



COVID-19
POST

Challenges & Opportunities of Mobilization in the Post-COVID World

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COVID-19 has no doubt reset our world in many ways, especially with respect to our practice of mission as well as in mission mobilization. This disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic requires new-wineskin thinking and re-strategizing on the part of the Church on how to creatively fulfill the mandate of mission mobilization in a post-pandemic world so that the good news of God's reign will be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all nations (Matt. 24:14). In examining the challenges and opportunities of mobilization post-COVID-19, this article will seek to envision mobilization in ways that are appropriate for a post-pandemic world, because to some degree, the survival of the Church and its mission during the next pandemics may depend on it.

“Through the COVID-19 pandemic, God appears to be orchestrating circumstances globally, preparing the optimal environment for the message of mission mobilization among His Church to be prioritized like no other time since the early Church.”¹ Sometimes, in order to help us embrace change, God puts us into circumstances we would never choose, but, in His eternal wisdom, best aligns us with where He is leading.

But what do we really mean by mission mobilization? Mission mobilization refers to the strategic and intentional activity of believers to inspire, equip, and activate the fruitful engagement of other Christians in God's mission. Essentially, it is the whole process of

¹ Shaw, Ryan. 2022 *Rethinking Mission Mobilization*.

maturing followers of Jesus to know, to be, and to do all that Christ has called the Church to in the fulfillment of His mission. According to Steve C. Hawthorne, “Mobilization in its broadest sense is helping God’s people to move with God in His mission.”² He further says that “mobilizing is the process by which people become fruitfully engaged in the mission of God to the world.”³ Ryan Shaw, on the other hand, says, “Mobilization is not a one-time event but a long-term process of putting the Great Commission at the center of every disciple and local ministry.”⁴ While Randy Mitchel opined that, “For the Church to mobilize begins with movement towards God and with God on mission.”⁵ How then does the Church fulfill its ministry of mobilization in a post-pandemic world?

Global Realities Facing the Church & Challenges of Mobilization

Along with the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global Church today is faced with exploding world population, migration and diaspora issues, poverty, hostile and dictatorial governments, militant religious beliefs, secularism, humanism, occultism, growing injustices, and more. For instance, Europe, which used to be the heartland of Christianity for such a prolonged time and in such an extensive way, is now the first continent to be de-Christianized, with the prevalent idea that life can be lived without recourse to God. While in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the Church is breaking new ground and establishing new Christian communities, Europe—and the West at large—appears to be in retreat. With significant social trends in Europe and the West like secularism, migration, people trafficking, Islam, technology, and Brexit, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, the West is fast becoming the most challenging frontier for missions and missions mobilization. Moreover, technology and the Internet, computing, digital storage, artificial intelligence, and

big data are some of the social trends shaping the world today and present their own opportunities.

During the pandemic, there was also the challenge of lockdowns and restrictions to movement. Churches in some places were unable to meet physically and mobilization events were unable to be held in conventional ways. This affected the entire process of mobilization in some ways. For instance, during the COVID-19 restrictions, we were limited to operating in small groups and had to cancel a big mobilization event we had planned. Moreover, we were limited in the deployment aspect of mobilization regarding a team we had enthused about God’s mission and trained in how to participate with God in His mission because the target people were in a no-go area.



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Opportunities for Mission Mobilization in the Post-Covid World?

With decreased mobility and increased digital connectivity, mobilizers need to re-envision how to mobilize the whole people of God to their shared calling and participation in the redemptive mission of God using digital tools. A major opportunity that the pandemic challenge opens up is the mobilization of young people, who are referred to as “digital natives” because of their digital literacy and ability to deploy their technological skills, to respond to the challenge of decreased mobility as well as funding of missions and mobilization work. This gives the youth

2 Mitchel, Randy. 2023 *Handbook for Mission Mobilization*.

3 Hawthorne, Steve. 2015 A Global Mobilization Consultation Paper on “Mobilizing God’s People for God’s Mission.”

4 Bendor Samuel, Paul. 2020 *Covid-19, Trends in Global Mission, Participation in Faithful Witness* Oxford Center for Mission Study.

5 Memory, Jim. Europe 2021 “A Missiological Report.”

a sense of belonging in the Church's mission, thereby guaranteeing the future of such mission endeavors. Moreover, the opportunity of digital connectivity requires that mobilizers come up with snackable digital content to use as mobilization tools in order to awaken, empower, and activate the Church to move with God in His mission to the billions who are currently online. So the challenge creates opportunity for creativity and innovation.


Another opportunity for mission mobilization in the post-COVID-19 world is that of dynamic collaboration among mobilizers. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed our insufficiency in ourselves and our need for interdependence. This is what is referred to as dynamic collaboration. No single church denomination or ministry, however well endowed, can fulfill the mission mobilization mandate all by itself. According to Michael Oh, the Global Executive Director and CEO of the Lausanne Movement, "Disciples of all nations will be made when disciples of all nations are collaborating (Gen. 11:6)."⁶

With migration comes an opportunity for diaspora mobilization. However, it is migration from the Majority World that is seeing the most significant number of new diaspora churches being planted in the Global North and parts of the Global South.

"Latin-American migrants have planted thousands of churches in Spain, Portugal and beyond over the last thirty years. It is difficult to find a major European city that does not have a large Spanish speaking and/or Brazilian congregation. Similarly, Chinese churches can be found almost everywhere. The Chinese Overseas Christian Mission lists over 120 Chinese-speaking congregations in the UK and a further 150 in the rest of Europe, though that is certainly only a fraction of the actual churches that exist. However, it is the Black African churches that are the most numerous. African-initiated Pentecostal churches number in the thousands in Britain alone."

To achieve the goal of a worshipping community drawn from all peoples of the earth, mobilizers must target diaspora churches and mobilize them for missions, to, through, and beyond the diaspora (Rev. 5:9, 7:9).

In order for the Church to survive the challenges of a prolonged pandemic and bring closure to the Great Commission mandate, mobilizers must be strategic in their mobilization of all God's people (including professionals, students, civil servants, business people, athletes, children and young people, as well as those in government, the entertainment industry, etc.) to target all the spheres of influence of society for the fulfillment of the Great Commission, beginning with their primary platform (Matt. 24:14). These people should be mobilized for kingdom impact in every sphere of society—the arts, media, science, technology, architecture, medicine, etc. We need them to fulfill the Great Commission.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented the global Church with a paradigm shift in its practice of mission mobilization. Far from being a frustration to mission mobilization, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented a challenge for the Church to re-imagine how different parts of the Body of Christ function together to support the faithful, holistic witness of the Gospel. The in-person gatherings that have been at the core of church programs for centuries showed their limitations during the pandemic. Rather than planning to "get back to normal," mission mobilizers need to plan for a more robust, hybrid way of being mobilizers and doing mobilization. Meanwhile, the digital world is here to stay as an integral part of the Church's mission field. The lessons learned must not be lost, rather, the Church must now carefully look at the opportunities and be diligent to prioritize the most appropriate ways of doing mobilization in tandem with the realities of today's world. The global Church must seize the opportunity of the moment to give a final major push to the Great Commission mandate through massive and creative mobilization of all God's people. Let us rise with all that Jesus has made available to us through redemption to reach all unreached, least reached, and unengaged frontier ethnic people groups of our world so that the Son may receive the reward of His suffering and global glory may ascend to our God and the Lamb upon the throne. 

⁶ Sanou, Dietrich, and Kern. *Towards a Post-Pandemic Mission*.