

I WILL DO A NEW THING



by **Jeff Minard**
Guest Editor of *MF*

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“See, I am doing a new thing. Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert, and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:19).

Isaiah reminds us that we serve an innovative God. What excitement there is in holding our expectations loosely, allowing God to turn our paths in unexpected ways!

This edition of *Mission Frontiers* honors that new thing. Fuller Theological Seminary performed an innovative work 50 years ago when they opened the School of World Mission (SWM), which later changed its name to the School of Intercultural Studies (SIS). A separate school focused on mission is common today among seminaries, but it wasn't then. This school was actually instrumental in the founding of our own organization, Frontier Ventures, three miles away.

We present excerpts of articles written by several faculty at the School of Intercultural Studies. The following pieces are excerpts from the forthcoming volume by IVP Academic, *Mission with Innovation: Retrospect and Prospect in the Field of Missiology*, edited by Charles Van Engen, scheduled for publication in October 2016.

This issue identifies several priority issues in Christian mission, exploring

each of them through two lenses. The first lens is the development of the School of Intercultural Studies of Fuller Theological Seminary over the last half-century; the second is the contemporary shift of global Christianity.

When a specialist school develops, what is its relationship with the host? I think of the rough analogy of the sodality and modality¹ pattern. From the time of its founding, Fuller's School of World Mission was not a spawning of a separate institute, but an embedded and focused connection that forms a balance between a mission laboratory and the parent university.

The interrelationship of the specialized orders (sodalities) and the generalized “host” is crucial to see. Dr. Ralph Winter said, “It is clear that the sodality, as it was recreated again and again by different leaders, was almost always the prime mover.” And today, the School of Intercultural Studies, is a leader in global and cross-cultural evangelism.

Dr. Ralph Winter came to describe the difference between Fuller and the U.S. Center for World Mission (now Frontier Ventures) as the difference between the crucial task of encouraging the worldwide church to “grow where it is” and the equally crucial task of preparing the church to “go where it isn't.”

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The formation of the SWM was a step in that direction—training practitioners, and training them to go cross-culturally.

Dr. Amos Yong opens our issue on page 6 with a view of the Center for Missiological Research and its plan to provide critical resources for new missiological research and equip men and women around the world for faithful leadership.

SWM/SIS has had a direct impact on Christian missiology, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, and there are innovations within that. In his article starting on page 9, Dr. Steven Bevans reflects on the relationships between Catholic missiology and Fuller’s innovations.

Dr. J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu presents on page 13 the case that it is now impossible to talk about Christianity without Africa, and impossible to talk about Africa without Christianity.

Dr. Pablo Deiros reflects a Latin American perspective on the globalization of Christian mission, and the pursuit of unity within the church in mission. (page 18)


Dr. Wonsuk Ma considered the challenge of any school remaining a thought leader, especially in the reshaping of mission thinking and practice, while training the mission practitioners. (page 22)

On page 30, Charles Kraft looks back on his time at Fuller and his opportunities to write extensively. And Greg Parsons of Frontier Ventures covers the many early books published by William Carey Library publishers by authors from the SWM. (page 40) While Glenn Schwartz shares stories of his time working with Ralph Winter— anecdotes that come from a longtime relationship. (page 26)

Through these articles and the coming book on this subject, we see that Western forms of the church that fifty years ago were still being exported and planted around the globe are being replaced by indigenous forms of church and indigenous ways of doing mission. SWM/SIS faculty and graduates have been actively involved as catalysts and participants in the changes mentioned.

Charles Van Engen has said that through the window of the 50th anniversary of Fuller Theological Seminary’s School of World Mission (SWM) and (now) School of Intercultural Studies (SIS), one can catch a glimpse of the panoramic landscape of Christian mission, both past and present.

The 50-year celebration event of SWM/SIS provides an opportunity for thinking about innovations in Christian mission past and future.

Calvin Coolidge once said “No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave.” The Fuller Theological Seminary School of Intercultural Studies earns that honor for what it continues to give to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. 

¹ A modality is a structure that is focused on “protection, continuity, avoiding risks and bringing its members to spiritual maturity.” A sodality is an apostolic structure designed to carry out the mission of extending the kingdom and focuses on initiation, plans on taking risks and perseveres against great odds.” Definitions taken from pages 748 and 749 of *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement - A Reader* 4th Edition, eds. Winter, Ralph D. and Steven C. Hawthorne, 2009. William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA

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