



Transformation and Leadership

Moving forward with the World Inquiry

David Greenlee

The “Evangelizing our World Inquiry” seeks to “enhance world evangelisation in the 21st century by . . . using a survey and focus group consultative process to gather, compile, organize and communicate the insights of Christian leaders throughout the world.”¹ Luis Bush has noted that the Inquiry is “a ‘listening venture’ that seeks to tune in to God’s voice through his people, especially those voices and leaders who are now emerging onto their local, regional and national scenes in the Two-Thirds World.”²

A Global, Grass-Roots Process

From Dehra Dun to Zaria, from Argentina to Finland, among first generation Kazakh Christians as well as Greek Cypriots with church roots going back twenty centuries, over 5000 women and men, from six hundred cities, have participated in sixty-seven World Inquiry events since July 2001. As a mid-point assessment of the process, World Inquiry steering group chair Sang-Bok David Kim and Luis Bush convened 132 delegates from thirty-nine nations at the Evangelizing our World Inquiry International Coalition Consultation May 7-9 near Seoul, South Korea.

Korean hospitality, organizational skills and generosity enhanced the conference, and many first-time visitors to the country were struck by the vitality of the Church there. One surprise on arrival was how many consultation delegates did *not* know each other. It was no accident that this was not just another gathering of the same old group! One theme coming from the floor of the consultation was the clear call to intentionally seek to identify, listen to,

and develop younger leaders. Mere replacement of existing leaders is not the issue: we need multiplication to meet the challenges we face.

Missiological Concepts Underlying the Statistics

The conference was not just about

surveys and statistics. In her key concept paper, Swiss-Argentine scholar Delia Nüesch-Olver challenged delegates to the demographic and social

realities the global Church faces. Wilbert Shenk of Fuller Theological Seminary explored concepts of missional ecclesiology while India Missions Association director K. Rajendran addressed changes and challenges in categories, defining who and what a missionary is. René Padilla challenged the Church to “be, say, and do the witness,” all integral components of world evangelism. “A holistic church,” said

Padilla, “understands that all spheres of life are ‘missionary fields’ and is constantly seeking for ways to affirm the sovereignty of Christ over all of them.”

This missiological perspective was affirmed not only in the preliminary findings from World Inquiry surveys but in each of the five World Inquiry processes. Spending much of the final day’s regional discussion time on the concept of “transformation,” delegates recognized that the word itself is slippery and needs clarification.

Transformation Coupled to Personal Evangelism

What has been the source of this emphasis on “transformation”? Is it a response to old ways of doing evangelism? In Korea there have been significant tensions over this

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Region	Attendance
East Asia Pacific	23
Europe	18
Latin America & Caribbean	13
Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia	10
North America	19
South Asia	20
South East Asia	14
Africa	7
South Pacific & Australasia	8
Total attendance	132
Distinct countries	39

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issue. Rather than criticism, Korean consultation participants called for recognition that both streams, with emphases on personal evangelism and on social transformation, are gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

How we respond to the concept of transformation is colored by our context. In the Middle East, how might Christ-centered social transformation be introduced among marginalized groups where the gospel has received minimal exposure in recent centuries, if ever? In Europe, “re-transformation” is needed; values

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on human rights and social justice issues have moved away from Christ as their center. While outsiders can have a constructive role to play, we see from the Philippines that some roles must be played only by insiders in the process of transformation.

The key question we must ask is if *we ourselves* are transformed enough to transform society. Transformation has to start with each person, Christ being the center.

Vision and Emerging Leadership

The preliminary findings point to “lack of vision” as a major internal barrier for the Church. It is not a lack of ideas and ways to keep busy, and not so much about local matters. Instead, this problem includes

- a lack of transformational vision **within** the church
- a lack of vision **beyond our local setting** to encompass the world
- a vision that is **shared** by the

church as a whole, not just capturing the hearts of a few

- a vision birthed in **our own hearts** rather than emerging from somebody else’s program.
- a vision centered on the **glorious Lord Jesus Christ**.

Lack of vision is coupled with perceived weaknesses in leadership. There are no simple programs, easily duplicated, to pass on vision or train up leaders. Time together is one vital ingredient: people can cry together, paper and ink do not.

In some of our cultures age itself carries weight and being a woman may limit exercise of gifting and ability. Older leaders may fear being replaced, but the question is not one of simple replacement but of multiplication to provide more and more leaders for the vast challenges which face us.



Moving Forward

While there is evidence of global patterns and trends in the preliminary findings, there is diversity across and even within regions and nations. Religious fundamentalism may be the key concern in Malaysia or Mindanao,

but corruption may rank highest in Manila and Mexico City. Rosemary Dowsett, chair of the WEA Global Missiology task force, pointed to the need amidst this diversity to find missiological and strategic solutions which *complement*, not fragment.



A key response of the delegates was a commitment to take the survey phase of the World Inquiry broader and deeper, making sure that the voice is heard from more nations, from more women and younger leaders, from rural areas, and even from those who might not be naturally inclined to favor a process such as the World Inquiry.

Another key concern is that the Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization issue groups be informed by the ongoing World Inquiry process. Finally, recognizing the need to ground the process and findings in solid missiology, further World Inquiry processes will look into underlying theological issues, worldview assumptions, and the concept and definition of a missionary. 🌐

Footnotes

¹ From the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization website, May 15, 2003,

www.gospelcom.net/lcwe/2004/overview.htm

² Luis Bush, “How the World Inquiry Began” in *Mission Frontiers*, May-June 2003, available online at www.missionfrontiers.org/2003/03/PFD/16_Bush.pdf