

the “World Christian Global Action Plan”



Michael Jaffarian

Editor's note: in recent months other publications have begun to explain and explore the enormous resources in the second edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia (WCE2)* and its companion volume, *World Christian Trends (Trends)*. But few have given attention to a proposed action plan embedded within *World Christian Trends* – the “World Christian Global Action Plan” (WCGAP). Therefore, we invited Michael Jaffarian, a member of the *WCE2/Trends* team, to present the inside story behind the WCGAP. We also invited a number of North American evangelical mission leaders to give their brief critiques of the WCGAP, especially encouraging them to assess the WCGAP’s “eight global goals”, the WCGAP’s recommended steps for mission agencies, and the value of goal-setting attached to the year 2025 or other dates. Our intent is to thereby help *Mission Frontiers* readers to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the WCGAP and to consider how its recommendations may apply to their own ministries and plans.

Every now and then I find myself in a situation that calls for telling someone that I once wrote a grand, comprehensive plan to evangelize the entire world. I never admit to this without smiling, since the idea seems, on the surface, so preposterous. Who am I to attempt something so big and important? Actually, it’s not completely accurate to say I wrote it. Yes, I composed its final form, but most of its ideas and content came from earlier work by others.

For seven years, from 1992 to 1999, I was on loan from my own mission agency, CBInternational (formerly the

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Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society), to the World Evangelization Research Center in Richmond, Virginia. My main task was to work with David Barrett, Todd Johnson, George Kurian, and others to help research and write the second edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia (WCE2)*.

Though all of us in this inter-mission research group helped each other in many ways, we each had responsibility for certain parts or sections of the work. It fell to me to write the World Christian Global Action Plan (WCGAP). Together we researched and wrote a 3-volume Encyclopedia, but as it turned out, two volumes were published by Oxford University Press under the full title of *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*. The third volume was published by William Carey Library under the title: *World Christian Trends AD30 – AD 2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus (Trends)*. The WCGAP landed in *Trends*, on pages 822-832.

Let me explain further by answering some questions.

1. What is the WCGAP?

Its first sentence reads, “This is a plan to bring Christians together to evangelize the world.” The WCGAP is a document that maps out a way

that some key goals in world mission could be achieved by AD 2025. It would require that many Christians of many kinds, around the world, work together, and that certain services be provided to this global movement by an international office supported by plan members.

After a 12-point introduction, the plan document in *Trends* includes:

- A World Christian Manifesto based on Scripture.
- A list of 12 Foundational Concepts.
- “A World Christian Agenda: The 8 Global Goals”.
- A section explaining the categories of involvement in the plan – about the members of the WCGAP, as well as supporters, participants, observers, and opponents.
- A detailed list of 87 tasks that would allow the 8 Global Goals to be achieved by AD 2025. Some of the tasks would be done by the WCGAP International Office and others by global ecumenical and confessional bodies, by Christian churches and denominations, by mission organizations, by seminaries and training institutes, by local churches, by missionaries, and by individual Christians.
- An 8-step scheme of implementation for the plan, showing how it

would emerge, take form, grow, function, and be maintained up to AD 2025.

- A set of 16 sidebar mini-articles commenting on or explaining various important aspects of the plan.

The first six Foundational Concepts are the basis for the plan. They are:

Evangelization

– that every person on earth should hear the gospel in a way they can understand, and have a valid opportunity to become a Christian.

Cooperation

– that Christians from all countries, many peoples, many denominations, all ecclesiastical traditions, and many languages, should work together in world evangelization.

World A – that global Christian resources, especially missionaries, should be deployed with a priority to the least-evangelized peoples, countries, languages, and cities.

AD 2025 – that a global plan requires a concrete date for the achievement of its goals, and that the 2025 date is the best for our present, post-2000 situation.

Quantification – that the task requires extensive, professional statistical research and publication.

Segmentization – that the larger goals in world evangelization should be divided into logical, strategic, and manageable units that are then approached one by one, by various Christian ministries or workers, with ongoing monitoring and course correction.

2. Why did you write it?

The simple answer: it was assigned to me! But, more significantly, it made sense for something like this plan to appear in the *WCE2*. Here is this huge trove of information; how should the global Church respond to it all? The WCGAP answers that question; it emerged as a logical response to the data.

The WCGAP also serves as an update of an important plan composed

by David Barrett and Todd Johnson in the late 1980s, which looked toward the final decade of the 20th century, which was to be the great global Decade of Evangelization. That earlier plan, the Kaleidoscopic Global Action Plan (KGAP), was published in the book *Our Globe and How to Reach It* (Birmingham, Alabama: New Hope, 1990, 136 pages). In many ways the KGAP, and that book, were oriented toward AD 2000 goals. The post-2000 situation called for new ideas on a global plan. We (Barrett, Johnson, and Jaffarian) decided together on AD2025 as the best new date for the plan's goals,



David Barrett

for several reasons – which are explained in one of the sidebar mini-articles (on page 827).

3. Where did the elements of this plan come from?

The name, “World Christian Global Action Plan”, links it to the *World Christian Encyclopedia* and to its predecessor, the Kaleidoscopic Global Action Plan (KGAP).

Much of the material came directly from the KGAP, which was mainly written by David Barrett. As part of the important AD 2000-related consultation in Singapore in 1989, a wide circle of Christian and mission leaders from many countries read and studied the KGAP, and I carefully studied their extensive written comments

while compiling the WCGAP. I also drew upon lessons learned through the 1990s (the Decade of Evangelization) by many Christian movements and organizations with global goals, including the AD2000 and Beyond Movement.

Some of the ideas come from my own experience as the director of a national missions center, the Singapore Centre for Evangelism and Missions, in a small but dynamic missionary-sending country. I learned a lot about mobilization, research, inter-mission and inter-church cooperation, and global networking during my Singapore years. Some of the ideas came from the Bible. Though it is a simple document, I put a lot of careful work and prayer into the World Christian Manifesto. The WCGAP also draws upon much common missiological thinking of recent decades, including many ideas that have appeared in the pages of *Mission Frontiers*.

4. What does the plan seek to accomplish?

The eight global goals of the plan are linked to each other. Many of them have appeared before in other forms or places. For example, the WCGAP affirms the idea that there must be a church for every people in order for every person on earth to be evangelized. The eight global goals, all directed to AD 2025, are:

1. For everyone on earth to be evangelized (to hear the gospel in a way they can understand and have a valid opportunity to become a Christian).
2. For the world to be 40% Christian (that is, Christian of any kind, of any denomina-

tion or tradition. Note that this is different than seeking for 40% of the world to be “born again” or “saved”, spiritual realities that cannot be known until the Lamb’s Book of Life is opened).

3. For the world to be 20% Great Commission Christians (Christians who know of, understand, and are acting on the Great Commission of Jesus Christ).



Todd Johnson

"A church in every city?" The WCGAP points to such a goal.

4. For every 2,000 Christians to send at least one cross-cultural missionary.
5. For Christians to give 3% of their income to Christian causes.
6. For there to be a church in every city.
7. For there to be a church for every people.
8. For there to be scriptures available in every language.

5. What are some of the best ideas in the plan?

Any plan that encourages Christians to prayerfully proclaim the gospel where people have not yet heard, to plant churches where there are none, to bring the light of Christ to places now dark, is on the right path. Many Christian plans call for such things; the WCGAP is among them.

I think the greatest strength of this plan is its link to the mass of detailed data in the *WCE2* and *Trends*. Any good goal-setting process requires one to first ask, "Where are we at?"; second, "Where would we like to be?"; or, "Where would God like us to be?"; followed third by, "How can we get from where we're at to where we would like to be?" For the WCGAP, the first question is answered, in great detail. That is a huge advantage, a great starting place.

The idea of membership is, I think, a good idea. I remember as a student and a young missionary reading about the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and

thinking very highly of its work and aims. But there was no way I could ever be a part of that elite Committee. I could only be a spectator and maybe a donor to their work. I did later attend the Lausanne II conference in Manila, but there was never any meaningful way for me, and thousands of other interested missions-minded Christians, to really be a part of that movement as active members. For the WCGAP, membership is open to individual Christians, individual churches, mission organizations, Bible colleges and seminaries, denominations, other Christian organizations of many kinds – with set membership requirements (including annual dues), and membership privileges.

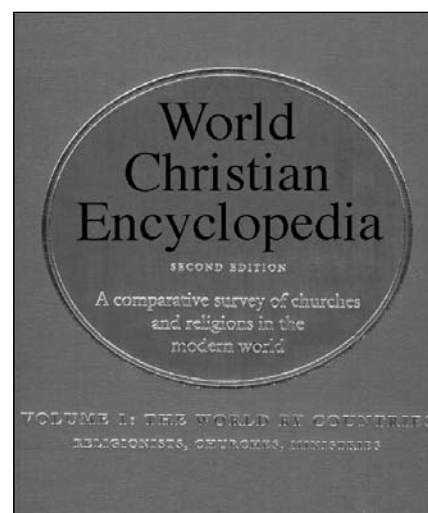
The WCGAP is optimistic. One of the sidebar mini-articles (on page 824) is titled, "It can be done." For this plan, that claim is backed up by the mass of data in the *WCE2* and *Trends*, data that makes clear the immense resources of the Christian world, and that shows in great detail the task remaining.

The heart of the KGAP is a detailed list of 109 specific tasks or action steps. The WCGAP's similar list of tasks improves on that in one simple, but powerful way – by noting exactly who would be responsible for which tasks. This plan tells any interested missionary what she or he could do to most strategically help the success of this plan, and the same

for any interested seminary or Bible college, Christian denomination, local church, or individual Christian. I was telling a local church pastor here in Richmond, Virginia about the WCGAP, and mentioned that his own church could be an official member of this global plan, that they could see their own ministry fit into a comprehensive plan for world evangelization. He was immediately attracted to the idea.

The WCGAP is also realistic about the need for a substantial International Office – including an organized World Christian Prayer Office, a World Christian Research Office, a World Christian Office of Plan Consultants, a World Christian Communications Office, and a World Christian Futures Office. I believe that any movement or network that declares, "We're not going to start a new organization", sets limits on itself that make impossible the fulfillment of an ambitious plan like the WCGAP. There are many tasks in this plan that can only be done by a substantial, new, international organization, unlike anything that now exists.

Two final good ideas: first, the plan is realistic and deliberate about the work needed in translation of all plan documents and materials, recognizing that global mobilization requires a vast multi-language approach. Second, the steps of imple-



mentation map out a series of events, publications, research tasks, and other actions in 5-year blocs through the entire period to 2025.

6. What are some of the weaknesses of the plan?

Others can be better judges of that than myself! To start with, certainly there are many people out there who are more qualified than myself to write such a plan – people with more experience, more gifts, and more knowledge. I wince as I read the plan today and see many ways it could have been better written. The writing style of the WCGAP is a lumpy mix of Barrett, Johnson, and Jaffarian echoing the thoughts and ideas of Barrett and others. Though I think it is well organized, I don't think it is written in a particularly graceful, compelling, or eloquent style.

As I read it today, I see the plan as strong on information and communication tasks, but weaker on organizational matters and the very important factor of bringing together the dynamics of different groups within Christianity. I am an Evangelical Protestant. There are real limits on how well I understand the perspectives of Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Ecumenical, and Independent Christians and missiologists.

7. Will the plan ever actually be implemented?

My first thought: not likely. On the one hand, I tried to make it as realistic and workable as I possibly could. But on the other hand, on a personal level I have a hard time believing it could all happen. I look at my list of the six factors most likely to scuttle the plan (indicated on page

831), and they certainly loom large. Then again, I review the list of reasons for membership (in a sidebar on page 830), and it all once again makes so much sense to me, and looks very promising.

At the very least, I hope people will glean good ideas from the WC-GAP, to apply to whatever stands among the next generation of significant plans for evangelization. I have no doubt that Christians will continue – after a brief, post-2000 lull – to write and promote plans for world evangelization, of various kinds, shapes, and sizes. I believe the WCGAP has good things to say to any of them. But it is not written as a grab-bag of disconnected ideas. The WCGAP is designed as such a thing must be designed – as a coherent whole, with interdependent parts throughout.

I'm not confident that now is a good time for such a plan. I hear some measure of "anti-research, anti-quantification" bias now in Evangelicalism, maybe in Christianity as a whole. But the great thing about publication is that the WCGAP will be out there, it will be in libraries, it will pop up through ever-improving retrieval processes any time into the future. The WCGAP may well be ignored in our own time but put to good use – even fully implemented – in another. 🌐

*To read the "World Christian Global Action Plan" and its context, you may order **World Christian Trends** and/or the **World Christian Encyclopedia** via the ad on pages 20-21.*