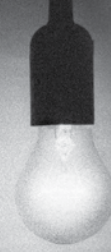


# STEWARDING A LEGACY



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In October 1976, I first heard Ralph D. Winter speak at a student conference. It was one month before the USCWM was legally founded. I had never heard of Winter before that day, but what he shared that evening changed my life focus. I had

a strong missions vision instilled by my home church, but what I heard that night from Winter blew away my understanding of the world and introduced me to the idea of Unreached Peoples.

When my wife and I joined staff at the USCWM in 1982, we thought we'd be here a few years. We figured we'd help out during those founding days and then we would have a better idea where we could serve overseas. But we never made it! Over the years, we felt led to stay—serving, at times in difficulty, witnessing amazing breakthroughs and watching people be mobilized and thrust out.

As Director of the USCWM from 1990-2010, I didn't always agree with Dr. Winter in terms of how to run things. But there were very few areas of missiology with which I differed. Sure, he overstated to make a point, at times ignoring valid points on the other side of the discussion. But it was rare that his insights in missiology—and a range of other issues—didn't make you think harder about the

point, which was the point.

So, for 27 years up until his death in 2009, I was stimulated by the way he “simply flipped that idea on its head” as *Christianity Today* Senior writer Tim Stafford put it in a cover article about Winter.<sup>1</sup> I found his approach was a great way to address a range of issues confronting us.

Winter seemed forgetful or focused elsewhere, but he was diligent to keep almost everything that came across his desk. As a result, when he died, there were some 900 boxes or file cabinets of materials. Many of them were archival materials of the USCWM or the WCIU—which Ralph and Roberta Winter also founded. Over the past few years, we have culled that material down, and are officially announcing the establishment of the **Ralph D. Winter Research Center**. This is a joint ministry of the USCWM and WCIU. It will house Winter's books and archives, material from Donald McGavran archives and his library as well as several other collections.

But it will not be mainly or only focused on the past. The foundation of the Research Center is based on the insights and innovation of people like Winter and McGavran, but the goal is to build on that, in order to discover and address today's global issues. It will be biblically grounded, strategically focused, and globally engaged. It will seek to: 1) learn and disseminate lessons from the past, 2) connect with current efforts, and, 3) project into the future, all with the goal of advancing strategic collaboration and effective networking of mission leaders,


thinkers, scholars and activists.

This will be accomplished through both the physical space on our campus, but also through online availability of papers, letters, and presentations—written, audio, and video. Add to that the element of face-to-face collaboration at the facilities of the USCWM and WCIU—and elsewhere globally.

In fact, this week, we are hosting a small event focused on the Stewarding the Legacy of Donald McGavran. In this case, we are bringing together ten scholars who knew or did doctoral work on McGavran to discuss his legacy and how it should be stewarded well. Other upcoming events include topics like Vulnerable Missions and Genetics and Faith among others.

To pull this off, we will need a lot of help. We have one full-time staff member working on the archives, and another working on cataloging, but we would love to greatly speed that up!

We also need some funds to increase staffing, provide seminar scholarships to key mission leaders globally, redo space for the archives, research and forums focused on the key global issues of the future.

We should have a basic web site soon, so keep your eyes open for major changes and updates at: [www.ralpdwinter.org](http://www.ralpdwinter.org) including more detailed information about the Ralph D. Winter Research Center. 

<sup>1</sup> Stafford, Tim 1984 “Ralph Winter: Looking for the Hidden Peoples”. *Christianity Today*, 28:12, September 7, 1984, 14-18.