

# Collaborating in a Global Context

by Greg Parsons

Director of Global Connections  
Frontier Ventures

Reflections from a Senior staff member – January 2018

In light of the ministry update Fran Patt gave in this issue of *MF*, I wanted to offer some historical context as to how our collaboration at Frontier Ventures has changed over the years since the early days of our ministry to help explain the rationale behind pursuing a potential sale. Having been on staff with Frontier Ventures since 1982—then called the U.S. Center for World Mission, I've had the privilege of seeing much of this firsthand.

Our original vision for collaboration on this campus was born in the 1970s. We wanted to bring together any and all who believed in the priority of reaching the “hidden peoples” (as we called the unreached back then) and work together to find new insights and strategies that it would take to reach them. Back then, there were no personal computers, email, or cheap long-distance phone calls. Physical proximity was necessary for collaboration. Hence, the purchase of the campus, which allowed such proximity, was a great and timely enabler of collaboration for the unreached.

We saw many formal and informal teams and partnerships formed on

the campus, but we increasingly realized that many of those who had contributions to make, especially in the area of strategy, were actually out engaged in the work around the world. Many would visit the campus as they passed through the L.A. area and would report what they were seeing and wrestling with on the field. In the pre-email era, this was one of the major ways we learned about what was happening beyond us and how we built connections. Not surprisingly, the rise of email and the Internet increased connections and learning opportunities outside of physical visits, lessening the *need* that workers actually show up on our campus (as much as we still enjoy and benefit from these visits). It also enabled collaboration to develop in more places and across geographies.

There was also a trend of ministries and agencies relocating from Southern California to other states like Colorado, Florida and Texas, where the cost of living was significantly lower, helping them operate more efficiently. This began in the 1990s and continued throughout the early 2000s. It changed the way we worked. The campus continued to play a key role in our work, but more of our collaboration was happening beyond our campus. (Many of our staff relocated as well. Now, more than one-half of our staff are located outside Pasadena.) Though it was sometimes hard to see things change, we felt it was to the good that they

could be more effective in what they were doing in their new locations.

The rise of movements from the Global South sending non-western workers to the unreached is perhaps the most important development in pioneering mission work over the last twenty years. We praise God for this wonderful and amazing trend. In light of it, we at Frontier Ventures have had to re-envision what collaboration looks like in this context. This includes how we position ourselves to better partner, serve and learn from those in the Global South. As Fran mentions in his update, this also means, intentionally choosing places and partnerships closer to the unreached themselves. I think much of the mission world is waking up to this reality.

In 1976, we envisioned workers *coming* to our campus to collaborate; in 2018 and beyond, we envision *going* to them to collaborate, so that we remain at the pioneering edges of the movement we helped to birth. While many still come here as they pass through the area, we connect, learn from and influence far more people outside of Pasadena than we could ever even fit on our campus here. Our collaboration continues, while the way we do it is changing. May we see ever more fruit as we press on toward seeing movements to Jesus among all the remaining unreached peoples. 