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## ABSTRACT

FROM THE PEW TO MISSION FIELD:

RAISING MISSIONARY SUPPORT

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*American Baptist International Ministries (IM)*

Valley Forge, PA

To respond to Christ's lasting command according to the book of Acts 1:8, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" the *American Baptist Churches – USA (ABC-USA)* has realized the need to take the word of God and the love of God to the *four corners* of the world. To be efficient in both its global and home missions, the *ABC-USA* has created the *American Baptist International Ministries*, the oldest Baptist mission agency commonly known as *IM*. For the past two centuries, *IM* has successfully carried out missionary ministries by sending hundreds of missionaries to the most vulnerable areas of the world: those areas mired by social injustice, natural disaster, human trafficking, economic crisis, political instability, and unbelief. To secure the future of *IM* finances, to survive calamities like the 2008 financial crisis and to meet church needs, *IM* re-strategized the way missionary ministries were funded. *IM* would no longer underwrite mission related expenses; instead, *IM* missionaries would have to raise funds for their calling to serve in those ministries. In other words, today, *IM* missionaries are self-funded. It's true that the missionary ministry is a calling just like pastoral ministry; yet, unlike pastors, *IM* missionaries now must raise the funds for their ministries. The requirement of fund-raising causes some missionaries to shy away from

the missionary call, and others to drop out in the middle of the fund-raising race. Some struggle for years to raise the support, and still others seem to raise funds without much effort.

Perhaps there is a better mission funding model to which God has called the church, to sustain *IM* financially, help missionaries alleviate the fund-raising burden in one hand and help donors to see mission funding itself as their ministry on the other hand.

So, in this project we gathered donors, missionaries, and *IM* staff to hear their stories. Stories we shared, and stories we heard from the Bible compelled us to explore and challenge the *IM*'s missionary fund-raising status quo, and also to suggest a model that might alleviate missionaries' anxiety, boost individuals' and churches' mission funding supports, and make *IM* missionary ministries more fruitful.

## CONTENTS:

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENT .....   | vii |
| CHAPTERS   |     |
| 1. AMERICAN BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES FROM 1814 TO<br>2016.....                   | 1   |
| 2. MY STORY: MY CALL - MY WOES.....  | 20  |
| 3. THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF FUND-RAISING...                                | 37  |
| 4. MISSION FUNDING, THE CHURCH CALL, GOD’S TASK:<br>METHODOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT .....    | 54  |
| • Diverse Mission Funding Models, One <i>Missio Dei</i> .....                            | 54  |
| • Methodology and Development.....   | 62  |
| 5. A MOMENT WITH DONORS: RESEARCH FINDING, EVALUATION AND<br>THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION..... | 79  |
| • Results of our Researches.....   | 79  |
| • Project Evaluation.....  | 100 |
| • Transformation.....  | 107 |
| 6. AND ALL THE CHURCH SAYS AMEN: CONCLUSION AND<br>DEFINITION.....                       | 111 |
| • Conclusion.....  | 111 |
| • Definition.....  | 113 |
| APPENDIX   |     |
| A- Sunday Bulletin Announcement .....  | 116 |
| B- Guest Speakers’ Invitation letter .....   | 124 |
| C- First Bible Study Session Program Information .....                                   | 125 |
| D- Second Bible Study Session Program Information .....                                  | 126 |
| E- Figure 1: Bulletin insert printed by <i>IM</i> for <i>ABC-USA</i> congregations.....  | 127 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| F- Figure 2: Prayer card used for France mission fund-raising..... | 128 |
| G- Figure 3: Prayer card used for Togo mission fund-raising.....   | 129 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY .....   | 130 |

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## CHAPTER 1

### AMERICAN BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES FROM 1814 TO 2016

In 2013, I resigned from my pastoral position at *West Ridge Church* in Chicago, and accepted the call to serve as a long-term missionary in France in association with the *American Baptist International Ministries (IM)*. My excitement quickly turned into disappointment when I realized what a challenge fund-raising for the mission would be.

The choice of the title for this paper, *From the Pew to Mission Field: Raising Missionary Support*, was not accidental and it wasn't chosen simply for the sake of doctoral project writing. It arose out of experiences, concerns, and struggles that I've been through as a missionary seeking financial support. I have to admit that at first, I chose to write on a topic dealing with scouting, encouraging, and sending African Americans or Africans immigrants living in the United States back to their homelands. There they could serve using the professional, pastoral, social, humanitarian or any other experiences and skills they have acquired here in the USA. This pool of experience could be vital for African social, educational, health, and religious life.

Despite the risks, the Holy Spirit led me to choose first to address the funding issue faced by the majority of twenty-first century American missionaries. I wondered if this research might reveal a change that could be beneficial for mission agencies such as *IM*, other missionaries and their supporters (in this case, the church).

I am not writing to criticize my denomination: *American Baptist Churches USA (ABC-USA)*, nor my mission agency: the *International Ministries* mission funding model nor its missionary funds' management. This research is an attempt to explore prayerfully and respectfully. Even so, results of this research have led me to challenge the *IM*

mission funding status quo, and have provided an opportunity to look into comprehensive possibilities for a more productive and encouraging model.

Before the project began, I looked into the history of *IM* mission, tapped into its mission funding model background, and explored some changes that have come about over the years.

The modern era of foreign missions was thus the product of a series of religious awakenings which broke out spontaneously in many quarters and which moved out along several different currents within the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. During this period, the greatest impulse to foreign missions came from those Christians whose churches had no connection with the state. Their missions were undertaken by leaders from the humble classes, whereas Roman Catholic missions were led by aristocrats and usually supported by government patronage. Their emphasis was upon the priesthood of believers, whereas the Roman Catholics retained the hierarchy as mediators between God and man...

By the sixteenth century, Protestants were entering upon their first contacts with non-Christians of other lands through commerce, conquests, and colonizing. These associations stimulated missionary activity on a small scale. The very first Protestant settlement in the New World was accompanied by a missionary impulse. In 1555-1556, a French clergyman unsuccessfully attempted to win converts while his comrades, under Nicholas Durand (Villegagnon), sought to establish a colony in Brazil near the present site of Rio de Janeiro.<sup>1</sup>

Organizers launched the *American Baptist International Ministries* (commonly known as *IM*) in May 1814 when the newly formed United States was in its second war with Great Britain. *IM* has had several names: its name at founding was *Triennial Convention* and later *Baptist Mission Board*; by the end of 1814, Baptists used *General* or *Triennial Convention* because the Board met every three years. In 1814, *International*

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<sup>1</sup> Robert G. Torbet, *Venture of Faith: The Story of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the Women's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 1814-1954* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1955), 6.

*Ministries* under the name of the *American Baptist Foreign Mission Society* appointed Adoniram and Judson as its first Missionaries.<sup>2</sup>

According to *Timeline of Baptist Reformed History*, in 1814, there was a Formation of the Triennial Convention (General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions) in Philadelphia. It was convened in order to pool resources for the support of Baptist foreign missionaries Luther Rice and Adoniram Judson. It was a completely voluntary organization that exercised no control over matters of theology. Its sole purpose was the financial support of foreign missions, and supporters of its work could be found in local churches and associations throughout Southern and Northern States. In response to appeals made by Luther Rice, among American Baptists, to raise support for Adoniram Judson in India, "The General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions" was organized May 1814 at Philadelphia. Because this convention met every three years, it came to be known as "The Triennial Convention."<sup>3</sup>

Following the birth of the Triennial Convention, many mission societies, including the *American Baptist Foreign Mission Society* that would become *International Ministries*, were formed. Several global missions launched and many missionary events unfolded in the year 1814:

- Baptists organized *The Irish Missionary Society*.
- Baptists birthed the *American Baptist Home Mission Society* and *American Baptist Publication Society*.
- *The Baptism of a Chinese convert, Cai Gao* was first recorded and *the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society* formed.
- Baptists founded the *Netherlands Bible Society*, paving the road for First missionaries led by Samuel Marsden to arrive in New Zealand.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard V. Pierard, *Christian History and Biography: Pioneers of American Missionary Movement*, Adoniram & Ann Judson. Missionary Pioneer (Spring 2006, Issue 90), 19.

<sup>3</sup> The Reformed Reader, "Time-Line of Baptist History," accessed on June 20, 2016, <http://www.reformedreader.org/history/timeline/19thcentury.htm>.

- *Lott Carey, a Black Baptist missionary, sailed with 28 colleagues from Norfolk, VA to Sierra Leone for mission works.*

The mission of the church, as vital as it was in the first century of Christianity, expanded quickly across cultures, borders, and seas.

In 1845, in the heat of mission expansion, *the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society* refused missionary appointments to Baptist slave owners in Georgia and Alabama. This refusal was the final straw that resulted in the split of the Baptists into the *Southern Baptist Convention* and the *Northern Baptist Convention*. The latter became the *American Baptist Churches –USA* beginning in 1972. Endorsing slavery, the *Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)* congregations pulled out of the *Triennial Convention*; and leadership then founded the *International Mission Board* known earlier as *Foreign Mission Board*.

In December, 1868, the *American Baptist Foreign Mission Society* appointed a Missionary Board and empowered it to appoint missionaries and set their salaries. In 1972, “Under restructuring, the *American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS)* becomes the *Board of International Ministries (BIM)*; and the *American Baptist Home Mission Society* becomes the *Board of National Ministries (BNM)*.”<sup>4</sup>

Still, there is no exact date that marks the beginning of Baptist missionary ministries. Could it be possible that Baptist missionary ministries were forming years before the nineteenth century with the emerging Baptist associations that committed themselves to discipleship, church planting, and church growth? The outgoing *IM* Executive Director, the Rev. Dr. Reid Trulson tackles this question when he writes:

The early Baptists were marked by zeal to share the good news of salvation in Christ. They planted new churches not only in their local areas but also along and

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

beyond the American frontier. It is often difficult to identify the precise beginning of a movement. This is true of American Baptist foreign mission. Did it begin when colonial Baptists first shared the gospel among the sovereign nations of Native American Indians? Or when Ebenezer Moulton migrated in 1760 from Massachusetts to Nova Scotia and subsequently started the first Baptist church in Canada? Does the definition of foreign mission include the deliberate purpose to enter another culture to make disciples?<sup>5</sup>

Although it's often difficult to identify the precise beginning of a movement, historians seem to set the official start date of *IM* at the year 1814. According to Baptist scholar and author Robert Torbet, thirty-three delegates from eleven states including three from *England* have gathered for a discussion that led to the creation of the *Triennial* on Wednesday May 18, 1814. On Friday, the delegates drafted the final constitution. Its statement became the declaration of the creation of the *International Ministries*. It reads:

We, the delegates from Missionary Societies, and other religious bodies of the Baptist denomination, in various parts of the United States, met in convention in the city of Philadelphia for the purpose of carrying into effect the benevolent intentions of our constituents, by organizing a plan for eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort for sending the glad tidings of Salvation to the Heathen, and to nations destitute of pure Gospel light, DO AGREE to the following Rules or fundamental Principles.<sup>6</sup>

Taking into consideration these historical accounts and events, the year 1814 seems acceptable as the founding date for *IM*.

If *IM* is still connected to its history after 200 years of missional activity, it is thanks to its principles. These serve as guidelines for the *IM* Board of Directors as they scout, endorse, appoint, commission, and send missionaries out into the world; as the handbook for missionaries and as the bridge between *IM* and its global partners. The work, faith journey, and missionary ministries of predecessors have inspired these

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<sup>5</sup> Reid S. Trulson, *In One Sacred Effort: Element of an American Baptist Missiology* (Valley Forge, PA: AB-IM, 1992), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Torbet, 27.

principles, and they shape *IM*'s twenty-first century missional ministry guidelines. In short, these principles have become an inspirational guide that has been passed down through generations. In support of the principles, Trulson wrote:

“Guided by their (early missionaries) understandings of scripture and by pragmatism, they sometimes imitated others and at other times launched innovative experiments. Gradually these missionaries and their supporters began to exemplify principles that today are marks of American Baptist missiology.”<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, to understand *IM* and to understand *IM* functionality, one needs to take a look at *IM*'s fifteen principles as listed below:

- 1- Prayer.
- 2- Scripture.
- 3- Global dimension.
- 4- Cooperation.
- 5- Flexibility.
- 6- Christ-like Ministry.
- 7- Servant Attitude.
- 8- The Church.
- 9- Service to “the Least of These.”
- 10- Partnership.
- 11- Baptist Identity.
- 12- Dynamic Tensions.
- 13- Care for People.
- 14- Qualified Personnel.
- 15- Accountability.

Inspired by these principles, we can discern the purpose of *IM*'s existence as we read:

American Baptist International Ministries works cross-culturally to invite people to become disciples of Jesus Christ and to proclaim, through both word and deed, God's reign of justice, peace and abundant life for all creation.<sup>8</sup>

A close look into *IM* principles leads us to conclude that *IM* is a faith based not for profit organization. It is faith based in the sense that it functions like the living body

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<sup>7</sup> Trulson, 5.

<sup>8</sup> American Baptist Churches – USA, “Our Purpose,” accessed on June 22, 2016, <http://www.internationalministries.org/read/61525-our-vision>.

of Christ, spreading the word of God, making disciples who make other disciples of Christ. It is a Christ centered mission agency and it aligns itself with the Bible. *IM* is still a not for profit organization with over 200 years of missionary based administrative experience, financial expertise, and with a large network of supporters and partners who adhere to its purpose.

Whereas predecessors inspired *IM* 's principles, its purpose shapes its vision for the future. Recently, as *IM* looked toward the future, it distanced itself from the 200-year-old mission funding model it inherited from predecessors.

In his account on pages nine through thirteen of "Venture of Faith," Robert G. Torbet, a former seminary dean, professor, historian, board member of the *American Baptist Board of Education and Publication* (now *Judson Press*), president of the *American Baptist Convention* wrote:

The Protestant missionary movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries enjoyed an increasing interest on the part of its followers... Money was raised by large numbers of the rank and file of church members. Roman Catholics, on the other hand, used very largely monastic orders for missionary work, and retained control of the enterprise in clerical hands... In fact, the Protestant focus of attention upon the individual has been a significant factor in the successful appeal of evangelical missions to the masses of non-Christian peoples...

During this initial period in Baptist foreign missions, there was considerable correspondence between leaders in England and America. The Philadelphia Baptist Association, for example, received frequent reports concerning Carey's work in India and encouraged the churches to contribute financial assistance... Other associations in the country also manifested a lively interest (in mission) by observing special seasons of prayer and by making generous contributions to its support. In 1806 Baptists along the Atlantic seaboard from Boston to Charleston and in the outlying regions gave \$2,500 to that Mission. During the next eight years, they shared in contributing more than \$18,000. When the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was established in 1812 by the Congregationalists, the Baptists collected \$3,000 to assist in sending Luther Rice and Adoniram and Ann Judson to India. In the twenty-year period prior to the

organization of their own national society in 1814, American Baptists gave between seven and eight thousand dollars through the channels mentioned.<sup>9</sup>

Ever since, this centralized mission funding has been the model for other societies in *England and America*.

When the Baptists sent the Judsons to India, this set the tone for *IM* global ministries. Born in August 9, 1788, Adoniram Judson had set aside his earlier ambitions for literary and political fame to accept the call to enter the missionary ministry in 1810.<sup>10</sup> He was a member of the Congregational church and he believed that “The motto for every missionary, whether preacher, printer, or schoolmaster, ought to be: Devoted for life.”<sup>11</sup> The *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Congregational mission agency commonly called *American Board*) would not commission Judson into missionary ministry without secured financial support. Afterward, in 1812, the *American Board* received a large bequest from a woman who was a member of the *Tabernacle Congregational Church* in Salem, Massachusetts that would enable it to support four missionaries and their families. On February 6, 1812, leadership at *Tabernacle Church* commissioned Adoniram, his wife Ann, and their three friends as “Christian Missionaries to carry the Gospel of Salvation to the Heathen.”<sup>12</sup> Before Judson’s family became *IM* missionaries, the *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* supported

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<sup>9</sup> Torbet, 9.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.



their ministry until 1814 when they became Baptists, cut ties with Congregationalists and thus distanced themselves from former friends and supporters.

Following the mission funding model developed by the *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission, International Ministries* over the years has supported 4000 missionaries, 1400 volunteers, and now serves in seventy countries working side-by-side with about 250 partnering organizations. The effort of past and current staffs and supporters has expanded its work into the areas of evangelism, education, economic development, health, hospitality and peace keeping. In addition, *IM*'s fight against human trafficking and its response to crises, wars and natural disasters is well known around the globe.

During the period of its most recent strategic plan called "Go Global," and with the help of worldwide partners, prayer warriors, and generous donors, *IM* has seen success: *IM* planted 9,500 churches, missionaries entered eighteen new countries, ministries focused on human trafficking developed. In addition, *IM* invested 2.71 million for advanced training for international leaders, and at present *IM* is completing a discernment process to guide strategic priorities to 2020 and beyond. One might say that "*IM* is sustainable ministry, a successful ministry, impactful ministry, a forward looking ministry."<sup>13</sup>

Initially, the *International Ministries* mission funding model had been made possible through well-managed endowments and a permanent fund established in 1823. Members of *American Baptist Churches-USA* have provided part of its holdings through

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<sup>13</sup> Al Evon, Ex-International Ministries Associate Executive Director for Mission Advancement e-mail message to Holale C. Azondjagni, November 06, 2014.

congregations' donations to fund-raising efforts. The funding from *ABC-USA* congregations comes in various forms: *World Mission Offering (WMO)*, *One Great Hour of Sharing (OGS)*, *United Mission (UM)*, *America for Christ Offering*, *White Cross*, *United Mission Love Gifts*, and more. Leadership manages these donations to help underwrite the cost of missionaries' ministries worldwide. Through this funding model, *IM* missions have grown through the establishment of new partnerships which have helped fund new missionaries to serve either locally or globally.

Although *ABC-USA* congregations still send mission support funds, *IM* leadership introduced a new fund-raising model for missionaries in 2003; this new model is called *personalized support* which is far different from the centralized support that has functioned since 1814. *IM* phased in this model over several years and it went into full effect in 2010, four years before *IM* celebrated 200 years of service at the 2014 *World Mission Conference*. Today, new *IM* missionaries must take an active role in raising their own financial support.

In plain words, missionaries must raise their own support from denominational congregations, other churches, businesses, organizations, family and friends. This fund-raising burden must be shared with a team of no less than four members called the Missionary Partner Team (MPT), which each endorsed missionary must recruit. The MPT's role is "to support the missionary through their assigned roles and to help the missionary build a network of partner individuals, congregations and regions that can provide foundational, spiritual, emotional, and financial support to the missionary."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> American Baptist International Ministries, *Lay Advisory Committee* (Handout during missionaries' Orientation. Valley Forge, PA, June 2014).

This group should have four or more members who fill one or more of the following categories: a convener, a communication advocate, a prayer advocate, a pastoral care provider, a financial advocate, a missionary kids' advocate, a mission involvement energizer, a relocation manager, a ministry specialist, a website technician, a video production specialist, a regional mission representative, and an international partner. Their ultimate responsibility is to help the missionary get the funds they need for mission by any means necessary. These funds can range from pledged donations to one-time donations.

*IM* manages these donations using state-of-the-art technologies. Among these, the most efficient is *DonorElf*, a software program built with missionary funding management in mind. It is a web-based program that helps missionaries map their donor contacts. It also notifies missionaries of important events with donors and it indicates amounts received, frequency as well as start and end dates. *DonorElf* is the program used by missionaries and *IM* staff to assess and monitor the level of committed support and relationship-building for the missionary.

Members of the Development team monitor the financial support status for each missionary. Although the MPT financial advocate administers the fund-raising effort using *DonorElf*, and the convener oversees MPT performance, the missionary is still the (kind of) general manager of all as he or she has to do to raise sufficient funds.

When setting missionaries' salaries, *IM* uses *Mercer Global Consulting* services to get a sense of the cost-of-living in various locations in the mission field. This service predicts the funds individual missionaries will need to raise for their salaries. The fund-raising that follows this protocol, as described above, is called *Personalized Support*. And

the funds a missionary needs to raise are called the *Personalized Support Goal (PSG)*. It is important to note that only ongoing supports (also known as pledge donations, or recurring donations) count toward the missionary *Personalized Support Goal*, while missionaries must apply one-time donations to cover start-up costs.

According to the *IM Handbook for Standard and Special Appointment Mission Personnel*:

All missionaries, with the assistance of their Mission Partnership Team (MPT) and IM staff, are responsible to secure from their MPN (Mission Partner Network) commitments of personalized giving sufficient to underwrite a PSG based upon their biannual budget. A missionary unit (couple or single) will start a term of service having established an MPN committed to giving a projected monthly average of 100% of their PSG.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, sometimes, prospective missionaries shy away from this new funding model, newly endorsed missionaries often struggle or fail to rise to the fund-raising challenge. At the same time, all missionaries must accept *IM*'s conditions for appointment: they won't be appointed until they have raised twenty-five percent of their PSG, they won't be commissioned until they collect eighty percent of their *PSG*, and they won't leave for their mission field until they have reached 100% of their support. This means missionaries face anxiety and spend months, if not years, racing between churches and individuals, asking for money rather doing mission work.

After missionaries manage to reach 100% of their *PSG*, they are cleared and subsequently commissioned to move to the designated mission field. Then, while doing

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<sup>15</sup> American Baptist International Ministries, *Handbook for Standard and Special Appointment Mission Personnel: A Compilation of Policies, Expectations and Procedures that Bind Both the Missionary and IM in Accountability to Each Other and to God as we Engage in Ministry Together* (Valley Forge, PA: AB-IM, 2014), 12.

mission work abroad, their worries continue as they wonder about ways to keep their *PSG* stable or at a steady 100% for the entire five years of their mission term. Because,

A missionary whose financial support falls below 88% of the required *PSG* for more than three consecutive months will be expected to direct concentrated efforts, with the assistance of IM staff and the MPT, to raising new commitments of financial support sufficient to reach the 100% of *PSG* within six months. Staff will offer extra lift strategies and support to assist in the securing of new commitments, but the missionary will assume the primary role in directing the effort. The missionary (or one individual of a couple) will be required to return to the U.S. or Puerto Rico for up to two months for deputation geared toward securing additional commitments of personalized support. If the missionary unit does not move from 88% to 95% within six months, resignation will be expected.<sup>16</sup>

Although individuals still respond to the call to mission, new missionaries are not fully aware of the challenges that accompany the process for missionary fund-raising. Along with the many anticipated challenges including cultural differences, hostility of pre-existing religions or belief systems, spiritual warfare, issue of race and gender, and variable theological approaches, missionaries now have to face the additional challenge of their own fund-raising. This could be exhausting, could overwhelm the missionaries and their families and could also drain missionaries' passion for ministry. These concerns become crucial when individuals with little or no connection outside their home churches receive the missionary call and must then raise funds. This might seem like a kind of mission impossible.<sup>17</sup>

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). For the church to be transformed by the renewing of mind, and make its commitment to the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Mission Impossible," Directed by Brian De Palma (USA: Paramount Pictures, 1996.)

*Missio Dei* (a Latin theological term that can be translated as the mission of God; see definition section) for a more dynamic and productive ministry, I believe it's imperative that the church's view of missionary financial support must change from lonely duty to collaborative investment. I am not alone in this. Not every *IM* staff, nor every *ABC* congregation, nor every *IM* missionary agrees with *IM* current mission funding model. As we say among us Baptists, "Baptists agree to disagree, and that's what make us Baptists."

In the *American Baptist International Ministries* resolution against slavery adopted by the *Board of International Ministries* on June 26, 2007, it is written:

"it resolved that the Board of International Ministries calls upon American Baptist churches and individuals to participate with International Ministries, providing financial and human resources to International Ministries as it works in solidarity with the International Christian Alliance on Prostitution, International Justice Mission, the Not For Sale campaign and other groups and individuals of like mind."

And as an *American Baptist Churches USA* mission agency, *IM's* core value is to:

"advance cooperative mission and support of local churches through the Covenant of relationships with American Baptist regional and national bodies; and to embrace the gift of diversity that is present within American Baptist churches and ministries."<sup>18</sup>

These statements reveal the idea of partnership, cooperation, and collaboration in *IM's* mission funding theology, which is brought out over and over again in the scripture (as we shall see later in this paper). However, most *IM* missionaries labor in isolation, making hundreds of phones call, sending out emails and mails, using social media, distributing prayer cards, conducting presentations and workshops, praying (maybe fasting) and hoping day and night, carrying (mostly alone) the burden of the funds they will need.

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<sup>18</sup> American Baptist International Ministries, *Responding to the Call: Operational Planning Process, Initial Results Statement and Proposed Measures* (Valley Forge, PA: AB-IM, 2015).

It doesn't have to be this way. For example, my home church, the *North Shore Baptist Church* in Chicago, IL, an *ABC-USA* congregation where I was ordained and served from 2006 to 2008, uses both models. North Shore has had a missionary to the Philippines on its budget for over a decade; thus, this missionary and his family do not have to experience the burden of fund-raising. At the same time, *North Shore Baptist Church* missionary and member such as myself must seek financial support from *North Shore Baptist Church* to other Baptist churches around the nation.

Many changes came with the mission funding shift. Let's take the example of change in the *World Mission Offering*. Baptists first launched *World Mission Offering (WMO)* in 1950 under the name of *World Fellowship Offering (WFO)*. Its purpose was to provide financial support for overseas missions. *WMO* is "the American Baptist response to the needs of international missions as mandated by the Great Commission in partnership with other National Baptist churches in other countries."<sup>19</sup> Ever since its creation, it has been part of the *ABC-USA* tradition to raise missionary support through the *WMO*.

During the months of September and October, over 4,000 American Baptist International Ministries' supporting churches are invited to rejoice in the great work God is doing in global missions. The highlight of this celebration in many churches is receiving a special offering for global missions, called The World Mission Offering (WMO). To help churches learn about the significant work of American Baptists in seven ministries focus areas, International Ministries (IM) prepares a video, poster, bulletin inserts, worship aids and other materials for churches to use for worship, study and promotional purposes. WMO is American Baptist International Ministries' largest and most important annual fundraising initiative for global missions.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> American Baptist Churches – USA, "World Mission Offering," accessed on September 22, 2016, <http://abc-oghs.org/about>.

<sup>20</sup> American Baptist International Ministries, World Mission Offering, accessed on July 10, 2016, <http://www.internationalministries.org/read/25247-world-mission-offering-started-september-1st>.

To sum up, gifts to the *WMO* help to raise up and send new global servants and volunteers to places around the world; *WMO* is still a primary fund-raising vehicle to support global programs and partners.

The 2015 *World Mission Offering* focused on Paul's call to *Stretch Forward* toward the goal of advancing God's kingdom on earth. During the *World Mission Offering* fund-raising campaign toward *IM* funding, *IM* Executive Director, Dr. Reids wrote to *ABC-USA* congregations that:

...Many churches I know hold an annual mission conference that may last a day or even several weeks. It's a special time in a church's life to focus beyond its walls get an in-depth look at a foreign country—its cultures, its foods, its customs and its pressing needs. Add that to inspiring mission success stories and a motivating look at ongoing needs, and you have a powerful event indeed!...The World Mission Offering is essential in our ongoing efforts to recruit and sustain new and existing missionaries...and much more!" then he close up by the laying down the challenge in these words "STRETCH FORWARD! Support International Ministries through the 2015 World Mission Offering.

Indeed, *World Mission Offering* has been one means of mission funding; even so, there has been a change in *WMO*. During the July 2016 *World Mission Conference* at *Green Lake Conference Center*, Green Lake (WI), the newly installed *IM* Executive Director, the Rev. Sharon Koh announced the "I AM IM" matching gift opportunity. Rev. Sharon is the sixth person and the first female to hold the office of *IM* Executive Director. She began her service as Executive Director-elect on July 1, 2016, and will assume the title of Executive Director on September 1, 2016, following the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Reid S. Trulson on August 31. During her July 8, 2016 installation speech, she said: "To help move us in that direction quickly, I'm introducing "I AM IM" to raise seed money for a matching opportunity that will kick off this fall's Word Mission Offering."



“I AM IM” is a short-duration fund-raising effort that runs through September 30, 2016 to generate the seed money with which to give churches and individuals an opportunity to double their gifts to *WMO* this year. As with other matching gift opportunities, gifts to *WMO* in October (and following, until the seed money is all gone) will be matched, dollar for dollar, using the funds raised from July 8, 2016 through September 30, 2016 in the “I AM IM” effort.

Hours before the official launch of “I AM IM” at the 2016 *Green Lake Conference*, Rev. Koh asked missionaries in a closed-door meeting to stop fund-raising toward their *Personalized Support Goal* and devote their fund-raising time and efforts toward “I AM IM.” I wasn’t at the conference. If I understood correctly, this is what I heard from my conversation with my colleague missionary who was at the conference and who recounted the story: “ask your donors to donate directly to *IM* from now through September 30 and not toward your missionary ministry fund. Any funds you get through that time period will go straight to the *IM* account.” The colleague who is a missionary to Ghana had reached eighty-nine percent of her *PSG* at the time of that announcement, had already been commissioned and was preparing to leave. She was shocked at this change and wondered, “Why would I stop fund-raising to raise your money when I am this close to leaving after months of hard work? I have never gotten anything from *WMO*,” she exclaimed. “Did you, Holale?”, she asked me. The short-term change will delay her mission and for some of us who haven’t even reached half of our *PSG*, it was yet another roadblock.

Prior to the latest changes, there were other changes including a decision, effective October 01, 2015, that *IM* would retain five percent of *Specific Gifts* to cover

the cost of processing, transmitting, managing, evaluating and reporting (the combination of processes usually abbreviated as *PM&E*) for *IM* to be financially sustainable.

There is a well-known saying in *Adja* (a dialect widely spoken in South-East of Togo Republic – West Africa) which literally translates as “When the rhythm changes, the dance also must change.” There have been cultural shifts in our American culture; the twenty-first century mission changes are countless due to cultural and financial shifts. Therefore, I can argue alongside *IM* that, after 200 years of global and home missions, as the culture of mission changes, the funding of same would have to change as well. The changes could be far-reaching for *IM* as an institution; they could impact ministry, transform mission, and challenge retired, current, and prospective missionaries as all seek a better outcome.

But when changes make *IM* look more like a receiving institution than a giving institution, it leads me to the thoughts of Richard Haverson, a former chaplain of the United States Senate:

Christianity began in the land of Palestine with the person of Jesus, as a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It went to Greece and became a philosophy, went to Rome and became an institution, went to Western Europe and became a culture. Then it came to America and became an enterprise.<sup>21</sup>

So, shall we say mission funding in America is “not about money, it sure is about money?”<sup>22</sup>

The purpose of *American Baptist International Ministries* as mentioned earlier, its mission “To glorify God in all the earth by crossing cultural boundaries to help people

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<sup>21</sup> Doug Stringer, *Hope for a Fatherless Generation: Rebuilding our Foundation* (Shippensburg, PA. Destiny Image Publishers Inc, 2009), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Rob Berger, “Top 100 Money Quotes of All Times,” accessed on October 28, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/robertberger/2014/04/30/top-100-money-quotes-of-all-time/>.

come to faith in Jesus, grow in their relationship with God and change their worlds through the power of the Spirit,”<sup>23</sup> and its designed mission funding model are the results of history that began in 1814, mission experiences over the past two centuries, and financial predictions for its future missionary work.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote:

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.<sup>24</sup>

Responding to Paul’s urging to press on, this project looks for a biblically sound fund-raising model that might alleviate missionaries’ anxiety, strengthen missionaries’ passion for mission through shortening the fund-raising lag time between missionaries’ call and entry to the field, boost individuals and churches mission funding supports, and make *IM* missionary ministries more fruitful.

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<sup>23</sup> American Baptist Churches – USA, “Our Mission,” accessed on June 22, 2016, <https://internationalministries.org/read/38823-our-mission>.

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth Barker Ed., *The New International Version Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan. Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), Philippians 3:13-14.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **MY STORY: MY CALL-MY WOES**

To grasp a deeper understanding of this project, allow me to present my background, my calling to missionary ministries, my missionary fund-raising experiences and my woes (fears or concerns).

My call to missionary ministries was unique. It was the first call to which I responded, and I hoped to carry it out in partnership with my wife when we married in 2008.

I was born and raised in Togo, a small French-speaking country in sub-Saharan Africa. I am married to my high school classmate, a very supportive pastor's wife whom I love dearly. My father was one of the few educated people in the village and he also served as the nurse of the village. He inherited indigenous beliefs and practices from his parents, whereas my mother had converted to the Pentecostal Church. Before my birth, my father left his medical profession and started a business involved with trade and associated with petroleum. He eventually became wealthy and befriended other wealthy individuals of the country including the first democratically elected president of Togo. Unfortunately, by the time I was born, my father had lost his material possessions and thus, I was born into poverty. In the face of hardship, my father turned his back on any belief that could not give him peace of mind. In short, he converted to Christianity and became a devout Catholic.

Early in my youth, I started following in my parents' footsteps by literally attending every worship service, fasting, praying, and reading the Bible. By doing so, I experienced spiritual growth and an admiration of Catholic priests. This engendered my desire to become a Catholic priest. As the desire of becoming a priest became irresistible, I attended a Catholic seminary but became disenchanted after a year of study.

I fasted for the first time at the age of seven. I said healing prayers with laying-on-of-hands and anointing for a woman of about fifty years old when I was eight years old. I preached for the first time at the age of fourteen and read the Bible from cover to cover in French and in the Ewe dialect at age fifteen.

In order to survive financial hardship and to provide a means of support for their ten children, my parents became farmers. While in primary school, I remembered being expelled from school for failing to pay my school tuition; at the time, the tuition was only 300 FCFA Togo currency (back then, this was roughly \$0.50).

My father had farmland close to a river called Lomo. After each workday on the farm, my siblings and I used to go to swim in that river. We did not know that the river contained *Onchocerciasis*, or *River Blindness*, a *Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)* caused by the parasitic worm *Onchocerca volvulus*. Uninformed about the risks of *Onchocerciasis*, we kept swimming in that river for years. This caused me eye disease, skin debilitating itching, and other medical issues. Thankfully I was cured after years of treatment.

At the age of five, I remember waking up at around 3:30 a.m. with my mother and older siblings. We would walk for miles just to get couple of gallons of water for the

day's usage. I remember using the same and sometimes ragged school uniform for years and getting mocked by those who could afford new uniforms every school year.

When I began secondary school, I left my parents for another city and every summer, I had to work hard in order to get money for my textbooks. I shared a room with my older sister and brother. The room had unprotected windows, thus exposing us to mosquitoes, rain, dust, and other dangers. The mosquito bites made some nights unbearable for the whole school year. We could afford neither mosquito repellent nor bed nets. These mosquito bites caused me to suffer a severe case of near-death malaria.

During the year 1990, Togo experienced political unrest and tribal infighting leading to thousands killed and hundreds of thousands displaced. My dad was a prominent opponent to the military dictatorial regime. Because of this, and because we were his children, my siblings and I became targets of the regime. We had to move from place to place and were unable to attend school for a whole school year. Finally, we sought refuge in a nearby district of Benin Republic. We experienced fear, starvation, and loss of all hope. While in Benin, there was no river nearby where we could get water. So, everyone had to purchase their water from a privately owned water pump. We could only afford enough money to purchase drinking water. In the house where we stayed, there was a decades-old uncovered water tank. Runoff water from rainfall would go into that tank. But the runoff water contained all kind of waste (animal, garbage, plastics, among other things). After days in the tank, the water smelled bad and its color turned green with algae. We had to use that water for bathing for the entire school year in 1993-1994. Looking back, it's a miracle I am still alive! Eventually, though my father and mother passed away in 2002 and 2006 consecutively.

In the midst of the turbulent political situation in Togo, I flew to the United States in December 2001. In America, I sought a sanctuary for resettlement, peace, hope, and opportunity. Two months after I landed to Chicago, I became homeless and lived in a shelter for two years. To make a long story short, I became a naturalized United States citizen in 2008.

For every season, there is a reason; and I believe that these life experiences prepared me for mission among the people I know best, in a place with which I am familiar. As you have seen, I am no stranger to the pain of living in poverty, being a refugee, suffering from tropical disease, the struggles of immigrants, and homelessness. I believe the Lord brought me to America and inspired my theological education. God equipped me pastorally, biblically, and gifted me through this faith journey for a missionary ministry. For me, pastoral ministry should not be limited to pulpit or pew; because one cannot serve God and not serve community. In the same way, one cannot connect to God without being connected to the community.

Thus, it is natural for me to look back to Togo-West Africa and think about the youth who are poor, needy, abandoned, and in need of guidance, companionship, counseling, awareness, training, education, protection, and the Lord Jesus. My longing to serve my local community and help it to meet the needs of the least, the last, and the lost in Togo led me to co-found the *Youth Center Togo (YCT)* in 2008. *YCT* is a missionary ministry that seeks to:

- Pray for and with children.
- Provide youth with tangible assistance.
- Bring awareness and attention to the plight of poor children and orphans
- Help orphans meet their educational, health, and social needs.
- Tell needy, poor, street children, orphans, children with HIV/AIDS: “You are not alone. We love you; we pray for you; and we will help you any way

we can.

- Fight to keep girls from sexual abuse, exploitation and human trafficking.
- Provide youth with companionship, counseling, tutoring, talent developments, basic computer training, and free daycare for working single young mothers.
- Overall, Youth Center Togo feeds children, clothes children, heals children, and teach children ....<sup>1</sup>

*Youth Center Togo* was my first oversea missionary ministry and it was self-funded. I've never had to raise money for the work I did internationally; instead, I invested all my own money, working collaboratively with my wife and other local leaders.

I consider all of this a prologue to my call to missionary ministry. My vision and goal is to build on the past and achieve greater missionary accomplishment for the ministry of our Lord Jesus.

While serving as a Pastor at *West Ridge Church* in Chicago, IL, a congregation that provided me with a salary and benefit package, I could not stop thinking about the mission in Togo. I was ready to take chances and risks and move to the mission field. "Being confident of this, that God who began a good work in us (in Togo) will carry it on to completion until the end" according to Philippians 1:6, in 2013, my wife and I agreed to reach out to the *American Baptist Church –USA, Metro Chicago (ABC-MC)* region for support in order to take the missionary ministries to the next level in Togo. In return, the outgoing Executive Minister of *ABC-MC*, the Rev. Dr. Larry Greenfield, personally referred my wife and me to the denomination mission agency, the *IM*, with hope that the region would provide support through *IM*. Unfortunately, *International Ministries* said it had no partnership in Togo (*IM* works in partnership with churches or organization on

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<sup>1</sup> Youth Center Togo, "Who Are we," accessed on July 18, 2016, [http://youthcentertogo.org/wrc\\_yth1.php](http://youthcentertogo.org/wrc_yth1.php).



mission fields) and thus does not send missionaries there. Since the *YCT* is an ongoing mission, I offered to become their partner in Togo. Instead, they proposed a threefold missionary ministry in France: Empower congregations for friendship, evangelism and growth; retrain pastors and church leaders for fruitful and dynamic ministries; reach out to immigrants from Middle East and Africa. Disappointed, I objected but later accepted the call to serve in France. Nevertheless, my heart never turns away from the ministries in Togo where I have transferred all leadership and material to local leaders and cut ties with the *YCT* mission to be faithful to the call to serve in France.

It was the beginning of a new chapter in ministry; official first-time missionary work and a journey in partnership with my wife, Awenam. My wife and I gave up the *Youth Center Togo*, she resigned from her supervisor position at a local Hilton hotel, I resigned as a pastor and together, we partnered with *IM* in a fresh rewarding *Missio Dei*.

The surrendering was important because I believe that:

Somehow God calls us into practicing our faith together, not so that we will all march in lockstep but so that we will move like a dance troupe, in which each one of us contributes a somewhat different step to the unfolding work and beauty. Practicing our faith is like a dance. Each event is unique and unrepeatable, but we are moving in patterns and steps of a radiation and people.<sup>2</sup>

I was looking forward to an easy journey at home, while anticipating hardships in the field. It wasn't long before I came to realize that the road from a local church pulpit to the mission field is not straight. There are doubts in decision making, anxiety in raising financial support, bumps in finding balance between one's personal life and ministry requirements and confusion in building network of supporters. In spite of everything, I

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<sup>2</sup> Lillian Daniel and Martin Copenhaver, *This Odd and Wondrous Calling: The Public and Private Lives of Two Ministers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing CO, 2009), 3.

responded to the call, made it through the lengthy initial process and got *IM* endorsement which is a kind of green light to start fund-raising in all *ABC-USA* congregations. At twenty-five percent of our *Personalized Support Goal*, my wife and I had our status upgraded from *IM* endorsed missionaries to *IM* appointed missionaries which means that we became *IM* employees.

When we joined *IM*, we came with the notion that our missionary ministry expenses and our salary would be underwritten just like that of a pastor. We had no clue what was awaiting us! During our June 2014 orientation in *IM* headquarters in *Valley Forge, PA*, *IM* leadership informed my wife and me that, according to our French mission cost of living, we were to raise \$10,975 a month, a total of \$131,700 a year. In other words, as a missionary couple, we were to secure a donation of \$10,975 per month for the next five years, the length of our missionary ministry in France. My jaw dropped. I told them I couldn't do it. I was sweating; I had to step out of the room. Leadership confirmed that we are not to get paid \$10,975 per month for our missionary works, we had to raise that money ourselves! They further clarified that committed fund-raising is disbursed as follows for a missionary couple:

- Housing: \$ 1,000
- Insurance: \$2,124
- Our salary is the salary of an average *ABC-USA* Pastor. The combination of our salaries is set to \$4,000 (far below what I earned as Pastor).
- A portion of the monies collected goes to *Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB)* and another portion goes to the *Federal Insurance Contribution Acts (FICA)*
- The remaining percentage goes to *IM* for Administrative Support.

One-time donations and special donations cover cultural and security training, location funds, home travel and lodging expenses, visa and passport renewal, property repairs, vehicle operating costs, Mission Partner Team (MPT) related expense and non-budgeted specifics.<sup>3</sup>

For both my wife and me, this was the worst ministry-related worry we had ever encountered, for three main reasons:

First, unlike citizens of other nations, American citizens have big hearts, hearts often moved to make financial contributions toward mission. They donate whenever the need arises. Yet, donors give to people whom they know, and they donate more to people they know and trust. This was truly a concern. My wife and I were neither born in the United States nor raised in an American community. Besides, I became a Baptist in 2003, became a licensed Baptist Minister in 2006, and was ordained in 2008. After my ordination, I served *Moody Bible Church* and *West Ridge Church* which were non-ABC-USA congregations. Although I've been a member of the *ABC-USA Ministers Council* for years, I was still an unknown face to many colleagues of ABC Ministers; and to many ABC-USA congregations I was nonexistent. I was known only to my home church, *North Shore Baptist Church*. The question I wrestled with before and during the fund-raising was: how can people trust me with their financial support for mission if they don't even know or trust me?

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<sup>3</sup> *Missionary Partner Team (MPT)* is a minimum of four persons (a typical MPT has five to ten members) with two main responsibilities: to support the missionary through their assigned roles and to help the missionary build a Network of partner individuals, congregations and regions that can provide foundational spiritual, emotional and financial support to the missionary.

Second, for a donor to contribute, s/he needs to listen carefully and understand my “3C” talk (Call, Cause, and Challenge to use *IM* training words), in order to better relate to my missionary calling. I speak up to five African dialects, and French is my primary language. No matter how hard I’ve tried, I could not get rid of the strong accent in my English. Sometimes, it’s hard for people to understand me during my fund-raising speeches; therefore, they could not understand my portrayal of the mission ministries and were consequently reluctant to contribute to the cause.

Thirdly, France is no third world country. Americans have mythic, romantic ideas about France. This mindset is causing notions about the refugee crisis, the church decline, and social needs in France to escape the mind of American donors. For an African naturalized US citizen to raise funds for a missionary ministry in that part of the world is preposterous in the mind of many prospective donors I’ve met during my presentations. For instance, during some of my fund-raising sessions, people would ask, “How much are the French donating;” or “When are the French sending missionaries to America at their own cost;” or “France can sustain itself, why are we to pay for someone to go there and help them when our churches are struggling financially and we’re in need of missionaries?” I had a pastor hang the phone up on me after saying: “We are not interested in your mission.”

It was in this state of challenge, fear, doubt, discouragement, and frustration that my wife Awenam and I launched the fund-raising effort in July 2014. My wife and I handed out hundreds of commitment cards, more than any other *IM* missionary at the time. We spoke and conducted workshop at churches in Massachusetts, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Wisconsin, West Virginia, New Jersey, and Iowa. We made many calls to

churches. Some of these turned us down, others made bold face-to-face promises to support us but never followed through - these hurt the most.

We used regular mail and email to send out journals and quarterly newsletters in order to raise support. We communicate with prospective donors using social media such as Twitter, and Facebook. After a year of prayer and trying, I still have not reached half of my *PSG*.

At this point, I hit rock bottom and was very discouraged. I had lost excitement and passion for mission but couldn't share this stress and worry with *IM*. I was afraid to be seen as the pastor of little faith. In a letter to our donors and prospective donors in May 2015, I wrote:

...After facing the reality that fundraising is a must, we understood that we are called to a ministry of fundraising before a missional ministry to France. At the end of our missionary orientation, we said to one another like Isaiah in Isaiah 6 -- "Woe to us! We are doomed! We are unskilled people, called to raise fund in a time of financial crisis." We then turned to God wholeheartedly with prayers, asking God give us courage, to move hearts, to make the "mission impossible," possible. Our hearts were ready as prayers were being fired up; still we struggled to accept our new reality.

With more prayers and words of encouragement from many of you, our hearts were saying, "You could do it!" But in our mind we still had doubts. "Who are we, that we should go to God's churches and individuals and take their money to invest into God's kingdom?" (Exodus 2:24.) After all, we are only a young couple, born and raised in Africa, naturalized US citizens, members of ABC Ministers Council with only a few relationships with folks from our region. The anxious prayer of Jeremiah resonated with us -- "Then I said, 'Alas, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am a youth'" (Jeremiah 1:6.) We do not speak English fluently, and we do not possess that "natural" fundraisers' attitude.

At the end of the tunnel of doubts, and beyond the cloud of hesitations, God says, "Do not say, 'we are only...' You must go to every church and every individual I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid" (Jeremiah 1:7-8.) God promises "I will be with you, and this will be the sign," that you will reach French immigrants with the compassion of Christ, and many French with the word of God. (Exodus 2:12.) "Be strong and courageous, do not be terrified; for I will be with you wherever you go to share your calling." (Joshua 1:6-9.)

As we started sharing, we received our first pledged donation from a fellow International Ministries missionary couple. What a blessing for a new missionary couple to be supported by an experienced missionary couple! God continues to sustain us in surprising ways.

We must confess that the journey is not easy. But our minds and hearts are no longer split, and we are maturing in raising the support we need. Like my friend, colleague, and pledged supporter, the Rev. Keith Cerk of First Baptist Church of Waukegan said to us in an email, “it looks like this will be a journey of walking by faith, not by sight...”<sup>4</sup>

This journal was a cry for help, a reminder to churches that failed to keep their promises to support us, and a challenge to prospective donors to support our missionary calling.

In October 11, 2014, my wife and I flew to West Virginia to try to raise funds in two churches. The next day, early in the morning, we drove one hour to the *First Baptist Church of Logan*, and after worship and lunch, we drove another hour and a half to get to the other church. Our presentation wasn't due till after six in the evening. Like the first church, the *First Baptist Church of Man* was all white. Their English accents were totally different from the Chicago accent and my wife and I wondered if they had ever heard an African English accent before that evening. The church was led by an eighty-eight-year-old pastor who had hearing problems according to his wife who repeated most of the things we said back to him. We were pretty much intimidated but sustained by the Holy Spirit and stayed joyfully strong. The church had just bought a new Mac computer with which they were not familiar. Their technician was not present and nobody was capable of setting the projector for our PowerPoint presentation. Thanks to the assistance of my wife, who thankfully had majored in computer networking, after about thirty minutes we

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<sup>4</sup> Holale and Awenam Azondjagni, “Called Endorsed, Appointed, Praise the Lord,” *Quarterly* 6, (May 05, 2015).

were able to set up the computer, the PowerPoint, and the projector and gave a successful presentation.

After we presented our call to mission, shared our cause for the call, and invited the church to partner with our missionary work by making financial contribution to *IM* and by praying for us, Rev. Clyde boldly stated: “A church that is not mission focused is a failing church.” He went on to call on a vote to support us while we were still standing there. The church unanimously voted to support us financially. We were emotionally moved. Upon returning to Chicago, my wife and I have sent a thank you email and a thank you card. We shared their warmth welcome, love, passion for mission, and their vote to support us on social media to hopefully serve as an example for others. I kept in touch with them by sending them newsletters, and journals. Unfortunately, weeks and months passed by but we have not heard from them and we have not received any financial support from them. We followed up to check on the Church’s promise to support our mission. However, no one has replied to our communications, and no one has returned our phone calls. To this day, the *First Baptist Church of Man* has never sent a dime to our fund-raising effort and has never followed up with us. There is a bright side though: the leadership did let us visit and they heard us out, unlike many other churches.

We’ve experienced the same thing with the *Andover Baptist Church* in Massachusetts. There, after I preached and shared our calling during worship on October 20, 2014 we were prayed for by the pastoral team and the whole congregation with the laying on of hands. From the pulpit, the senior pastor promised a financial support on behalf of the church. To the day, that support never came through.

Whenever the fund-raising effort didn't seem to work, I would pause and ask, what is going on? Am I different from other missionaries? Is my mission less important than others? Am I that bad in fund-raising? What am I doing wrong? What should I do that I am not doing? I've changed my speech and presentation to fit a particular congregation's theology of mission, still nothing seems to work.

The Metro Chicago Region had referred us to *IM* with hope that *IM* would find some way to support us. At their 2014 Annual Meeting, the *ABC-MC* gathered pastors, leaders, and other members enthusiastically applauded when their leadership officially introduced us as the Metro Chicago Region missionaries to France. We could see that they loved us and we felt like they would support us spiritually as well as financially without hesitation. Because of how passionately they cheered for us, I told my wife we were in good hands and that we would raise 100% of our *PSG* in no time. We knew many of them and they seemed like brothers and sisters to us. In addition, I was very encouraged because there was no *IM* missionary from Metro Chicago apart from us. All the more reason to have faith in God, and trust in the Metro Chicago congregations for financial provision. I was wrong. A year later we got nothing but false, heartbreaking, humiliating, and discouraging results.

There was another event that pushed me to think outside the Metro Chicago box. After trying unsuccessfully to secure fund-raising presentation venues in Metro Chicago, we received word from the regional office that *ABC Metro Chicago* pastors suggested that we send them an informative brochure to share our background, our call to mission, more information about our mission field, our expected mission works, and explain in what ways congregations can assist us. With the help of our Communication Advocate,



we compiled the brochure, had it printed at a nearby Office Max, and mailed it to them through the regional office. In spite of these efforts, only four pastors invited us to speak at their churches. Of all sixty-two sister churches of the *ABC- USA Metro Chicago Region*, only *North Shore Baptist Church* (my home church) and *First Baptist Church of Waukegan* made recurring donations toward our mission. No other congregations supported us in Metro Chicago. Instead, they started spreading false rumors about our resignation as follow:

On March 2015, I had an email conversation with a pastor colleague who is a member of the *American Baptist Churches-USA Metro Chicago Ministers Council*. He's a great man who deeply loves my wife and me. From time to time, he would send us an email of encouragement to boost our morale. As I think about it, he has been one of the few pastors of our Metro Chicago home region to sympathize most with our missionary support raising struggles. He wrote: "Right now I am wondering how close you are to your targeted amount needed to leave for France. Somebody told me he had heard you were being advised to drop out due to lack of support. Sad if that was true. How are you doing?"<sup>5</sup> What a journey! It will take the mighty hand of the miracle-working Lord Jesus to keep our heads held high.

Sadly, our anticipation of serving in *France* has shifted. We have come to understand that the expectations of our *Evangelical Baptist Churches of France* partners have changed so much so that our calling to serve in *France* is no longer needed at this time. As a result, after prayers, discernment, and hard work, the *IM* Board of Directors "bent the rule" and voted to redirect us to serve in Togo, West-Africa in partnership with

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<sup>5</sup> Rev. Keith Cerks, e-mail message to Holale C. Azondjagni, March 26, 2015.

their new partner, the *Baptist Convention of Togo*. Thus, in December 2016, a detour toward a new journey to the Togo mission field would have begun.

Although I felt mixed emotions, I realized that God uses brokenness as well as blessing to place us where we are supposed to be. I thought that people did not support us because missionary activity in *France* did not match their mission vision. I also thought that now that *IM* rerouted Awenam and I to Togo, our *PSG* would drop, and the support will just flow in.

Togo is a very small country. That's where I was born; and that's where Awenam and I started our self-funded missionary ministries. I know my way around. In spite of inflation, the cost of living is nothing compared to that of France. Surprisingly, the *PSG* that *IM* came up with for missionary work in Togo did not drop compared to the *PSG* we were to raise for the French mission. In addition, there was no excitement about our potential work in Togo from Churches as I had hoped.

So, three months into this new journey, my wife and I needed and were graciously granted an unexpected family leave of absence effective April 18, 2016.

I couldn't agree more with William Dillon, Founder and President of *People Raising* who stated:

One of the obstacles standing in the way of Christians fulfilling the Great Commission is the dwelling supply of Christian workers. Without an expanding workforce, we will be unable to deliver the gospel. Often, what prevents willing servants from getting down to the work they long to do is a lack of effective strategy for raising funds.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> William P. Dillon, *People Raising: A Practical Guide to Raising Funds* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers CO, 2012), 11.

It was true that I became skeptical and wanted out. But my wife kept us going on with words of encouragement. I was tempted to think I was wasting precious time with the distraction of fund-raising and was anxious to get going on my real calling in either France or Togo. But the missionary fund-raising effort has taught me many things. I've learned that it's a journey of walking by faith because it does stretch my faith for real. I liken the delay to the story of Moses tending sheep, a time when God is doing some deep work necessary for both my wife and me to be fully effective (Hopefully, though, it won't be forty years until we get to 100% and get to the mission field).

It was a journey that has led us to build a nationwide network of friends, family, churches and organization. It introduced me to the twenty-first century *ABC-USA* congregational culture, belief, theology, and missiology. I've learned to trust no man/woman for missionary support, but God alone. In the process, I learned to deal with my doubts, woes, and fears prayerfully, and I've learned to try to meet congregations where they stand.

Bud Taylor, a Network Associate with *Strategos*, author, speaker, and change management consultant shares in the burden of missionary support raising when he writes:<sup>7</sup>

There are many things that God (has taught me) that (I) could not possibly learn anywhere else. (I) learned how to work with people and how to adapt under divergent, difficult, and sometimes desperate circumstances. That is when the realization dawns that we are limited and God is so limitless! It is not as is so often misrepresented a punitive measure, but a privilege. It is not a promotional

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<sup>7</sup> A group of Strategy and Innovation experts, and talented professionals that helps organizations create a point of view about future opportunities and develop strategy and innovation capabilities to exploit them since 1995.

gimmick, but a prerequisite. In the process, one learns to poise, polish, and proficiency and how to use time, tact, and talents to (one's) best advantage.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Bud Taylor, *Taking the P.U. out of Deputations* (Self-published pamphlet, source of Light Ministries), 19.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF FUND-RAISING

Missiology, and the theology of missionary support raising go hand in hand.

Mission, missionaries' works, and missionaries fund-raising have a long history. Mission began when Jesus sent the twelve Apostles from first century Palestine. The Word of God reached Asia, Europe and now has become a worldwide ministry. Professor, pastor, and author, Dr. Kevin J. Livingston shares stories that underlie the beginning of mission. He writes:

Throughout the history of the church, men and women have witnessed to Jesus Christ by word and deed, participating in God's mission. In the early centuries of the church, the apologists and fathers proclaimed the faith, while far the North, the Celtic missions evangelize large parts of northern Europe. By the Middle Age, however, the church had largely turned inward. It chose not to evangelize but to make a military crusade against Muslims. Even so, numerous monastic orders ... kept the concern for a mission beyond Christendom alive, seeking to bring Muslims to faith in Christ through acts of love and service rather than through the sword. By the reformation, with the era of discovery and Western colonialism dawning ... Roman Catholic Jesuits as well as Anabaptist group ... in quite different ways, took the gospel to those who had not heard it. There were, however, early voices within Protestantism urging a similar concern ... but not till the advent of the Pietist and Moravian movements did mission become firmly established within European Protestantism ... Then came the 'Great Century of Missions' ... In the nineteenth century, as newly formed missionary societies began sending out more workers, the discipline of missiology was born.<sup>1</sup>

Mission itself is first and foremost about the work of God in humanity through the Church who sends individuals called missionaries. Individual missionaries leave familiar pulpits for unknown lands, cultures, and languages to fulfill the biblical call to be the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Kevin Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road: Early Perspectives in David Bosch's Theology of Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene, OR: James Clarke & CO, 2013), 66-67.

*hands and feet of Jesus, the light and salt of the world, and peacemakers, according to Mathew 5:3-15.*

The scripture narrative reveals a missional God who walks with people from various backgrounds, cleansing, teaching, healing, feeding, reconciling, liberating, and redeeming.

In Mathew, 14:16-21 Jesus feeds the hungry:

Jesus replied, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.' 'We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,' they answered. 'Bring them here to me,' he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

In Luke 17:11-14, Jesus' missionary ministry consists of healing the sick:

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

In 2 Corinthians 5:19, the Missional God reconciles nations:

...God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Finally, God extends the missionary call to all humanity to teach and preach the Gospel, heal the sick, cloth the naked, empower the weak, reconcile nations, visit prisoners, work for peace and justice, become the voice of the voiceless. This call echoes in many Bible verses, but two resonate with me most:

Luke 1:8: But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Mathew 28:18-20: Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

To better understand the mission in a context, one needs to understand the meaning of culture. A widely cited definition of culture comes to us from anthropologist Clifford Geertz who suggests that:

[T]he culture concept ... denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life.<sup>2</sup>

Having come from another culture, being raised in a remote African village and familiar with indigenous belief and practice, now living in North America and having adopted the culture of America, this quote speaks volumes. Despite our nature, belief, and tradition, culture enables us to define our identity, and to explain thoughts, actions, and attitudes. Whatever our culture might be, we are still the beloved children of God; and in God’s mission, tribe, race, gender, and social class are nonexistent. It means that all people, including indigenous peoples, are so precious that God comes to them by means of missionaries who come to be present alongside them. It means that God is ever present even in the most forgotten, chaotic, and broken part of the earth. Therefore, missionaries are the bridge God uses to reach out into the world. This makes mission an expression of God’s love, mercy, and grace, a manifestation of God’s compassion, and a total disclosure of God’s hidden plan and action to mankind. The missional God is not against any culture.

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<sup>2</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, NY: Basic Book, 1973), 89.

This is seen clearly in Jesus' last prayer in John 17: 15-18

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

The believer is called to be in the world but not to be of it. Mission without cultural consideration is doomed to fail. In mission, God meets people where they stand. To put it in the words of Emil Brunner, an ordained *Swiss Reformed Church* minister and theologian,

In the message of missionary, whether we are willing to admit this or not, to be able to make use of the knowledge which the pagan, unconverted, man already possesses plays a decisive part. Missionary work has ever carried on in any other way, and it can never be done in any other way. The mere act of "bearing witness" remains sterile unless it can be integrated with the truth which the listener already possesses. To deny this is to deny an obvious fact.<sup>3</sup>

Adding to this, Francis Anekwe Objorji, a Nigerian Catholic priest, emphasizes that mission is "a conversion, a service of God's reign; it's a church planting; it's an enculturation; it's a dialogue; and it is a contextual theology..."<sup>4</sup> This summarizes the cross-cultural work of missionaries which consists of:

- Representing the kingdom of God by preaching the word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Teaching, encouraging, disciplining, and equipping men and women for discipleship, faithful and holy living.
- Translating the truth of the gospel as good news for the mission field in the field context.
- Reaching out to all with the love of God without religious distinction, sexual orientation, race and tribal affiliation.

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<sup>3</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God. Dogmatics: Vol. I* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1949), 101-102.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Anekwe Objorji, "The theological language in Africa: Missiological Reflection," accessed on August 13, 2015, [http://sedosmission.org/old/eng/objorji\\_5.htm](http://sedosmission.org/old/eng/objorji_5.htm).



- Guiding believers in praise, confession, testimony, and worship
- Evangelizing non-believers
- Being a prophetic voice to the larger society seeking social justice for the neighbor.
- Clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, empowering the weak, reaching out to outcasts ...

The command of Jesus to go to the ends of the earth establishes the worldwide mission for the church, a mission that requires a sustainable financial investment. The great commission, the great commandment, and the biblical golden rule are carried out within the local church and its community and beyond the local community, i.e., overseas. Mission has been the means of church survival, and the means of community rescue for centuries. For example, in 1920, after World War II, the *International Ministries of American Baptist Churches USA* partnered with *British Baptist* and the *Southern Baptist* in an unusual rescue mission partnership to help rebuild the church and reach out to the displaced.

Overseas mission is part of Church *DNA*. It's one of the many things the Church does best. The question is no longer whether the Church would participate spiritually and/or financially in the mission. The question is, if the church is aware that it's been part of a movement that goes beyond its wall to the ends of the earth according to Acts 1:8, then how would it fulfil that mission without proper funding?

Seeking a missionary placement is not synonymous with seeking a pastoral placement. Some would say that a missionary who is going to serve overseas has received a call to become the ambassador of Christ; according to 2 Corinthians 5:20, "we are therefore Christ's ambassadors" in a broken world. Missional ministry is not a career; it is a call into mission, a commissioning and sending to the mission field. A missionary

is called, not hired. A missionary is sent by individuals, churches, and organizations acting together with God's blessing. Whereas pastors are ordained and evangelists sent, missionaries are commissioned. A missionary is like someone working abroad, a national Ambassador to another nation, or the *American Peace Keepers*. Unlike *Peace Keepers* who work to keep peace in the name of ideology, politics, and international relations, missionaries do all they can in the name of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. For example, the missionary work during the 2015 Ebola outbreak in Liberia and other parts of West Africa was a great display of God's love, compassion, and presence among indigenous peoples.

Missionaries use their mind, spirit, and heart to build bridges. Whether ordained or not, theologically trained or not, the bar of expectation is high for missionaries who are called to live out their faith in God. From personal experience, missionaries are called to:

- Quicken consciences by the holiness of God.
- Feed minds with the truth of God.
- Proclaim the beauty of God.
- Open hearts to the love of God.
- Encourage people to find the will of God.
- Help people to become more Christ centered.
- Help people to have a repentant heart.
- and encourage people to live in sincerity, fidelity, humility, and purity; and live in harmony with others and God.

The basis of the call of missionaries is a set of theological and philosophical reflections that are Christ centered and heaven focused. The work of missionaries tries to

replicate Christ's life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Quoting systematic theologian Martin Kähler, missiologist theologian David Bosch claims that "Mission is the mother of theology;"<sup>5</sup> because, he claims: "theology began as 'an accompanying manifestation of the Christian mission.'"<sup>6</sup> This powerful statement implies that church doctrines, philosophy, theology, statement of faith have stemmed from the mission of the church.

When God calls missionaries, Bosh continues and states in Kähler word, they participate in

God's mission as reality that will, one hopes, transform the world's people to open their hearts to see and participate in God's reign."<sup>7</sup> "To participate in that mission requires a spirituality of the road. It involves putting ourselves in a place where God's Spirit will lead us along paths that left to our own devices; we could not imagine and would not choose."<sup>8</sup>

For a missionary, God becomes the only roadmap in the mission field. God becomes the spiritual navigation much like a kind of heavenly satellite signals (*GPS*) to accomplish the vision of the mission. The GPS analogy rings true, considering mission theologian, Andrew Kirk's definition of missiology that says:

The theology of mission is a disciplined study which deals with questions that arise when people of faith seek to understand and fulfill God's purposes in the world, as these are demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is a critical reflection on attitudes and actions adopted by Christians in pursuit of missionary mandate. Its task is to validate, correct, and establish on better foundations the entire practice of mission<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011). Kindle version, Locations 755 of 1084.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew J. Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations* (London: Longman & Todd, 1999), 21.

Missiology might have been impossible without a clear definition of who God is, what God is doing, what God intended for this world, and how God is planning to use us all, in short, the doctrine of God reflected in the person of Jesus Christ. Mission theologian Scott Sunquist describes this as:

...the church crossing frontier. There must be some crossing of barriers – whether they be linguistic, economic, cultural, or religious – and there must be some communication of the message of Christ... (it) involved both sending and the crossing of the boundary of faith or belief... From biblical and theological perspective, mission means “announcing the good news; transforming cultures; providing justice for the poor; promoting encounter, dialogue, and witness among the religions of the world; building peace in a world of violence; and caring for the environment. Moreover, all this is to be done in partnership. Regarding mission to political life, the church’s mission is three-fold: prophetic task, servant task, and evangelistic task.<sup>10</sup>

Mission as defined above is clearly a description of Jesus’ earthly three-fold ministries: Teach-heal-feed. In responding to the call, a missionary becomes a living tool in the hand of God as he or she inwardly says: “You are the potter, make me and mold me” or prays “have your way, Lord.”

To fulfill that noble call, God asks missionaries to have hearts big enough to love all without regard to race, sexual orientation, tribe or nationality. A missionary is that person who is called to live out the passion of Christ, with a compassionate heart toward all God’s people. If missional ministry is a response to the call of God; if it embraces a noble cause, then the person must carry a sweet burden, for it is written:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers,

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<sup>10</sup> Scott W. Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 400 of 764, Kindle.

for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.<sup>11</sup>

We can also consider missiology from another aspect, the notion of *cor inquietum*

(the restless heart) and as a conversation. Again, Brunner:

As dogmatics is necessarily deductive, missionary theology is equally necessarily inductive. Dogmatics says: this is the revealed truth, and this is the salvation of humanity. Missionary theology says: This is the need and the danger of man – and from this, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the means of rescue. Missionary theology is, first of all, wholly concerned with the hearer, with his need, his helplessness, his skepticism, and his longing. Missionary theology unveils the “*cor inquietum*”, and shows why it is “*inquietum*”; it does not however, do this in such a way that the gospel appears to be derived from the need of man; rather, its aim is to show that it is only the miracle of revelation in Jesus Christ which can meet man’s need, because this distress is caused by man’s distance from God, and indeed consists in alienation. Missionary theology takes the form of a conversation between a Christian believer and an unbeliever. The Christian believer enters into the questions raised by the unbeliever; he gives full weight to all the truth and insight the unbeliever already possess. But he shows also how his knowledge, and therefore also his questions, ignore the very thing which brings light and true knowledge. Missionary theology is, so to say, pastoral work in the form of reflection, just as dogmatics is witness in the form of reflection.<sup>12</sup>

Mission is indeed a blessed, fulfilling, and holy work; mission is a balanced sweet-burden; mission is serving Jesus by serving God’s people or revealing God to others who seem unaware of God’s presence or who seem to know God through other means. Mission shares some facets of pastoral work without necessarily standing behind the church pulpit. Then again, many already ordained ministers, lay leaders, and the laity sometimes seem hesitant to respond to the call to mission. After all, it may seem easier to say yes to the pastoral call than to a missionary call. Not that pastoral ministry is that easy, just ask any pastoral minister!

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<sup>11</sup> NIV, Matthew 5:3-10.

<sup>12</sup> Brunner, 102-103.

One difference between pastoral ministries and missionary ministry is simple: Missionaries are called from their comfort zone for a self-funded ministry, to an unknown location, and hopefully to be a blessing to mostly indigenous communities. On the other hand, pastors are called to a well-known destination with the guidance, salary and benefits guaranteed from their denomination or churches.

I personally believe that the church has enough resources to support missionaries' ministries because "Christians make up 33% of the world's population, but receive 53% of the world's annual income and spend 98% of it on themselves."<sup>13</sup> And according to The Traveling Team, "American Christians spend 95% of offerings on home-based ministry, 4.5% on cross-cultural efforts in already reached people groups, and .5% to reach the unreached."<sup>14</sup>

"91% of all Christian outreach and evangelism does not target non-Christians, but targets other Christians ... of 100% foreign missionaries, 87% goes for work among those already Christian ... 12% work among already evangelized, but Non-Christian ... 1% work among the un-evangelized and unreached people."<sup>15</sup>

If the church and its mission organizations reorganized church fund management and restructured the missionaries' funding, fund-raising could take on a more spiritual dimension as Church management author, Mark Baxter says:

From the perspective of the gospel, fundraising is not a response to a crisis. Fundraising is, first and foremost, a form of ministry. It is a way of announcing

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<sup>13</sup> David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends AD 30 - AD 2200: Interpreting the annual Christian Megacensus* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 656.

<sup>14</sup> The Traveling Team, "State of the World," accessed on August 10, 2015, <http://www.thetravelingteam.org/stateworld>.

<sup>15</sup> Mark R. Baxter, *The Coming Revolution: Because Status Quo Missions Won't Finish the Job* (Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing, 2007), 12.

our vision, and inviting other people into our mission. Vision and mission are so central to the life of God's people that without vision we perish and without mission we lose our way (Prov. 29:18; 2 Kings 21:1-9). Vision brings together needs and resources to meet those ends (Acts 9:1-19) ... Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission. Fundraising is precisely the opposite of begging. When we seek to raise funds ... we are declaring, 'we have a vision that is amazing and exciting. We are inviting you to invest yourself through the resources that God has given you – your energy, your prayers, and your money – in this work to which God has called us' ... fundraising is a very concrete way to help the kingdom of God come about' ... By calling (the church) to a deeper commitment to particular ministry, fundraising help to make visible the kingdom that is already among us.<sup>16</sup>

To take the Baxter reference further, let me share my encounter with Pastor Paul whom I met in July 2014 at the *IM World Mission Conference* when *American Baptist International Ministries* was celebrating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of overseas and home mission. Paul is the program director and volunteer coordinator at the *Bethel Neighborhood Center* in Kansas City. A year ago, I received a humbling invitation from him to come and preach at his ordination service, in Kansas City. The first time we met, I was presenting my missionary call as a way of building a network of supporters to raise the financial support for the five-year mission in France. It was also my first time speaking to prospective financial supporters. At the end of the presentation, he approached me and said, "I like this presentation very much. It's going to be a life changing mission in France. I'd like to invite you to speak to youth at the *Bethel Center*," he said. Then he continued saying, "I myself have been considering becoming a missionary." I replied, "Good; *IM* would love to have you onboard." He said, "I am not sure I want to serve through *International Ministries* or any other mission agencies." As

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<sup>16</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *A spirituality of Fundraising* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2010), 16, 17, 24, 53.

the conversation continued, I asked, “Why?” “I am not sure if I am afraid or just not ready. Sometimes, I want to. Sometimes I don’t want to. The fund-raising thing is a little bit scary, seen what you’re going through....” My mind started processing his last phrase: “the fund-raising thing.” That was like hitting the bull’s eye. “This has been my struggle as well,” I said inwardly. From my conversations with many prospective missionaries and missionaries, with pastors and lay leaders, I can see that the challenge of missionaries’ fund-raising is real.

Courageous men like Pastor Paul who are intentional about mission could be encouraged to enter missionary ministry, not shy away. They could have been persuaded that mission is God calling, God vision for the church, and therefore, God’s provision for missionaries through the church could be a guarantee. It’s not missionaries’ cause, not missionaries’ provision, and most certainly not missionaries’ task, but God’s task.

God is not alone in mission. God empowers humankind with the Holy Spirit to reach out to humanity. In Peter 2:9, it’s written: “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of (God) who called you out of darkness into (God’s) wonderful light” meaning that God has appointed men and women for fulfilling tasks including the missionary’s task on earth. Because we are empowered to participate in the advancement of the reign of God on earth, human participation can be personal, financial, and spiritual. Therefore, mission and mission support, whether with time, talent or treasure, work out well together.

Whether we do mission, or provide support for missionary work, we respond to the same missionary call. Fund-raising can create opportunities to be missional for those



with financial resources; and it can be missional for those who support the institutional mission funding model as empowering *Missio Dei*.

It's not that asking for money or talking about money for ministry is a taboo in the biblical word. The Scripture are never silent about ministry related finances. Prophets, kings of the old, even Jesus and the apostles after Jesus called us into collaborative support of ministry, and this is fund-raising. 'Jesus spoke more directly about stewardship than about any other subject. Approximately seven hundred direct statements in the Bible relate finances. One could add a hundred indirect references. Nearly two-third of the parables of Christ deal with the use of wealth.<sup>17</sup>

Inviting the church to join in a mission financially is to make fund-raising our collaborative ministry as good stewards of God's blessing. Eugene F. Roop, a professor of Biblical Studies, provides a perfect image by writing that

The picture of a steward that has emerged from study of Joseph, Daniel, the parables of Jesus, and the Greek word *oikonomos* has provided a colorful and expansive image, energetically calling people to care for human and nonhuman life and earth which is home to all.<sup>18</sup>

So, asking people to donate toward mission work is asking them to join in redeeming the created order. It's asking them to serve the Lord, as God is using mission as a channel to reach the hitherto unreached. Therefore, "Support-raising provides opportunity for blessings to those who give to mission. And God gives them credit for missionaries' fruit-bearing."<sup>19</sup> A missionary raising support is

an opportunity to prove his faith, to inform fellow Christians of God's work, to inspire them to invest in things of eternal consequence, and to encourage them to pray for him and for and for the work of the Lord, then his deputation is no longer a mountain but a ministry" in partnership with the church. It's no longer a financial support raising but personal support raising.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Dillon, 21

<sup>18</sup> Eugene F. Roop, *Let the Rivers Run: Stewardship and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eedermans Publishing Co, 1991), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Dillon, 15

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Fund-raising as a spiritual practice appears throughout the Old and New Testaments. For example: In Exodus 25:2, “The LORD said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give” for the making of the tabernacle. In the book of Nehemiah, we learn that Nehemiah raised funds to rebuild the temple. In I Corinthians 16, Paul raised funds from the church in Corinth to send to the church in Jerusalem to help reboot that church’s ministry.

The biblical statements and theological approaches are not against fund-raising. The arguments are against a so-called lone ranger (please, see definition on page 113) model of fund-raising.<sup>21</sup> Fund-raising can always benefit the church, the mission organization, donors, and missionaries. It cannot be beneficial to one and a burden to another. Like William P. Dillon mentioned in the *Benefits of Raising Funds*,

- Raising financial support attracts a base of prayer support.
- Raising financial support stretches your faith.
- Raising financial support stimulates and encourage vision in the body of Christ.
- Raising financial support broadens the base of financial support of your organization.
- Raising financial support develops you as a person.
- Raising financial support stimulates fellowship among other believers.
- Raising financial support opens opportunities to witness.<sup>22</sup>

I believe fund-raising is Biblical, and is vital to any church ministry and mission. Asking people to donate toward mission support is asking them to partner with God and missionaries God has called to the redeeming missionary work on earth.

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<sup>21</sup> *The Lone Ranger*, Directed by George B. Seitz Jr. (Old Tucson, USA: Apex Film Corp., 1949).

<sup>22</sup> Dillon, 17-19.

Fund-raising can boost missionaries' hope as it expands their vision to know that they are not alone in mission, but are in partnership with God and God's people. Fund-raising can be a collaborative ministry. This reminds me of St. Paul's illustration in I Corinthians 12: 12-27 that we, members of the body of Christ are one. In verse 26, he writes: "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

In comment posted on Garrett Evangelical and Theological Seminary blog on October 2014 Lallene J. Rector, President of *Garrett Evangelical and Theological Seminary* wrote:

It's an understanding from the earliest days of the Christian faith that we are all in this together. That we really do need each other to get the job done and we need to value what each one can contribute. This means to continue to work toward collaboration even when it seems untenable, while also being willing to work alone, if necessary, in order to make incremental change. And even if it is incremental change and not all that we might have hoped for, we proceed all the while with hope and trust that God will redeem our efforts and bring our efforts to good completion.

Neither Moses, nor Nehemiah, nor Paul would be able to fulfill their call without participative and collaborative financial support. God thus "loves cheerful givers."<sup>23</sup>

When the whole church joins the missionary in one common accord with one heart to a mission using its time, talent, and treasure, there is a display of God's own fingerprint all over the ministry of the church and the mission of the missionaries. From the biblical and theological perspectives, mission support should be OUR collective ministry, not just the duty of lone ranger missionaries who race between churches and individuals, trying to win their trust and garner their financial support.

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<sup>23</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7.

Inspired by my home church's mission funding model experience, and after exploring the *IM*'s current mission personalized fund-raising model, I am aiming at what Laurie Green, a liberation theologian and former Anglican Bishop of Bradwell (England) calls "the liberation and changing of individuals and communities" in regard to their mission funding models. For Green, theological reflection is a way to "understand and interpret the world through the eyes of its Christian faith using all the sacramental, creedal, and biblical insights that the church has."<sup>24</sup> Theological reflection is "to serve as a tool in transformation and engagement with people in their situation... This is praxis, a constant marrying of action and reflection, and is key to 'doing theology' "<sup>25</sup>

For Green, theological reflection is a spiral developed through a combination of five sequential steps: Experience, Exploration, Reflection, Response and New Experience that might open to another, perhaps deeper spiral. In my context, reflection begins with the current *IM* mission funding tradition, the familiar personalized support fund-raising. As a group made of members of *NSBC*, *IM* missionaries, and *LAC*, we explored our stories and practices together with the Bible's teaching about mission funding. Then we reflected on the narratives gathered from this exploration, leading to "new insights derived from all their theological reflection." This led us to the response task which consists of building bridges between the lone-ranger personalized support raising model, and the Bible's teaching about mission funding. This also has led to new opportunity," thus a new experience: Lecture Lab (see definition section).<sup>26</sup>

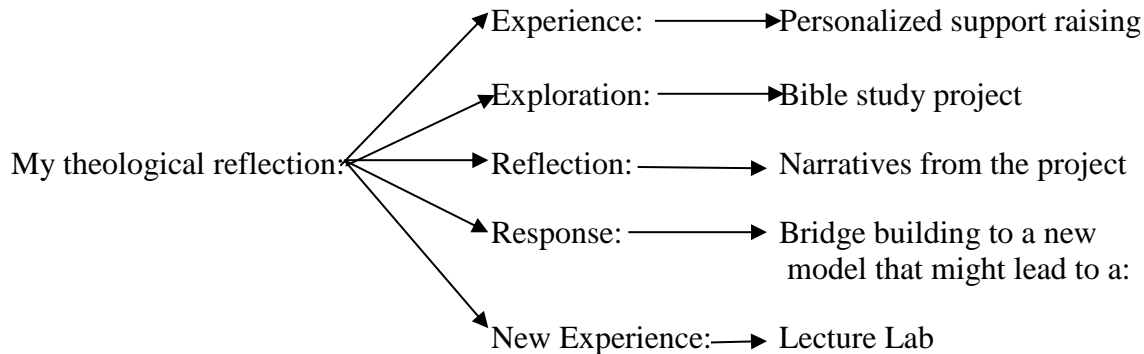
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<sup>24</sup> Laurie Green, *Let's do Theology* (London: Continuum, 1990), 100.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Laurie Green, *Let's Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology* (London: Mowbray, 2009), 23.

**The following is the chart of my theological reflection:**



Quoting New Testament scholar Heinrich Kasting, missiologist theologian David Bosch states that “Mission was, in the early stages, more than a mere function; it was a fundamental expression of the life of the church. The beginnings of a missionary theology are therefore also the beginnings of Christian theology as such.”<sup>27</sup> Bosch continues to say that “Christianity has never been more itself, more consistent with Jesus and more evidently en route to its own future, than in the launching of the world mission.”<sup>28</sup> That said, raising missionary support is a reminder to the church that *Missio Dei* and raising missionaries support are heaven’s mandate.

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<sup>27</sup> Bosch, 747 of 1084, Kindle.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

**CHAPTER 4**  
**MISSION FUNDING, THE CHURCH CALL, GOD’S TASK: PROJECT  
METHODOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT.**

**Diverse Mission Funding Models, One Missio Dei**

The work of *IM* missionaries at home prior to their oversea assignments are not only limited to trainings and fund-raisings; missionaries are required to take a discerning two to three-week vision trip to their future mission field.

For me, a vision trip is not just any trip. It's an opportunity to encounter God in a fresh new way; to broaden my understanding of the call to serve overseas. It is a chance to experience firsthand, what God is doing in the country in which I am called to serve. It is also an opportunity to get connected while experiencing cross-cultural worship and fellowship. Thus it is vital for a missionary calling as potential missionaries, including me hopefully to become more familiar with my future mission field.

Initially, the date was set for my two-week vision trip to France in Fall 2014. But then the road curved. Our fund-raising did not reach the twenty-five percent of our *PSG* threshold required to quit our jobs and become *IM* employees. Our preoccupations at the time presented difficulties with arranging for the extended time away needed for a fruitful trip (late October through early November). We realized that our vision trip would need to await the point at which we reach twenty-five percent of our *PSG* (*Personalized Support Goal*). It was with great sadness that we canceled our vision trip. Yet this difficulty only strengthened our resolve. Once we raised twenty-five percent of our *PSG*

in Spring 2015 we were finally able to take our long-awaited vision trip, meet our future coworkers and witness the harvest field into which God has called us to serve.

In Numbers 13, the Lord commanded Moses to send some men to explore the Land of Canaan which God would give to the Israelites. Whereas Moses chooses the strategic number of people, twelve, we were more: my wife Awenam, me, and supporters who spiritually accompanied us for our twelve-day vision trip to France. Unlike the Israelites' spy mission to a land that needed to be conquered, our vision trip goals were to experience God's work; to get oriented and connected cross culturally; to receive affirmation of God's call and to enhance our enthusiasm for this mission. While the twelve Israelites conducted their spy mission from south to the north of Canaan, the land that needed to be conquered geographically, our vision trip was moving from north to the south of France, a country that needed to be engaged.

One thing we have in common with the Israelite spies was that we, not as spies but as appointed missionaries, encountered people in the land we visited. We encountered American missionaries, French clerics and fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The encounters revealed us stories that have impacted our approach to mission and missionaries' support raising.

During our first three days, we attended the annual meeting of *the Federation of Evangelical Baptist Churches of France (FEBCF)* in Wasquehall, France. We were privileged to meet the council, the committee, pastors and staffs of the *FEBCF*, and many other guests from Protestant and Catholic churches with whom the *FEBCF* has developed an ecumenical partnership. It was a time of worship, prayer and praise, fellowship, and

breaking of the bread. At the end, we were blessed to be presented as *American Baptist – International Ministries* missionaries to France.

Then we met other American missionaries outside of our *IM* connection such as our friend the Rev. Ilena, a very caring American citizen living in France. She visited France years ago, and realized that “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.” So, she returned to the United States to raise the financial support needed to go and serve in France. Unfortunately, “I never got that support because people just don’t get how dire the situation is in France,” she said. Mindful of the situation, she went back to France, joined a church, attended seminary, got French citizenship, became ordained, and is now serving a church to help advance the kingdom of God. Her story moved my heart, and it was an affirmation of God’s calling us to France to help jumpstart France ministries. “I pray you reach your target quickly and come to help us in France,” she said to us.

Our hope was to make her dream come true this time by joining her swiftly to advance the kingdom of God in France. After our conversation, I couldn’t sleep the following night. Repeatedly, I wrestled with a question for which only God knew the answer: If a born and raised white American lady (with more network of people than us) failed to raise the support she needed for missionary ministry, could I, a naturalized U.S citizen rise above the mission funding challenge? Doubt was welling up inside my head.

Still, I was able to share the exciting news that my first placement will likely be in Biscarrosse, France, about seven hours southwest of Paris. After the annual meeting, my wife and I drove nine and a half hours to Biscarrosse where I preached the next day at the *Centre Chretien* (Christian Center), had a meeting with the area executive and the church council, and spent four days making visitations. I heard heartbreaking stories of people



thirsting for church growth, community outreach, and youth ministries; and I heard stories of people's lives, interests, passions and creativity.

Biscarrosse is a unique city of 14,000 inhabitants which swells to 140,000 in the summer because of its seaside location. It is also a military city where Europeans test heavy arms. *Centre Chretien* is the only Protestant church in town and the congregation has not been led by a pastor in fifteen years! Its attendance can shrink to fifteen people on Sundays. But the day they heard of our visit, about sixty community members came to hear the gospel. The next closest church is Pentecostal, about thirty-five miles away.

Geographically, Biscarrosse might become a home for immigrants and refugees who are moving west from Marseilles. I believe that churches need to be equipped and prepared to welcome migrants. Spiritually, Biscarrosse is a mission field for disciple making, for church growth and planting, and youth ministries.

Aware of the urgency, our French partners expected us to start the mission as of September 2015. At thirty percent of our 100% needed support, my mind laughed at the deadline, but my spirit was kind of optimistic.

In the midst of this psychological split, we ran into Randy Trail, a *Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB)* missionary in France. After an edifying conversation, he told me to contact him if *IM* ever fails me in raising the financial support needed; he promised to put me in touch with his *Southern Baptist* denomination and its mission agency, *IMB*. "IMB will send you to any mission field without your raising a dime," he continued.

The encounter with Randy, an American serving as an *IMB Connecting France* missionary, triggered my quest for a mission funding model that could offer an

alternative to *IM's Personalized Support Raising*. I thought I might need to know just in case things didn't work out well with *IM*. I realized that there might be more than one mission funding model while the missionary calling is still the same.

According to *Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS)*

... there are over 4,000 known evangelical mission agencies sending 250,000 missionaries from over 200 countries. This is up from 1,800 known mission agencies and 70,000 missionaries in 1980. It is a remarkable progress, and a powerful demonstration of global vitality and vision in the evangelical movement.<sup>1</sup>

Each one of these “over 4,000 evangelical mission agencies” has their own mission funding model with hope to fulfill *Missio Dei*. For example:

*SIM (Society for International Ministries)* mission agency uses an approach called *personal support*. Personal support provides for salary and mission related expenses without factoring in cost-of-living in the mission field.

A mission agency such as the *International Mission Board (IMB)*, the *Southern Baptist Churches (SBC)* mission agency, underwrites missionaries' salaries and mission-related expenses without requiring its missionaries to raise funds. However, in an open letter to *SBC* congregations on September 04, 2015, David Platt, President of *IMB* revealed “a shocking severity” of *IMB's* financial state. In the same letter, he mentioned financial predictions over time, and measures undertaken to maintain *IMB's* missional ministries. He shared that in:

- 2008 – “IMB reports cautionary finance news that could have a significant impact on the Board's work around the world next year.” Later that year, our trustee chair said to churches, “I am sounding the alarm. The IMB budget is under strain to support growth in our missionary force.”

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<sup>1</sup> Global Network of Mission, “Accelerating the Fulfillment of the Great Commission in our Generation,” accessed July 2016, 2016, <http://www.gnms.net/envisioning.html>.

- 2009 – “Economic challenges...IMB anticipating another tough financial year...IMB in budget shortfall crisis [that] could affect 600 positions.”
- 2010 – “IMB lamenting financial declines, trying to balance budget...IMB sending 30 percent fewer long-term personnel than would be sent if there were no financial constraints.”
- 2011 – “IMB having difficulty balancing budget...IMB lowering the missionary force.”
- 2012 – “IMB preparing for another sobering financial report...IMB working through a painfully difficult process of trying to balance the budget.”
- 2013 – “IMB urging for greater support from churches...IMB laments Christian callousness...IMB trustees vote for substantive proposal changes across the SBC.”
- 2014 – Just two months before I stepped into my role, one article read: “IMB must soon come to grips with the demands placed on us by years of declining Cooperative Program receipts and Lottie Moon giving. We will be hard-pressed to continue supporting a mission force of our current number, much less see a greatly needed increase in the number of fully supported career missionaries on the field.

He then moved on to sound the alarm:

... when we stepped back and looked at IMB finances since 2010, we realized that IMB has spent a combined \$210 million more than people have given to us... When staff leadership realized the severity of our financial situation, we knew that we needed to take significant action. We spent hours on our knees praying and at tables discussing potential options for balancing our budget, ranging from sending fewer missionaries to cutting various costs. We poured over financial models and looked at the long-term impact of each of our options.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to his open letter, *Christianity Today* published on August 27, 2015 that “Southern Baptists will cut 600 to 800 missionaries and staffs. The publish continued to include the following:

IMB president David Platt announced Thursday that the agency needs to cut at least 600 missionaries and staff in order to balance its budget. Those cuts are needed to make up for a \$21 million deficit for 2015. The first of the cuts will come from voluntary retirements, followed by a restructuring. Overall, the IMB

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<sup>2</sup> International Mission Board, “Open Letter from David Platt,” accessed on July 2017, 2016, <http://imb.org/updates/storyview-3509.aspx#.V5jv5k2Sjag>.

could release as many as 800 employees, according to an FAQ posted on the IMB's website.<sup>3</sup>

It seems like the centralized mission funding model well admired by missionaries like myself has been beneficial for missionaries and catastrophic for the mission agencies. In the middle of a chaotic financial crisis, after prayers and brainstorming through mission funding options, nothing seemed right to bring *IMB* back on track.

A third approach: An *IM* missionary to Africa, friend and colleague of mine shared her spring 2016 cultural and language training experience with us. She said that she had the privilege to meet other colleague missionaries from mission agencies such as *Pioneers USA*. From her conversation with *Pioneers USA* colleagues, she learned that *Pioneers USA* missionaries are required to raise only fifty percent of their support and *Pioneers USA* will match the support raised to 100%. After hearing this, I knew it was too good to be true. I browsed *Pioneers* website for three days seeking that information; it was nowhere to be found. On a Friday morning, I pick my phone and call the *Pioneers* mission agency main office to get the information regarding their missionary support model.

*Pioneers* is an interdenominational mission agency founded in 1980. Over the years, it has welcomed five other mission agencies with which it has merged: (*World Outreach* in 1994; *Asia Pacific Christian Mission and South Pacific Partners*, formerly, *South Sea Evangelical Mission* in 1997; *Action Partners* in 2001; *Ameritribes* in 2009; and *Arab World Ministries* joined *Pioneers* in 2010).

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<sup>3</sup> Bob Smietana, "Southern Baptists Will Cut 600 to 800 Missionaries and Staffs," accessed on July 27, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/august-web-only/southern-baptists-will-cut-800-missionaries-imb-david-platt.html>.

*Pioneers USA* has its own mission funding model. *Pioneers* missionaries have to raise funds as well. To help missionaries raise the required funds for missions, *Pioneers* requires that a congregation recommend any missionary who feels the call of God for a missionary ministry. The church thus becomes a major partner in the calling, support building, commissioning, and sending of the missionary. The missionary is no longer a lone ranger missionary backed up by a mission agency, but s/he is accompanied by a congregation that knows the missionary best, and which is still familiar with its missionary call. Some congregations support missionaries at 100%, or fifty percent or any percentage according to the congregation's financial capability. If a congregation supports a missionary at fifty percent for example, the missionary becomes responsible to raise the remaining fifty percent from family and friends, businesses and organizations. *Pioneers USA* retain ten percent assessment fee for administration and ministries support from any funds raised while the missionary is still at home; whereas they retain twelve percent once the missionary moves to the mission field. For *Pioneers*, the idea of the sending church is a new idea. It gets the sending church to be more involved with the missionary, it's "a tremendous way to get a good glimpse and connection to what's going in the worker's life on the field and to really walk with them through the process of seeing disciples made and churches planted in a cross-cultural setting."<sup>4</sup> The sending church has no choice but to become a foundational financial and spiritual supporter of the missionary.

On their website, *Pioneers* explicitly defines that the sending church does not necessarily have to put the missionary on the church budget. *Pioneers USA* elaborate that:

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<sup>4</sup> *Pioneers USA*, "A sending Church: what is a sending church," accessed on July 21, 2016, <http://www.pioneers.org/Content/Documents/send/2.%20what%20is%20a%20sending%20church.pdf>.

It's not a given that there's going to be money. I can think of several churches that are excellent sending churches and they give absolutely nothing from the church budget to support that person or to support that couple or that family. But what they do is they get them up in front of the congregation on multiple occasions and through different means such as small groups and they say their church as a whole, "We are sending these people, and we expect that you will help support them." And so they directly try to connect their church [to the missionary]. Other churches have different models of percentages. I know a church that does 50%. And then it's up to the appointee to find the other 50%. I know a church that actually does 100%. But their expectations surrounding that are very different [from what churches would typically expect]. For home assignment, as an example, they really want to focus on going very deep and really encouraging those people. That's their commitment.<sup>5</sup>

*Missio Dei* is about God the creator seeking to reclaim the created order through the work of missionaries, with the support of the church. Although it's a call to impact lives, bring positive change, and encourage growth in communities here within our borders and overseas for the advancement of God's kingdom, the missionary funding model could vary from one mission agency to another (whether denominational, interdenominational, or non-denominational) as shown in the examples described above.

Whether centralized or decentralized, whether personnel or personalized, whether raised or underwritten, every missionary funding model has its shortfall and is in need of new approach as it currently benefits either the agency more than the missionary, or vice versa. Mission funding models need prayerful review, reboot, and coordination to meet twenty first century missionaries' financial needs. As long as success matters, choice matters, and context matters. Without adapting mission funding models to the twenty first century context, churches can't conduct fulfilling missional ministries with success, and missionaries can't meet their hopes and expectations as anticipated.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## Methodology and Development

The scope of the project involved the *North Shore Baptist Church* mission committee, members, friends, and supporters, a missionary outside the *IM* context, and five *IM* missionaries. It also involved the *First Baptist Church of Waukegan* (Waukegan, IL) and the *Mill Creek Baptist Church* (Mill Creek, IN).

*North Shore Baptist Church (NSBC)* is a 110-year-old multicultural community and mission-oriented congregation located in the Edgewater neighborhood on the North Side of Chicago-Illinois; last summer at the 2015 *ABC Biennial*, it was ranked as third of the top fifty donors to mission in the entire *ABC-USA* denomination. Our process is for missionaries to set up a visit, share their call, demonstrate the where, when, why, what, and how of their call, and appeal to the missional ministry committee and to individual members to donate. After missionary visits, it's up to the church members to decide whether or not to support the missionary. If the congregation is not familiar with the missionary, if the missionary is not convincing during his or her fund-raising presentation, or if the congregation and the missionary do not align theologically, support might not be granted. *NSBC* grants mission support funding only if its missional ministry committee approves the missionary's call. If the missional ministry committee approves, *NSBC* may budget for the missionary, and members of the church have an option to support the missionary; but their gifts are disbursed through *NSBC*, and *NSBC* in turn will send members' donations to *IM*. *NSBC's* missionary budget may be upgraded, downgraded, or cancelled at the discretion of the missional ministry committee.

Although I've been a member of *North Shore Baptist Church* for over a decade, I was not granted permission to make a fund-raising presentation at our church during a

worship service, and I've never heard any of the pastors say officially: "he is our missionary." I was only granted provisional permission to plan and carry out an invitational presentation after church and Sunday school. This meant that many people had gone home or were already tired before I made my one and only fund-raising presentation and request for support.

Of hundreds of *American Baptist International Ministries* missionaries, only one missionary (to the Philippines, whose father has retired as the *NSBC* Japanese congregation pastor) is considered the *NSBC* missionary. Although he lives permanently in the Philippines and visits Chicago maybe once in a year or two, he is listed in the church directory as the church support staff every year; and his name appears on every Sunday bulletin as *NSBC* Missionary to the Philippines (See Appendix J).

After six months of fund-raising efforts and after meeting the missional ministry committee twice, my wife and I are granted financial support toward our *PSG* as we receive about 2.28% of our annual personalized support from the same *NSBC*. Even so; we are not considered staff as is the missionary to the Philippines. It's in this context that I conducted the project.

I used the *Wesleyan Quadrilateral* as discussed by Savage and Presnell to shape the project's Bible study at *North Shore Baptist Church*.<sup>6</sup> I envisioned "Scripture... Tradition... Experience... Reason..." as the framework through which we explored the Bible study portion of the project.<sup>7</sup> The quadrilateral has helped us tell the stories of Scripture: as outlined above; tradition: how we have traditionally funded

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<sup>6</sup> Savage and Presnell, 54-58.

<sup>7</sup> Don Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, & Experience as A model of Evangelical Theology* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2005), 50.



mission; experience: what it's like to work in our current mission funding call model; and reason: thinking together toward a new model that might emerge with a new story or identity. With regard to the *Wesleyan Quadrilateral* as discussed as possible methodology for the Bible study project, I used a *Lectio Divina* approach in a way that is “devotional, (missional), didactic, and social action” centered<sup>8</sup>. *Lectio Divina* can be a private moment of reflection, meditation, prayer, faithful study of the text and also a thorough examination of available scholarly commentary with all textual anatomies in a way that allows scripture to speak to the reader.

We integrated the *Lectio Divina* approach with the *Wesleyan Quadrilateral* by reading, meditating or contemplating the SCRIPTURE; sharing our EXPERIENCE and connecting that to mission funding. Then we linked scripture and experience to the *IM* mission funding TRADITION (how-it-has-always-been done) in personal, denominational, and local contexts. Finally, we REASONed together about what to do about it; in this case, I invited the Bible study participants to suggest a discussion of possible new ways of thinking in keeping with the project purpose. Then, we kept cycling through the remainder of the study sessions.

The project was a nine-week long process involving fellowship, Bible study, storytelling, and Lecture Lab (see definition section) using two stewardship programs: “Fulfilling God’s purpose”<sup>9</sup> and “Living Each Day as a Steward.”<sup>10</sup> At each Bible Study,

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<sup>8</sup> Samuel D. Proctor, *The Certain Sound of the Trumpet: Crafting a Sermon of Authority* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1994), 82.

<sup>9</sup> R. Chewning, *Stewardship! Inspiring a deeper Understanding of True Giving: Fulfilling God’s Purpose* (New Canaan, CT: Parish Publishing, LLC, 2015), 5-28.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-25.

I invited a missionary guest speaker to participate via *Skype*. The missionaries participated at the Bible Study, shared their mission funding experiences, told their stories as missionaries and discussed their approaches to the *IM* mission funding model. Then, participants and missionaries entered an informal conversation. I also had a privilege to have Ms. Karen Horsman, *IM* Vocational Development Assistant as guest speaker at the last day of the Bible Study.

Following the six weeks Bible Study, and the LAC evaluation, I visited and preached “Our 3T calls: Time, Talents, and Treasure” at three *ABC-USA* congregations: *North Shore Baptist Church* in Chicago-IL, *Mill Creek Baptist Church* in Mill Creek-IN, and *First Baptist Church of Waukegan* in Waukegan-IL. These three churches have been supporting my missionary ministry financially. The preaching was conversational or in the form of a Lecture Lab as discussed by pastor and speaker George Barna.<sup>11</sup> At each church, I intended to have all available LAC present at previous available Bible Study participants as special guests for the Lecture Lab.

But how did I get here? How did I successfully bring together the LAC and get the churches and *IM* involved?

The project began on February 07, 2016 (although the preparations leading to the Bible Study began right after the prospectus approval), and ended on April 03, 2016.

I am privileged to have a very unique Local Advisory Committee (LAC) whose members included: pastors, a chaplain, *IM* staff, and a missionary. Although they come from different church backgrounds, they are familiar with *ABC* church ministries and *IM*

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<sup>11</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 138.

mission funding. They helped in the project planning and supported me in carrying it out from ministry and academic perspective in order to keep up with “the context out of which we spring.”<sup>12</sup>

Setting up a Lay or Local Advisory Committee (LAC) in a way that met the Drew University Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program requirement was one of the harder tasks I fulfilled. It brought bad and good memories. It reminds me of two committees of close members I’ve formed during my pastoral and missionary ministries. The previous committees’ roles were not the same but there are similarities.

The first group consisted of my ordination-candidate Watch-Care Committee. Although my local church showed its approval by making it public that I, as an individual candidate possessed the ability and the spiritual and emotional qualities necessary for ministry, and was receiving the academic training required for ordination, I needed to form a Watch-Care committee. Under Watch-Care, my home church was expected to give regular counsel in regard to vocational and professional training. It was a team composed of pastoral staff and members of various church committees. Forming that team wasn’t very hard and their role was to show support, to provide adequate follow up and information vital to my future pastoral ministries.

My second tougher experience was a formation of a Mission Partner Team (MPT) to meet *IM* requirements for fund-raising. Although I’ve invited dozens to be part of this particular team, I barely got seven YES response; and three conditional responses would turn me down later. Of all the seven team members, only three were doing their job and then only when they were able. I had no choice but to excuse three; one who was the

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<sup>12</sup> Savage and Presnell, 27.

chair excused herself after around six months. This meant that I had to reform the team. So far, it was a bitter experience. I have to take on some of the roles to make sure things go as planned.

So when I had to put together an LAC, I was wrestling with the thought of whether or not to keep my MPT as my LAC. In the end, I asked two of my MPT to take on an extra role by joining my LAC.

Although the scope of the project is *North Shore Baptist Church*, the target is still the *American Baptist International Ministries*. *IM* is a global faith based, not-for-profit organization; if I were to take into consideration its ministries, the research cannot be done in a fixed local place, like an office or church building. *IM*'s main office is in Valley Forge, PA and I live in Chicago, IL but travel intensively for aggressive fund-raising. It may sound like I work from home but it's not always true. While working on the project, I am a missionary without an office. My ministries at this present time require me to work from home, away from home.

I know that it's going to take time and hard work to come up with the right and unique team that would be able to use different means of communication instead of face-to-face meetings. I was on a quest for people who are familiar with my fund-raising struggles, people who are familiar with the *IM* mission funding model, and people who would be open to possible changes in the missionary funding model. In conclusion, my LAC should be made up with God-fearing people of good character, committed faith, and sound judgment, and who have had experience in the church and/or missionary ministry. They should have a variety of gifts, skills, and willingness to contribute and turn my

DMin project into a successful ministry story. Finally, they should be able to hold each other and the candidate (me) accountable for the assigned tasks.

I brought together five brothers and sisters from the faith family but with different experiences and backgrounds. They are Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterians; they are conservative, liberal and progressive. They are white and black; and they are Pastor, retired seminary staff, minister, secular employees' supervisor, and *IM* staff member. They are a perfect image of a missional field diversity. Still, they have a common denominator: they are involved in one way or another in my oversea missionary ministry, and they are aware of the challenges missionaries such as myself face as they race to garner support for ministries.

In the beginning of the LAC recruitment, I sent an introductory letter in which I informed prospective LAC members about my DMin program at *Drew University*, shared my DMin requirement to form the LAC, informed them about my choice of project topic; and finally, I closed with an invitation to join me in the capacity of advisors using their talents, experience, expertise, and any available resource they deemed fit for this academic, pastoral, biblical and missional journey. This evite triggered conversational emails and mails leading to a *Skype* conference call.

At the conference call, I was bombarded with questions “how can we get involved...” “...be specific...” Inspired by a class handout, I emailed them what the task of a typical *Drew University DMin* candidate’s LAC entails:

- 1- This team works supportively and collaboratively with Holale and the rest of the committee to develop the project through all of its phases.
- 2- The team will objectively evaluate the project and Holale’s leadership of it from its inception, through all of its development and execution, and at its final evaluation at the Site Visit.

- 3- It will help Holale do research, locate documents, recruit participants, design training models or curricula, disseminate information, construct or adapt evaluation instruments, interpret the project to the ministry context, handle legal and logistical matters, etc., and prayerfully support the project.
- 4- The group will assist Holale in pulling together relevant documents and other project materials for the Site Visit.
- 5- It will prepare for and attend the scheduled Site Visit, study the criteria for evaluation of the project, and offer a thorough critique and evaluation of the project with the faculty, candidate, and others present.<sup>13</sup>

I purposely left out any portion that referred to financial assistance because I have already burdened some of the LAC with financial assistance toward my missionary ministries. Also, there was no meeting location specified because my LAC live in different States and cities from Chicago, to Philadelphia, Bolingbrook, Indiana, and Downers Grove. On the one hand, we chose to use social media such as a Facebook closed group under the name of *Holale LAC* for constant updates, and regular email as means of written communication. On the other hand, we agreed to use regular telephone conference calls as our means of oral communication for special meetings, whereas *Skype* conference call remained our main platform for scheduled meetings. The LAC was well informed for their journey with me. Two members saw the project as an attack on the *IM* mission funding model. After explaining and training, they saw the project from a new perspective, and thought it would be edifying and transforming for a positive change. But one member wanted me to keep in mind that *IM* would not make any immediate change because "...it takes 100 years for Baptists to make a little change" he jokingly said.

One of the many things the LAC wanted to know was whether or not the scope of the Bible Study project and the Lecture Lab was confirmed. Having faith in the Lord,

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<sup>13</sup> Dr. Daniel Kroger and Dr. Kathy Stoner-Lasala, *The Lay Advisory Committee*, Global Online Project Colloquium Fall 2015 / DMIN 990 X2 handout (Madison: NJ, July 2015).

trusting my relationship with my home church for the Bible Study project and the remaining two churches for the Lecture Lab, I said yes without confirming it with the pastors of the churches.

Indeed, I shared the project with both pastors from the *North Shore Baptist Church*, English congregation. They agreed to the plan and offered their support. A couple weeks later, when I sent a follow up email, to my surprise, the pastors said they did not remember what was said. I sent another email to re-explain everything. Their feedback required a clarification and an elaboration on what they could do to help. In spite of the delay, everything worked out well, and the scope was secured for the project. *NSBC* pastoral staff referred me to its missional ministry committee. I worked in partnership with the committee to help make the project a success.

After I sent out a page-long explanation email to the two remaining churches, one of the pastors, Rev. Keith of the *First Baptist Church of Waukegan* who had fund-raising experience, wrote in an email to welcome the Lecture Lab to his church:

Holale,

Excellent writing. Just what I needed.

Reading what you wrote brought back bad memories of my fundraising days while I was on Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship staff. It is a sad thing that when missionaries such as you and Awenam are willing to devote yourselves to the work of Christ as you do, you must still go out and beat the bushes for financial support. I certainly wish you success on your DMin project having an impact on IM....

As regards my fundraising, not much more to tell. I served on Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) campus staff in the early 80's. I traveled between 3 college campuses in Wisconsin to work with students. It took me 1 year to raise my support, however the person I replaced had a chunk of that already committed from donors local to those three campuses who wanted to see campus ministry continue. It was still very difficult to raise the remainder and keep it going. Took too much time away from ministry, and the money pressure was constant. I was

glad when I left, attended seminary and then began a new career as pastor with a salary I did not have to raise myself. Promised myself I would not take another position where I would have to fundraise to make a living...<sup>14</sup>

His background and experience has well prepared his church for the Lecture Lab.

After I secured the scope of the project, I scouted potential missionary guest speakers, talked with them, and then sent an official invitation that required *RSVP*. Meet the guest speakers:

- 1- Cheryl Jones: Rev. Cheryl was supported by her home church, the *Cathedral International* also known as *Second Baptist Church of Perth Amboy*, NJ to serve in South Africa as a missionary from 2005 through September 2013. She returned to the USA, and plans to continue missionary ministry under appointment from *International Ministries* and with a new basis of support.
- 2- Sarah and Peter McCurdy are a new missionary couple serving in the Dominican Republic where they are called to train and provide pastoral care and counseling to pastors. Their missionary ministries also include extending ministries into Cuba. The couple accepted our invitation and participated in the project.
- 3- Jonathan and Thelma Nambu are one of the few *IM Associate Missionaries*. According the *IM* vocational development, "Associate Missionaries or Development Workers are employed by a partnering agency/organization and are appointed to work in association with *IM* as well as their employing agency/organization, with support from both the partnering agency/organization

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<sup>14</sup> Rev. Keith Cerks, e-mail message to Holale C. Azondjagni, January 26, 2015).



and IM-related Missionary Partnership Network (MPN).”<sup>15</sup> The Nambus are appointed *IM* missionaries to the Philippines where they work in partnership with the *Samaritana Transformation Ministries*. Their missionary ministry includes but is not limited to reaching out to women caught up in prostitution, caring for them and empowering them for a prostitution-free life.

Jonathan enjoyed our primary conversation about the project until I sent out an official invitation via Facebook messenger to participate. He informed me that they did not receive it and asked me to resend it to their personal mail, which I did. Unfortunately, not only have I not heard back from him, but our Facebook and other conversational email have received no response. During their spring visit in Chicago, he would not look at me when we were both at church. Still, I took pictures of their deputation to send to them. Jonathan, who used to reply to my email instantly, never replied. My invite might have been the beginning of the end of our friendship and collegiality. He did not reply, and he did not participate in the project. Was the project that offensive? The answer is still a mystery.

- 4- Rev. Rony Reyes is the pastor of the *North Baptist Church Spanish Language* congregation. Although a Baptist Pastor, he’s leading the *Connecting Hands Across Americas*, a missionary ministry to South America that is not partnered with *IM*. He accepted the invitation and spoke during the project.
- 5- *IM* missionary to Ghana, Rovaughna Richardson, a friend and partner in ministry, was invited as well. During the project period, she was on her vision trip to Ghana

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<sup>15</sup> American Baptist International Ministries, “Appointment Categories,” accessed on August 04, 2016. <http://www.internationalministries.org/read/45960-appointment-categories>.

to explore her call to rescuing, rehabilitating and educating women who had been victims of the *Trokosi* slavery system. Although we exchanged *Skype* messages two hours before the Bible Study, the network was defective in Ghana, she lost connection and she was unable to participate.

- 6- Ann and Bill Clemmer: After serving for about 25 years as *IM* missionary to Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan using respectively their teaching and medical experience, the Clemmers returned to the U.S. in mid-2015 for their first year of U.S. and Puerto Rico assignment in nine years. They offered to help, and participated in the Lecture Lab from Greece via *Skype*.
- 7- Kathy Charland: Kathy was *IM* appointed missionary to Zambia. She spent two years raising funds but was unable to reach her targeted support goal; she resigned early in 2016. When I invited her, she declined immediately and wrote: "... I'm sorry, but I think I'm going to decline your invitation to participate in the Bible Study. The fact is that I have really struggled with support-raising, but I'm not sure I'm in a good position to disclose the extent of that right now ..."<sup>16</sup> As I tried to persuade her, she asks if I believe fund-raising is biblical. I suggested she read my prospectus. Despite the doubt and risks, I shared my prospectus with her. After reading it, she asked the name of the *IM* staff participants; I kindly declined to share participants' information without their approval. She wrote: "Sorry – I actually need to have some conversations with *IM* but they haven't happened yet. I'm concerned that by the time they do happen, it would be too late, or too late to

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<sup>16</sup> Kathy Charland, e-mail message to Holale C. Azondjagni, January 14, 2016).

let you know to participate in the studies.”<sup>17</sup> Her fund-raising struggles that were the cause of her resignation would have been a great asset to the project. It was the main reason I hoped she would participate in the Bible Study project. She declined the invite.

- 8- I extended another invitation to Mrs. Karen Horsman, *IM* Assistant Director of Vocational Development. Karen is a great, outgoing and lovely lady. She joined *IM* staff in early 2015. Prior to coming to *IM*, Karen served in development with the *American Baptist Foundation*, *Baptists Homes of Indiana*, and *Christ Theological Seminary*. Her role was to connect missionaries to *ABC* congregations in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Kentucky; establish relationships, involve and update donors, and set up missionaries’ visits to churches. Her overall role is to assist missionaries in raising support or in funding projects from the four states I mentioned. We were blessed with her informative participation.
- 9- Carlos Bonilla and Mayra Giovanetti, *IM* missionary couple to Nicaragua were also invited and participated in the project. They are enthusiastic speakers. Carlos and Mayra are currently serving in partnership with the *Baptist Theological Seminary* in Nicaragua, providing informal theological education in the churches of the *Baptist Convention of Nicaragua* and writing curriculum material for the Seminary.

Of all 9 missionaries (endorsed, appointed, commissioned, and assigned

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, January 17, 2016.

missionaries), *IM* staffs, and independent missionaries invited, I was blessed with six “YES” and three “NO.” The guest speakers made the project a wonderful Spirit-led Bible Study, personal, local and denominational experience sharing, educational and critical thinking. I chose to refer to guest speakers by their title follow by their last name throughout the rest of the writing.

When recruitments were completed, announcements were made in the church’s Sunday bulletins for several weeks (please see appendix A) to prepare and motivate participants.

In mi-January 2016, I took a vision trip to Togo-West Africa, and returned in the evening of February 06, 2016. From Togo, I remained in communication with the *NSBC* missional ministry committee and the pastoral staff to make sure the project started and ended on-time and as planned. And it did.

From February 07- March 13, 2016, I conducted a series of six Bible Studies using Chewing’s *Stewardship Programs* as follows:

**First three weeks:** *Living Each Day as a Steward.*

Week one focused on *The Steward Identity* with Rev. Rony Reyes as the guest speaker.

Week two targeted *The Steward Purpose*; the guest speaker was Missionary couple Carlos and Mayra from Puerto Rico.

Week three bible study was on *The Steward Lifestyle*; Rev. Cheryl Jones was the guest speaker of the day. She joined us from New Jersey.

**Week 4 – week 6:** *Fulfilling God’s purpose.*

Week four reminds us of our *Devotion to God*. When the network failure kept Missionary Rovaughna from attending the Bible Study, participants and I had a wonderful conversation with my wife, Awenam A. Anifrani, an *IM* appointed missionary to Togo. The conversation explored personal fund-raising experiences from the perspective of an African-descent naturalized US citizen who is seeking support to go back and serve in her country of birth.

Week five's teaching focused on *Lifestyle of Giving and Lifestyle of Serving*. Missionary McCurdy was the guest speaker of the day. He skyped in from Costa Rica.

Week six led us into *Lifestyle of Witnessing and Lifestyle of Walking Humbly with God*. We were honored with the participation of Ms. Karen Horsman, *IM* Assistant Director of Vocational Development, who skyped in from Indiana.

The Lecture Lab (which I will describe in more detail later in this paper), was held at *North Shore Baptist Church, First Baptist Church of Waukegan, and Mill Creek Baptist Church* from **Week 7** to **Week 9**. During the Lecture Lab at *Mill Creek Baptist Church*, Ann and Bill Clemmer provide a moving missionary work and mission funding experience all from *Greece* where they were attending Doctor's refresher training.

Although a research project to begin with, "From the Pew to Mission Field: Raising Missionary Support" took on some extra roles: informational and educational. It was obvious that missional ministries and mission funding are evolving like any other ministry. Support is building for a paradigm shift. In this state of paradigm shift where all are called to the table of the Lord without exception, it's no longer the work of a mission agency alone, and it's no longer up to the missionaries and their supporters to suggest a beneficial model. It's the work of all of us. As a Baptist, I believe in the priesthood of all

believers. Missionaries are not equipped enough to bring about the change. Donors are not informed enough to work for a better lasting mission funding model. And mission agencies such as *IM* have a decentralized funding, and a centralized power that may make it difficult to perceive new mission funding models. That's what makes this project unique, inspirational, challenging, and ministry-sound. The project has developed a new model that relies on the sender (God), the sent (missionaries), and the sending (the church and its members) to work together as a team, to brainstorm as people, and to prayerfully discern and come up with a graceful and encouraging model as the children of God for the children God. Maybe a model that fit into the twenty first century paradigm shift could help impact and empower *Missio Dei*, the seeking and rescuing mission of the missional God, for a healthy growth mission "on earth as it is in heaven."

## CHAPTER 5

### A MOMENT WITH DONORS: RESEARCH FINDINGS, EVALUATION, TRANSFORMATION, AND THEOLOGICAL-BIBLICAL REFLECTION

#### Results of Our Research

As I noted in the Project Prospectus, the purpose of the project was to help the church to see mission supports as OUR collective ministry, not just as a lone ranger missionary's duty to race between churches and individuals, trying to win their trust and garner their financial support. For the church to "be transformed by the renewal of our mind" according to Romans 12:2, I believe it's imperative that the church's view of missionary financial support change from lonely duty to collaborative investment. With the help of the LAC, I hoped to push forward in a biblically sound way to consider funding practices that might shorten the fund-raising lag time between missionaries' call and entry to the field. I hoped that presenting options to ease the fund-raising burden might help to strengthen missionaries' passion for mission.

It was Sunday, February 07, 2016. Nobody was expecting me to arrive at church to hold the Bible Study as planned at *North Shore Baptist Church*. Indeed, I had just travelled to Africa for a three-week vision trip as I mentioned. I flew back on Saturday early evening after roughly fourteen hours in the plane and about seven hours layover in France.

On Sunday morning, I was suffering from jet lag and the time zone difference. Still, I tip-toed into the church office during the worship service. As expected, the missional ministry team had arranged to have everything ready for the Bible Study. As

soon as I got there, the custodians brought the projector and equipment needed for the *Skype* call conference to the meeting room. With the help of my wife, who is also a member of the LAC, we set up and tested the *Skype* communication. A welcome handout (please see appendix C) was printed and left at the table; I also left some on the narthex desk (welcome table at *NSBC* lobby) for other interested participants to pick up. I was still able to attend the worship. At the end of the worship, I was invited to say a word about the Bible study. The LAC chairperson had driven about twenty-two miles to join the faithful to launch the program. She even offered to take notes. I was moved. If you ever drive in Chicago traffic, you know how I felt about her presence. After worship, we all gathered around the table. Suddenly, the room was full; there were no seats available and some interested participants left.

When I first shared my desire to use the *Wesleyan Quadrilateral* as discussed by Savage and Presnell to shape the project's Bible Study (please see methodology and development in chapter 3) with my advisors, they recommended that I incorporate the *Lectio Divina* approach. At first, it sounded too much so I hesitated; then it sounded feasible. But when we were ready and most of participants including myself had our Bibles handy, it was clear that *Lectio Divina* would be the perfect approach to open up to devotion for the word of God to sink into our mind, heart, and soul. We found that *Lectio Divina* allowed the Holy Spirit to flow, helped us remain connected, made our thoughts Bible-centered, and inspired "the meditation of our hearts acceptable to the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

The most difficult task during the course of the project was that I had to keep reminding myself that I was not to expose, impose, or interfere with my mission funding

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<sup>1</sup> NIV, Ps 19:14.



preferred model; that I was no more than a group facilitator; that I was to avoid interference from any personal agenda.

At the first gathering we prayed and read the Bible verse of the day. Silently, we let the words of the Biblical reading speak to us in our context, and we prayerfully said out loud the words that resonated with us most in regard to our Christian identity as stewards.

Then I invited our guest speaker of the day Rev. Rony Reyes to share his ministry, mission funding experiences, tell his story as a missionary and discuss his approaches to the *IM* mission funding model. Thirty minutes down the road, I joined participants as we used the *Lectio Divina* approach to the *Wesleyan Quadrilateral*. This was our sequence: First: go back to the SCRIPTURE; Second: share our EXPERIENCE; Third: talk about our mission funding TRADITION; Fourth: REASON to see what best fits this context.

Rev. Rony Reyes' story was unique as he is an independent missionary and an *ABC-USA* pastor. He is a full time Hispanic pastor at *North Shore*. Yet, he co-founded *Connecting Hands Across America*. *Connecting Hands Across America* is a missionary ministry that seeks to

improve the learning experience of a child ... better the lives of the upcoming generation ... be present ... bring hope and courage to youngsters ... in South America rural areas where there are limited education opportunities and lack of resources for young people to better themselves....<sup>2</sup>

Rev. Reyes' last missionary work was at a school and church facility building in Guatemala. His works are similar to the mission works *IM* has conducted in South

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<sup>2</sup> Connecting Hands Across the Americas, "About," accessed on February 07, 2016, <http://www.connecting-hands.org/About.aspx>.

America for years. But *Connecting Hands* does not partner with *IM*. In fact, Rev. Reyes distanced himself from *IM* and sees himself as an independent missionary whose ministry is sustained by his personal fund-raising efforts together with sponsorship from *NSBC*, *Christ Community Church of Wheaton*, Wheaton - IL, *Central Baptist Church* in Paoli - IN, and *Iglesia Bautista Central* in Chicago - IL. His other partners are local leaders on the mission field. Every year, Rev. Reyes submits the *Connecting Hands* project and costs to the sponsoring churches; in turn, the churches provide financial support and human resources such as volunteers for a short-term mission trip. Some of his fund-raising efforts consist of a car wash, church lunch, and other church activities. The fund-raising effort does not require committed-long term donors.

One way *IM* uses its funds is to support projects like *Connecting Hands Across the Americas*. In light of the experiences he shared, and *IM*'s effort to fund this kind of project, a participant asked why not partner with *IM*? After all, Rev. Reyes is an ordained *ABC* Minister, serves a growing *ABC* Hispanic congregation; and is a member of the *ABC-Metro Chicago Region Mission Partnership Committee*. To this question, Rev. Reyes indicated that he approached *IM*. *IM* rerouted his calls several times or referred him to its various departments. "It took forever to get hold of a staff member, and staff's protocol was a slow and stressful process." In the end, *IM* wanted to take ownership of the project, and (maybe) sent a missionary *IM* thinks fit to carry out the mission. Rev. Reyes claimed that the "*IM* staff's approach was ridiculous and unacceptable." From Rev. Reyes' conversations with *IM* over a long period of time (weeks), it sounds like *IM* was saying that the project should become an *IM* project, the *IM* way or no way. "*IM* has

a weird awkward process,” Rev. Reyes concluded. For this reason, he does not partner with *IM*.

Rev. Reyes’ sharing of his *IM* experiences triggered participants’ curiosity about the *IM* mission funding model. How does *IM* do what it does? What does *IM* do with the funds our church has been sending all these years? Participants wanted to know. At that, the project began to educate and inform participants about *IM* ministry’s partnerships, mission funds, missionaries support raising, and staff supports.

In spite of my efforts to provide a clear understanding of *IM*’s vital role in the call, ministry and life of its missionaries, participants’ frustration deepened when *IM* Missionary couple Carlos Bonilla and Mayra Giovanetti, guest speakers at our second gathering refused to call *IM* by its current official name *International Ministries*. Instead, the couple insisted on calling *IM* by its good old days name, *Mission Society*. In their sixteen years of missionary ministry, the missionary couple was disappointed by many changes that occurred, changes they claimed have had a negative impact on missionary ministries. For the couple, missionaries are called to do missionary work only; *IM* as the denominational mission agency was “supposed to take responsibility in providing financial and spiritual support for the missionaries ... (and) ... We believe the church is called to support what God is doing through us because we’re serving alongside with the church ... It’s *IM* job to partner with churches in the USA and secure the necessary funds needed” they said. The couple has agreed to missionaries’ deputation in churches as means of relationship building only and not for personalized support raising. When participants entered into a conversation with the missional couple, they defended their position by saying that “...we feel part of a movement not an organization. We don’t feel

like employees. Though *IM* is not necessarily connected to the *ABC* church, it's no less than an organization."

It's true that *IM* missionaries are called and prayerfully endorsed. But the *IM* missionaries' handbook referred to missionaries sometimes as employees whose career could be terminated by *IM*, their employer, at *IM*'s discretion whenever *IM* deems it necessary. The handbook clearly states:

Employment and/or service with International Ministries (*IM*), is 'at will' meaning that either *IM* or the missionary may terminate employment at any time with or without cause. No verbal or written communication to an employee should be construed as a legal contract or guarantee of continued employment.<sup>3</sup>

The couple's reference to *IM*'s disconnection from some *ABC* congregations made sense as well. In Metro Chicago, I know of many churches with strong financial capacity. Some pastors from the Baptist churches I am referring to have been serving for over a decade but have not heard of *IM*. Others know about *IM* but have no clue how to get involved with *IM*. As I spoke with additional *ABC* pastors, they claimed that they do not trust *IM* missionaries' fund management. Participants asked if it might be time that we take *IM* to confused or unreached churches, to market (to use a word from the business world) the work of *IM* missionaries, to reignite or improve relationships with congregations, and to inspire unwilling Baptists to journey with *IM* in its global ministries?

But our guest speakers insisted that "*PSG*-raising is breaking down *IM*'s sense of cohesiveness." On February 14, 2016, the Bible Study ended as our *IM* missionary couple guest speakers and participants concluded: *IM* needs to go back to its roots, get reconnected with churches; and reconsider broadening and/or strengthening its

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<sup>3</sup> American Baptist International Ministries Handbook, 9.

partnerships with *ABC* congregations. At the same time, participants recommended that missionaries use any bridges that *IM* builds to connect with churches and individual members. Then, *IM* might secure funds easily from churches and individual members for missionary ministries. Missionaries' raising funds for their own missionary ministries would then be unnecessary.

The next Bible Study involved another *IM* missionary, Missionary Jones, who agreed with participants, the previous missionary couple guest speakers and the next missionary guest speakers that missionaries should keep up deputations. Deputations enable missionaries to meet with supporters personally, encourage potential and prospective supporters and display *IM* ministries, vision and mission. Also, deputations help missionaries build relationships, give missionaries opportunities to receive the prayers of the faithful and hear words of encouragement from people who have passion for mission. Finally, deputations help churches feel part of missionary work. Therefore, Missionary Jones prefers the term support-raising, not fund-raising. *IM* also prefers support-raising over fund-raising.

I too believe that mission is the call of the church; the church in return sends missionaries. My position is that it's only natural for missionaries to go back to the church and share the wonders of God on the mission field, show current needs to the church, and provide a glimpse into expected future success stories if needs are met. The church is not a secondary party in the missionary journey. The church deserves to meet and get to know its missionaries, pray for them, empower them spiritually, boost their mission financially, and support them morally with encouraging gestures and words.

I believe that churches are called to be missional, and a missional church is called to get connected to the missionaries. After all,

Good (support)raisers know who they are approaching, what their passions are, what relationships they have, and what they are interested in ... They care about persons more than their projects ... The donors (churches) also connect to the (support)raiser's follow up as part of the relationship building ... The donors refers to (her)himself as an "investor," in a relationship that naturally calls for reporting back about how (her)his funds were used to accomplish stated goals and mission ... (Support)raisers maintain relationship even the donor no longer has the means to donate because the donor has become friend" and partners in ministries.<sup>4</sup>

From Missionary Jones' story and experience, fund-raising has been one of the worst experience in her twelve years of missional ministries. She shared that she raised only seventeen percent of her required *PSG* in two and half years. Most of her financial support came from seventy churches but the majority of those churches made only one-time donations while she needs recurring donations for five years. Worse, some individual donors and churches that made commitments to donate regularly started pulling out when they realize that her fund-raising was not increasing.

Missionary Jones is an opponent of *IM* missionaries' *Personalized Support Raising*. She notes that all *IM* missionaries use or are encouraged to use the *IM* fund-raising network of *ABC* congregations. For this reason fund-raising has become very competitive: "who gets to a church first, who can connect with the mission committee of that church, who can please the 'powerful' leaders of the church and which missionary the church prefers to support. The fund-raising market is full and thus competitive."

Later, Rev. Reyes who was attending the last session as a participant would raise the same concern with the guest speaker from *IM* staff. He said that *NSBC* always sends

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<sup>4</sup> Dillon, 189.

nice financial support to *IM*. So now that *IM* missionaries know of the *NSBC* generous gifts to missions, many have been requesting a visit and support from *NSBC*. But the church can't support *IM* and all *IM* missionaries at the same time. So, Rev. Reyes requested that *IM* came up with a plan to stop inundating any individual church with missionaries.

When speaking of fund-raising, Missionary Jones mentioned that there are privileged and there are under-privileged fund-raisers within the *IM* circle: those "with long ministry-based history or who were born into families of several generations of missionaries get support from key churches and sometimes they get more than what they need." Continuing, she said that she doesn't want to use the word "Clique-ish," but said, "I think *IM* is very clique-ish." According to Missionary Jones and the missionary guest speaker who spoke next, *IM* promotes well-known missionaries, long serving missionaries, or other missionaries whose mission field and ministry description appeal to churches and potential supporters most.

Appointed Missionary Kathy Charland, who resigned from *IM* a couple months ago after over two years of fund-raising struggles, shared with me shortly before she resigned that there was a survey within *IM* that showed that *IM* single females and blacks are most likely to fail to get 100% of their financial support for any missional ministries. She did not specify the source, place and date of the survey. One of the participants, an aging African American, Dr. Peggy Griffin, expressed her anger and disappointment when Missionary Jones mentioned that *IM* gave her a June 2016 deadline to reach 100% of her *PSG* or else she might have to resign.

In summation, Missionary Jones suggested and participants found appealing the notion that *IM* missionaries could build a network of supporters by visiting churches to share their call, cause and challenges. Whatever money missionaries raise could go to a “common pot to be divided” toward every missionary in need of support’s *PSG* to make sure no missionary would be left behind. Eighty-five percent of *IM* staff and missionaries with whom Cheryl shared the common pot idea agreed; but some staff members didn’t think it could be implemented and came up with a menu of churchy excuses “We never did it that way before; we always did it that way before; it will never work; it’s too expensive.” Missionary Jones gave a biblical foundation to this mission funding model from I Corinthians 12: 12-20:

...Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body... As it is, there are many parts, but one body... But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

This Bible verse brings more clarification that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. In Missionary Jones’ view, *IM* Missionaries responding to the call to mission (endorsed, appointed, commissioned, and assigned) have become one body of Christ, called into the one and only *Missio Dei* of the Triune God.

It’s my understanding that missionaries’ common goal is to take the love of God and the word of Christ to the unreached. Their common struggle is locating funds for the mission. While some succeed (slowly and with difficulties), others struggle, and still others fall short; therefore, the solution could indeed be a common solution. That



common solution displays the oneness of the Spirit of the missional God, and the oneness of the missionary call. In my opinion, there is no greater mission and there shouldn't be a lesser missional ministry. As missionaries, we are one by our call, one by our cause, and one by our challenges.

At our fourth gathering our guest speaker Missionary Rovaughna Richardson lost her network connection and could not join us from Ghana via Skype. My wife, Awenam A. Anifrani who is also an *IM* missionary to Togo filled in for her. So, we still heard biblical stories again, shared our experience around the table, explored the pros and cons of our denomination's mission funding model, and tried to find a reasonable balance that would work for all.

During the conversation with Missionary Awenam, the *NSBC* member and choir director for over a decade exclaimed, "Missionaries have to raise money for each year?" It was her first participation since we started the narrative research project. Although she had donated money to mission, she had no clue how *IM* mission funding works. After she heard other participants speak, she said, "I didn't hear other participants, but I think *IM* should raise the support and let missionaries focus on the work using their gifts and talents."

Dr. Peggy Griffin, the elderly member of the church who had shared at the previous Bible study and once wanted to become a missionary, concurred. She reiterated that guest speaker Missionary Jones shared that she is sure of her call, but she doesn't have the skill set for being a fund-raiser.

Kate, the *NSBC* handbell director who came in spite of her fight with cancer, found it “heartbreaking to learn of folks with such strong calls and gifts to missionary ministry, who can’t go because of money.”

On the bright side, participants saw missionaries’ visits as opportunities to connect and educate churches. Ron Barlow, a foundational donor (Ron donates more than any other donor to our mission) is willing to give *IM* the benefit of doubt in its current fund-raising model.

Our next guest speaker was Missionary Peter McCurdy (Missionary McCurdy) whom I admire personally. He’s not afraid to speak his mind, and he always goes right to the point. He made the Bible Study lively and informative. As in my own situation, Missionary McCurdy resigned from pastoral ministry to opt for missionary ministry. After spending nearly two years travelling intensively, speaking in churches, meeting donors, and following up with individuals, he was able to raise 100% of his *PSG*. Most of his donors are outside the *IM* network. He finds *Personalized Support Raising* frustrating and competitive. He said he did not get much help from *IM* whatsoever. Every schedule, contact, and follow up was the work of God, his wife or himself, he said. He is confident that if he were to break away, *IM* would not follow-up with his supporters. He said, “Sixty percent of our donors are brand new to *IM*,” and *IM* has no way to transfer contact information for those donors. Here is an outline of the things he thinks of *IM*:

- “*IM* doesn’t have a young mind to deal with the current paradigm shift; it needs to shift into modern age.
- *IM* needs to listen to missionaries; “whatever I tell them falls into deaf ears.”

- *IM* development team needs to do their job by training churches in regard to a mission funding model shift; during deputations, “we spend more time training churches than promoting our mission.”
- *IM* promotes long serving missionaries; and Seventy percent of them are retiring. “I am not discrediting that, but where is the new movement? To be strategic to the new transition, *IM* has to develop new heroes of mission.”

During our conversation, Missionary McCurdy implied that *IM* needs to come up with a better strategy to shorten the fund-raising lag time before missionaries enter the field. Some churches and individuals will not donate until they are sure missionaries are at work on the field, and a lengthy fund-raising period impedes these churches’ participation. A participant leader of the *NSBC Philipino Class* agreed with this note of regret.

Missionary McCurdy doesn’t think that it would be ideal for *IM* to bring back the former mission funding model in which *IM* underwrote funding for missionaries. And yet, he thinks the current model is not ideal either. “For a missionary family of six to raise the \$106,000 startup cost fee (which is different from an annual donation recurring for five years) is unreal. Sure, God has provided but it is still insane; it’s a daunting task; I don’t know about you,” he added.

Fund-raising is changing. Missionary McCurdy noted his belief that if *IM* wants to keep the current model, it should

...have churches and large donors on deck to help us move along ... get rid of roadblocks into churches.... I brought up this because someone from *IM* would not give me the list of *IM* big donors; and an *ABC* Regional Executive Minister would not have us over to his region because he’s afraid the region might run out of money if missionaries come to raise funds.... We need more support, more

guidance ... and to be able to go directly to churches without begging churches to grant us a visit.

Before the end of the session, participants came up with a *Holy Match Making* mission funding alternative model. In this model, missionaries would work with one another. Whenever missionaries visit a church and learn of that church's interest in a mission differing from their own, they could point the congregation to a particular missionary who is raising support toward work more closely aligned with that church's vision and mission.

I have the greatest example of this idea in the Metro Chicago Region. Although *ABC Metro Chicago Region (ABC-MC)* referred me to *IM*, I did not get any support from the region I call home. I tried so hard before I was able to secure deputations in six churches. And yet the region and other congregations in the region readily extend invitations to my colleague missionary to Ghana (who currently lives in Charlotte, NC); my wife and I always have the blessing of hosting her each time she is in Chicago. *ABC-MC* has a special partnership with the *Ghanaian Baptist Convention* that built a rehabilitation and training center, and this is why Chicago churches have no problem supporting an *IM* missionary to Ghana. Some Chicago congregations have sister church relationships with churches in Ghana and send support directly to Ghana as well. These sister churches in Ghana and the *Ghanaian Baptist Convention* also receive missionary support from the *IM* missionary in Ghana. The missionary represents a symbolic presence, a visible vision and mission of *ABC-MC*, although the missionary is an *IM* missionary. Besides a relationship with Ghana, *ABC-MC* congregations are currently developing relationships with India, Burma, and Central America. *Holy Match Making* could work in cases like this.

Together with participants, we spent most of this fifth Bible study session looking into the cons and pros of missionary support raising and many participants concluded that the cons overshadow the pros. Although we couldn't come up with a model that was both complete and fitting before the meeting ended, participants thought there could be a better way to fund mission whether using an old, new or some other approach. We shall see how this played out later in this paper.

The Bible Study had been a spiritual, prayerful, personal, as well as frustrating journey when we welcomed our sixth and final guest speaker, Ms. Karen Horsman from *IM*. A week before she joined us, the *NSBC* leader in his early eighties whom I call Grandpa talked to me and said "I will have questions for her." When we got together for the "Lifestyle of giving joyfully and generously" Bible Study, I hoped nothing went wrong as I prayed for patience and a spirit-filled and spirit-led session.

After sharing her background with participants, Ms. Horsman told the story about the excellent *IM* accomplishments by its first missionaries, its amazing success stories and the current shift in its mission funding model. She thinks there will be no turning back to the former mission funding model. The shift was a response to crisis, needs, and change in the way people give. The main reason for the change, she said, was that "people didn't just make regular gifts; they wanted more connection, more choice, and more voice.... People wanted to have more impact and they wanted direct involvement."

She gave the example of the *Mennonite* missionary ministry that changed their mission funding model to missionary support raising in 1990, a decade before *IM* stepped into this model. Apparently, the shift has become contagious as *IM* was not the last to

opt for missionary fun-raising. More churches such as the *Christian Church Disciples* are following the *Mennonite* and *IM* missionary support raising model.

Meanwhile, mission agencies such as *IMB* that keep the old model are experiencing a budget crisis that leads to layoffs for missionaries and staffs. She explained *IM*'s hope that the current mission funding model would place a sense of responsibility on the church and bring missionaries and churches close.

This clarification made sense, but it didn't stop participants from expressing their disappointment, frustration, and disagreement. The chair of the *NSBC* missional ministry said, "I am disappointed that the lot of money we've been sending to *IM* is not used to fund missionaries. We're at a loss here." He shared with participants that there is a total disconnection between *IM* and the church. The only connection is made by the church when the church sends money. So, he asked: "What kind of guideline materials do you send to churches to update them on the missionaries' needs and the status of their fund-raising goals? What are the guidelines for helping us decide which missionaries to invite for a visit?" At this point, Ms. Sherry Nelson, a member of *NSBC* who once chaired the missional committee, and who is serving in my MPT, observed a vacuum in the relationship between *IM* and regional and local churches, coupled with a lack of communication.

Ms. Horseman understood the state of confusion, agreed that there is a vacuum and affirmed that "Missionaries are to go anywhere and everywhere to get that money; it doesn't work very well because it spreads them too far." She also argued that *IM* had a new plan, and has moved to put together a development team including herself to carry out that plan. The plan is to help every missionary focus on one geographical area by

connecting that missionary to local churches close to the missionary's place of residence. She said that though this connection to home churches would not guarantee financial support from those churches, at least missionaries would not have to suffer the pain of long travel for deputations.

Grandpa, who is also an ordained minister, recalled the missionary couple guest speakers who had to raise about \$15,000 a month for their missionary ministries in *South America*. "It's too high," he said. So he asked participants and our guest, "Is *IM* sending missionaries or recruiting fund-raisers?" Ms. Horseman was not in a position to answer that question because "I don't know how the funding breaks down" she said; but she was able to describe *IM's* expectation that missionaries would rely on their MPT for fund-raising.

Indeed, *IM* missionaries do rely on their MPT. But each MPT has a well-defined role to play. My current MPT supports me graciously, performs many tasks for my ministry and some MPT members have even gone the extra mile to donate financially toward my *PSG*. At the same time, there are things they can't be pushed to do. For example, they did not set me up with any church or any organization where I could raise funds. I gave my MPT prayer cards to share with their friends and family but none of the cards were ever returned. There is a job description for every member of MPT as described in chapter one. It's understood that they will help raise funds but the job description doesn't say explicitly that MPTs would take missionaries to churches, or refer them to big donors, or host an individual missionary for fund-raising events. My MPT members come from various churches. They know I struggle for deputations, but they don't invite me to their churches. I have been in one MPT's church to speak, and I only

spoke during their Sunday school, not during worship (worship deputations are more appealing as more people attend worship than Sunday school). Imagine that!

Further, today's *ABC* congregations display different giving patterns. As one of the participants pointed out to Ms. Horseman, churches are getting smaller, merging, or closing doors. Some couldn't afford to support missionaries financially but are able spiritually; and others don't have or have lost denominational loyalty. Still others opt for community outreach or home mission rather than overseas mission.

All participants discussed their views about what things would be like if *IM* kept the missionary support raising current model. Then, they compiled a list of their thoughts about improvements *IM* might consider:

- 1- *IM* might connect to more grants, and other ways of fund-raising.
- 2- *IM* might get more creative with where missionaries should look.
- 3- *IM* might consider bringing a grant writer onboard.
- 4- *IM* might find different means of communication such as story-telling through different media.
- 5- *IM* might create connections with missional ministry committees of regional denominational bodies and churches.
- 6- *IM* might provide monthly follow up and guidance to missionaries

The six-week journey ended with brainstorming about four possible alternative models for missionary support: "Root", "Common pot", "Holy match making", "Improved *PSG*".



The LAC and I took some time to reflect on the four models. The LAC wanted to pause till we observed the outcome of taking the four models outside the Bible Study context to a worship setting using the Lecture Lab methodology.

I held the Lecture Lab sessions during worship. These sessions are little different from the Bible study sessions. During Lecture Labs, I shared the word of God with an emphasis on Stewardship. Before starting, I informed participants that this is a conversational preaching; that I would share a specific verse and develop a brief topic around which we will share ideas and discuss them. Then after a brief sermon (or lecture), I would open up the conversation with a thought provoking question that would hopefully then lead us to conversation about missionaries' fund-raising. During the Lecture Lab at *Mill Creek Baptist Church* for example, we had the privilege to welcome missionaries from Greece via *Skype* as I mentioned earlier. I invited them to share their experiences of fund-raising; this sharing has led to more of a theological, biblical, spiritual, personal, congregational and denominational approach to fund-raising.

During the Lecture Lab at the three churches, participants thought that missionaries should not be wary about fund-raising. Lecture Lab attendees noted their preference for missionaries to have a chance to focus on mission and churches to have a chance to support missionaries. Participants also described their hopes that *IM* would manage mission support fairly and provide the guidance missionaries need for life changing ministries abroad.

I have experienced fund-raising to be a burden and am aware that it is also worrisome for some of my missionary colleagues. When I seemed unable to reach my targeted percentage goal after prayer and a lot of trying, I asked God if I am in a wrong

ministry, at a wrong place, in a wrong time. At the time, I had a sense of very important missionary ministry that needs more attention and support versus a lesser missionary ministry for second class missionaries.

During our Lecture Lab at *Mill Creek Baptist Church* in Indiana, we were blessed with the participation of Ann and Bill Clemmer, a well-respected and experienced missionary couple who risked their lives saving and changing lives in war-torn African countries of South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. During their speech, they said that they had lost contact with many churches while busy on the mission field; ties with their supporting churches become stronger during their home assignment for support-raising deputations. In 2016 alone, they received requests from 200 churches to come to visit or speak over a two-month deputation.

However, it seems that *IM* and *ABC-USA* common sense that good missionaries are good fund-raisers was coined about white missionaries having long histories in ministry. My wife and I were turned down, ignored, or had phone call hang-ups from ninety percent of the churches to which we reached out with a plea to let us visit. It is worth mentioning that the Clemmers have been good colleagues who have been a special source of encouragement to my wife and me; they even encouraged some churches they visited to support our mission financially, and they went out of their way to distribute our prayer cards.

At the end of the Lecture Lab, there were two more ideas about how to improve *IM*'s model: a suggestion for a ten percent donation from *ABC* congregations, and a proposal that *IM* match fifty percent; that is a "Tithing Alternative Model" and a "Participative Alternative Model" which I'll explain later.

With the help of the LAC, generous participation and recommendations of missionaries and churches, we expanded the list of alternative models for funding that we developed in the Bible Study phase of the project. After the Lecture Labs, the number of alternative models expanded from four to six:

**Alternative Model 1- Root** - *IM* could go back to its roots by providing direct funding to missionaries; missionaries would not raise money. But missionaries would pursue deputations to develop relationships with churches and donors.

**Alternative Model 2- Common Pot** - Missionaries could get fund-raising speaking engagements. Whatever funds all endorsed, appointed, commissioned, and assigned missionaries raise should go to every missionary according to their financial support goal. No missionaries should be left behind as the funds raised is divided equally till all missionaries reached 100% of their *PSG*.

**Alternative Model 3: Holy Match Making** - *IM* and missionaries would work hard to match missionaries with churches' mission interests. If a church is interested in the fight against human trafficking in China for example, *IM* would match a missionary to China who was fighting against human trafficking with the church and get them connected. Or missionaries who were aware could inform their colleague missionaries who were carrying out that mission. If none, a missionary doing a closer or similar work somewhere else could be the missionary of interest to that church.

**Alternative Model 4: Improved *PSG*** - *IM* could keep the current model while providing more tangible and encouraging support: supply a grant writer, build or strengthen relationships with church mission committee, provide *IM* updates on missionaries' support to supporting churches to validate missionary newsletters, help

missionaries focus on churches and donors in the geographical areas close to their places of residence to reduce travel expenses and travel related stress, prayerfully follow up with missionaries on a monthly basis, market all missionaries' ministries equally; listen to missionaries' concerns and suggestions, and if needed after careful review, implement some of their proposals.

**Alternative Model 5: Tithing** – The *ABC-USA* denomination could challenge its congregations to donate ten percent of their income to *IM* to help *IM* underwrite missionary salaries and works. In this case, missionaries would make deputations according to *IM* guidelines.

**Alternative Model 6: Participative** - Missionaries would raise fifty percent of their *PSG* by any means necessary while *IM* matched their *PSG* to 100% from funding received from other sources such as World Mission Giving, United Mission, One Great Hour of Sharing, America for Christ Offering.

As we brainstormed, the LAC and I were able to see how the Bible Study project and Lecture Lab participants concluded that the current *IM* mission funding model is broken. In the future, the LAC and I expect that we will continue to discern possible improvements or alternatives to the current *IM* funding model and also advocate for improvements or alternatives to congregations, denomination and *IM*.

### **Project Evaluation**

Savage and Presnell state that:

We see a form of evaluation that consists of two distinct parts. One part is observing change...you compare the state of the context prior to new ministry intervention and afterward...the second part is discerning transformation...the

latter part of this definition is critical...in the purpose of evaluation – discerning transformation toward a preferred future.<sup>5</sup>

Following Savage and Presnell’s evaluation method, after the ministry project period closed, the LAC and I retreated, re-imagined the story telling, and listened again to the narratives “to reflect on the presence of the divine unfolding.”<sup>6</sup> In this way, we hoped the evaluation would consist of “Observing Change and discerning transformation” whether social, financial, theological, or biblical.<sup>7</sup>

As I noted in the Project Prospectus, the purpose of the project was to help the church to see mission supports as OUR collective ministry, not just a lone ranger missionary duty.

For the church to “be transformed by the renewal of our mind,” I believe it’s imperative that the church’s view of missionary financial support change from lonely duty to collaborative investment. With the help the LAC, I hoped to push forward in a biblically sound way to consider funding practices that might shorten the fund-raising lag time between missionaries’ call and entry to the field. I hoped that presenting options to ease the fund-raising burden might help to strengthen missionaries’ passion for mission.

I chose functionalist evaluation, described by Savage and Presnell, as an appropriate evaluation method to observe change and discern transformation in participant individuals and congregations.

Functional evaluation seeks to discern how parts of a context might fit together differently now. It builds on the sense that of one component system (in this case

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<sup>5</sup> Savage and Presnell, 124.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 123-124.

*NSBC*) is changed, that change (could) affect the whole (in this case *IM*). While this perspective can be used in a deterministic way, it also allows for the researcher to discern “unintended” consequences that may have emerged by the programmed initiatives.<sup>8</sup>

While it might be easy to observe change that could be connected to this narrative research project, discerning transformation is more complicated. The LAC and I chose such indicators of transformation as: body language, questions raised, feedback shared, positions advocated. In other words, we sought to discern signs of passion around the question of mission funding.

During the project, the Bible Study research explored the *Missio Dei* through two published curriculum guides about stewardship. The functionalist evaluation of the Bible Study research was coordinated with the two curriculum guides: *Living each day as a Steward* and *Fulfilling God’s Purpose*.

When the LAC and I observed change and discerned transformation. At *North Shore Baptist Church*, we found that the potential change the project might have created was overshadowed by the pastoral transition. We might have seen signs of transformation in the mission committee chair. The chair’s approach to the *IM* mission funding model changed during the project in a way that might lead to transformation and my preferred future.

In addition to our observations of the mission committee chair, the LAC and I examined the bible study group’s response to the first curriculum guide’s approach. *Living Each Day as a Steward* identified three dynamics of stewardship: identity, purpose and lifestyle. It was interesting to see how participants function after their experience in the sessions as told in the narratives! Disappointment, ignorance, anger, sympathy, desire

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 128.

to learn about missionary support raising. These responses were indicators of transformative awareness of disconnection or lack of communication between *IM* and some *ABC* congregations.

We then examined the group's response to the second curriculum guide, *Fulfilling God's Purpose*, which is more spiritual in focus (devotion to God and two lifestyle meditations). We anticipated that we would evaluate toward a functional shift in attitudes, approaches and new ways of looking at one's life in regard to mission support. We anticipated that we might be able to observe change. As they say in advertising, "results may vary" and they did in this case. In this case, the LAC and I found that some participants show signs of sadness and sympathy toward missionaries who are facing struggles and others are letting their anger out against *IM*. Words such as "we're sorry you have to go through this" were heard; phrases such as "No, they didn't; why, is there another way," echoed in the room. Some show sign of willingness to support my mission financially as they requested prayer cards, filled them out on spot and, instead of sending them to *IM*, gave them to us personally to support the missionary ministries. The message in this gesture was clear: we'd rather give you support directly than give it to you through *IM*. From a functionalist point of view, this transformed financial choice by project participants could result in a change in *IM*'s financial position. This potential reduction in *IM*'s funding could lead *IM* to greater responsiveness to the views of its funders.

The Local Advisory Committee and I reflected more on the research findings in the transcripts of the narratives. Using functionalist evaluation, we explored whether participants were aware of other existing mission funding models. So, we were looking for changes in participants' preferences among the four mission funding models we

explored in the Bible Study as mentioned earlier: *IM* personalized support raising, *SIM* personal support raising, *IMB* centralized missionaries support, and *Pioneers USA* sending church missionaries support. It turned out that the majority of participants had no idea that other mission funding models existed; those who did know about the *IM* mission funding model did not know how it works, and they did not know that its name is personalized support.

Immediate transformations were personal. One Bible Study participant changed from non-donor to donating toward my wife's and my mission support during the project. He was surprised to learn during the second part of the Bible Study project that he has to commit to donating throughout my five years mission period if he wants to be a sustainable supporter; he gasped and asked, "So you have to raise money every month for five years, oh my God!" This participant's transformation had no immediate results for *IM*. However, if *IM* were to change its approach, this participant would begin to contribute through *IM*.

There were a couple of participants who wanted to know more about the difference between a one-time donation and recurring donations. They then asked for prayer cards (a donation form that is used for fund-raising) and filled them out as recurring donors to support my wife and I in mission.

Another said "At this time, I can provide spiritual support; my wallet doesn't allow for financial support." A lady expressed that "Missionaries should come to educate us about what is going on – the furlough time can be used to educate churches and raise money. Funds shouldn't be tied to personality or fund-raising skills."



Jim, a *North Shore Baptist Church* member who has held various positions in the church is a very smart but reserved man. I've never seen nor heard him express his feelings or talk about his personal life or faith journey. For the first time, he opened up and said to my surprise that "I guess missionary support would be based on a personal relationship. Part of my own conversion had to do with mission. There can be a negative impression or feelings about missionaries due to colonialism, history... but for me, I felt an expression of God's love." So, I assume he has been supporting my missionary ministry financially as an expression of God's love.

The Lecture Lab and sermons focused on time, talent, and treasure. The observations were almost the same: sympathy, ignorance, disappointment, and desire to learn more. After the Lecture Lab, the LAC and I gathered once again, to review and evaluate outcomes in information, experience, stories, suggestions, theological and biblical approaches to mission funding.

During the evaluation, an LAC who is a *United Methodist Church* clergy and unfamiliar with *ABC-USA* policy, believes this much through friendship and mission partnership with *IM* missionaries that: "the likelihood of *IM* or anybody reverting to past policy is negligible." She supports that the *Holy Match Making* Alternative Model should be happening in any circumstance, as part of the supportive role of *IM*. She does maintain that the "*Improved PSG Alternative Model* seems to be consistent with both the needs of the missionaries, and *IM's* current policy of providing support without funding." Her insights are important because she's a member of my wife's and my Missionary Partner Team (MPT); and together, with her husband, they have been recurring donors to our mission.

Other LAC members also think that the *Tithing Alternative Model* seems reasonable, but there is no central administrative body in the *ABC-USA* system. Therefore, there would be no way to exercise control over a congregation's budget.

An LAC member who is an *ABC-USA* clergy and very active in various areas of denominational ministries supports Alternative Model 3 (*Holy Match Making Alternative Model*) and Alternative Model 4 (*Improved PSG Alternative Model*) because “they are very consistent with the current model, yet provide much needed support to the missionaries” he pointed out. He’s totally against Alternative Model 5 (*Tithing Alternative Model*) for two reasons:

1. Being a Congregationalist denomination, *ABC-USA* can't really challenge churches to do anything with their budgets, but it could and does give churches opportunities and strong encouragement to give in general.
2. If a church gives ten percent to an *IM* cause, that could mean reducing its support for *Home and United Mission* which desperately needs the funding as well.

One member of the LAC reflected that she didn't quite understand the use of the word: finding. Initially, the LAC and I referred to the alternative models as findings and it is only in this writing that we have cleared up this confusion by using the language alternative model. The LAC member’s position was that normally the findings of research are all supposed to be true and not to contradict one another. That doesn't seem to be the case for this project which has used research methods grounded in narrative theology. For instance, she points out that, "*IM* could go back to its roots," is directly contradicted by "*IM* should keep the current model..." She concluded that three of the alternative models were free of internal contradiction. These three options were:

a- Root Alternative model

b- Improved PSG Alternative Model

c- Participative Alternative Model

d- Tithing Alternative model – In regard to this model, she upholds that “I have long encouraged whatever congregation I am a member of to contribute at least ten percent of its budget to missions, but as the LAC member who is an *ABC-USA* clergy said, missions is not only International Missions, but also the work of Home Missions and even local missions (as well as *United Missions*).”

The LAC member pursued her argument against internal contradictions as she stated that there are supplements:

(a) or (c) 1-*Common pot alternative model* – this model could be used with the root model and the participative model; its appropriateness to the current model seems less feasible.

(b) or (a) or (c) 2-*Holy Match Making Alternative Model* – this does seem to be a good idea as part of any of the three models.

(a) or (b) or (c) 3-*Improved PSG Alternative Model* would be helpful for any of the three models.

### **Transformation**

My experience echoes that of Rev. Dr. Patrick Gordy-Stith who writes: “Rather than increasing our sense of guilt, despair, or a need to defend ourselves by shifting the blame to others, this experience gave us space to brainstorm and to reimagine our past,

present, and future experience of the gap together.”<sup>9</sup> *From the Pew to Mission Field: Raising Missionary Support* has been a faith journey that leads us to reflect on our personal, local, and denominational experience and bring forth the best of ourselves and the best of *IM* interest using *Lectio Divina* approach to scripture.

Arguably, the LAC and I had our share of agreement and disagreement. Again, we mention this because it was necessary to help us determine how to engage individuals, *IM*, and churches to make mission funding OUR stewardship ministry instead of a missionary lone-ranger duty.

Knowing that “it takes a hundred years for Baptists to make a slight change,” most LAC seem to favor the *Holy Match Making Alternative Model* and the *Improved PSG Alternative Model*, which does actually incorporate change.

We have discerned and agreed that we will advocate in the future for combining the *Holy Match Making Alternative Model* with the *Improved PSG Alternative Model*. Not only are these consistent with the current model, they also have a common denominator: they challenge not only the *NSBC*, but also the Church as the body of Christ to own up to its call to the *Missio Dei* for taking a hands-on role; they dare *IM* to take full responsibility for missionaries support raising by doing more to help missionaries reach 100% of their *PSG*; and they call on missionaries to be accountable as they prayerfully and aggressively gather a network of supporters for the mission of God. In the *Holy Match Making Alternative Model* and the *Improved PSG Alternative Model*, it’s safe to say that missionaries’ call, missionary support and partnership is a call to responsibility,

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<sup>9</sup> Patrick B. Gordy-Stith, *A Little Child Shall Lead Them Back to Community and Communion* (DMin Diss., Drew University, May 2015), 119.

accountability, and ownership making missionary *Personalized Support Raising* OUR ministry.

If these two models were combined, missionary ministries would not be wholly self-funded ministries. As discussed earlier, self-funding takes away missionaries' passion for ministries, and it discourages prospective missionaries.

Although I see limited discernible transformation at this moment, I am grateful for the overall variety of possibility to which God is calling us through *Missio Dei*. The experiences we've shared through the project enabled us to reimagine mission and missionary support raising in a new fresh way, a way that meet churches, missionaries, mission agencies such as *IM* where they stand; and these are signs for possible change.

The LAC finished the project period with hope that congregational and denominational transformation might occur. Even so, it's hard to predict when, or if, the Lord might lead to a denominational or *IM* transformation as a result of this project. At minimum, we observed how the project got churches, missionaries, pastors, LAC, and some *IM* staffs talking.

In April 2016, I had a meeting with the *NSBC's* outgoing English pastoral team. Though only one of them had attended a project event, they said they appreciated the project and that it has moved many people. They mentioned that members were thankful and wanted to know if there would be more to come; they wished other *American Baptist Churches USA* congregations were privileged with such a project. It really keeps people talking.

Personally, I have mixed feelings. On one hand, I've been skeptical of missionary's support raising. During the project, I was encouraged knowing that I am not

the only one feeling the pain and the frustration of this approach. I felt sympathy from participants who can also relate to some of the missionary fund-raiser's struggles. With this emotional and spiritual support, I felt encouraged and hopeful that there could be many ways to make *Personalized Support Raising* bearable. And I am optimistic that God who call us to the *Missio Dei* has helped us to see through this project that mission support is OUR ministry.

On the other hand, I feel like breaking away from *IM*, pursue my own fund-raising, and use whatever support I raise for missional ministries in partnership with *Youth Center Togo* organization in West Africa.

We anticipate that things will fit together differently and we might be able to discern more change once the new pastoral team meets with the mission chair committee.

In light of the breaking through of hope, I am confidently envisioning a spirit led and a non-aggressive way to share the project and its results with the *American Baptist International Ministries*.

**CHAPTER 6**  
**AND ALL THE CHURCH SAYS AMEN: CONCLUSION AND  
DEFINITION**

**Conclusion**

A couple of months ago, a Facebook friend shared a laughable, fun but insightful story which I access on his Facebook page on January 20, 2015. As one of his Facebook friends it was my privilege to read that story. Although I do not know the exact source of the story, I have no doubt that it's been around for a while, and the reader might have heard the story or read it before. I read it at a time when my *Personalized Support Goal* seemed stalled. One night after 1:00 am prayer I paused and wondered what if all churches or all members of my church donated just a dollar toward my missionary ministry support... The story title was "That's not My Job" and it reads:

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have.

This fun story resonated with the project when I first thought about it. Missionary support raising is the call of God and the work of God extended to "Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody." In God, we represent "Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody." God, Missionaries, *IM*, and *ABC* congregations are teamed up for mission to the end of the earth. God entrusts us all with the ability and responsibility to carry out the mission of God with success. Each and every one of us should play our role without hesitation, as we hold one another accountable.

The *Missio Dei* is healthier, more successful, impactful, and transforming when missionaries respond promptly to the call, mission agencies connect missionaries to the churches, churches secure resources needed, and God blesses “the ties that bind us together”<sup>1</sup> in mission. Responding to the call, the connecting or bridge building, the resource securing, and the blessings, all together make missionary support raising OUR ministry.

George Mueller of Bristol, England, Founder of the *Home for Orphans* believed in prayer alone for God’s provision in mission and for him, it seemed to work well. The Founder of the *China Inland Mission*, Hudson Taylor believed in the Apostolic Plan which for him, “was not to raise ways and means but to go and do the work, trusting God’s promise who said, ‘seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you;’” his moto “God’s work done in God’s way would not lack God’s supply” worked well.<sup>2</sup>

Their contemporary D.L. Moody, evangelist and founder of the *Moody Church* and *Moody Bible Institute* had a different approach when he said “I show my faith when I go to men and state to them the needs of the Lord’s work and ask them to give to it.”<sup>3</sup>

As *IM* missionary, I believe in the latter. I believe that I should pray, communicate my vision and ask for support. I believe that *IM* should provide direction and guidance to prospects (the churches); I believe the prospects should be willing to listen, be informed, and prayerfully consider whether to support or not. In this setting, I

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<sup>1</sup> John Frawcett, “Bless be the tie that binds” in *The Worshiping Church Hymnal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing Company, 1990), 708.

<sup>2</sup> Dillon, 34.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



believe the Lord’s provision for my mission is guaranteed. When the Lord, the missionary, and the prospect come together and resolve to play a hands-on role, “fund-raising can be viewed as three-pronged relationship” making *Personalized Support Raising OUR* ministry.<sup>4</sup> Whether using the *Holy Match Making Alternative Model*, *Improved PSG Alternative Model*, or *Personalized Support Raising Model* or any other model as led by the Spirit, missionaries, mission agencies, churches or prospects could hold one another accountable in love for a sustainable, joyful, passionate and bold missionary support raising.

As we begin and end the project “with reflection on contemporary situations confronted in the storied realities of discipleship and (missionary) ministry,”<sup>5</sup> it’s my understanding that *Raising Missionary Support* is OUR ministry to “please God ... to be real ingredient in the divine happiness ... to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son – it seems impossible, a weight of burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Definitions**

*International Ministries* is the American Baptist Churches-USA missionary movement forms since 1914 and is still the oldest Baptist mission agency in North America.

*One Great Hour of Sharing* is one of four annual offerings received by American

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 35

<sup>5</sup> Savage and Presnell, 65.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Purtill, C. S., *Lewis’ Case for the Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 172.

Baptist churches. “One Great Hour of Sharing is administered by the World Relief Committee of the Board of General Ministries of the ABC USA. The committee facilitates ABC emergency relief, disaster rehabilitation, refugee work and the development of assistance by establishing policy guidelines and overseeing distribution of the annual One Great Hour of Sharing offering received by churches.”<sup>7</sup>

*World Mission* is “the American Baptist response to the needs of international missions as mandated by the Great Commission in partnership with other National Baptist churches in other countries.”<sup>8</sup>

*The America for Christ Offering* is “the American Baptist response to the needs of home missions within and beyond the local congregation in witness and service for Christ as mandated by the Great Commission. Gifts are channeled through National Ministries and Regional Ministries to fund home mission, education and local community ministries.”<sup>9</sup>

“It is through *United Mission* or one family offering, that each ABC giver is able to participate in the total ministry of the American Baptist family.”<sup>10</sup>

The *Mission Impossible* is a series of action films and a classic television series from the 1960’s in which the actors try to accomplish their mission against seemingly impossible odds, even by Hollywood standards.

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<sup>7</sup> American Baptist Churches – USA, “One Great Hour of Sharing,” accessed on September 22, 2015, <http://abc-oghs.org/about-us>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

The *Lone Ranger* is a western character and only survivor of a group of six Texas Rangers works alone in fighting outlaws although he is usually accompanied by a Native American.<sup>11</sup> The term itself has since acquired the connotation of someone who chooses to go it alone.

“*Missio Dei* is a Latin theological term that can be translated as "Mission of God;" it refers to the work of the church as being part of God's work. So the church's mission is a subset of a larger whole mission that is both part of God's mission to the world and not the entirety of God's work in the world.”<sup>12</sup>

*Lecture-Lab* preaching consists of a lecture with a lab giving an opportunity to a group or a church to discuss how to apply a sermon lesson to their daily life.

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<sup>11</sup> *The Lone Ranger*, Directed by George B. Seitz Jr. (Old Tucson, USA: Apex Film Corp., 1949).

<sup>12</sup>Eddie Arthur, “*Missio Dei* and the Mission of the Church,” accessed on November 10, 2015. <http://www.wycliffe.net/missiology?id=3960>.

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