator tells the story in an interesting way with an appropriate musical background. The camera would focus on

characters and other aspects of the pictures in the story. The stories could be loaded onto a digital tablet and displayed to a small group by means of a portable projector and speakers. The artwork, admittedly, is Eurocentric and representative of a style used 50 years ago. Nevertheless, 92 of the stories have been distributed in book form in 12 languages.

We are also working on an interactive digital approach to the *Bible Teachings Series*. 25 books (ca. 100 pages per book) are used in distance learning programs at the discipleship level. A digital approach would allow us to avoid printing and shipping costs and avoid customs issues, when a digital approach can be used.

Although not all visual depictions of Bible history is accepted everywhere, such illustrations are more likely to be accepted than scenes of contemporary life in a particular area of the world.

**

Gonzalo Delgadillo wrote:

Creativity is a fruit of gifts and deep knowledge.

**

John Lawrenz wrote:

I do not consider myself an expert by any means. A few things I know. Large audience forums are as common or more common in East Asia as America. In East Asia the population of villages start at a quarter million people and there were 660 cities of a million inhabitants or more in China a decade ago. America has nine.

Teaching a roomful of students is not unusual. Learning English for the Beijing Olympics often required tens of thousands learning together in a sports stadium. Rallies and crusades (*a la* Billy Graham) have a natural attraction. Hong Kong has its own cinema industry. Movie making is emerging in mainland China. Video via hand devices reach 20% of China's 1.3 billion today. Reaching the masses through visual media is worth doing if it can be done well. We are

watching closely the reception and "reach" of the MLP/NPH/WELS video "The Road to Emmaus."

Art work is a challenge. To me it is significant that the Scripture offers no physical description of Jesus apart from the words of Isaiah that he had no special form or attractive features that would attract us to him. The Gospels underscore that it was the words of Jesus spoken with authority that was his hallmark. In Saginaw, Michigan, I received some push back by hanging a black Jesus on the cross inherited from our Central African WELS mission field. I also recall those days when beards had a special irritation for conservative Christians. Visual art cannot be ignored. And it cannot be foisted either. Conservative Chinese have gotten used to the Western depictions of Bible stories. They also love their version of the "King James Bible" and resist making either art or translations more contemporary and "true" to the way things are in 2012. In this regard a person embarking on the artistic presentation of the Gospel in music or visual ways would do well to gather focus groups of likely audiences to find out where attitudes lie. That done, sanctified Christian common sense would need to be invoked. We should neither be the last to leave the old or the first to embrace the new. And we will have to have special patience when we know that "what's out there" is not what the people recognize as close to home. In East Asia today, Christianity remains in many minds a "Western" import. Art can either confirm or disabuse our audience of this canard. The Chinese today have a taste for the best. Many have developed ability in the arts at the cost of great personal sacrifice and self-discipline. We need to engage such people when they become Christians. And we should do it without hesitation and with the trust that new believers, better than we, will know how to adorn the Gospel with appropriate adornment.

At this conference I have been permitted to show a short "Christmas video" which is not from China, but from Pakistan. I saw it for the first time when teaching in Nepal during Easter 2011. This video has had an unbelievable number of hits on YouTube. Pakistan is 97% Moslem. I'm sure I would not have produced this video myself, nor do I appreciate why it is so appealing. As a

“critic,” I don’t know where to begin. Artistic forms can be imported, but this video shows that imported items may be way beyond the ability of average Westerners to appreciate at first blush. We can and must collaborate on the mission fields.

outside than use a piano or organ if the pastor could not lead the people with his own voice.

##

Moving from videos to translations, I am also aware that in Pakistan a controversy arose this past year over the term to be used in the Urdu translation of the New Testament to describe Jesus as the “son of God.” The concept of God having a son is horrifying to Moslems. Yet it is crucial to the Gospel message. In Asia we should be prepared to face choices that are surprising. Would you think twice about carrying a Bible below the waist? In Pakistan this is not done by Christians because the Moslems do not carry a Koran in such a way. Is this conforming? Or is it saying what needs to be said in a Pakistani way about our reverence for the holy Bible? The answer should be obvious, but it takes getting used to.

In the USA we have our customs that govern worship. Asians will allow laymen and laywomen on occasion to read Scripture and to initiate prayer. It all depends on the service or the people available to serve. Hongkongers don’t don vestments in Lutheran churches, but pastors wear collars to distinguish ordained pastors from evangelists. The Chinese of Hong Kong enjoy humor in the pulpit. Wedding services are elaborate, beautiful, but never “formal” in a somber way. A chaste kiss of the bride raises no eyebrows. Curiously, they frown if anyone but a pastor gives the benediction at the end of the service. Testimonials are normal for adult confirmands. Things are done decently, but in an order that diverges significantly from what passes in Midwestern America for acceptable. I found the same to be true in Ukraine where I served before going to East Asia. In Ukraine a proper pastor had to wear a pectoral cross while leading the service. I can remember holding up Sunday worship until a proper cross was found for me to wear when I discovered too late that mine was left behind at home. In Ukraine a proper liturgy is sung with the human voice, not accompanied by instruments. Small missions in Ukraine would rather hire singers from the

4 The Legal / Political challenge: What legal / political barriers must be addressed in each nation in order to deliver Gospel messages to large audiences via media? How should risks to life and livelihood be addressed?

- Where in the world can Christian messages be broadcast? Where can't they be?
- Personal safety factors in pursuing world missions with media.
- Licensing and permission requirements in [location].
- How do we get "on the air" in [location].
- Strategies for Gospel penetration into hostile areas of the world.

Terry Schultz wrote:

I have not researched the subject of intellectual and cultural property rights or the challenges in obtaining legal permission to bring foreign film crews into the countries I work in. I would however, make a case for cultural sensitivity and knowing the political climate at the local or community level. For example:

In many tribal societies, supreme political and spiritual authority resides in one person: the village chief. A direct challenge to the tribe's false religion may be perceived as an attack on the chief's authority. In other societies, the religion expert (shaman, witch doctor, Vodou priest) is simply a local practitioner who is both feared and respected. There is often an exceptionally renowned occult practitioner presiding over a large region who is considered more powerful than the local purveyors.

Christianity confronts and challenges the cultural status quo. Why not produce a series of videos or picture books with minimum text that sensitively contrast local beliefs with Christian beliefs? Recall how Paul in Athens respectfully commented on the Athenians' interest in religious things (Acts 17:22). Imagine the interest in the community watching on a big screen a conversation in which a shaman and then a Christian offer their views of spiritual reality. Their competing stories could be dramatized during the conversation. A third character, a villager facing real-life choices, would be depicted as caught between the two belief systems.

Ideally such videos and picture books would be presented by an evangelist of the culture who had crossed over from the tribal religion to

Christianity. Such evangelism materials and presentations would send a powerful message. Not only would the materials challenge the worldview of each villager, but the villagers would know that the filmmakers and presenters have no fear of retribution (black magic curses, physical harm, etc.) from the area occult practitioners they challenge!

**

Gonzalo Delgadillo wrote:

Legal issues must be defined by expert local attorneys.

**

Jas Lonquist and Mike Klebig wrote:

Censored: Search on the word "river" in the United States and Google serves up more than 1.5 billion responses in 34 seconds. Search on the word "river" in China, using the Google search engine, and you may find yourself disconnected, blocked with an error message, or frustrated by a timeout. Why? The Chinese word for river (jiang) happens to be the name of former Chinese president Jiang Zemin and it is a banned search on anything but a government-sanitized server.

Breached: In December 2009, a Google information security manager detected a break-in to Google's system in China. Among the information hacked - Gmail accounts and correspondence of Chinese dissidents and human rights activists. It is believed the Chinese government was involved in the break-in. On January 10, 2010, after four years of struggles

with the Chinese government, Google closed its offices north of Beijing.

Google is a multi-billion dollar company with skilled government relations experts on staff and some of the best information security people in the world. It's eye-opening that, as powerful as Google is, it struggled with censorship and information security breaches against a government unfriendly to its beliefs.

Ideas to consider: (a) Offer **programs that benefit the community**. Sarah's Hope in India helps and provides a home for disabled children. It's blatantly Christian in a region that does not necessarily support Christianity, but the charity responds to such a devastating, unmet need – taking in abandoned, disabled children living on the streets – the local government now sends children to them. (b) **Remain impartial and neutral** on political issues that do not conflict with Gospel messages. (c) If there's risk that your **computer** or smartphone could be seized or impounded, be sure to protect addresses and personal information that might endanger others in the wrong hands. (d) Seek allies in **businesses and groups** already operating there. (e) **Remember you're a guest** in the country. Know and obey all laws for your safety and to best represent what it means to be a Christian to locals.

SAMPLES OF WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING (For information only – not an endorsement of services or content)

- **United States State Department**
www.state.gov
Updates on security threats for American citizens. Affiliation: U.S. Government
- **Federal Trade Commission**
<http://business.ftc.gov/privacy-and-security/data-security>
Data security information. Affiliation: U.S. Government
- **Kwintessential**
www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html
Free guides on language, etiquette, customs, business localization. "Whether it's a website, app, social media campaign, Facebook page, online

content, video, software or e-commerce platform – we can localize it." Affiliation: Secular

- **Crisis Consulting International**
www.cricon.org
"For more than 25 years, CCI has been the premier provider of security and crisis management services to the Christian missionary, humanitarian and church sending communities." Risk assessment. Policy development and contingency planning. Training of staff, leaders and crisis management teams. Management of major events, conferences and disaster response. Resolution of hostage and kidnapping events, extortion and other threats. Updates on current security threats on website. Affiliation: Value statement on site

LEGAL/POLITICAL CHALLENGES WORKSHEET: MEDIA TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

- Are there government restrictions on web content?
Does the government allow a free press?
Are there laws specifically against Christianity or proselytizing?
Can Christian materials be shared and exchanged openly?
Can foreigners own and operate radio or TV stations? If not, can they partner with locals to operate?

**

Paul Hartman wrote:

Two of the reasons why we are interested in digital publishing relate to cost and customs issues. Nepal and Indonesia do not allow the importation of Christian literature. Importation to Pakistan and Nigeria is very difficult, if not impossible. Customs and shipping issues make importation to Latin American countries difficult and expensive.

Broadcasting is possible in surprising locations, such as from Pakistan to Muslim countries. Outreach to China is possible through QQ—the Chinese version of Facebook.

Relative to Road to Emmaus, Steve Boettcher reports: "I think we had approx. 8-10 television

broadcasts during Easter 2010, 2011, and 2012 on TBN. According to TBN's website, TBN is now the world's largest Christian television network. Across the world TBN is carried by TV stations and cable systems to millions of homes. TBN is on 5,000 television stations, 33 international satellites, internet and thousands of cable systems around the world. "

We do not show on the Internet names and locations of Christians who live in countries where hostility to the gospel makes the profession of the Christian faith dangerous.

**

Ugis Sildegs wrote:

Certainly, in different countries there are different issues in respect to religious and media freedom. Therefore wisdom and sensitivity is needed to grasp and comprehend the local situation in legal and political matters.

But doing public media projects will never be a completely smooth ride, and some sort of problems can arise in any country. In this regard there are always fights worth fighting, but there are also those fights which waste our time, money and energy. And we have to be smart in distinguishing which is which.

Being an Eastern-European and Post-Soviet country, Latvia has both democratic traditions and the challenging heritage of the totalitarian past. While Lutheranism is a traditional faith of the country, our Confessional Lutheran (free) Church according to Latvian legislation is considered a "non-traditional," "new religious organization," since we were registered only recently. It meant that we were perceived as a suspicious organization that should be checked and controlled for a 10 year period, according to the law.

The Department of Religious Affairs had a duty to monitor our activities, and several times we experienced attempts to restrict our religious freedoms. Once again, we were reminded of the feeling that "Big Brother" was watching us. Those, undoubtedly, were relics of the old Soviet

system, and we felt urged to take up fight against such an attitude.

On one occasion, we learned that the big Lutheran Church sought to deny our Church and newspaper the right to use the name "Lutheran." Thankfully, they didn't succeed. On a couple of other occasions some state representatives obliquely and by hinting expressed their discontent about our doctrinal statements (regarding the Roman Catholic Church, ecumenism, etc.) and tried to restrict our freedom of speech. However, seeing that we were not scared or intimidated and that we defended ourselves, they gave it up.

By and large, our newspaper has served us well as a public medium, guarding our freedoms against state officials and bigger denominations which often have a tendency to assert their dominant role. Thus we have experienced the positive power of mass media, as it has protected us and made our little Church more respectable in the eyes of the general public. Having such a medium and a free public voice is always an advantage, especially in contemporary social structures where mass media play such an important role.

Questions:

The Church history of the Soviet period also reveals that legal and political issues can become a dangerous trap set up by enemies of the Church. Being hard pressed and desperately trying to survive in the atheistic world, the Lutheran Church eventually became loyal and too obedient to communists. The Church became a kind of "Soviet Church," losing her salt, spiritual strength, freedom and credibility. It was devastating. In consequence, membership declined from 55% before the WWII to 1% after the Soviet era.

So we ask: What kind of lesson can be learned from such a history? In a situation when the whole political and legal system is set up against you, aiming to put an end to the existence of the Church, is it worth striving to fit in to such a system and work out compromises? Or is it better to go underground and become a "martyr's Church"?

**

John Lawrenz wrote:

Hong Kong is a part of the People's Republic of China under a "one country/two systems" compromise hammered out with the departing British in 1997. It is indeed a strange situation which allows Hong Kong to be rated the most "capitalistic" political entity on earth inside a nation which is still under one party communist rule. Hong Kong is ruled by law. The mainland is ruled by the party who make the rules. An independent legal judiciary inside China is yet to be crafted.

At the present time it would be very, very difficult to distribute a major media item inside China. Yet in Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as Singapore, it is quite possible to do so. Inside mainland China books are regulated by the state. Inside the Peoples Republic the only recognized "Protestant" church is the Three-Self Patriotic Movement over which the party exercises control and censorship. House churches flout government control and there are more house church congregations than licensed congregations. It is dangerous to do anything that appears to break the "harmony" that the party wishes to impose on society. Open challenges to the government's control of religion has been met with force, though inconsistently and sporadically.

People passing through customs may carry religious items for personal use, but there is always a watchful eye open at the border crossing lest anyone bring religious items into China for distribution. Visas for people who put down the purpose of their visit as "religious" risk being denied. Scores of confessional Lutheran young people regularly teach English in Chinese schools and have done so for more than a decade. The local authorities know who they are and are not oblivious to the meetings held in the evening over prayer and Scripture. Large groups are discouraged. Evangelism is illegal for minors, therefore child baptisms are technically breaking faith with the government.

Asia Lutheran Seminary makes use of safe internet communication as a prudent caution. We are actively seeking official permission for Lutheran books and pamphlets to be distributed through intermediaries who work with the government. Our general position is "don't poke the dragon in the eye." The attitude reflects what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 13. Yet we monitor carefully how "the powers that be" act and consider their public practice more significant in respect to "law" than some of China's public statements that throttle religion and that strictly limit the sharing of the Gospel. We are aware that many in the party welcome Christianity if their adherents contribute in tangible ways to the stability of the state. We believe that a Christian citizen in China can practice and share faith without becoming rebellious and we encourage this in the same way that the apostles encouraged first century Christians to honor Rome and its emperor.

More can be said. At the conference I will be willing to speak orally of some things that are best not distributed in print or put on the Internet. China employs an unbelievable number of people who monitor the emails of people inside and outside of their country. A careless, well-meant, but insensitive church bulletin in one of our confessional American Lutheran churches could shut down operations half a world away. This very thing has happened to other denominations. "Don't poke the dragon in the eye!"

##

5 The teaching challenge: Since ideally media messages for a particular culture should be produced by people within that culture, how can local expertise be developed, supported, and encouraged?

- What partnerships can support these efforts?
- How to discover and inventory local talent in [location]?
- The basics: what do local media producers already know? What more do they need to know?

Ugis Sildegs wrote:

Mission work involves not only preaching and teaching the Gospel, but also preparing everyone to serve in their calling and capacity. Available local talents and skilled people should be recognized and, if possible, put to good use. Particularly, it is important for media outreach. A big difference can be made, for example, discovering in our midst tech savvy people, outstanding artists or excellent writers who are willing to devote their time and gifts to the mission.

I am convinced that the best way to start is, first, by knowing and understanding what kind of people are available and what kind of media they are most suitable for. That can serve as the basis on which to build and add what is necessary, afterwards improving their skills and qualifications. Thus the basis should be our own Church people. Of course, it is possible to employ all sorts of professionals, but, if they are unbelievers, they will fail to understand and participate properly in the mission.

In our work in Latvia the main force behind our paper were pastors who besides their congregational ministry did most of the writing, interviewing and editing for *Latvian Lutheran*. Some pastors were better writers than others. But in these years all of us managed to improve our skills of writing and communicating, significantly. Since our Church and newspaper mission was closely correlated, both of those ministries benefited and could become only better.

We discovered that in our congregations there were some very good writers, artists, poets who could contribute to our media work. They were able to come up with important feedback, questions, suggestions and recommendations, which helped to make our paper finer and improve our mission.

The skills and qualifications which our pastors obtained during publishing *Latvian Lutheran* have been very beneficial to us, since in recent years we had no choice but to look for secular jobs and become bi-vocational. Today two of our pastors earn their living as professional journalists for the biggest daily business newspaper, and another writes regular articles for the same paper. So the experience we gained continues to be a blessing for us.

We also should recognize and commend the assistance and cooperation from our sister Church bodies in USA. The most important help has been the theological education. Two of our men have received degrees from the Bethany Seminary. Several others have participated in Summer Quarters. Particularly in the beginning of our mission we gained a lot of knowledge, inspiration, good advice and valuable books from our visiting professors.

**

Jas Lonquist and Mike Klebig wrote:

Since we aren't boots-on-the-ground missionaries, we won't address the question of how to find and nurture talent in a particular region. Instead, we'll discuss tools that can be used for teaching and training. M & J

An Ethiopian eunuch, riding in a chariot, puzzles over the meaning of scripture. Two men walking the road to Emmaus ponder recent painful events. In each case, someone appears to share and explain scripture, and connect the dots for the person with the searching heart. Today, media and technology can help us do the same!

The Potential: Teachers can create a course of study and, using media technology, share it with millions, massively amplifying every effort.

Students can learn anywhere, anytime as long as they have materials, access, and power.

Technology provides unprecedented opportunities to share media, including:

- **Film:** A projector, brought on back of motorcycle, plays a docudrama of Jesus' life on makeshift screens in remote corners of the world. *(Requires film print, projector, power source, a screen, and transportation)*
- **Online courses:** A foreign national studies for the ministry in his own language, his own country. Materials have been approved so teaching is accurate and consistent. A woman takes a Bible information class and asks questions of a pastor in live chats and email. *(Requires a computer, power source, internet connection.)*
- **Radio:** A crowd of neighbors gather by a hut where a fix tuned radio (\$25, operates on solar power) plays a Christian radio program. The radio station is portable and missionaries trained locals to operate the station. *(Requires license and/or government approval to operate, radio station, transmitter, programming, radios).*
- **iPad:** Video Sunday School materials are shared with an illiterate audience in a remote area. The portable system was brought in a missionary's suitcase and will be left with the class. Inexpensive flash drives provide additional media. *(Requires device, power, data on drive)*
- **iPod:** Hundreds of tiny, inexpensive iPods loaded with gospel messages in the native language are given away in a remote village. Users in areas with internet access subscribe to ongoing series. *(Requires device. For subscription, requires internet access.)*
- **DVD:** A family with no access to a church in China takes a full year of sermon DVDs recorded the previous year. Messages track with the church calendar. They invite neighbors. *(DVD Production requires camera, audio. May require computer for editing. Playback requires computer or DVD player. Duplicator may be required if distribution is wide or to duplicate in alternate format. Printer may be required to put an image on DVD.)*

- **Smartphones:** A Masai man reads a daily scripture on a smartphone. Cell phones send SMS text messages in developing countries. Since 2002, phones have surpassed computers as a means of accessing the internet. 4 billion users worldwide. *(Requires feature phone, internet access, some kind of power – in remote parts of the world, may be DC from a vehicle or solar.)*

SAMPLES OF WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING *(For information only – not an endorsement of services or content)*

- **The Hope** www.thehopeproject.com
An 80-minute film produced by Mars Hill Productions in collaboration with filmmakers around the world detailing the redemption story. Translated into many languages. Study guides. Affiliation: Belief statement on www.mars-hill.org.
- **Simplifying the Web for Ministry** <http://churchsmo.com>
Information on using iPod, iPad, social media, video, and more in ministry and missions. Affiliation: Not Stated
- **Christian Missionary App** <http://christianmissionaryapp.com>
iPad app helps you repeat Bible verses in any language as well as simple phrases like “May I pray with you?” Affiliation: Not stated
- **Missionary Help** <http://missionaryhelp.com/?p=1123>
Information on starting an SMS (text messages) ministry. Affiliation: Author Jonathan Parsons
- **Your Network of Praise (YNOP)** www.ynop.org
Christian outreach using radio. Many outreach efforts. Affiliation: Non-denominational
- **Time of Grace** www.timeofgrace.org
Outreach using TV, streaming video on internet, and other media. Affiliation: Wis. Evangelical Lutheran Synod
- **Redcliffe University (Bible College in the U.K.)** <http://www.oscar.org.uk/index.htm>
“If you're involved or interested in world mission or Christian work around the world, OSCAR is your gateway to useful information, advice and resources.” Timely information, good technical knowledge, newsletter. Affiliation: Nondenominational

**

Paul Hartman wrote:

Through its coordinators Multi-Language Publications seeks to help identify local talent and guide, encourage and support them in the publishing process.

The Asia Publications Conference, scheduled for the week of October 29 to November 2 in Hong Kong will bring together nationals and missionaries working in the area of publications. Attendees will come from areas that reach out in Cantonese, Hindi, Hmong, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Nepali, Telugu, Thai, Tibetan, Urdu (and related languages), and Vietnamese. Dr. ER Wendland (WELS Central Africa) and Dr. Soesilo (UBS-Asia) will help attendees consider the production or adaptation of publications oriented to the needs of their targeted audiences. Martin Spriggs will help attendees see how the Intranet can be used to share files and track the development of publications.

Ongoing training and development of local talent is a critical need. One idea that has surfaced is a degree program in translation studies at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Students would come from cross-cultural publishing programs of our fellowship. Prerequisites might include a degree from a national seminary of our fellowship. The purpose of the degree program would be to help students articulate the needs of their targeted audiences compared to the audiences for which source materials were produced. The curriculum might be delivered through seminars, distance learning, attendance at one or two summer quarters at WLS and study projects related to the publishing programs of the students.

**

Terry Schultz wrote:

I believe every world mission field would benefit from having national church members trained in video production with access to basic production

equipment. What would be the most viable way to deliver a video production education to a national? Bring the education to the foreign country, or bring the foreign student to the United States? Could ongoing instruction be offered over the Internet?

How about a media institute designed specifically for foreign students that teaches the basics of video production? How long would it take for a student to complete such a program? The local church leadership could easily identify potential students. Perhaps the video skills learned at the institute would translate into a marketable skill for the student in his home country.

**

John Lawrenz wrote:

Permit this Old Testament professor a sidebar on the teaching profession as viewed from the Bible before turning to the questions posed by our conference planners under this rubric.

God's plan at the beginning was for parents to teach their children. Parents mentored their children and passed on what life had taught them. Under Moses education buttressed the Torah, which is by definition what God wanted Israel to know and observe. Moses marshaled the wider community. He equipped the nation with a "textbook" and with five percent of the population teaching what the book said. The school year was the religious "calendar" that called for continuing education and set appointed times for repeated refreshers. The High Priest was "superintendent," and the priests and Levites were the heads of regional schools. In villages the Levites would teach the heads of clans and families. The Levites in turn were to tutor the heads of the local households. Finally, at home fathers taught their children. In this way God's covenant was supposed to pass from generation to generation. In actuality the command "teach your children!" was honored more in the breach than in the observance.

David placed a patch on the system after the sons of Eli brought about the destruction of the

tabernacle in Shiloh which had served for hundreds of years as "education headquarters." Kings were to make their own personal copy of God's instructions and see to it that the old educational system got a second life. Sadly, the system broke down again. Before David the Word of God was scarce according to the writer of 1 Samuel. After David there was a famine of the Word according to Amos.

Ezra the scribe is credited by tradition with the inauguration of the Sabbath school concept, another reform. Ezra himself was a teacher. He gathered the scriptures and urged the remnant of Judah to learn from them in community gathering places later known as synagogues. Jesus learned at these schools. At 12 Jesus became a "son of the commandment." This meant he had mastered the contents and language of the Torah and was ready to publicly read what he had learned. The Apostle Paul learned God's ways from Gamaliel. Timothy learned from his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois. Paul came full circle when he admonished parents to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:2).

Teaching and preaching are a perfectly matched pair in Ephesians 4:11. If Christ is to be preached in the world, then he must be taught as well. Jesus said "Go!" and he said "teach them to observe everything I have commanded you." Jesus promised his presence where two or three are gathered. Jesus sent his Spirit to bear witness to everything.

Mass media must preach and teach Christ and teach what his advent means. Repentance comes from a knowledge of the law. Forgiveness, life and salvation flow from the Gospel. Can there be such things as mass eye contact, mass laying on of hands, mass prayer that sums up and focuses the peculiar needs of a particular sinner? Media can't baptize nor can it digitally beam the elements of Holy Communion.

Western education, something being imitated in East Asia, cannot do it either. At the risk of oversimplification, Western education is since the Renaissance a highly organized, streamlined,

and structured system not unlike mass media. Students are gathered in cohorts, walked through a schedule of set hours, weeks, semesters and years, and are pushed through curricula that may or may not equip the learner for what he needs to know for time and eternity. American education puts a premium on doing it yourself and exploring options to conquer the unknown. At their worst, schools have taken over what parents were meant to do and leave the learner unequipped for eternity.

The densely populated and largely non-Christian mission field of East Asia has encountered the Western world. Though it imitates American educational methodology, Chinese education marches to a different drummer. The Chinese revere the teacher as an authority figure and as a bulwark of cross-generational stability. What the group knows is more important than what the individual learns. Age trumps youth. Earning the respect of peers is golden. So too is success, good health, long life and accumulated wealth.

China is churning out literate people. The sheer numbers guarantee that there will be educated leaders in most any field of human endeavor. Without respect for the revealed Creator, schools in East Asia have embraced evolutionary science wholeheartedly. Chinese excel in mathematics. Western humanities are little known. Eastern humanities are making a comeback after the Cultural Revolution. Business ethics are pragmatic. Vocations serve the needs of the state. What is missing is the reason for living and an explanation for dying. As a consequence there is a spiritual hunger that appears to match that at the first advent of Christ when the Roman world was spiritually empty.

Back then, the Gospel spread person to person. Mass media and the instruments of mass media have the power to move millions and muster instantaneous responses. Thus—after much thought—I wonder out loud whether mass media could become a huge and volatile mouthpiece of the prince of this World far quicker than a gigantic stimulus for repentance and regeneration.

One huge and necessary thing to be mastered through education in East Asia is language. Chinese is both a spoken and written phenomenon largely unknown in our Christian circles. The hundreds of Chinese dialects use a common set of picto/script “icons” as conduits for meaning. There is no Chinese alphabet. This system was headed for obsolescence, but has since been rescued by the digital age. It is no longer necessary to learn a brush-stroke order or to elegantly shape each character so that the proportions are just right. The computer does it. The Christian who wishes to communicate, however, still needs to speak Mandarin, the major spoken dialect, and acquire skill in reading and writing the written code in simplified characters. The thousands of years of history that have gone into the development of Chinese orthography and expression mean that there is no shortcut. Mass media can use the Chinese language if the script writers know what they are writing. The writers can glorify Christ if they know what the Holy Spirit teaches. The two have to work hand in hand.

In the current context bilingual education within schools, utilizing technology on a small scale provides missionaries with a necessary bridge. The teacher/preacher whose roots are in unilingual America needs to speak, write and think like a Chinese or he will never adequately make those adjustments in his own thinking that communicate God’s message.

A unique insight into Christ’s work in these last days was provided by the faculty of the Lutheran Theological Seminary of the Wisconsin Synod in the years before World War I.

I believe their convictions instruct our mission endeavors in the 21st century. In Wauwatosa, the home of the WELS seminary in those days, men decided that the words of the prophets and apostles needed to be read in the form they were written, that is, in Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic. These same Wauwatosa men warned against doing God’s teaching primarily on the basis of *Vatertheologie*.

What the world values in education is built each generation on the shoulders of those who have gone before. Inherited knowledge begets all we

know and makes it likely that we will come to learn more. In theology, however, it is different. The sermons, books, and theological works of the past have value because they addressed God’s enduring truth for their times. They are useful, but they are not the place to begin. Only the Word itself as written can be used by the Holy Spirit to validate speech. That same Word is the only thing that can keep human minds from obscuring the content of what the Holy Spirit teaches.

Bad translations of the Bible are inhibitors, yet not without their place. Good translations are better. The Hebrew-speaking prophets and the Greek-speaking apostles are by far the best. Theological works, based squarely on biblical teaching, even in a bad translation are not without their limited value. Good translations are better. Having leaders in the Chinese church who can go to Moses, the prophets, the evangelists and apostles is best.

Mass media won’t do such things, even though lesser media out of an arsenal of technological wonders can help. Today we can search and compare words, phrases and syntax in Greek and Hebrew through such programs as Logos and BibleWorks. We can store notes and hard won insights for later retrieval. We can aim to arrive at a state of theological interdependence in a mission field like modern China. The enduring truths of God, once grasped by the Holy Spirit’s power will be best expressed to the Chinese people in a written or spoken Chinese that breathes the Law and Gospel drawn from Scripture.

Technology is not new. It has always been there to augment person to person sharing of God’s Word. The simple spoken word was God’s vehicle in the Garden of Eden. Moses parlayed his knowledge of the newly developed Semitic alphabet to write the first scripture. Later Ezra pioneered the need for libraries and translations. The early church adopted the easy-to-flip Bible codex as a tech improvement over an armful of scrolls that had to be coiled and recoiled with every use. Luther’s testimony spread throughout Europe because he utilized the printing press. God’s Word moved on telegraph

wires in the mid-19th century. Then came radio, TV, and now digitalization. The Christian teacher in East Asia will accept the 21st century as rich in technological tools. He will use them and rejoice to do so. He will use them well and take the time to master their potential for communication.

But the 21st century teacher in East Asia will not forget that the heart of Christ's mission is speaking God's truth in love through person-to-person communication that honors Christ and believes that only the Holy Spirit can kindle faith and move an individual from light to darkness.

What do I see? We teachers teach the way we were taught. We emerged from a layered process that began for most of us in childhood and ended with a graduation and a calling sometime in our 20s. The vast majority went to serve folks who entered God's kingdom through baptism as children. In East Asia there is no layering. Most gathered Christian congregations are made up predominantly of adult converts. Few have the mentoring skills of parents whom God has always commissioned as the first teachers for a little child. We do what we know. If there is a continuum in ministerial education in WELS/ELS it emphasizes the cognitive skills that congregations seek in a pastor early in the educational process. Along the way we expect pastors to accrue the people skills that belong to the affective domain. This usually happens in the course of eight to a dozen years. In East Asia this continuum is flipped. A love for people and affective skills are prized early in a potential pastor's journey to the pastoral ministry. A cognitive grasp of biblical doctrine is developed late and sometimes imperfectly. Thus continuing education is a must if doctrinal maturity is an eventual goal.

Moreover, East Asia's ministry of Word and sacrament comes with two tiers. The graduate is almost never ordained. He serves as an evangelist and only after he nears age 40 is he deemed ready to become a pastor. The evangelist is in very real sense a "junior" pastor. Many men pay their own way into the ministry. Scholarships and direct subsidy for students are both rare, even though living costs, particularly for a roof over one's head is steep. As a result

recruitment of men is not easy. Many feel they must salt away enough to support themselves and a family before considering seminary training.

In Hong Kong we have started a seminary that is not all that different in externals from Bethany Evangelical Theological Seminary or Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. There is a calling today in East Asia to build Christian families from the bottom up. Our partners are Chinese Christian parents. Our partners are the evangelists and pastors who shepherd existing Chinese Christian congregations. Our partners are also all the people who can open up to us the culture and language and history and ethos of the Chinese and other Asian peoples. We can't be teaching unless we learn. And we can't learn God's way unless we stand firmly alongside God's prophets and apostles with the crucified and risen Jesus Christ in our midst and the Holy Spirit as our constant teacher, all to the glory of the Father.

##

6 *The stewardship challenge: management and funding:* Since media production and distribution are expensive, how can financial support be obtained, and how can production and distribution be managed in an efficient and business-like manner?

- What is worth it? Factors and formulas for directing limited resources
- International monetary policy and how it affects Gospel outreach
- US support and local support: what proportion is best?
- A business model for supporting media ventures in world missions

Ugis Sildegs wrote:

Counting all costs and serious stewardship planning is necessary before any media undertaking. From a strict business perspective it is hard to imagine how such a media mission can be profitable, unless one is involved in some kind of "theology of glory," where health, wealth and a worldly success enterprise is substituted for the Gospel. Whichever way you wish to look at it, the Gospel mission always is "a holy waste" which, God willing, will bring some good fruits for eternity.

Professional media production for TV, radio and printed media can be quite expensive and, before starting such a demanding project, it is important to think through whether in fact it will be worth the human and all other resources which are necessary to expend.

The Internet, on the other hand, has become a quite cheap medium and web projects can be started now almost by anyone who has Internet available and some basic skills. Even making a simple audio or video message doesn't cost too much. So in that regard it is better to start activities on the Internet and acquire some skills and experience, before spending bigger money on more advanced projects. If anything goes wrong, it is better and cheaper to fail on the Internet.

We were privileged. The support for our newspaper was provided by the mission organization *Thoughts of Faith* and the *Schwan Foundation*. Since our congregations were still young and relatively small, they were able to support only their pastors, and then only partially. Thus, thanks to the overseas support and stipend, our pastors were put in a very

favorable situation, being able to do mission both inside (congregation) and outside (newspaper).

In our newspaper production and distribution we combined both business and mission principles. Our paper sold for about 1 dollar which was a reasonable price. But there were also places like an army base, a prison, homes for the elderly, and hospitals where we gave away free copies (of left over older papers). In many ways we had to learn about the newspaper business from "the children of this world who in their generation are wiser," at the same time keeping our distinct Christian identity and putting our mission objectives first.

We attempted to raise funds for *Latvian Lutheran* also from our own members who for the most part loved the paper but unfortunately didn't help much financially. There were both objective and subjective reasons for that. Objectively, there were still many poor people who struggled to make ends meet. Subjectively, there was also a sort of human prejudice which implied: "You receive support from rich Americans. Why do you ask something from us, poor Latvians?!"

Questions:

Since media outreach most often is not the first priority in Church and such projects can be funded only from some surplus which congregations rarely have, usually it will be up to media enthusiasts to be the driving force. What are the best ways to encourage them? How can we make individual projects into a common mission?

**

Terry Schultz wrote:

Good stewardship of scarce funds often means trying to reach a large number of lost souls with each media project. I have suggested picture books and videos that feature real-life situations of the target audience. I have seen our Amazon brothers take great interest in seeing drawings depicting their daily lives and traditional beliefs. Villagers would be captivated seeing for the first time their lives portrayed on a big screen.

One may need to somewhat generalize the real-life stories portrayed in books and videos in order to reach across as large a population as possible. For example, Vodou adherents on the north coast of Haiti believe and practice Vodou differently than adherents in central Haiti. Yet there are many common core beliefs.

Evangelism books and videos for Haiti based on real-life situations would need to be detailed enough to be authentic yet general enough to be applicable throughout the country.

Questions of video production quality need to be analyzed. How sophisticated a product do we insist upon? An amateur magician can dazzle an audience with parlor tricks and sleight of hand, while some people prefer a glitzy Vegas-level stage production. However, if you rarely have access to any performance, even a simple presentation is welcome! A field study of the audience response to a low-budget evangelism film could provide a valid test. Remember, in remote areas especially, an evangelism film will invariably be the “only show in town” that night, perhaps the only special event in weeks or more.

**

Paul Hartman and Gonzalo Delgadillo wrote:

We at MLP agree with the need to evaluate the usefulness of publications and related initiatives. We hope to begin a program at Wisconsin Lutheran College that employs business administration students working under the supervision of a professor to give quantified answers to three questions about various publications in various fields: 1) Are publications

sent to (or produced in fields) actually gotten into the hands of the intended readers/users? 2) Are the publications actually used by the intended population? 3) Does the use of the publications show evidence of spiritual growth? A particular publication of MLP (done in association with WELS Prison Ministry), the *Bible Teachings Series*, is well-suited to provide the information needed to answer those questions, since the series asks users to take a final test upon the completion of a book.

Another way in which students might help MLP evaluate its work is to determine what portion of its budget is used for production.

WELS World Missions puts strong emphasis on national churches becoming self-propagating, self-administrating, self-supporting and self-disciplining. The world mission effort has increasingly put its support for national churches in the areas of worker-training and publications, while it encourages national churches to conduct its own outreach and discipling ministries, administer its own affairs and support its national ministries.

Publishing has been an expensive proposition, even though publishing does generally increase the number of people evangelized and discipled. The sales of many items does not seem consistent with outreach and discipling at the beginning level; and the capturing of sales income in foreign countries in any case is frequently more expensive than the funds received. Nevertheless, placing a value on publications is as important in foreign cultures as it is in the United States; items that are actually purchased tend to receive greater respect than items that are received free of charge. Our solution has been to encourage national churches to sell materials when they consider sales helpful and to use the proceeds to support their outreach efforts.

Here is a comparison presented to the national convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mexico that to some degree represents a business model:

Comparison between Distributing Printed Booklets of *Bible Stories in Pictures* And Using Digital Equipment during a Period of Five Years

Printing and shipping of 1,000 sets of 64-page booklets to Mexico from Bogotá, Colombia

	Printing	Shipping	Cost per student (15 books + shipment to Mexico)
Cost / book	\$2.05	\$1.30	\$3.35
Books / set	15	15	15
Cost / set	\$30.75	\$19.50	\$50.25

iPad + Projector + Printer

	Cost of digital equipment per group
Cost per set of equipment	\$2,000
Number of students needed per set	44
Cost per student (the basis for calculating minimum number of students needed per set of equipment)	\$50.25

- 50,250 -- The total cost for 1,000 sets of booklets (at 15 booklets per set)
- 25 -- The number of sets of digital equipment that could be purchased for \$50,250
- 26 – Number of congregations and preaching stations in Mexico

Benefits of distributing printed books

- Book given to every student
- Books can be taken home
- Teaching can be reviewed at home
- Less misuse of materials
- Materials are easier to use
- No equipment repairs

Benefits of using digital equipment

- Stories presented to the entire congregation
- Audio-visual presentation is more dynamic
- Films like *Road to Emmaus* can be shown
- A large theological library can be placed on the tablet – *the real cost savings*
- Communication via the Internet facilitated
- Higher level distance learning encouraged

Cost of equipment (in USA/in Mexico):

\$500 / \$1,000	iPad (tablet)
\$300 / \$600	Projector
\$100 / \$200	Printer
\$100/200	Speakers
\$1,000 / \$2,000	Total

Another, related business model is to publish resources like the Spanish People’s Bible on Logos. The company has offered to enter the entire Spanish People’s Bible into the logos without charge to MLP/WELS. This would save us more than \$32,000. Logos would pay a 10% royalty fee on the sales of the Spanish People’s Bible in logos. At the republications 40% discount, each license of the Spanish People’s

Bible could be purchased at \$132. After Logos has had time to sell the Spanish People’s Bible, MLP would be able to make the same volumes available in PDF or e-pub format.

**

Jas Lonnquist and Mike Klebig wrote:

My mom was not reared in a Christian home. At age 13, she heard a radio broadcast offering a Bible study course. Listeners were asked to send \$1 to cover the cost of the course but if they didn't have a dollar, send for it anyway. Mom didn't have a dollar but, as promised, received the materials. From them, she learned the truths of the Bible. She became a Christian and, later, reared six children in a Christian home. Her oldest son and grandson became Lutheran pastors. Another son, an executive at a radio network, has put more than 50 Christian radio and TV stations on the air. Several more kids and grandkids volunteer in medical missions, video streaming, church music, and other gospel outreach and humanitarian aid.

Someone used their time and talent to record that broadcast and write the Bible study course. Someone used technical skill to put the broadcast on the air. Someone covered the dollar when my mom could not. They did this not knowing if anyone would ever listen to what they had to say or if the dollar would bring a return on investment. I wonder if they'll be amazed at the crowd of people who thank them in the kingdom of heaven!

Ideas to consider:

(a) **Inspire.** People want to be partners, not donors – active participants, not just a checkbook. Financial partnership should be rewarded with feedback. A Christian radio station helped fund a medical mission trip to Tanzania and sent a satellite phone with the nurses. Each morning a nurse called the radio station to provide updates: Parents who carried a child with a crushed arm five miles to the church where they were set up. Hundreds of people lined up by dawn for treatment. A man, blind from cataracts, who could now see. Listeners heard the effectiveness of their donations and responded with even more. The cost of these phone calls? \$1.90 per minute.

(b) **Use funds wisely.** Transparency, accountability, and a system of checks and balances help.

(c) **Share successes regularly.** A thank you note from a person who benefitted from an outreach is powerful.

(d) **Talk about money.** Wrong attitudes toward money hurt stewardship. Money is a tool, nothing more or less - not “filthy” or “stinking” rich and not the “root of all evil” as often misquoted. Money should be discussed like time - something to be used wisely for the most part, invested, shared, and not squandered.

(e) **Specific gifts:** Some people prefer giving specific gifts. Gospel for Asia offers opportunities to make specific purchases for missions from \$1 tracts to vehicles. Galcom offers \$25 radios or entire radio stations. ChildFund International's catalog has everything from a chicken for a family to water treatment plants.

(f) **Overcome evil with good:** Scripture says “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Giving a gift can be a very healing response to pain or disappointment with life. One day, preoccupied with a problem, I decided to respond to “evil with good” and made three donations to worthy charities. It did make me feel immediately better. A week later, to my amazement, I received three thank you notes, including a hand-written note from a teen in drug rehab and a cheerful letter to update me on resident's activities at Bethesda Lutheran home. I had to shed a few tears. I never anticipated that the people I hoped to help would turn and minister to me. Since then I've encouraged many hurting people to try this.

(g) **Fifty on the First:** Ask 50 people from 50 congregations to give \$50 on the first of every month. To donors, it's less than the cost of sushi for two. To missions, it's \$1.5 million a year.

SAMPLES OF WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING *(For information only – not an endorsement of services or content)*

- **Crown Financial Ministries**
www.crown.org

Money management tools for Christians.
Affiliation: Statement of faith on website

- **Gifts for Asia** www.gfa.org/donation
“Tools for missionaries” allows donors to provide specific gifts. Affiliation: Statement on website
- **Barnabas Ministries**
www.barnabasministries.org
Scriptural principles of stewardship. Seminars, teaching materials. Affiliation: Non-Denominational

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John Lawrenz wrote:

The greatest challenge that faces mission work in the world is not something entirely new, but one that has been developing over time. Researchers tell us that economic and generational factors are moving the general membership of denominations like the ELS and WELS toward “investment at home.” What that means is that a larger share of personal offerings will be, more and more, kept close to the local congregation or be given to ministries that people can easily see and influence. This is true even if total dollars given to the Lord’s work has increased overall in the last fifty years.

The economic downturn of 2008 worked itself out in dollar outlay for world missions in WELS that had the net effect of reducing the number of workers in world fields significantly. The next largest Lutheran denomination in the USA after the ELS and WELS no longer has a mission program directed and funded by the synodical center. Missionaries from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod are now expected to raise a significant percentage of their own support. This is done through direct appeals. In the early 1990’s grant money from Schwan underwrote mission expansion in both ELS and WELS. The extent of that support could not be sustained. Yet, individual donors and grass roots mission movements among confessional Lutherans continue to spring up.

In East Asia we count the cost going forward and the investment is neither static nor diminishing. It will take continued new investment of financial support to bring the unconditional

Gospel to the millions who have never been fed or are being fed “another gospel.”

Raising money is improving stewardship on the part of both givers and spenders. The biblical teaching on giving turns away from high pressure tactics. It is not against presenting need, but the motivation must be love for God who loved us first. Direct appeals are not wrong, but with them comes the temptation to fragment cohesive planning, to pit one need against another, and even to create circumstances that will generate waste and duplication of effort and investment. If direction from a synodical central office fades and even comes to an end in the foreseeable future, there must be a heightened spiritual awareness on the part of missionaries to take its place.

Scripture also admonishes the worker to serve God rather than the nice things money can buy. There is a statement from the flush times of the early 90s that has been etched in my memory. A missionary had been extraordinarily blessed with a gift many times larger than what he expected. Exiting from the donor’s presence, he remarked to an aide who later shared the anecdote with me. The newly endowed missionary exclaimed, “Now we will have to come up with things to do with all this money!” Spenders must plan, be wisely frugal, and never take support for granted. Visions become concrete when costs are carefully counted. “Bang for the buck” is simple prudence, but it must never be short-sighted. A quick investment in media that chintzes on quality is bad stewardship. Take translation, for an example. Employing a cheap translator with limited gifts may render the whole enterprise fit only for gathering dust on the shelf. If there is a rollout of any kind, media included, watch out if it garners a burst of initial attention, only to sputter and go out like a spent Roman candle. For such penny-pinching a high spiritual price will likely be paid, if not immediately, eventually. It’s like casting good seed among the rocks, or on the path, or in shallow ground.

I believe God’s judicious use of miracles in his recorded plan of mission expansion offers us some guidance. Miracles did not create faith.

Nor do they sustain faith. God used them to bring proclaimer and lost soul into juxtaposition in order that the power of the Holy Spirit in the Word could go to work. Miracles also authenticated the extraordinary love of God in a world fast in the grip of godlessness. In similar fashion, a media blitz can have a special, authenticating place on the mission frontier. Our God is great and he can motivate his messengers to do great things. But then MUST come the sure, steady sustaining power of Word and sacrament ministry in order to kindle and nurture faith. That's good mission field stewardship.

Mission endeavors defy the rather static budget processes of established church bodies. Our experience with planning in East Asia is that mission expansion is dynamic to the extreme. Nobody knows for sure what doors will open or when. Nor do we know what doors must be closed and when. Prudent planning, developed over many years in the States in my synod works on a two-year cycle, with input for those two years to be laid on the table as much as a year and a half before the budget is presented in convention for approval. The approval process is multi-layered and loses clarity and focus as it is handled "up the line" by well-meaning people who have only a vague grasp of the dynamic issues which drive the mission frontier. Fast changing circumstances can rarely look 3-1/2 years in advance with a high degree of accuracy. Good stewardship therefore requires effort to build trust. This means budgets that somehow always finish in the black. And it most often means gathering additional funding from sources outside the budget because they rarely can. Such planning and spending must be carried out transparently. There must be no hiding and no misrepresentation. Both destroy trust.

Our work in East Asia, and more specifically, our work to build and expand a confessional Lutheran seminary in East Asia, has turned to mission advancement. In this we are far from alone. Our confessional schools in America all employ mission advancement. Here a brotherly concern for others is always in place. We must believe in our own pitch to donors, but must be

informed and gracious in regard to the appeals of others, all in the interest of kingdom balance.

Finally, it must be mentioned that both of our confessional American church bodies have experience with para-church organizations, also in world missions. I have had personal experience with Thoughts of Faith and served a decade on their board of directors when it was still an entity largely independent of the ELS. Since my move to East Asia, Thoughts of Faith has been brought directly under the ELS Board of Missions. In East Asia we were not alone when we came to East Asia with the "Now Is the Time" charter of WELS adopted in November 2003. WELS members in the Twin Cities area, led by departed brother Loren Steele, had opened a window to East Asia. They organized outside WELS structures. They raised funds and sent people. They did what needed to be done and we still remain the beneficiaries of that early zeal.

Our strategy out of Hong Kong is to work with and alongside anyone that promotes the spread of the unconditional Gospel in the Chinese-speaking world. We ask only that all entities be informed fully and accurately, and that all entities care enough about each other to share information and avoid costly duplication of effort. While in Thoughts of Faith the board agreed that our appeal to donors would openly and clearly state: congregation first, synod second, Thoughts of Faith third. This, I believe, is still common sense. Granted, it is not as easy as the uncluttered appeal. Teamwork requires communication, patience, and advancing those strategies that are compelling—not just to the donor, but to all who are brothers and sisters in the same work.

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7 *The discipleship challenge:* Since Gospel messages delivered by mass media will create believers in widely dispersed locations, how can these new Christians be “gathered” and nourished in their new faith?

- Is a “virtual” or “online” congregation a viable option?
- What theological issues are involved in administering Word and Sacraments “online”?
- What are other religious groups doing with media in [location] and how?

Ugis Sildegs wrote:

The aim of Christian media witness is making disciples. The biggest problem in this regard is that mass communication has created a particular kind of environment where media is ever present in people's lives, but its reception is very superficial. Even though many people spend long hours each day using media, they get very little out of it. The reason: because it is a very passive mode of communication and there is a great distance between a "media consumer" and the "media message."

The great relational distance while communicating via media makes Christian discipleship very difficult and problematic. For instance, if unbelievers are struck by our media message on some occasion, they usually don't have any further direct and personal relationships to rely on. We hope they will have some Christian friends, or they will be so excited that they can come and seek out our congregations and attend our worship services.

However, in our newspaper experience there were very few direct results. Of course, we have gained a few members directly through *Latvian Lutheran*, but not as many as we could expect (having a couple thousand subscribers). Perhaps Latvians are too passive and shy, which limits communication possibilities. But maybe that is the special nature of media consumption which doesn't produce active disciples, but mostly passive spectators and mild sympathizers.

We heard a lot of stories from our members and readers from which we gathered that our paper has been beneficial for both believers and unbelievers. For example, we heard an anecdotal story about a Catholic priest, a regular reader, who even used our sermons in his preaching. We received many compliments and we had plenty of devoted readers who appreciated the clear

Gospel presentation, but unfortunately most of them didn't become members of our Church.

Thus our conclusion was that our media mission didn't reach deep enough, and by no means could it substitute for a face-to-face Christian witness. True, media can serve very well for pre-evangelization, education about the Bible and faith, an introduction to Christianity, etc., but the fact of the matter is that media can only be a supplement for direct communication, for the personal address which always is the best means for inviting and proclaiming the salvific message of our Saviour.

Questions:

In this age of rugged individualism many prefer a virtual reality to an actual face-to-face reality; they prefer a virtual community to a real human community. How can we use media in such a way which overcomes the distance of passive consumption and encourage people to meet and join in the living community of the Christian congregation?

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Terry Schultz wrote:

Deep in the Peruvian Amazon, tribal communities usually contain no more than 50 villagers and are located about a day's walk from each other. How are we discipling believers residing in such widely-dispersed locations? We first needed to develop a deep trust between the villagers and us. Our invitation for one or two elders from each village to spend a week in Bible classes with us at a centrally located town at the edge of the jungle was eagerly accepted. Transportation, food, and lodging were all provided. Our course offerings progressed from adult instruction and Bible classes to lay leadership classes to pre-seminary and seminary classes.

Discipleship training must be compatible with the host culture. Tribal students are given many classes that incorporate storytelling. Classes that respond to students' specific spiritual concerns (black magic, white magic, jungle spirits, souls of the dead) have evolved into a "Dogmatics for Daily Living" course. Poster-size drawings and diagrams are used to illustrate bible stories, village situations, and fundamental Christian doctrines. These are tremendously popular. During class, students practice the presentations they will give in their villages.

In Haiti we follow a similar strategy, working with nearly a dozen orphanage directors who gather for a week of classes once a month. The directors crave story-based religion curriculum for their children. Classes that analyze Vodou beliefs in the light of Scripture are extremely popular. Posters and diagrams are eagerly received.

The discipleship models above are compatible with a missiological strategy of indigenity. No Peruvian or Haitian student is removed from his or her village for an extended period of time. Pastors and students continue to support themselves as they did before starting their education. The obvious drawback to this approach is that it takes a long time to complete a seminary education. Residential seminary programs have their advantages. The use of online education opens up entirely new avenues for delivering worship services, ongoing discipleship courses, and seminary education to widely dispersed communities.

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Jas Lonquist and Mike Klebig wrote:

As we don't work in the mission field, we'll discuss another angle - the discipleship challenge of recruiting and connecting the necessary media technology professionals to support missions. - M & J

When I was in the fourth grade at Mt. Calvary Lutheran School, a group came from New Ulm to share information about Martin Luther College. Following their presentation, the leader of the group asked students to say what they planned

to be when they grew up. Inspired, the children answered one by one: "Lutheran teacher." "Lutheran pastor." "Lutheran pastor." "Lutheran teacher." It was my turn. "Go-go dancer," I loudly announced. Seeing my teacher's horrified face, I quickly added "*Lutheran go-go dancer.*"

Later I puzzled, head down on my desk during recess, what I'd said wrong. I didn't want to be a teacher! Chalk made me cringe and I badly wanted a pair of white vinyl boots. And frankly, naïve though I was, I was on to something. God does not endow each person with the skills to be an effective pastor, teacher, or missionary. People from many disciplines are needed to work cooperatively in sharing the gospel.

Gospel outreach needs dedicated people skilled in technology, medicine, politics, scientific research, statistical analysis, engineering, construction, software development, international relations, art, music, media, and the entertainment industry. It requires people who simply earn money at jobs where they excel to help support those in the mission field. There are roles for everyone, and every Christian should play a role. We're compelled to use everything in our power – talents, resources, skills, time.

Ideas to consider: (a) Parents and teachers should strive to see children's **natural talents** and gifts, encourage them, educate them, and make it clear we all are needed and responsible for sharing the gospel. (b) **Don't burn out** volunteers. Make sure all are well-supported. (c) Look **beyond the obvious**. The best media technology volunteers in our church are the retired seniors. While training took longer for some because they were less familiar with the devices and software, they are unmatched in their commitment. They can also work hours other volunteers who are still in the workforce cannot. They inspire the younger volunteers and they've rewritten our vision of retirement. (d) Create **excellent training** materials to support new volunteers. (e) Find people who will consider **tithing on time** and career skills – four hours of volunteering their professional skills for every forty hours in the workplace. (f) **Focus on purpose** – not self-fulfillment although the

work can be fulfilling. Not to feel good about ourselves (although serving others is probably one of the best paths out of depression or grief) but because of our powerful mandate: *“Rescue those being led away to death, hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, ‘But we knew nothing about this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?”* Proverbs 24:11-12 Can’t say it more plainly than that.

SAMPLES OF WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING (For information only – not an endorsement of services or content)

- **Time Management Applications**
<http://blog.intuit.com/trends/top-10-time-management-ipad-and-iphone-apps>
2011 article featuring top time management apps for iPad and iPhone. Affiliation: Secular
- **LifeChurch.tv**
www.lifechurch.tv/leadership-development
Christian leadership development. Tools to discover strengths. Affiliation: Values statement on website
- **Vintage Life Church**
www.spiritualgiftstest.com
Assessment tool to discover gifts and strengths for ministry, church work. Affiliation: Statement of faith on website
- **The Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development**
www.churchleadership.org
Development programs. Mission strategies. Affiliation: Protestant Evangelical

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Gonzalo Delgadillo wrote:

Multi Language Publications has experience in gathering Christians by Internet.

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Paul Hartman wrote:

The MLP Coordinator for Latin America, Gonzalo Delgadillo, has much experience in developing a “virtual” or “online” church. The Spanish version

is sponsored by the WELS related congregation in Medellin, Colombia. While the Lord’s Supper has not been distributed in the setting of the “online” church, I personally think that it could be. Small groups meet via Skype in a variety of locations. A believing male who belongs to a congregation of our fellowship could administer the elements while a pastor leads the worship online.

Closely associated with online worship is the distance learning program at the discipleship level. The self-study materials entitled the *Bible Teachings Series* have involved more than 50,000 adults and children in South Asia and Latin America.

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John Lawrenz wrote:

Today we have a mass of humanity before us. There are more people alive today, arguably, than the sum total of all who have lived and died before us. All are souls for whom Christ died. All are objects of the Great Commission. It is an understatement to say that the mass of humanity demands the careful consideration of mass media to reach many.

Jesus mentioned that his presence would be wherever two or three are gathered in his name. If that name comes through a book having been read, a film having been seen, or an Internet blog having been joined, a small number of meters and inches between individuals is not essential to the concept of “congregation,” no more than many miles or hundreds of kilometers. Christ is the head of the true church which exists everywhere. It is our Lord’s intent that the Gospel be preached everywhere before the end comes. Isolated cells that form around the Gospel will seek out like-minded cells and gravitate toward each other wherever the Word is sown. Today that Word can be spoken in person, through print, over airwaves, and in digital form.

The theological question is one of nurture. The first Christian congregation in Jerusalem gathered regularly to hear the apostles’ doctrine,

in the breaking of bread, and to pray. Baptisms were part of this. We know the Lord's Supper, too, was part of this early church in Jerusalem. Later on Antioch, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, and many more were stirred in Word and sacrament to care for each other in all things sanctified by the Word and prayer. All strengthened and encouraged each other in the face of persecution.

Getting the Word out in Paul's time meant walking mega-miles on foot. It meant carefully written letters sent to the churches. It meant raising funds for the less fortunate. Disciples sorted out from among their midst new evangelists, preachers and teachers. The Lord who ascended gave gifts to the church then. We can be confident he will do the same to us today. With mass outreach through media must come a massive recruitment, training, and deployment of disciples to follow up the cells that the Holy Spirit creates.

I will venture an educated guess on what faces us. The sheer need for disciples will cause a crisis because the inherited institutions of the church have arisen, and are still maintained, in smaller contexts of scale. The Spirit knows this and will work to create new forms of the Gospel ministry, every bit as orderly and adequate as those that have come down from the past. The Spirit will do this among those who are into the Word and simultaneously pray in the Word and gather about the Sacraments. They will lay hands on those who know Jesus and are full of the Holy Spirit and they will go out to strengthen cells spawned by mass media. Baptisms will happen. The Lord's Supper will be celebrated. And the technology that made it possible in the first place will keep things in good Christian order. Some will resist the changes that occur. They will need to be won over patiently. It is my prayer that many will not resist and that some of us will live to see the day.

In East Asia young people from ELS and WELS are recreating a New Testament "atmosphere" in China. Theologically trained mentors are doing training using a mixture of blogs, personal visits, and on-line follow-up. Other Christian groups are doing similar things. It is a testimony to the Holy Spirit's own wisdom that God surprised us

when congregations sprung up almost spontaneously in several Chinese cities. This happened at a time when we thought seed sowing ministry was all that could be possible.

Time of Grace out of Milwaukee's St. Marcus congregation is on satellite TV. Currently the time slots are not ideal, but these can change, and we are working to have them change. We are making use of the Bible Teaching Series that was first written for prison inmates in the USA. Most of the booklets are now in Chinese. We are hopeful that all of them will eventually find themselves into bookstores with the knowledge and okay of the government. The more these and other things happen, the more we will hear of congregational cells forming and amalgamating. In anticipation we are equipping leaders for the groups that are forming, working around all the challenges that impede. If mistakes are made, they will be corrected and safeguards put in place to remove obstacles to the spread of the unconditional Gospel. If successes are experienced, they will all be to the glory of God!

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