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Transforming Missions Through Transformative Practices

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If he want to come and that's not what I want, I don't want to tell them no don't come.

But if you want to come, if this is important to your group to doing a mission, ok, but it's

not what I want. And not what I think about mission. So, for me the thing when we think

about mission and we are doing mission somewhere, it's oh what do you need to do

there. Asking them how can I help you? No[t], oh I'm going there, and I have a team and

I'm going to paint all the church. So, if for the leader, the mission is just about help with

the church like just paint, I think that always he going to do that.

-Thiago Rosa, pastor at Comunidade Betesda Igreja Cristo Church in Campinas,

Brazil

Introduction

The world and the church are experiencing incredible change. Globalization increasingly

connects the world in new and different ways. Every year over one and a half million Americans

participate in short-term trips alone (Ver Beek 478; Priest et al. 432). Not only are participant

numbers high, but annual spending on short-term trips is estimated to be five billion dollars

(Farrell 42). Yet, for all the change going on in the world, the shape of long-and short-term

missions has remained relatively untouched. Relegated to outdated models, missions

unintentionally continue to perpetuate ethnocentrism, paternalism, and colonialism. The

changing population of the global church requires the Western church to find new paradigms

for mission engagement. It involves rethinking the structure of missions, especially the impacts

of power and privilege. This shift necessitates moving toward equality, reciprocity, and

mutuality in relationship with global allies. This thesis is a call for mission participants from the

West, specifically the United States and Canada, to re-shape their understanding of and role in

engagement with missions. It is also a call for voices from the global South to lead the church into a new future of missions. What would it look like to envision a new way forward that prioritizes the dreams, hopes, and freedom for those who live in oppression? What if the idols people have made of missions were destroyed and replaced with a new vision? It is my firm belief that this is possible. But, there must be a willingness to sacrifice the way things have been for what could be. Only by working together will a new way forward be found.

At the age of 9, I went on my first short-term missions trip to Tampico, Mexico. This formative experience opened my eyes to the world's disparities and laid a burden on my heart to do something in response. Since that first trip, I have participated in several other domestic and international short-term trips. In addition, from July 2012 to August 2013, I also served as an on-site coordinator for Bethany First Church of the Nazarene in Eswatini, Africa. It was especially through this experience that I became aware of the issues in missions practice. Ever since that experience, I have been searching for better ways for churches to engage in missions work together. This thesis is a product of my personal journey wrestling with my experience with missions. The research for this thesis is qualitative in nature and is comprised of personal interviews conducted from May to August 2018, as well as fieldwork that took place in July 2018. For my fieldwork, I traveled as a participant-observer on a short-term missions trip to Comunidade Betesda Igreja Cristo Church in Campinas, Brazil with Lubbock First Church of the Nazarene.

In the next section, a snapshot of the state of the modern church will be explored. This will be followed by a brief overview of mission history. Understanding the historical context of missions lays the groundwork to examine the current state of missions. Specifically, the

structure of short- and long-term missions, as well as faith-based missions organization and non-faith-based humanitarian work will be explored. Knowledge of the structure of missions will illuminate specific issues related to missions language and short- and long-term missions work. After a discussion of the issues, the focus will turn toward the future of missions. This final section will discuss how changes to people's understanding of language and power and privilege must inform the practices of solidarity, reciprocity, mutuality, and equality in global relationships. Before walking into the future, it is important to take note of the current state of the world as it relates to missions and the church.

State of the Church

Over the last century, the church has grown exponentially in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America. In the United States, Canada, and Europe it has continued to decline in membership and growth. The places where the church is growing have had little influence on the nature and shape of long- and short-term missions. As referenced by Priest et al. *The Protestant Mission Handbook* defines long-term missionaries as people who are expected to serve four years or more in an overseas location (431). The length of stay for short-term missionaries varies widely from two weeks to one year of service (Priest et al. 431). Short-term missions have continued to grow in popularity while the sending of long-term missionaries has experienced decline since the mid-1990s (Jaffarian 35). Part of this growing trend is due in part to the effects of globalization, which enable people to travel further and faster than ever before and live connected lives via technology. While there is not a universally accepted definition of globalization, here it refers to "the increasingly interconnected character of the political, economic, and social life of the peoples on this planet" (Groody 14). Globalization has also

resulted in an ever-growing divide between the rich and the poor. The net result of these realities is that people from Western (global North) churches now know more about the needs of the world and have access to the resources necessary to travel to try to alleviate them. Western Christians also have a historical narrative to support their belief that they possess the skills, resources, and capabilities to bring change and alleviate the poverty and suffering of the world's impoverished. However, the way that missions continue to be conducted remains flawed.

Globalization

Globalization today makes it easier to travel further, faster, and more easily than ever before. The ability to learn about the world through the Internet, news, and social media provides new glimpses into the world that were previously rare. Mere minutes after the fire broke out in the Notre Dame Cathedral, I was made aware of the breaking news via an app on my phone. I was also able to see, through photographs posted online, the destruction caused by the bomb cyclone that hit Mozambique in March 2019. Through WhatsApp I can stay in touch with friends in Brazil and Eswatini. In spite of these advances, missions work continues to be plagued by incorrect understandings and assumptions about other cultures. All of the access gained through innovation and travel has led to the "globalization of empathy" (K. Priest 274). This term refers to experiences short-term missions participants have spurring them on to invite others to join them in caring and meeting the needs of the impoverished. The ability to know about world events almost immediately coupled with ease of travel and the compelling belief that the world's problems need a Western intervention in order to achieve success, are the backbone of the issues facing current missions practice. Further reflection on the

relationship between globalization and missions demonstrates that the importance of understanding and working well with people from other cultures cannot be understated.

Craig Ott explains that globalization demands that people think through the effects that our connections have on one another. This notion is especially critical as churches work together in missions-related activities. Instead of holding to one specific method, efforts must be shifted, and lessons contextualized to the culture. It is foolish to think one can merely transfer wholesale ideas or techniques without taking into account the specifics of a culture. Ott described this thinking as the "McDonaldization of ministry" and the "hybridization of culture" (44). Here he means that just as McDonald's is easily identifiable and transferable to other countries, so too many people think the same of church programs and training. However, rather than being transplanted wholesale to other countries, mission participants must first take a critical look and contextualize their understandings and work to a specific local culture (Ott 47).

Dimensions of Culture

Culture underlies every interaction between people. The Hofstede Insights website defines culture as "the collective mental programming of the human mind which distinguishes one group from another" ("Description"). The cultures of the individuals who make up the global North and global South churches provide an additional layer of understanding for the scope of issues in missions. Cultural experts Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov provide understanding into existing cultural differences. Understanding and insight into these dimensions help prevent cross-cultural relationships from becoming mired in differences. It enables diverse groups of people to work together through their unique cultural expressions.

The cultural dimensions explored in the book are: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long- and short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint.

While each dimension is important to understand, here the focus is on individualism versus collectivism. Unlike individualistic societies, in collectivist societies, group interest takes precedence over individual interest. Collectivist societies make up the majority of societies, while individualist societies are in the minority (Hofstede et. al 90-91). Hofstede's Individualism scores from the global North countries of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States range from New Zealand at 79 to the United States at 91 ("Description"). In the global South, China has a score of 20, Kenya 25, Brazil 38, and India 48. Surprisingly, Hofstede et al. found that the national wealth of a country indicated whether it would score high on the Individualism dimension (94). They also discovered that "individualist societies…consider it superior to other forms of mental software" (127). In other words, a country's wealth implies that its citizens are more individualistic, which also means that they consider their way of life superior to others. Hofstede et. al's findings provide vital insights into why missions work has been heavily criticized for approaches that perpetuate colonialism, paternalism, and ethnocentrism. The mental software of the global North perpetuates the idea that their way of life is best. As a result, it influences the way they relate to and interact with people from the global South in missions work. Jenkins states, "Debates over faith and culture often focus on attitudes to specifically European matters (136). He deems this the result of "the long Western dominance of Christianity" (Jenkins 136). Thus, people on missions trips look at the lifestyles and issues that people are dealing with, and mistakenly attribute the differences to the

shortcomings of the other culture. As a result, the dignity of global people is stripped away and tarnishes the establishment of a healthy and mutually-reciprocal relationship from the outset. Thus, learning to understand and work with cultural differences is now more important than ever, especially as globalization brings different countries closer and closer together. Part of growing in understanding necessitates a look at the history of missions.

History of Mission

From the early church age to the present day, missions have evolved over time in relation to the changing dynamics of the world. An important offering of these historical perspectives comes from Steven B. Bevans and Roger P. Shcroeder. In their book *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, they write about six distinct ages of missions:

1) "Early Church" (100-301 A.D.)

2) "Monastic Movement" (319-907 A.D.)

3) "Mendicant Movement" (1000-1453 A.D.)

4) "Age of Discovery" (1492-1773 A.D.)

5) "Age of Progress" (1792-1914 A.D.)

6) "Twentieth Century" (1919-1991 A.D.) (Bevans and Schroeder v-vii).

The Age of Progress, or ecumenical era, is where the historical narrative of modern missions began. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, William Carey, Adonorum and Ann Judson, David Livingstone, and Hudson Taylor left their homes with all of their worldly possessions. They headed to far-flung locations to bring 'Good News' to the heathens and the pagan lands of Africa, Asia, and Central and South America. The narratives and motivations that drove those original missionaries to leave their homes continued to influence the twentieth

century and present-day missions. Despite knowing that these modern narratives contribute to the perpetuation of unintended ethnocentrism, colonialism, and paternalism, change has been slow to take root. New paradigms and narratives that promote equality in relationships and healthy relational dynamics have yet to find their way into mainstream missions.

A historic moment in modern-day missions took place in 1971 when Rev. Dr. John Gatu, from Kenya, called for a moratorium on missions activity from Western contexts. Gatu stated that the moratorium was an opportunity for churches "in the developing world….to feel a part of God's mission. Not only to themselves, but to other people…It was a challenge to ourselves to engage in God's mission" instead of relying on outside sources of funding and influence (Reese 252). Many leaders in the missions world, including the revered Dr. Billy Graham, misunderstood the meaning behind Gatu's call and took it as a threat to their power and influence (251). As a result, indigenous churches were able to raise their own funds for pastoral salaries and building projects and experienced a time of spiritual renewal (254). Gatu's moratorium marked the end of the "colonial mission paradigm" and ushered in a postcolonial paradigm of missions (245-246). Despite the good that came from Gatu's moratorium, it did not fully put an end to the colonial mindset. In many ways, the explosion of short-term missions work has only solidified the fact that the colonial mindset is still very much alive and well within Western churches. This mindset believes the world needs Western intervention so that the poor might be saved from their circumstances and changed for the better. These types of narratives are what drive missions in the twenty-first century, to resemble a more modern-day "recreational activity" rather than actual missionary service (Livengood, Personal Interview). The church in the global North continues to believe that by simply going to a place and bringing

our version of 'culture' to it, it will become better. Rather than allowing and believing that

churches in the global South are capable, the global North church has continued to play the

part of a nagging spouse who constantly, perhaps with mostly good intentions, tries to change

their partner without learning to appreciate who they are. Gatu's historical call for a

moratorium took place less than 50 years ago. In the time since Gatu's call, the world has

experienced great change but the ways that global North and global South churches interact

has changed very little. Despite the lack of change, now more than ever the church in the global

North is in a position to humble itself and truly let the church in the global South lead it into a

new era of missions.

Changing World and Missions

This opportunity for change comes as a result of the world's globalization and the

changing face of Christianity (Reese 246). The reality of the growth and leadership outside of

the West, though, has not fully infiltrated or influenced how missions work is being done in

light of these new developments. As the church continues to grow outside of the West, it may

once again be time to look towards Gatu's moratorium to help shape missions of the future.

The reasons behind the moratorium still hold true and have relevance for missions work today.

Power struggles still plague mission relationships and likely always will, and difficulties always

arise when different people from different cultures work together. In order to move into a new

era of missions that is marked by mutuality, reciprocity, and equality, people from the West and

the global South must allow themselves to be transformed. Simply put, if "North Americans

[want] to be effectively involved in the [global South] church, there must be a reorientation of

our thinking" (Borthwick 14).

Jehu Hanciles points out, "Christianity [is now] a predominantly non-Western religion, with Africa and Latin America as major heartlands (123). Hanciles goes on to say, "This dramatic 'shift' has yet to fully engage American missionary consciousness" (123). Part of the issue is because Western church congregants still think missions is "passing along our knowledge, faith, and finances without seeking to listen to, understand, or learn from others" (Barnes 6). This issue is made even more apparent because the new strains of Christianity from the global South do not always bear resemblance to Christianity in the global North (Jenkins 134). Global South churches are interested in supernatural workings, prophecy, healing, and visions (Jenkins 134). In 2018 my team witnessed these elements during our short-term missions trip to Brazil. A woman who was said to be a leader of the Satanic church came to the church's evening prayer service several nights in a row. Our leaders forewarned us about what we might see and hear from her as the pastors worked to free her from the demons living inside of her. It was my and many of my teammates first up-close encounter with anyone who was demon-possessed since it is not a common occurrence in North American churches. The very issues that churches in the global South deal with, like demonic possession in Brazil or human sacrifice and witchcraft in Eswatini are so far removed from the consciences of Western Christians that it can lead to difficulty understanding and accepting global South forms of Christianity as right or true. Even small differences like expressiveness in worship or length of time spent in prayer can be difficult to accept as normal. As a result of these differences, missionary leaders are caught in the struggle between educating participants on how to make sense and even accept these new forms of Christianity, while balancing the fact that these same people (Western Christians) are the ones who financially support global North churches' international missions work (Barnes 6).

These new forms of faith can look so completely different that mutual relationships built on solidarity, reciprocity, and equality continue to be plagued by the "latent feelings of superiority and paternalism" from global North to global South churches (Barnes 5). These issues are real and represent a real challenge to the future of missions. Acknowledging the past and present is imperative in the quest for new mission paradigms. This includes understanding the differences in Christian faith between the global North and global South. In order to understand what needs to change, it is important to examine in greater detail what modern-day missions work looks like.

Structure of Modern Missions

Generally speaking, when people today hear the word missions they likely think of two distinct elements. They either think of short-term mission trips or long-term missionaries who they perceive to live in exotic and perhaps dangerous locations and sacrifice a 'normal' life to serve and tell others about God. The shape of each of each of these entities has changed greatly since their inception (Lamberty "Mission as" 296). In terms of long-term service, it is no longer necessary for missionaries to leave their homes and say goodbye to their old lives. Instead, they are able to stay in close contact with family and friends through technology. They and their family members can visit each another with greater ease due to advances in air travel. The differences in short-term missions are similar. They have enabled people of all ages to see different parts of the world that were once unattainable to travel to in their lifetime. As an example, while in Brazil, a couple brought their three children with them, the youngest of whom was five years old. Suffice it to say, while modern mission activity retains its shape, the makeup of it continues to change.

Long-Term Missions

Kim Lamberty declares, "The old way of doing mission, marked by the commitment of life-long missionaries, still exists but it is diminishing" ("Mission as" 296). At one point during my childhood, I remember feeling called to serve as a long-term missionary. This idea set in not long after my first international short-term trip to Mexico. During my teenage years I read the missionary stories of Jim and Elisabeth Elliott and Amy Carmichael and was allured by the romantic and adventurous appeal that living in a foreign land held. This idea was one I held long into early adulthood. It even came up when I was dating my husband; I had to let him know that I felt that I might be called to live and serve overseas. Yet, for many others in North America, long-term service overseas did not become their reality.

At the same time that North American missionary service is declining, Lamberty points out that most new foreign missionaries are coming from the continents of Asia and Africa ("Mission As" 296). It is not only these continents though; South America (specifically Brazil) is also sending many long-term missionaries. During my fieldwork research in Brazil I learned that multiple people in the church's youth group were interested in serving as missionaries. In fact, two of the leaders of their youth group were gone for the week because they were attending a conference on missions. One of the youths who was there, Isabela, was passionate about serving as a missionary one day. She had gone so far as to create country cards for all the countries in the world. On each card she listed facts and ways to pray for each country. Instead of going out into the world, the world is now coming back to the West and bringing with it the good news. These global South participants represent a new breed of missionaries who can adapt more quickly and live less expensively than their Western counterparts. Their social

location offers them a perspective on sacrifice and commitment with which the Western way of living has grown unfamiliar. However, there are Western missions organizations who promote simpler lifestyles for their long-term missionaries. In a research interview I conducted with Jake Page, Missions Pastor at Lubbock First Church of the Nazarene, he shared about a couple he knew who lived and worked as missionaries in Nepal. They resolved not to own anything that their Nepalese neighbors would not have access to, right down to bug spray (Page). The impact of that decision was made real when local authorities questioned the couple about their work. Their neighbors quickly came to their defense and said, "These people are Nepalese, they are just like us" (Page). Instead of being asked to leave the country, they were left alone and able to continue their work. This example though appears to be the exception rather than the case. As a result, instead of long-term missionary service and commitment, many people from the global North have taken to participating in short-term missions work.

Short-Term Missions

Short-term missions have exploded in recent years, but accounts of the growing trend vary. In 1989, Kurt Ver Beek estimated that approximately 125,000 North Americans participated in short-term missions trips (478). Less than a decade later in 1996, Priest et. al estimated similar numbers at around 100,000 participants (432). Entering the twenty-first century, short-term participation reached the level of millions of participants each year. Ver Beek estimated that in 2003, between 1 and 4 million people took part in short-term missions (478). In 2006, Robert Wuthnow estimated that approximately 1.6 million people participated in a short-term trip (Priest et al. 432). The reality is likely that between 500,000 and 1.5 million people per year are participating in short-term missions. None of these figures include data on

mission trips within the United States.

Today, a typical short-term mission trip lasts from one to two weeks depending on the destination. These trips are project-based, built on the premise of partnership, driven by a desire to help, and focused on doing work in countries that are easy to travel to, but also tend to already be highly evangelized. For example, trips to Mexico, Honduras, and Haiti tend to be some of the most popular destinations for short-term trips (Park). From my own experiences I have traveled on short-term trips twice to Mexico, once to Guatemala, and four times to Eswatini, Africa. While the work of short-term trips attempts to be strategic, the very structure of short-term trips prevents them from being so (Tennent). The leadership for short-term trips tends to be provided by unpaid and untrained volunteers who may not even speak the language of the local people (Farrell 42). This was the case for my husband and I when we served as coordinators for the Eswatini Partnership with Bethany First Church of the Nazarene. We raised our own funds for the year and received no formal language training, yet we were tasked with planning for six short-term teams during our year of service. The length of stay for non-collegiate type teams was about 12 days, including travel. That left four or five days to do "work" which in reality left little time to accomplish much of anything. These trends in short-term missions contribute to the crisis that is facing the way global North Christians participate in missions work (Farrell 38). Unless change takes place, short-term trips will continue to be plagued by ineffectiveness disguised as well-meaning action.

Faith-Based Missions Organizations

Beyond denominational and individual church missions that can operate long and short-term missions work, there are numerous faith-based missions organizations that provide and

connect people with an opportunity to serve either locally or overseas in some capacity. Youth With a Mission, Adventures in Missions, Footsteps, the World Race, One Collective, and TEAM are just a few examples of these faith-based organizations. There are other umbrella-type organizations, like The Traveling Team, that also connect individuals and groups to multiple service organizations. On The Traveling Team website, there is a listing of 13 organizations with which an individual could serve ("Mission Agencies"). Each of these organizations has a specific focus and is vying for the attention of people hungry for a chance to make a difference in the world.

Non-faith Based Organizations

In addition to the faith-based organizations, there are also non-faith-based NGOs and organizations providing people with service trip opportunities. Doctors Without Borders and the Peace Corps are prominent examples of non-faith-based organizations that deliver an experience similar to the work done on a missions trip. The Peace Corps in particular is different in that participants live with a local family, versus a missions trip where a team usually stays in a hotel or hostel of some sort. These thousands of organizations all exist to provide opportunities for people to serve and try to make a difference in the world around them.

These various modern structures of missions type work are made possible through the effects of globalization. Understanding the structure of modern missions is only part of the equation when it comes to working towards new paradigms in missions. The next necessary step is examining the issues in current missions practice.

Issues with Missions Language

The issues in current missions practice relate to the language of missions as well as the structure of short and long term missions. Author Michael Stroope contends that the way people talk about mission "determines *who we are* and *what we do*" (xiii). He goes on to say, "Language forms identity as words shape and express beliefs and ideals, choices and purpose" (Stroope xii). For Stroope, the language of missions is murky at best (4). Over time the corresponding terms *missions*, *missiology*, *Missio Dei*, and *missional* have caused confusion rather than clarity. The differing understandings of each of these words negatively impacts people's ability to "faithful[ly] witness to Jesus Christ" (27). For some people in the church, missions is based solely on the idea of evangelism and telling people about Jesus. For others it extends to working for social justice and caring for the poor. Questions arise as to whether missions should be focused on local communities or distant lands, building up and supporting churches in other places, or some combination of these.

There are other issues with language used in missions. Namely, word choices that shape other people's perceptions of people from the global South can unintentionally imply superiority from one group over another. When people are thought of as 'lost' or 'poor,' every part of a person's interaction with them is filtered through that lens. The way that they live and the choices that they make are all filtered through the view that they are lost or poor and need outside intervention. In missions this plays out with people from the global North assuming a place over people from the global South. Language choice also reveals the lack of situational contextualization that global North participants need in order to truly understand the realities

of global South friends. During a University summer trip my husband and I led to Eswatini, a female student asked whether they had any amusement parks in the country. Her question revealed that indeed she lacked a true understanding of the realities of the country. Other examples of this lack of understanding occur when mission trip participants return home and share about their experiences of how they were changed or what they learned through their experience. From Kurt Ver Beek's research in Honduras, he noted that the most common response from participants about what they had learned was that the Honduran people were "'happy despite their material poverty" (491). From this response, he concluded that not only are missions organizations failing to educate participants about the realities of the lives of global residents, but more alarmingly, this type of verbiage is a way for global North missions participants to justify not doing more to address those realities (Ver Beek 491). The words people use to talk about missions are important. Borrowing an idea from Stroope, finding a better way forward must involve "reimagining witness, service, and love in conceptual and linguistic frameworks that allow for creativity and freedom" (26). Re-thinking mission language is imperative and relates to the present issues facing short-term missions.

Issues in Short-Term Missions

The issues facing short-term missions relate to and impact one another. The first issue is that short-term mission relationships, often through partnerships, tend to be initiated from global North churches. This stems from a need to "satisfy the postmodern desire for authentic personal experience" (LeFeber 47). As is the case for the trip I took to Brazil, the conversations about a potential partnership were initiated from North to South. Jake Page reached out to Thiago Rosa to see if they could bring a team to Brazil and explore a potential partnership.

Another example comes from the Eswatini Partnership. Through a connection with Bethany First Church, a church in California initiated its own partnership in Eswatini. In conversation, Jon Livengood Missions Pastor at Flint Central Church of the Nazarene shared that they are also in the process of "exploring the opportunity to partner with Puerto Rico because Puerto Rico is becoming less trendy...[since] it's not in the news anymore...less teams are going now" (Livengood). North American churches are actively interested in pursuing these types of partnerships with global South churches. I believe that underlying the growth of these North to South partnerships is the idea that perhaps for the first time in the history of missions, short-term mission trips are really being done more for the benefit of the missionaries than for the people they go to serve (Borthwick 136). Global North churches see this type of activity as an ingredient for the spiritual development of their congregants. They want to offer people an experience to see and respond to the needs of the world. This is the same narrative that drives the savior complex of modern missions.

D.L. Mayfield, author of *Assimilate or Go Home*, illuminates this narrative through her personal stories of working with Somali Bantu refugees. She writes that the assumption "we [will] make everything better based on our presence alone" is misguided (134). This type of thinking cements the narrative that Western Christians possess the power and answers to other people's problems; that their way is the right way. A person's expectations of how others should respond to offers of help can unfortunately turn into just "another form of oppression" they experience (166). With the narratives guiding missions work today, participants all too easily turn into "just another person that wants something from another person, [and]... is expecting a certain reaction from them" for the kindness that they have been shown (166). This

mindset that Western involvement is key to solving the world's problems ultimately leads to

"oppress[ing] people in the kindest way possible" because it is clothed in good intentions (167).

These mindsets and narratives are perpetuated by the "decentralized mode" of missions

leadership, which "limits mission decision-makers to acts of charity and prohibits them from

'going deeper'" (Farrell 42). In my research, I discovered that Parkview Christian Church, a non-

denominational, three-campus, mega church outside of Chicago, Illinois, is representative of

many churches involved in short-term missions across America. While sitting in the large, air-

conditioned lobby of Parkview, Sean Mixson, director of missions, explained that they utilize

volunteer leaders to head up short-term trips to their partners around the world. On Christian

college campuses each year, over spring and summer breaks, professors and other staff

volunteer their time to lead students on trips. Inherently, these types of trips need to be easy

enough to fit the skills and abilities of a wide range of people. They tend to focus on what the

members of the group can do, rather than what the receiving host needs or wants. This was the

case for several of the trips we planned in Eswatini. When we would meet with our supervisor

to plan out the work for short-term teams, the focus was on how to put everyone to work so

that they felt useful. This was difficult when teams included an age range from teenagers up to

people in their late seventies. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why vacation Bible schools

(VBS) and low-skill construction projects like painting are so popular for short-term teams. They

enable all people to be involved and to feel as if they are doing meaningful work when in reality

they are just being given a task to justify their visit. These trends ultimately stem from that shift

in decision making from long-term practitioners to lay leadership (Farrell 39). The mission

leaders of this new era are "less...trained, less connected...and operate within the constraints of

shorter time frames" (41). They often lack the required understanding and training in

missiology to shape the decisions and broader scope of work for successful relationships.

The issues in short-term missions are also made possible because people with access to

monetary resources can raise the money or pay their own way for missions experiences. Their

affluence and position in the world enable them to see the poverty of people in an up-close and

personal way. Authors Stefan Senders and Allison Truitt explain, "Money allows proximity, even

as it establishes distance" (qtd. in Moodie 150). The local people with whom they interact and

serve know that just by being able to come on such a trip, these people enjoy a certain level of

wealth. Though these experiences may in fact have value, Kurt Ver Beek's post-Hurricane Mitch

study attests, long-term change in both participants' and recipients' lives was short-lived (477).

There is danger in giving permission for people to feel that they are doing good by

serving in this way without also spurring them on to changed ways of life or continued advocacy

once they return home. Author Kim Lamberty boldly proclaims, "It cannot be the case that God

allows unspeakable misery to continue so that the privileged may have the opportunity to

serve" ("Proclaiming" 89). It is irresponsible for people to participate in short-term missions

without also returning home and continuing to advocate and work towards long-term solutions

for the issues they have seen. The experience cannot simply become one highlight among many

in a person's spiritual journey; it must spur them on to advocate and speak up for those who do

not have a voice to share their sufferings. Unless these types of changes infiltrate short-term

missions, the desire for connection and "yearning for authenticity" will continue to necessitate

that the differences between the global North and global South remain and "never be filled"

("Proclaiming" 160). Ultimately, this perpetuates an unhealthy cycle of relational dependency that exploits the poor for the experience and benefit of the rich.

While conducting fieldwork in Brazil last summer, I was confronted in a very real way with Moodie's argument that the desire for authentic experiences necessitates unequal relationships. The wife of the mission's pastor, Mimi Rosa, and the current pastor of the Brazilian church, Thiago, are siblings. The team's time at the Brazilian church was focused on co-hosting a VBS for local community children with congregants from the church. The city of Campinas is considered a wealthy suburb of Sao Paolo. In contrast to my past experiences on a mission trip to Mexico and my time spent living in Eswatini, Africa, there were no apparent and immediate 'needs' evident that the team was meeting. This experience lacked the dynamism and excitement that I had felt on previous trips. I kept questioning, "what is our purpose in being here"? Jake, the mission's pastor from Texas, shared that part of this trip was to examine whether there may be potential for a future partnership. It was interesting to observe how the other trip participants worked to ascribe meaning to the activities in which they engaged. Aside from Mimi, no one else on the team spoke Portuguese and only a few of the Brazilian congregants spoke English. This made for interesting dynamics because in many aspects everyone was on equal footing with one another. The trip was meaningful for me because it allowed me another perspective into the different dynamics of missions; however, I would venture to say that it has had little meaning or impact on the rest of the trip participants' lives since their return. This is perhaps because they were not as 'needed' as they might have been in a community where poverty, death, and disease were the lived realities of the church congregants with whom they interacted. The team came because they wanted to "act on their

concern [and] their caring" (Moodie 158). But, because the group was more or less on equal footing with people from the church, the hero narrative, that may have driven them to come in the first place, had to be revised. This revision was necessary so that when they returned home and shared their experiences they would be able to maintain the illusion that their presence was needed in order to attract others to participate in missions and justify their trip in the first place (159).

All the issues mentioned above are simply a continuation of the ones that caused Rev. Dr. John Gatu to call for a moratorium. Although often unintentional and unrecognized, these issues perpetuate the ongoing oppression of the global South church. The actions from people in the global North make it appear as though they do not believe that Christians in the global South can do their own spiritual development and solve their own problems without outside help and influence. At a 2009 missiological conference held at Trinity Evangelical School, the Reverend Oscar Muriu of Kenya called Western churches to "Do your own spiritual formation at home!" instead of letting the African church sponsor it (LeFeber 48). Muriu's criticism had far-reaching implications and is worth further consideration. Important questions to ask are: Can Western churches continue to justify the cost, energy, and resources that go into short-term trips if lasting change in the lives of participants is minimal to nonexistent months or years down the road? Can the Western church let go of the "savior complex" and find new ways to relate to, learn from, and support churches in the global South? How can change come to missions if people's relationships with one another require that the inequalities between the North and the South remain in place? (Moodie 160). All of these questions are important to contemplate as new paradigms in missions are considered. But, the issues facing missions are

not reserved only for short-term missions; long-term missions also face their own unique set of issues.

Issues in Long-Term Missions

The issues facing long-term missions are related to the structure of missions organizations and Western missionaries difficulty in assimilating to other cultures. In many ways, missions organizations can be thought of as social enterprises. According to authors Kevin Lynch and Julius Walls Jr., a social enterprise is a business "that seeks, above all, to make the world a better place" (vii). By their very nature, missions organizations are focused on improving people's lives. Missionaries do this by meeting people's physical and spiritual needs. Although these are generally non-profit organizations, they also tend to face the same funding issues as traditional for-profit businesses. Many missions organizations are actually shaped like traditional business corporations, but smaller in scale. Author Scott Bessenecker, shares that the reasons behind the expense of Western missionaries are these "primary sending structures" that dominate long-term missions work (84). These organizations require specific levels of funding to continue their work, and it is becoming increasingly difficult even for people from the American middle class to raise enough money to work long-term as a missionary (43). He elaborates, "It is relatively rare to find Western mission organizations that take bivocational ministry seriously or who seek to minimize living cost[s] (84). With middle class American having trouble raising funds, it becomes nearly impossible for missionaries from the global South to become a part of these organizations. These monetary requirements are keeping global North and global South participants from being able to serve.

Expenses are not the only issue in long-term missions. Western missionaries do not blend in as easily, nor are they as welcomed into new cultures as missionaries from the global South. The difficulty in assimilating to another culture was exemplified by the experiences of Jeremy and Reetu Height. They recently decided to return to the United States after serving for a little over a year as missionaries for the Nazarene church in Senegal and Ghana. On a Skype call just before they publicly shared their decision to return home, Reetu shared "the bottom line is they [Africans] view missionaries as white people that try to adapt. But they can't because they're not African...that's the truth. And [the] people that are put in leadership in the church are...missionaries who are white". They went on to explain that they have faced difficulties in building relationships with people because they did not always know what people's motivations were for befriending them. They asked themselves, " 'Do people want to be our friends because they like us?' or 'Do people want to be our friends because we're missionaries...we have money and power?'" (Height). Ultimately, not knowing the answers to these questions led them to feel extremely lonely. The experiences of the Heights are not isolated ones. Even when my husband and I lived in Africa, we also bristled when people who we were close to, would ask us for money or present us with a project proposal. It made us feel like our relationship with that person was based on the transactional value that we offered. It felt like others viewed us as a means to an end. Our skin color and country of origin magically granted us an elevated status in people's eyes. Although we were only able to serve for one year, we also quickly learned how difficult it can be to assimilate into another culture, not only because of the differences in our skin colors, but because of the values that our cultures are based on. Culture in the United States is so different and so focused on individuality that it does

not make it easy for people to live and work in more collectivist societies. Someone from another culture or even a national citizen would have fit in more easily to the culture than the Heights or my husband and me. Yet, missionary leadership continues to be dominated by white Westerners. Perhaps this perpetuation of white leadership is related to a lack of trust in national leaders or simply the result of laziness in re-tooling missionary structures to accommodate voices from non-dominant cultures. Whether or not there is a single underlying cause, the issues facing long-term missions are based upon outdated organizational structures and leadership ideas that are not representative of the current state of the church. Because of this, new models of missions are needed moving forward.

Moving Forward

Roberto Zwetsch, professor and Latin American missiologist, writes, "Every Christian generation must redefine its understanding of mission" since "the Bible has no 'laws' of mission or a detailed 'plan' on how to do it" (10). The new generation of Christians engaged in missions has the unique requirement of dealing with new, never before seen or experienced issues. Moving into the future, missions will continue to be influenced by the changing face of Christianity. The church in the global North will likely continue to decline, resulting in more and more Christians living in the global South. It is this global South church that will set the pace for what Christianity will look like in the foreseeable future. The implications of this should not be lost on missions practitioners but must be taken into account as new ways forward in missions are identified. Even with this knowledge, Hanciles admits that mission scholars and practitioners do not have a good track record for predicting Christianity's "future trends" (124). If the future cannot be predicted, then a path forward must be flexible, fit with what is

happening in the world now, and be capable of allowing all voices to speak into and shape the future. The postures and practices of participants and practitioners must be such that they help people learn their way into the future.

The onus of responsibility to re-shape mission paradigms lies in the hands of people in the global North. This may seem contradictory being that the growth of the church is happening in the global South; however, it is the dominant beliefs and perspectives of North American missions that need to be addressed more than anything. These are issues of the heart, which require continuous personal transformation that leads to greater interdependence with global friends. Interdependence recognizes that "no single community, country, or even continent contains all the resources and ingenuity for flourishing" (Bessenecker 152). Working toward the future requires Christians in the global North and global South to reorient their understanding of their relational role in the field of missions work. An imperative question to ask when looking to the future of missions work is, "What can be done together that could not be done alone?" Answering this question requires healthy missions dynamics built upon solidarity, reciprocity, equality, and mutuality as well as re-thinking the effects of power and privilege on the structure of missions.

Language

An important step toward reoriented thinking starts with changing the way people understand and use mission language. Authors Tom Kelley and David Kelley share that changing "attitudes and behaviors" first starts with changing the words with which something is talked about and associated (198). When it comes to improving missions, it is important to examine the vernacular of missions because "the words we choose...shape...our thought patterns"

(Kelley 198). Jennifer McClellan, former director of student missions at Olivet Nazarene University, recently moved from Illinois to Hawaii. While on her way to her new job as a kindergarten teacher in a low-income school she shared that "The M word," missions, "is going out" (McClellan). She went on to say that people are moving away from the word missions because "it sounds like that going and helping somewhere. It's ministry and it should be ongoing ministry" (McClellan). Her sentiments were echoed in the words of Jon Livengood, Missions Pastor at Flint Central Church of the Nazarene in Flint, Michigan. In conversation, he shared that Flint Central sees "mission as the work of Christ, whatever that is or whatever that entails" (Livengood). For Livengood and McClellan, the definition of missions is folded into the idea of ministry. While this is one idea for making needed changes, Stroope offers a compelling argument for returning to Kingdom language. The focus of Kingdom language is the biblical theme that culminates with Jesus' message about the coming of God's kingdom (Stroope 358). Stroope shares "rather than preaching mission, advocating for mission, mobilizing for mission, or revising mission, the biblical injunction is to proclaim, promote, and live the kingdom of God" (Stroope 361). Kingdom language keeps missions grounded in the narrative of God's coming reign rather than elevating it to a status that competes with or obscures that message (362). Kingdom language has transforming power because it "transcends routine speech and programmatic agendas" (368). Kingdom language does not put emphasis on the actions of humankind; rather, it focuses on the supernatural workings of God (368-369). The adoption of Kingdom language "prompts those who follow Christ to live as pilgrims who give witness to the coming reign of God. They are not called *missionaries*, and their life purpose is not named as *mission*" (376). Returning to kingdom language overcomes the shortcomings of mission

language and broadens Christians' understanding and responsibility for how we ought to live in the world as believers and in relation to one another. It emphasizes that only God transforms lives and that everyone is invited to be transformed. No one group or body of believers has power over others, but all are equal in the eyes of God. The importance of changed language becomes more evident as global North Christians recognize that their illusive monopoly on the Christian faith is stripped away. This is not an easy change; in fact, it will challenge all the presuppositions held about the ideas of mission. This transformation of language is a necessary requirement for individuals who seek to participate in the Kingdom of God.

Power and Privilege

Changing the language of missions is just the first step toward its transformation. As language evolves, people's mindsets about power and privilege will also begin to evolve. Drawing from his personal experiences working with native people in Canada, Rev. Ray Aldred, director of the Indigenous Studies Program at the Vancouver School of Theology, offers a re-imagining of missions considering the historical issues of mission activity he has witnessed. He calls for the Western church to partake in three shifts in its understanding of missions to move toward a future based on justice, rather than charity motivated by pity. These shifts are "truth-telling," "listening and confessing," and "reconciliation as a lifestyle" (Aldred 193-94, 97). Although his experience is limited to North American missions work, it has implications for the larger and more global aspects of missions activity. His words and ideas hold true for the entirety of Western churches as they seek to engage with global people in missions work. Before the church can move forward, first it must own up to past issues in missions as a necessary part of remaking missions.

First, for "truth-telling" the global North church must own and continue to bring to light all the ways in which missions of past and present inflict harm on the people they intend to serve. In doing so, space is opened for the church in the global South to share openly and honestly the ways that assumptions and mission practices have hurt them. One such issue that continues to surface is the thought that "Western progress is the progress of the Kingdom of God" (Aldred 193). The expansive growth of the church in the global South has forever changed the face of Christianity. The Western church has not ever held a monopoly on the keys to the Kingdom. As churches and individuals seek to engage in missions work, they must first make room to hear the stories of others and listen intently to who they are and what they want and do so without believing that their church or they themselves possess the "answers to [others'] problems" (Aldred 193). An example would be the treatment of polygamy in Africa by missionaries. It was all too easy for Western missionaries to see the polygamous relationships in African countries and pass judgments. But these initial missionary responses caused many harmful consequences. Whereas if missionaries had "allowed 'the indigenous Christian conscience to evolve its own solution" much of the harm and issues that came about as a result could have been avoided (Muthengi 57). If all parties approach a relationship from this posture, then not only are individuals capable of becoming "agents of change," but their relationship "[is] also…being changed for the better" (Aldred 194).

In the second shift, the truth-telling must be accompanied by listening and confessing. This may perhaps be the hardest shift for believers in the global North to engage with because the pain and hurt that past actions have caused are laid bare. Instead of rushing to fix the problems, it is important that the global North church sit with and accept its role in causing

harm. Aldred states, "In hearing the pain there is opportunity to feel, and these feelings give strength to imagine what repentance could look like…it allows the guilty to feel and then begin to take responsibility for what has happened" (196). From this reflective posture, the strength and imagination required for change is gathered without jumping in to problem solve right away (194).

The third and final shift is comprised of three parts: creating a shared plan for the future, adopting reconciliation as a "lifestyle of engagement in mutual transformation," and giving up power and being willing to be led rather than lead (Aldred 197). The latter two elements create the space to work towards a new shared plan. This shared plan goes beyond one time reconciliation events and is focused on holistic change that address the "social problems that resulted from wrong-headed mission strategies" (Aldred 197). This type of work is ongoing and does not have a fixed end point. Just as one issue is addressed, others quickly rise to take its place. More than anything, the church in the global North must learn to see the assets, strengths, and beauty of the growing global South church. A healthy relationship based on self-giving love and sacrifice does not look at what a specific church or people lacks. Instead, it focuses on building the relationship through mutuality and equality. It is not misguidedly based on transplanting a correct model of worship or church to another place.

Aldred's words and ideas are important for all people engaged in or hoping to engage in missions work. Before the church can move forward together, global North believers must own up to their own role in the creation of issues in missions. Recognizing shortcomings, hearing from other perspectives, and moving forward in reconciliation are all necessary ingredients for creating new paradigms in missions. These new movements recognize the role that justice and

redemption play in creating healthier and more dynamic relationships across cultures. Introducing reciprocity, equality, and mutuality into missions relationships ultimately means re-thinking and relinquishing Western assumptions about power and privilege. In doing so, the nature of missions will have to change.

Transformative Practices

Ultimately, new paradigms in missions should focus less on finding new strategies or structures and focus more on the personal transformation for individuals who engage in missions. Unless individuals engage in a process of personal transformation, the unhealthy patterns and issues that have plagued missions will continue. These elements undergird and form the healthy dynamics required to find new paradigms in mission engagement. They are solidarity, reciprocity, mutuality, and equality. Harnessing the power of these four elements promotes a pattern of interaction that honors the image of God in every person. They are a way of living and being in the world that are for the marginalized, the oppressed, and the poor. Rather than limiting missions as something done by professionals or for a short period of time once a year, these elements are a way of living and being in the world that underscores everything a person does.

Solidarity

A first transformative act is to live out solidarity with others, especially those from the global South. Solidarity is more than acts of charity. It is a mindset and way of living in relation to others that defines the actions of an individual in which they "seek the good of all" (Lamberty "The Art" 327). Author Rebecca Todd Peters describes it as a "moral norm" that inspires critical evaluation of "personal and collective actions" that impact others (224). It is

also a means by which persons can be transformed through relationships with the oppressed

and marginalized (Peters 224). Solidarity necessitates the inclusion of the voices of the poor

and oppressed and flows out of expressions of liberation theology, which are built upon a

preferential option for the poor (Lamberty "The Art" 327). A preferential option for the poor

calls on others to understand the reality of their lives and helps to liberate them from any form

of oppression they face, including sin (Bevans and Schroeder 312-313). The beginnings of

liberation theology sprang from the 1968 Conference of Latin American Bishops held in

Medellín, Colombia. Reflecting on the issues in missions, Gregory Baum states that the

underlying notion of the preferential option for the poor is based on two dimensions. The first

dimension is gaining the perspective of the poor, which is a cognitive task (Baum 52). This

means that global North participants must learn to truly listen to the voices of their global

friends rather than assuming comprehension of others' lives. This will necessitate inviting them

to speak into missions rather than expecting them to interject with their opinions, which they

are unlikely to do because of their cultural context (Borthwick 170). The second dimension is to

live in and act with solidarity toward the poor's struggle for social justice. This is an active task

that shapes the lives and responses of the non-poor to the poor (Baum 52). For global North

citizens, the requirements for this task include learning to live sacrificially and more simply.

Borthwick pointedly states that a worldview that assumes people are entitled to happiness and

success "will run away from the sacrifices needed to be a genuine participant in the global

mission of God" (146). Believers in the global North run the risk of becoming "increasingly

irrelevant" to the rest of the world unless they "learn to sacrifice…entitlement and the

expectation that [their] lives ought to get more and more comfortable" (Borthwick 146). Both dimensions require a change in the language of missions.

Another element of change lies in learning to relinquish control and ownership so that egalitarian relationships become the norm. This means fully involving people from the global South in decisions about missions so as Pope Francis states they become "artisans of their own destiny" rather than having a destiny imposed on them from outsiders (qtd. in Lamberty "The Art" 327). This requires putting aside the idea that the rest of the world must rise to the standards of living that the global North enjoys. The standard of living in the United States should not be the tool used to measure the success of another country.

The question then is how to create transformation in a person's life that creates the potential for a transformed world. Peters offers a framework that enables "first-world citizen[s]" to simultaneously re-shape their own behaviors while also working to transform the structural inequalities and issues that contribute to the increasing disparity in the world (223). This framework is based on living out an ethic of solidarity that necessarily influences the actions of individuals which ultimately leads people to "live out [their] calling to transform the world" (Peters 224). Living in solidarity influences where people live, what they buy, and how they vote. Author Julie Clawson shares, people's everyday decisions carry a price tag and have an impact on others (25). But, in living out solidarity, people harness the influence of their decisions and make informed choices that are ethical and just (Clawson 25-26). One of the other pillars of this transformation is re-shaping the way people see others. Lamberty shares that people, and in particular Americans, when faced with issues immediately respond by attempting to fix them out of their own skills, resources, and power. Instead of seeing only

issues and problems that require an American or global North response, the right prescription is to look for the gift and resources that each person and community possesses (Lamberty "The Art" 330). Solidarity in relationships is tied to how people view one another. When the view is positive and people are "train[ed]…to see [the] gift" in others, then the relationships shifts from dependence to "accompaniment" (Lamberty "The Art" 330). Instead of the relationship being dominated by inequality, all parties are on an equal plane and are seen for what they possess, rather than what they lack. Where one party is weak, the other party is there to lift them up and support them. Globally living in solidarity means seeing others for their strengths, seeing who they are as individuals, and honoring their dignity. It means looking beyond the problems that their country might face, looking beyond cultural differences, looking beyond individual preconceived notions, and allowing people's understandings to change so that they can move from "despair to action" (Peters 225). Solidarity with others requires so much more than simply seeing the disparities they face. It requires action and change on our part.

Reciprocity

Part of that change starts with practicing reciprocity in missions relationships. This is where global North Christians learn to receive from their global friends (Borthwick 129). A true reciprocal relationship is one in which both parties give and receive equally. This first requires building relationships based on friendship, receiving hospitality in the form of lodging and food, and releasing the need for control by allowing ourselves to be vulnerable. Reciprocity in missions also requires that credence be given to global South modes of worship as expressions of their Christian faith (Jenkins 140). People in the global North must begin to recognize that what Christianity is and looks like will be influenced by the "habits and thought-worlds" of the

global South church (140).

Reciprocity in missions relationships is easy enough to conceive of, but the execution of it is often more difficult than people imagine. The difficulty in co-creating reciprocal relationships stems from cultural and socioeconomic differences. Access to resources and money can lead to Westerners feeling guilty or trying to downplay when hosts extend hospitality toward them. During my team's trip to Brazil, team members were assigned hosts. For whatever reason, I was the only person assigned to my host, who was a middle-aged Brazilian woman who spoke no English. We communicated with each other through pantomime and the technological gift that is Google translate. On my way to her house the first night, she stopped at a local grocery store and encouraged me to pick out some things I would like. It was difficult to accept this hospitality, because I had just met this woman. However, the excitement with which she greeted me and the warmth she extended communicated that she wanted to make my stay comfortable. Although there were no material differences between us, our language barrier made it difficult for me to accept her kind gestures. That very first night at her house, I ended up in tears from travel exhaustion and missing my young daughter and husband. She thoughtfully called her own daughter, who lives in Florida and speaks English, to explain things about the house and make me feel welcome and comfortable. I was very much in need of comfort in that moment, and my host was able to offer that to me. By humbling themselves and making themselves needy, people make space for their hosts to serve them through their own hospitality. The host's dignity in the relationship is solidified because they have an opportunity to tangibly serve their friends. Through mutual service toward one another, the dignity, worth, and honor of both parties is solidified.

Bringing reciprocity into missions starts with changing people's relationships with one another. Author Petra Kuenkel offers the Collective Leadership Compass as a tool for creating the relational dynamics necessary to facilitate change processes towards a common goal. It has six dimensions: Future Possibilities, Engagement, Innovation, Humanity, Collective Intelligence, and Wholeness (Kuenkel 49). When understood and harnessed properly, the Compass is a tool and approach that helps overcome difficulties while enhancing the contributions of individuals, ultimately leading to more sustainable co-creation across differences (48). The good news is that these unhealthy issues and patterns in long- and short-term missions have indeed been identified as mentioned previously. Once the issues are known, the next step is to figure out which dimension of the Compass is "missing or undervalued" (159).

Based on the findings of previous researchers and drawing from Kuenkel's Compass, the dimension of Humanity is lacking in most missions relationships. Tapping into Humanity enables people to see the humanness of another person; it provides perspective when a difficult situation arises or when a person's behavior is hard to understand. The result is compassion that helps individuals to remember that a person is a person and not just a means to an end. This requires "suspend[ing]...prejudices" so that "the humanness" of everyone comes into focus (Kuenkel 64). Without suspending judgment, all come to the table with their preconceived notions of who the other person is. Trust is not easily built when people misunderstand each other. By tapping into the Humanity dimension, trusting relationships are built. These relationships are "mindful...of difference and dynamics, balance between task and human encounter, [and create room for] empathy for the story that exists behind each person" (166). The dimension of humanity contributes to relationships built on equality.

Missions work involves "multi-actor settings," so it is crucial that stakeholders make room for their differences and value the humanity of each person involved (Kuenkel 166). It does not mean that agreement or consensus must take place. When differences of opinion arise, the first response is to hold each other up and see the other's humanity rather than letting differences divide. The result of this practice is a trust-filled relationship that "unleashes a dynamic of contribution" from each party (166). Everyone's opinions and ideas matter and should be heard and weighed equally. One person's experiences or knowledge are not more important than those of others.

Making room for this practice requires adequate preparation before collaborative gatherings happen. It cannot be expected that this type of dynamic will occur instantly. Forethought and planning must be given to trainings and preparation for all who will work together. Outlining expectations with each group and individual helps mentally prepare them for how collaboration will take place. Taking time to thoroughly prepare each party helps "plant[s] the seeds" for success (Kuenkel 154). Mission practitioners must set the stage and the mood for collaborative engagement; because of this, leaders of long- and short-term missions work must be adequately prepared to lead others.

One way to do this is by focusing on the relationships between people over task accomplishment. For Americans, the experience of short-term missions is often built around accomplishing a task. Americans want to feel productive and be able to see that they have built something with their time. As a result, building trust-based relationships involving culturally dynamic individuals is not an easy task. The camaraderie and 'high' that happens during a short-term trip fills the participants with an overly optimistic view of the relationship. Because there

is a definitive beginning and ending to the face-to-face interaction, which is generally less than

two weeks, the surface-level interactions seem deeper and more personal than they actually

are. Especially for people from the global North, the beginning of the relationship is often

incited by the idea that they are going to do a 'great work' and 'help' people. Thus, in order to

have a true relationship with someone from another culture, the time together cannot be

focused on task accomplishment alone. Taking time to value the humanness of the other party,

engaging with where they are in the present moment, and giving people a chance to loosen up

before diving in to the work all help build reciprocity and relationship equity that will last long

after the team leaves. Thus, the end is not defined by the completion of a project or when a

team returns home. In fact, cross-cultural missional relationships should not be defined by

projects. Rather, the relationships built between churches are the ultimate focus, when

projects come to an end the relationships are able to endure (Lamberty "The Art" 333). Rather

than focusing on task completion, participants should think of their role as bridge builders and

champions for the local church. Americans have a unique standing as an attraction in many

parts of the world. I experienced this during my research trip to Brazil. My team's mere

presence as a group of Americans drew in the local community. The children who came to the

VBS were enamored and attended simply because we were Americans. The team's presence

enabled the local church to bring in new families. We focused on building relationships that

would lead to connections with people in the local church; thus, when our time came to leave,

we knew that we had contributed to new relationships in the church. The church did not need

us to continue to move forward with their goals. In the end, our lives and theirs were enriched

by the fellowship we enjoyed together. Reciprocity lays the foundation for equality in

relationship.

Equality

Equality is grounded in the biblical notion that all humans are created in the image of

God. Although all people are loved and valued equally by God, author Bryant Myers shares,

"Everything else about us and our particular contexts seems to reflect an unequal distribution

of gifts, talents, and resources" (20). There is nothing in the story of creation that demonstrates

this was not the intention of God (Myers 20). Creating equality in missions flows from honoring

and utilizing those differences. Thus, creating relational equality requires combatting

paternalism, which is doing something for someone that they could do for themselves

(Borthwick 152). Paternalism feeds off of viewing one culture as more superior to another;

cross-cultural interactions are ripe grounds for these kinds of judgments. It ultimately ends up

influencing the entire shape of a relationship. How is this natural tendency fostered? It

flourishes because people, unaware of their tendencies to make these kinds of moral

judgments, encounter another culture and their "normative judgments" about what is

acceptable or unacceptable kick in (Beck 59). These judgments shape their view of others and

lead them to act in paternalistic ways because they have ranked the other group as being

inferior to themselves. Richard Beck in his book *Unclean* shares that "'feeling[s] of rightness'

trumps sober reflection and moral discernment" (5). Thus, without proper action, these

relationships become abandoned to what Miroslav Volf, author of *Exclusion and Embrace,* calls

a "cycle of exclusions" (98). Exclusive judgments lead to justification for the beliefs held of

other people, thus contaminating missions relationships.

Miroslav Volf's concept of embrace provides a framework for a way out from under people's tendency towards exclusion. He states that while the starting point of embrace in sin-filled, human relationship-building is "God's reception of hostile humanity into divine communion" (Volf 100). God's very extension of love and grace to sinful humanity is the model by which humans ought to base their relationships with one another. Since not even humanity's sin could keep God from inviting people into relationship, so too ought people to live in relation to others. Nothing should keep someone from embracing another person. But, because of the fallen nature of the world it is necessary that people work against the silence and inaction that allow injustice and exclusion to reign. Borrowing the idea of mandated reporters who are required to speak up when they suspect abuse, followers of Christ, and as people who engage in missions work, are all responsible for calling out injustice. Living that out each day means that they must create space for God to "work [in their lives] and shape [them] into agents of reconciliation" (Thompson 39). The boldness and fearlessness that this type of living requires does not bloom of its own accord. It necessitates truly understanding who God calls people to be and how he calls them to live. Self-giving and self-sacrificing love, along with wanting the best for others, must drive actions and beliefs. If people truly want to love others, they must allow God to continually shape and re-orient their hearts and minds.

The importance of personal transformation cannot be overstated. Marjorie Thompson states bluntly, "It is deeply damaging to the church and its members to suppose that a person can transform the world if they are unwilling to be transformed personally" (15). She continues, "That the clarity of a single person who is transparent to the Spirit has more impact in God's design than the best theological teachings and most ambitious social ministries" (Thompson

15). Effective agents of reconciliation will ultimately realize that division is futile. They will go to the greatest of lengths to restore relationships by taking the first step of embrace, even without knowing whether it will lead to their being killed or ridiculed. Agents of reconciliation recognize that "it is the responsibility...of each of us to use the light we have to dispel the work of darkness" (Lewis 175). With each reconciling action they cause the darkness to shrink back and lose more of its power. Even though the darkness cannot be completely eliminated in this world, reconciliation gives a foretaste to the coming Kingdom.

Mutuality

Author Anne Nasimiyu-Wasikedefines defines mutuality as a "a two-way exchange that is open to give and to receive". Mutuality is a characteristic that should shape every human relationship (45). In missions relationships, this characteristic makes room for the traditions and practices of each culture to influence their mutual relationship and work. Mutuality allows these differences to enrich relationships (Nasimiyu Wasike 51). It also gives global leaders the voice they need to speak up and say no to unnecessary or unwanted Western ideas, programs, etc. Pastor Simone Twibell, a recent doctoral graduate and South American native who grew up as the child of missionaries in Brazil, shared that the native leaders will often say yes to requests they either do not want or do not intend to honor because "when you have a lot of money involved and a lot of resources [they] don't want to lose...that connection" to a future potential resource. She shared that Latin American and African cultures in particular tend to say yes because they simply do not want to offend (Twibell). Mutual relationships allow each party to honestly express themselves without fear of repercussions when differences of opinion arise. This give and take is also important because it is likely that at some point in the future, the

working relationship will end. When mutuality is not part of missions relationships, the likelihood of misusing resources for vanity projects and taking valuable time away from local leaders increases. This might take place when planning for a short-term team. Rather than fitting the teams to the expressed needs, the trip and activities were fit to the team.

Lack of mutuality can be seen in Bethany First Church of the Nazarene's short-term missions trip to Eswatini, Africa. In one instance, the US-based team planned to put on four concerts focused on encouraging people to get tested for HIV. The undertaking ended up costing approximately $25,000. Although relationships were built between the North American team and the small local delegation of singers, the project came across as a waste of money, time, and resources. None of the local leadership had asked or even brought up a need for this type of program. Instead, the North American supervisor presented the idea to the leadership in Eswatini, to which they agreed. The concerts were poorly attended, did not meet an expressed need, and took focus off of other, more pressing concerns.

Thiago Rosa, pastor at the Comunidade Betesda Igreja Cristo Church in Campinas, Brazil had his own experience where lack of mutuality shaped a missions relationship. One day during downtime at the Vacation Bible School, Pastor Rosa shared that a previous team in particular, "Come just to know Brazil, not to do the mission" (Rosa). From his perspective, this team was not worried or interested in sharing the gospel with the local people but were instead focused on "where we can go [and] what we can do" to see and experience the culture of another country (Rosa). Pastor Rosa shared that he did not feel that he could express how he was feeling "because I was new, and I was like the leader…and this leader he was from the United States". The difference in his experience with that team and the team I was a part of during the

summer of 2018 was the personal relationship he had with the leaders. Jake and Mimi Page, his brother-in-law and sister, had the established relationship that enabled them to mutually share what they wanted this trip to look like. The mutuality of their relationship also allowed Pastor Rosa to freely express what he wanted the team to do and experience while in country. The reason the team put on a VBS was to help build up and grow the church (Rosa). He went on to say:

> Sometimes the leader of the mission have a good idea. So, I cannot say 'oh no, I just want somebody from the United States to do a VBS.' Maybe he could tell me, 'Hey, Thiago, let's do a conference of worship.' And I can start to say 'Oh, we're going to have a conference of worship in the church and that would be good. [Or] he tell me, Thiago, I have just three people to go so let's do another thing [different from] the VBS because I don't know if it's enough [with] just three people. (Rosa)

The ability to share honestly back and forth is a hallmark of equality in missions. The established relationship between Pastor Rosa, Jake, and Mimi demonstrates the difference in his experience versus with the other trip leader. Although they had the benefit of their relationship being familial in nature, it does not mean that that level of trust and openness cannot be established in other missions relationships.

Pastor Rosa shared that there is something that mission participants from the United States can do better. He said, "When you go to another place to do something like that, you need to do what the guys there need and are telling you [they] need. Not [what] you guys want to do. For me this is the most important thing when we are trying to do a mission" (Rosa). For Pastor Rosa, mutuality is coming together to share ideas and then reaching consensus through

the act of sharing.

These examples, and the power and privilege of North Americans should cause North American churches seeking global relationships to critically evaluate their motivations and goals. A necessary requirement for mutuality in mission is humility, recognizing that those in the West "are no longer the leaders, the initiators, the norm setters. We are now to learn to be the helpers, the assistants, and the facilitators" (Borthwick 87). Their place in missions has shifted. Moving forward into this new age, their approach to the global family must be guided by a humble spirit that is committed to learning rather than leading (87).

Conclusion

The future of the church and missions is being influenced by the growing global South church. In order to maintain relevancy and not become mired in unhealthy practices, the global North church must be willing to be led and learn from the new faces of Christianity. Transforming the relationships between people from the Western church and those from the global South church starts with tuning in to the individuality of others and recognizing them for who they are and the specific gifts, strengths, and assets they possess rather than simply for what they appear to lack. This reoriented view honors the humanity of others and keeps one group from overpowering another. There is beauty and strength in the differences each person possesses. Achieving this new perspective also involves people from the Western church engaging in three new practices. First, the language used to talk about missions and others must be re-shaped. As language evolves, the second change of relinquishing power and privilege becomes possible. This is where hierarchical structures are laid to rest and new ways of relating to and working with one another are born. Sustaining this transformation

necessitates engaging in the in the transformative practices of solidarity, mutuality, equality, and reciprocity. Working together, these elements lay the foundation for healthy interpersonal dynamics, which allow for the dignity of all to prevail. Although the future of missions cannot be predicted, people can prepare themselves to understand and work with the ever-changing dynamics of the world and its effect on the church. The future of missions does not lay in a new structure or shape. Rather, through transformed relationships new ways forward will be found.

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