



# Why Meetings of Mission Leaders?

Greg H. Parsons



As I write, I'm sitting at a meeting of mission leaders, administrators, professors and a few others. This is the second of two similar fall meetings, which are sometimes combined as they'll be next September 23-25 in St Louis.

Why do they meet?

I'm sure there are many reasons—depending on who you ask. Let me tell you why I think these gatherings are a help to the advance of God's purposes globally.

My first time to attend one of these was in the mid-1980s. I was not yet 30, whereas most of the mission leaders had grey hair. One year I videotaped many of them to record breakthrough stories their missions had experienced. Beyond the blessing they were to our video production that year, I've always been blessed and stretched by sitting with mission leaders, hearing them pray from their hearts, concerns, and burdens—and seeing what it takes to run a mission. I learned a lot.

I also saw them connect with other leaders. These were men (mostly, back then) from various mission agencies and denominations who had deep, lasting relationships with each other. They had partnerships around the world, they deferred to each other, and they had strategic working relationships that most of the secular business world wouldn't have even dreamed

of before "partnership" became a *cool* business strategy.

It wasn't perfect. I'm sure there were things going on behind the scenes I didn't know about, but these events helped shape me and my view of agencies and how we do mission.

Now my heart aches when I hear about agencies or churches going it alone, not connected with others, often not knowing what is being done by other agencies where they want to work—not to mention work done by non-Western agencies. I've seen that anything done in a vacuum is not done as well as it could be.

This fall, key issues were discussed, like:

- the need to see the impact of our lives as believers in the world in light of social and political situations—as in China or the Muslim world.
- asking why the Gospel hasn't made in-roads in some places (like Japan or North India) as it has in other places
- looking at new ways to be ready to reach out in times of crisis—given that we see crises more often.
- how to create "insider" movements in cultural groups who have difficulty hearing an effective message about Christ through normal "religious" channels.
- how our culture is shifting – what are the trends in mission
- how we deal with 60% of the world that doesn't get information by reading (70% among the unreached)
- the advance and evaluation of church planting movements in locations around the world

- how we keep focused on the centrality of Christ in a world with many "paths to God".

Beyond these issues, partnerships were advanced in one-on-one meetings in areas like:

- on-field training in multi-agency partnership.
- collaboration between training schools to get training resources to national leaders on-site.
- publications of various sorts discussed and planned across agency lines.

I am still applying what I learned to my own life and to leading the USCWM. I encourage you to connect with others in whatever you are doing in mission. Churches (or individuals in them) can join some of these associations to enhance their mission program. They, too, can rub shoulders with these leaders and think through tough mission issues with them. They can keep in touch with current thinking through

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journals like the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (or *Mission Frontiers* of course) and through web sites like [www.ifmamissions.org](http://www.ifmamissions.org) or [www.efmamissions.org](http://www.efmamissions.org). There are also some new information sites like [www.globalchristianity.org](http://www.globalchristianity.org), which is an initiative of the newly-formed Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. (More on that in the next *Mission Frontiers*.)

But most of all, we all need to be aware of what is happening in places where we work. While there will always be differences in both doctrine and practice, these often create a helpful breadth of approach. The bottom line is that we will see more effectiveness as we work together where we do agree. 🌐



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