

# WILL YOUR AGENCY BE READY FOR P.E.A.C.E.?

## Some Friendly Advice for Mission Leaders

**Steve Moore**

One of the challenges mission leaders face is the complex issue of globalization, and one of the implications of globalization in mission is decentralization. Major initiatives no longer begin exclusively at the top of mission structures and flow down. Grassroots initiatives abound; they cannot be ignored, and they raise important questions for mission leaders. One of the most significant illustrations of decentralized mission is the P.E.A.C.E. Plan ([www.thepeaceplan.com](http://www.thepeaceplan.com)), championed by Rick Warren and Saddleback Church to combat the “five giants” of spiritual emptiness, lack of servant leaders, poverty, disease, and ignorance.

The P.E.A.C.E. Plan was introduced to *Mission Frontiers* readers two years ago (in the May-June 2005 issue – see [www.missionfrontiers.org](http://www.missionfrontiers.org) to find a copy of that article). Since then the leaders of P.E.A.C.E. have refined their plans and invited North American church and mission leaders to a series of briefings.

As the leader of the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies (EFMA), I’ve been asked by a number of our members how they should respond



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to P.E.A.C.E. After attending a briefing for mission agency leaders last fall, I’ve identified four answers to that question. While my thoughts are framed with agency leaders in mind, I invite every mission-minded person to listen in.

**1. Affirm pure motives and common objectives.** After hearing Rick Warren share the journey that birthed

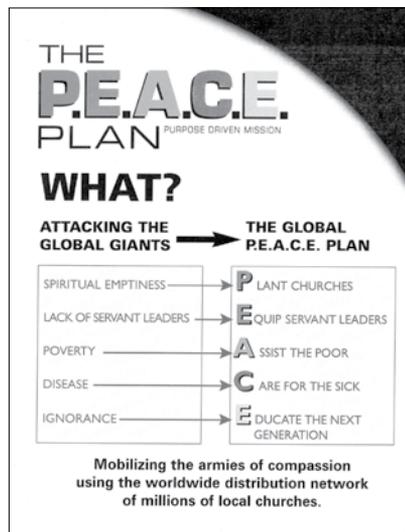
P.E.A.C.E., my suspicions were confirmed: this is not about fame or money or power. The motives behind P.E.A.C.E. are pure. As for the objectives, we all believe more churches need to be planted (especially among the least evangelized), more servant leaders developed, more practical ministry done among the poor, more care provided for the sick, and more education made accessible to the next generation. We can also agree that many of the resources to accomplish these global challenges reside in the local church around the world.

When *The Purpose-Driven Life* began its meteoric rise to

the top of international best-seller lists (over 30 million copies sold in nearly 60 languages as of November 2006), many mission leaders were asking why the global aspect of being “purpose driven” was so noticeably absent. One organization after another went racing to Saddleback (programs and resources in hand), hoping to hitch their wagons to the Purpose-Driven star. With P.E.A.C.E. Rick Warren has put global mission in purpose-driven. But relatively few agencies have openly celebrated that fact or affirmed their common objectives with P.E.A.C.E.; in fact, some of the loudest voices have emphasized problems and differences.

**2. Approach P.E.A.C.E. with the heart of a learner.**

As is the case with every ambitious plan, many opinions have surfaced, often based on limited information. Saddleback leaders have repeatedly



emphasized that this is a work in progress. A number of my misconceptions were corrected at the November 2006 agency briefing.

Here, for example, is a short summary of what P.E.A.C.E. is NOT:

*P.E.A.C.E. is not a call for churches or small groups from the U.S. to plant churches among unengaged, least-evangelized peoples.* According to Saddleback leaders, P.E.A.C.E. is a mobilization and church-to-church partnership initiative that seeks to connect U.S. churches and small groups with other local churches who are cultural (and at times geographic) “near neighbors” to unengaged, least-evangelized peoples. The focus of these partnerships is to mobilize, train and *appropriately resource* the “near neighbor” congregation to plant churches among a particular people group.

*P.E.A.C.E. is not a long-term mobilization/sending initiative to encourage Americans to go as career missionaries.* In fact, as of the November briefing, very little consideration has been given to the possibility that one of the unintended consequences of P.E.A.C.E. is that some Americans will feel called to serve in long-term mission.

*P.E.A.C.E. is not a wealth- or resource-redistribution plan.*

Significant thought and energy has been given to “the appropriate use of resources” in all aspects of P.E.A.C.E., including “assisting the poor.” Teams are challenged to focus on “sustainable” and “reproducible” solutions. One of the reasons P.E.A.C.E. discourages local churches from focusing on a single people group is that such a focus may tempt them to

default to “throwing resources” at the five giants. The belief is that small groups (at the most, two or three working together) will be forced by limited resources to focus on sustainable and reproducible solutions in the cities or villages where on-the-ground ministry is happening.

*P.E.A.C.E. is not a church-only movement that dismisses agency involvement.* Whether it was in response to early criticism, a spontaneous change of heart or merely a misunderstanding from the beginning, at the November briefing Rick Warren

specifically said to an agency-only audience, “We need your expertise and your help.”

**3. Raise honest questions.** Understanding what P.E.A.C.E. is *not* raises as many questions as it does answers. For example, how will churches here in the U.S. identify or connect with “near-neighbor” churches around the world? How effective will

these teams be in providing cross-cultural church planting training for the “near-neighbor” believers? Saddleback is trying to address these issues through their online training system, but by their own admission much is still unclear.

Will prospective long-term workers emerging from short-term teams be encouraged to connect with agencies? Will they be responsive to agency training and timetables for going if they have already “helped plant a church” among

the unreached?

How effective will the training be in discouraging reflex responses from Americans who tend to default toward the redistribution of wealth or other resources as a primary way to solve global problems? In a fully decentralized model with a bias for “growth” over “control,” how will groups/

churches that move in this direction be encouraged to reconsider?

How will P.E.A.C.E. leaders respond to agency input over time, especially if it is contradictory to some of their values or training content? How will P.E.A.C.E. teams perceive and relate to long-term workers who are involved with “near neighbor” churches?

These are legitimate questions, most of which cannot be completely answered until the mobilization process is fully underway. Building on a platform of common objectives with a learning mindset, agencies need to keep asking honest but hard questions.

**4. Seek opportunities for partnership.** The mission leaders and organizations who positively contribute to P.E.A.C.E. will do so by engaging more than attacking. Honest questions need to be asked and midcourse corrections will no doubt be needed,



but the voices that are listened to will likely be whispered from the shoulder rather than shouted from the sidelines.

While there are opportunities for agencies to contribute conceptually to P.E.A.C.E. through dialogue with Saddleback leadership, most mission organizations will find themselves dealing with grassroots initiatives springing from local churches that connect with this latest expression of the Purpose-Driven movement. (Warren suggests that one out of 10 churches in the U.S. have done “40 Days of Purpose.”)

Local churches will face their own set of challenges in seeking to implement P.E.A.C.E.; not all of which can be readily addressed by the online “wikiPEACE” system. Pastors will face financial challenges as their congregations seek to get involved in P.E.A.C.E. through the proliferation of short-term teams. Based on the model presented in November, if five small groups from a church of 300 were to fully embrace P.E.A.C.E., it would translate into 15 short-term trips (three per small group) in 18–24 months. If each team had only six people and

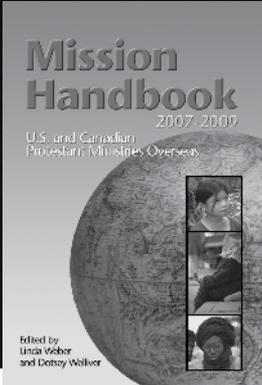
the average cost per person was \$2,500, the total invested by that local church would be \$225,000. Even pastors who pursued ministry because they flunked 9th-grade algebra can do this kind of “local church math” in their heads. Few smaller churches have a full-time mission pastor, which means the senior pastor will likely be called upon to solve problems and give counsel to these teams. The combined financial and oversight challenges could become overwhelming.

Some next-generation churches may turn P.E.A.C.E. into p.e.A.C.E. or even A.C.E. While few “millennials” would say they are against planting churches (the P in P.E.A.C.E.) or equipping leaders (the E.), they often gravitate toward a “Bono-esque” theology responding to a call to action that is focused on social inequities or human need. These churches may buy into P.E.A.C.E. *a la carte*, going heavy on some combination of assisting the poor (A.), caring for the sick (C.) and educating the next generation (E.), without giving the preferred emphasis to planting churches (P.) or equipping leaders (E.).

Some churches will probably try to capitalize on Rick Warren’s popularity by overlaying P.E.A.C.E. on existing pet mission initiatives that are not focused on the unengaged, unevangelized peoples that are at the core of this strategy. P.E.A.C.E. trips from these churches might pop up in Guatemala or Kenya, working with existing churches who are not reaching out to the unreached.

All of these scenarios represent opportunities for agencies to come alongside local churches to assist them in pursuing a careful and strategic mission agenda. But those partnerships will not emerge spontaneously.

Will your agency be ready to come alongside churches that develop some form of grassroots P.E.A.C.E. initiative? 🌐



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Published by the Evangelism and Missions Information Service at the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL