

# Global Cross-Cultural Mission Collaboration: 1910 to 2010

By **Ralph D. Winter**

**T**he first question is inevitably, “What happened in 1910 at Edinburgh that was so great?”

Two periodicals give background about the unique nature of the 1910 meeting. See [www.tokyo2010.org](http://www.tokyo2010.org). While only one of the 2010 meetings is intentionally structured like the one in 1910, all four meetings commemorating E-1910 will have a good purpose and success.

## **Four 2010 meetings consider Edinburgh 1910**

In June 1910, over 1,000 mission leaders met in Edinburgh, Scotland for a World Missionary Conference, representing 162 mission agencies. Four international conferences are being convened in 2010, each in its own way looking back to the Edinburgh 1910 meeting. Organizers of the four meetings met on Nov. 10, 2008 in Boston to compare notes and to pledge cooperation. Here’s a brief description of each meeting in 2010, in chronological order. (See picture.)

### **May 11-15, 2010 in Tokyo, Japan**

The Global Mission Consultation & Celebration will feature evening sessions of local “celebrations” open to anyone from local churches in Japan. But during the day it will be a very serious “consultation” of mission executives and mission leaders—because, as in 1910, all participants will be delegates chosen and sent by mission agencies, no one will be invited as a person. Tokyo churches are hosting the meeting. This meeting is thus far officially sponsored by various regional and global associations of mission agencies: the Asia Missions Association (AMA), the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association of North America (IFMA—Canada, USA, Mexico, and some Caribbean nations, now CrossGlobal Link), the Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS, founded in 2005 at Amsterdam), and the Third World Mission Association

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(TWMA). The intention now is to gain the sponsorship of as many national level associations as possible who can, in a final stage, encourage their mission-agency members to send delegates. See [www.tokyo2010.org](http://www.tokyo2010.org) for more information.

### **June 2-6, 2010 in Edinburgh, Scotland**

Edinburgh 2010 has come into being to seek new direction for mission in the twenty-first century by bringing together representatives of different strands of mission and church life for a very focussed and highly organised process of study and reflection. It is expected to culminate in the centenary celebration of the 1910 World Missionary Conference which will take place in Edinburgh again from 2-6 June 2010 when 1,200 Christian leaders will gather. The study process revolves around nine specific themes and guidelines are to be developed to help mission leaders evaluate their models of mission within the broad theme of ‘Witnessing to Christ Today’. Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Independent Churches from around the world are currently involved in preparing for the centenary celebrations in partnership with New College at the University of Edinburgh. For more information visit the website [www.edinburgh2010.org](http://www.edinburgh2010.org).

### **October 16-25, 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa**

At the urging of Evangelical leaders worldwide, the Lausanne Movement, with the participation of the World Evangelical Alliance, will host the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Cape Town, South Africa, 16-25 October 2010. Cape Town 2010 will provide a global forum – before, during and after the Congress – in which leaders from around the world will explore issues facing the Church and God’s world. Then together, leaders will prayerfully seek God’s guidance in responding so that God’s name may be honored and many more men, women and young people will be able to hear and respond to the message of Christ presented in a relevant and culturally appropriate manner. It is anticipated that over 4,000 leaders

from 200 countries will attend Cape Town 2010. The Participant Selection Team, made up of leaders worldwide, has established specific criteria to ensure that the Congress will include men and women from a broad spectrum of nationalities, ethnicities, ages, occupations and denominational affiliations. More details are found at [www.lausanne.org](http://www.lausanne.org).

### **November 4-7, 2010 in Boston**

Seminary students and faculty from all over the world, but particularly as based in the schools of theology, seminaries and university divinity schools of the Greater Boston (USA) area, will hold a conference sponsored by the Boston Theological Institute (BTI), the consortium of such schools. (A similar meeting was held in 1910 in Boston shortly after the one in Edinburgh in 1910.) The BTI envisions a conference that will come toward the end of 2010, offering a summation and analysis of the previous “Edinburgh Conferences.” The conference in Boston, with the theme “The Changing Contours of World Mission and Christianity,” will reflect the student and academic character of its setting. This conference will be an opportunity not only to interact with key mission leaders but will also include workshops welcoming student participation at a variety of points, particularly around the leading themes of the Edinburgh mission process. The goal of the conference is to discern a vision for what might constitute mission in the twenty-first century, a mission that stands in the trajectory of Christian witness from the earliest days of the church and is inclusive of matters relating to human flourishing, reconciliation, faith in the future and conducive of religious liberty. See [www.2010boston.org](http://www.2010boston.org) for more information.

All four meetings are part of a process of reflection and activism that will likely continue beyond 2010. Though constituencies and agendas of the four differ markedly, the organizers have expressed a commitment to work together and will send representatives to each other’s meetings.

Although I hope to be involved enthusiastically in at least the Edinburgh and Cape Town meetings, the reason I am most interested in the Tokyo meeting—and the reason we are highlighting it in this issue of *Mission Frontiers*, is due to its serious focus on the mission agency level of concerns and activity. The other meetings will probably stress more what church leaders can do. The only meet-

ing that will be a repetition of the kind of meeting that took place in 1910 will be the one in Tokyo.

### **Tokyo 2010**

What will Tokyo be like? No one will be invited! All participants will be selected and delegated by mission associations and mission agencies. This is what happened in 1910 and that would seem to be one reason why the 1910 meeting has had such an impact across the years—the huge New York meeting ten years earlier that attracted up to 200,000 has been almost forgotten. At the website already mentioned you can find the details about 1910. They can be consulted and downloaded.

Finally, why is a global level meeting of mission leaders important? Because like an avalanche, the peoples of the world are now more and more global in their location. That is the reason for the new Global Network of Mission Structures—to track peoples and offer to mission structures the data essential to an approach, people by people, that will take into account the location of the members of any given ethnic group in the entire globe. This kind of research cannot as easily be done by national or even regional associations of mission agencies.

### **What was the Edinburgh 1910 meeting?**

In 1886 D. L. Moody sponsored a meeting of college students. That meeting resulted in the formation of the famous Student Volunteer Movement. Those young students were 40 years old by 1910. They organized a global meeting of mission leaders, who met in Edinburgh in 1910.

The meeting was not absolutely perfect.

1. For example, in order to please the Anglicans (who had outstanding mission work in Africa and India) they had to ignore the urgent need to evangelize the vast number of nominal Christians in Europe, America and Latin America. Missionaries to Europe and Latin America were outraged when they were not expected to participate! But the leaders of the meeting were earnestly trying to focus on only those fields where there were no Christians of any kind, or very few.
2. Also, to avoid the use of time at the conference arguing over denominational customs they excluded discussion of theological issues such as modes of baptism.
3. They had a “credentials committee” which studied and approved the theological statements of the agencies from which they expected delegates. Thus, they did not require each delegate to sign a doctrinal statement at the meeting. This is similar to other meetings of church or mission leaders where the participants come from

organizations which already have published statements of faith.

4. The worst deficiency was the fact that no one present officially represented a non-Western mission agency.” Even though Bishop Azariah had earlier started two mission agencies in India, he was in Edinburgh as a delegate of the Church Mission Society of England.

The meeting had, nevertheless, many good points.

1. It sponsored extensive study and planning in advance.
2. It was clearly focused on the unfinished missionary task.
3. It set in motion one of the most valuable journals, the *International Review of Missions*.

4. It demonstrated the basic unity of the Protestant mission world.

5. It was able to give serious thought to and discussion of many mission field problems.

6. It was the first time in the history of the world that so many diverse groups of Christians met together on the world level.

7. A similar meeting in 1980, commemorating the 70th anniversary, drew delegates from 47 non-Western mission agencies—one third of the total. At Tokyo in 2010 we expect that two thirds of the agencies will be from the Global South. 