

[ON MISSION]

The North American Mission Board and IMB have partnered to present this joint publication of *On Mission* with content from both mission entities. We hope you will enjoy reading about mission efforts across North America and around the world, and how your prayers, participation and support help make these efforts successful.



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[ON MISSION]

President
Kevin Ezell

Art Director
Shawn Elledge

Managing Editor
Joe Conway

Editor in Chief
Aaron Coe

Design
Steve Beaver

Associate Editor
Adam Miller

Marketing Director
Joshua Harrelson

Photography
John Swain, Susan Whitley

Contributing Editors
K. Faith Morgan, Tobin Perry, Meredith Yackel

Contributors
Joann Bradberry, Matt Carson, Marie Curtis, Emil Handke, Anne Harman, D.A. Horton, John Jarvis, Eric King, Tony Kitchens, Stephanie Lane, Paul W. Lee, R. Albert Mohler Jr., Nolan Way, J. Ryan West

On Mission highlights missionaries, chaplains, church planters and churches working to reach North America for Christ. On Mission is a publication of the North American Mission Board, SBC.

NAMB is a Southern Baptist Convention entity supported by the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.® The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® is a registered trademark of Woman's Missionary Union.® Postmaster: Send address changes to: On Mission; P.O. Box 3068; Langhorne, PA 19047-9855.

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Local, global and creative

EDITOR'S NOTE

Our guest editorial is from IMB President David Platt. You will find IMB content throughout this special issue of *On Mission*, including an enhanced City Page feature. It is all part of the continuing collaboration between IMB and NAMB.

By David Platt, IMB President (@plattdavid)

Globalization is a big word that means different things to different people—disappearing borders, global economic competition, new jobs, or, perhaps, lost jobs. When I think of globalization I think of the nations coming to us even as we continue to go to the nations. That's why I am excited about IMB and NAMB partnering more closely to mobilize churches to reach the unreached, wherever they are.

God isn't just bringing unreached people to American cities; He's bringing them to cities all over the world. How can we maximize our resources to follow Him and make disciples in a rapidly globalizing world where 2 billion people have yet to hear the gospel? We need to think more creatively. Our current mission model isn't getting us to all of them.

With budget constraints in recent years, I proposed a streamlined mission strategy to our IMB trustees earlier this year, which they strongly affirmed, focusing on one main priority: *empowering limitless*

missionary teams to make disciples and multiply churches among unreached people for the glory of God. What does that mean for the development of missionary teams? Let's get creative.

Picture a global megacity, for example. Picture two fully-funded IMB missionaries living and working there. But picture also three or four professionals who get paid by their own companies or by businesses to serve in that city. Then imagine three or four students on scholarships funded by universities to study in that city, and maybe several retirees funded by Uncle Sam. Now we have a team of 10 or more mission workers while financially supporting two. If you multiply that by hundreds, you get the picture of "limitless."

With the globalization of today's marketplace, God has given us countless opportunities for more men, women and families to get in on the action. How do you fit into God's creative global plan? How does your church fit in? I'm convinced those are two of the most important questions you will ever answer. **[OM]**



Want to join a creative global mission team? Explore possibilities at imb.org/SendMe.

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Heard

“They need to know there’s a God who will love them and care for them. There is a God who will be there for them in good times and the bad. Suicide is a horrible experience, but it happens ... People need to know that the only place you will find hope is in the Lord. He will be with you.”

Frank Page, addressing the issue of suicide
Source: Baptist Press, Feb. 2, 2015

“Our prayer is this, that we could teach them more by going than we could ever teach them by staying.”

IMB missionary Jim Flora, on choosing to raise his daughters in rural Lesotho
Source: IMB

“It’s not our granny’s generation anymore! Today’s culture doesn’t keep the same job from college through retirement. Families will make an average of 11 moves in their lifetime.”

Shauna Pilgreen, Epic Church San Francisco planting team member, in *Live Sent: 31 Days in the City* e-book, available at sendnetwork.com

Global economy growth

The world’s economy is expected to grow 3.2% in 2015 and 3.7% in 2016. China, the Philippines, Kenya, India and Indonesia are all forecast to grow more than 5% in 2015. China remains the fastest-growing G-20 (major economy) nation, with the Chinese economy growing 7.3% in the fourth quarter of 2014.

Source: Bloomberg.com

16 million U.S. children on food stamps

Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau showed that 22% of U.S. children rely on food stamps. Even more surprisingly, the number has increased since the 2008 recession when it was reported only 9 million children relied on food stamps. The report found that the largest percentage of the children was from single-mother households.

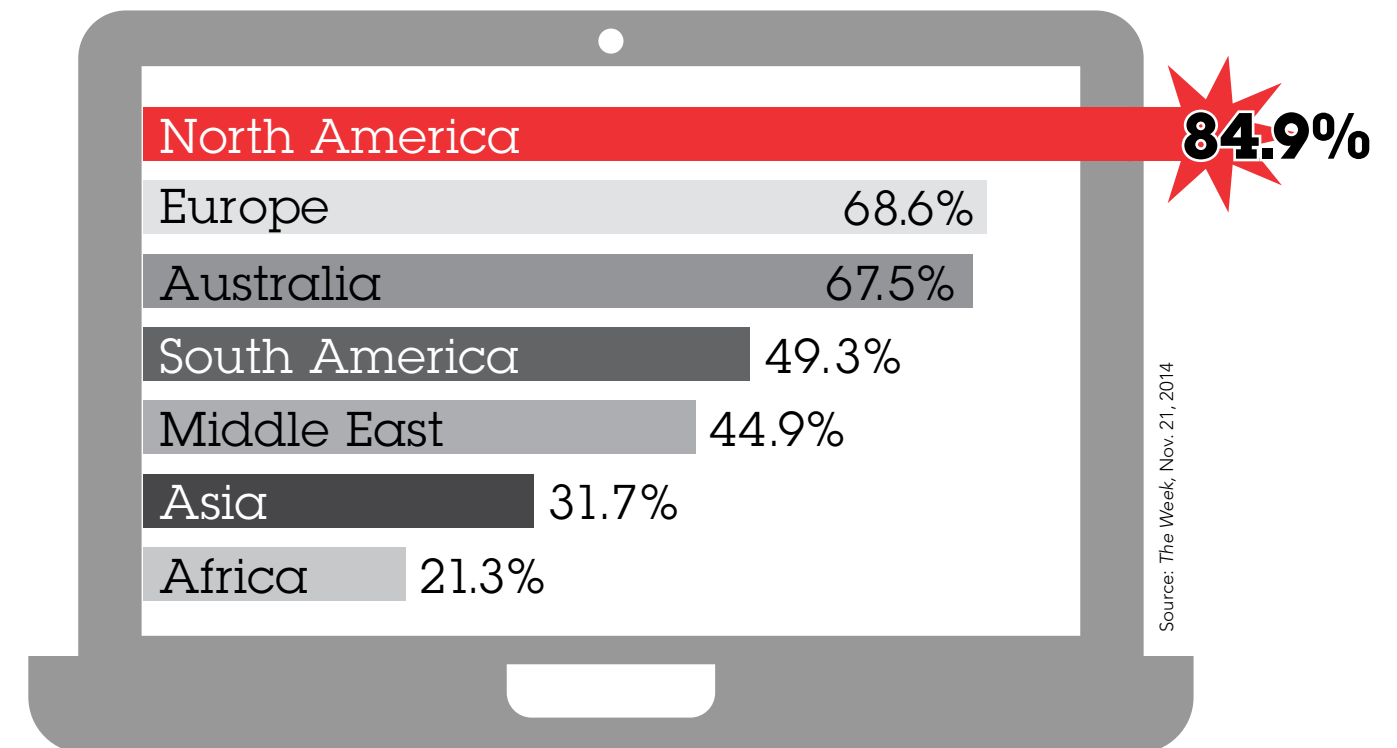
Source: Slate.com, Jan. 28, 2015



Measured

A global connection

Between 2004 and 2014, Internet connectivity rose from only 910 million to 2.9 billion worldwide. Global use percentage:



Syria is not forgotten

IMB strategy leader James Keath* and other Christian workers serving throughout North Africa and the Middle East live amid the day-to-day reality of violence and bloodshed, but they are passionate about communicating another reality that is equally true: God is at work.

“God has not forgotten the Syrians or the Iraqis, whatever the world may think,” says Christian worker Don Alan.* Alan says stories abound of how the violence and conflict have provided conduits to share the gospel.

*Names changed for security reasons

Source: IMB

Predestined wins, maybe

A recent poll by the Public Religion Research Institute found one in four Americans agree with the statement: “God plays a role in determining which team wins a sporting event.”

Source: Vox.com poll reported in *The Week*, Feb. 13, 2015



On mission at work

According to the U.S. State Department, some 6 million Americans live abroad as expatriates. Statistically, it's quite possible that 1 million of those expats are evangelical Christians, and many live in places with little or no access to the gospel. Imagine if these believers could be mobilized to be witnesses for Christ?

Source: MarketplaceAdvance.com

Nepal earthquake relief ongoing

Nepal's massive May 25, 7.8 magnitude earthquake, which claimed more than 7,000 lives, brought immediate response from aid entities around the world, including Baptist Global Response (BGR). A BGR assessment team was mobilized within hours of the initial reports of the scope of the tragedy.

As with major disasters in the U.S. and around the globe, trained Southern Baptist volunteers will be in Nepal long-term. You can aid GBR's ministry through prayers and financial support. To learn more about recovery efforts, and how you and your church can assist, visit gobgr.org/Nepal.

Source: IMB/NAMB

On the origins of our species

The National Study of Religion and Human Origins, funded by The BioLogos Foundation, reports 63% of creationists believe it is important to have "correct beliefs" about human origins. Atheistic evolutionists were close behind at 52%, but only 35% of theistic evolutionists agreed.

Source: Christianity Today, January/February 2015

Unchurched mystery guests rate churches

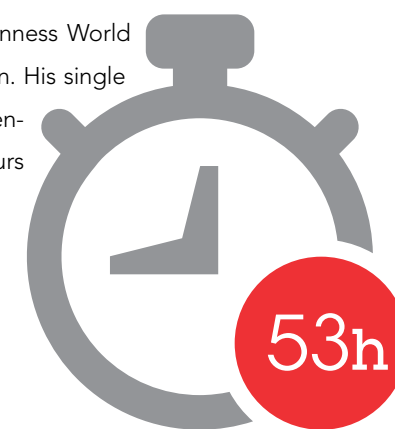
A church marketing project cast over the past six years used unchurched people to rate over 4,000 different church programs and atmospheres with more than 13,000 volunteers in all 50 states. The study showed that although small churches were typically friendlier, large churches (1,000+) had better sermon quality. The majority of churches scored "very poor" however in diversity and outreach.

Source: ChristianityToday.com, June 27, 2014

The most long-winded pastor

A pastor from Florida recently set a Guinness World Record for the Longest Speech Marathon. His single sermon covered the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation over a span of 53 hours and 18 minutes.

Source: FoxNews.com, Nov. 11, 2014



City center love

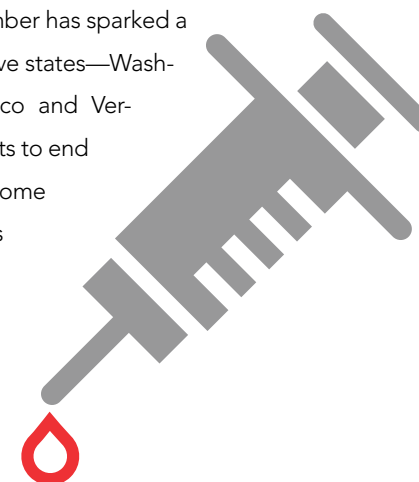
Denver, San Diego, Baltimore and Pittsburgh are leaders in recruiting recent college graduates into the workforce—contributing to a trend of people aged 24-34 with degrees moving into cities. Estimates show a 37% increase of this demographic living within three miles of city centers since 2000. Of the largest U.S. cities, Detroit is the only exception to this trend.

Source: NYTimes.com, October 2014

Death with dignity?

The death of 29-year-old, terminally ill Brittany Maynard by physician-assisted suicide last November has sparked a battle over the issue in many states. In five states—Washington, Oregon, Montana, New Mexico and Vermont—it is legal for terminally ill residents to end their lives. Globally, Switzerland has become a destination for "suicide tourists." As many as 200 people a year travel to the country for the purpose of ending their lives, regardless of their current health condition.

Source: The Week, Nov. 7, 2014



Noted

1 in 4 churches overspend

A LifeWay Research survey of 1,000 pastors, ministers and priests indicated 1 in 4 churches were over budget in 2014. A full 46% reported their spending matched their budgets, but 22% exceeded theirs. Only 29% reported they were below budget.

Source: LifeWay Research, November 2014

Negative savings

Americans under the age of 35 have an apparent aversion to saving for the future. On average Millennials are saving at a rate of negative 2—meaning they are spending more money than they are bringing in.

Source: The Wall Street Journal, Nov. 9, 2014

What is hidden in our hearts?


Of self-identified Bible readers, 48% say they memorized verses in 2013. Children's Bible memorization events were provided by 64% of congregations in 2013.

Source: Christianity Today, October 2014

Online trolling on the rise

Of North American Internet users, 40% claim to have been harassed at some point online, and 73% claim they have witnessed someone else being bullied online. The most common form of harassment is name calling, but 8% said they have received physical threats, and 6% report incidents of sexual harassment.

Source: The Week, Nov. 7, 2014



Globalization and the Christian mission

Looking at Christian missions today, we may be seeing the birth of a new missiological movement. This new era in missions will build upon the accomplishments of the last 200 years, but it must also be adapted to the new realities of our world context.

By R. Albert Mohler Jr.

The most important dimension of any vision for world missions is a passion to glorify God. From beginning to end, the Bible declares that God is glorifying Himself in the salvation of sinners all over the world and that He desires to be worshipped among all the peoples of the earth. The

impulse of the missionary conviction is drawn from the assurance that God saves sinners and that He is glorifying Himself by creating a new people through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we have the glad opportunity to glorify God by declaring the gospel to all the peoples of the earth.

Christianity is a global faith, and our world is increasingly a global community. Throughout most of his-



tory, though, humanity primarily lived in cultural and social isolation. Even in the United States, it took the experience of World War I to introduce a significant number of Americans to foreign experiences and to foreign cultures. Even within the “melting pot” of America, ethnic and language groups tended to inhabit their own unique neighborhoods and spheres. In fact, historians have pointed out that an American boy born up until the time of World War I was unlikely to travel more than 50 miles from the place of his birth in his entire life.

The Western encounter with non-Western cultures did not happen in any wide-scale manner until the 19th century—the great century of empire and expansion. Whereas explorers and intrepid sailors had brought back tales of “the other,” it took the age of empire to bring a wide experience of a global reality to the Western consciousness. In similar patterns of isolation, major Asian cultures, especially Japan and China, were openly resistant to engagement with other cultures.

World War I marked a cultural tectonic shift. After the events of the Great War, the 20th century emerged as the century of globalization. World War I mobilized millions of American men who would enter fighting units together, introducing those of Irish, Italian and German backgrounds (and even language) to Americans of other ethnicities. World War I also became the first American experience that introduced millions of our citizens to travel

across an ocean and to a direct encounter with other societies and peoples.

“Globalization means that we now understand ourselves to live in an economy, and community, that is globally connected and irreversibly so.”

The most dominant forces of globalization were actually economic and technological. Advanced communication and transportation allowed the bridging of cultures, and, by the end of the 20th century, globalization meant that a child in the U.S. could be in real-time, instant communication with a child behind the Great Wall of China. This type of technology and ability to communicate around the globe was unfathomable just a century ago.

Global communication as icon

Indeed, the image of two people communicating in real-time from opposite ends of the globe is nothing less than a symbol of the phenomenon of globalization. As the writer Henry Adams noted at the beginning of the 20th century, a boy born in the

year 1890 would have more in common with Moses than he would with a boy born in just the first years of the 20th century. In terms of globalization, he was assuredly correct. The commonality would certainly be even lesser for a boy born in the 21st century.

Globalization means that we now understand ourselves to live in an economy, and community, that is globally connected and irreversibly so. We are able to get on an airplane in virtually any American city and be at any spot on the globe within 24 hours. Globalization means that headlines from around the world can arrive to us as quickly, and with as much attention and immediacy, as headlines from across the street. There is a growing awareness of the fact that we are now part of a global civilization that includes, and now seems to reach, virtually every inhabitant of the planet.

It is now more likely that residents of Sub-Saharan Africa will have access to a cell phone than to a flushing toilet. Unprecedented transportation and economic energies that have opened previously sealed borders and information aids that seem to permeate every single society—all these help to create the phenomenon of globalization as we now know it.

Cities as population centers

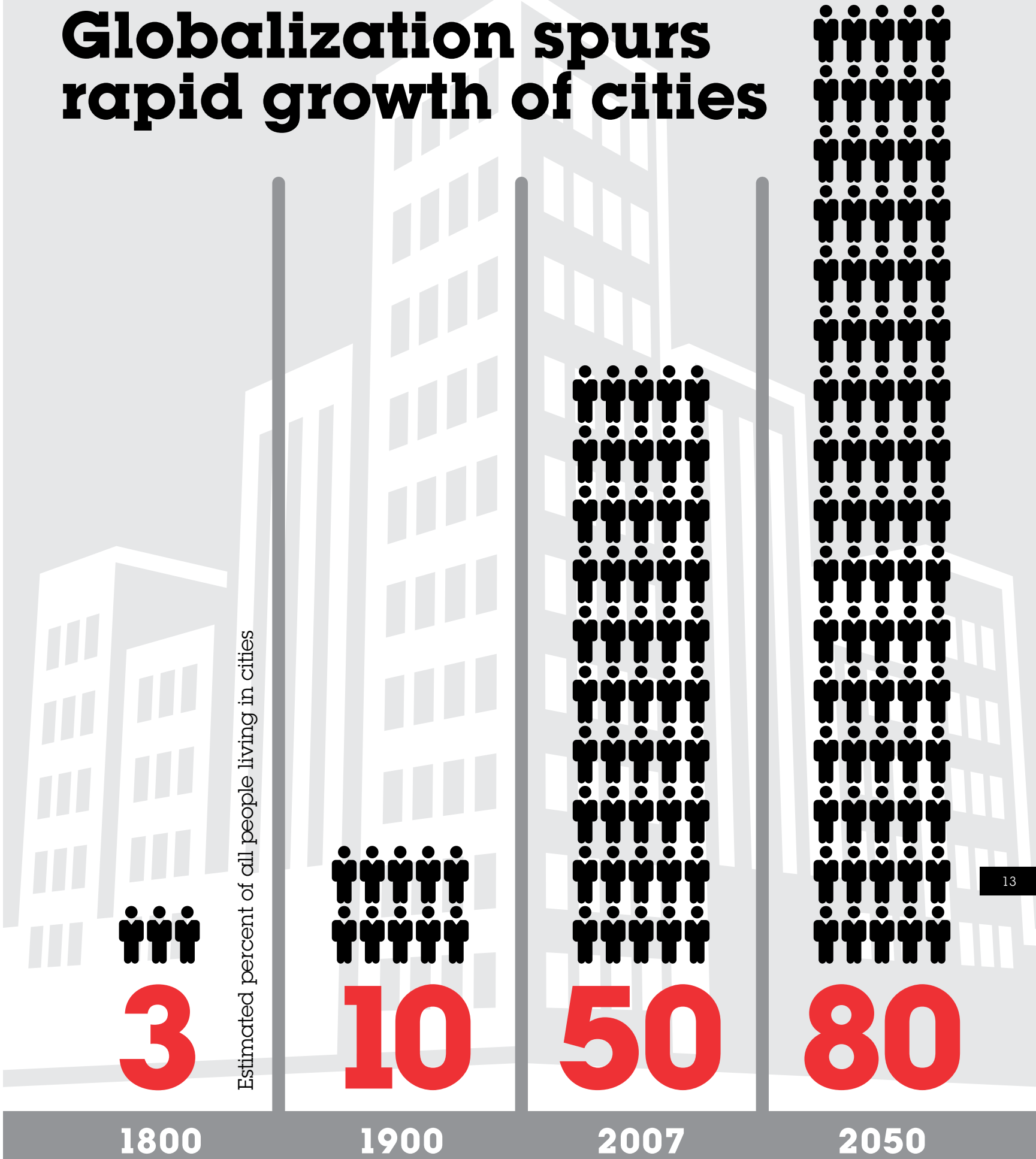
Additionally, along with globalization has come the rapid growth of cities and the rise of urbanization.

In the year 1800, it is estimated only 3 percent of people lived in cities. The city was a rare experience. In 1800, cities existed for political, economic and cultural reasons, but they did not primarily exist to be a place of residence. By 1900, that 3 percent increased to 10 percent. Between 1900 and 2007, though, that 10 percent increased to 50 percent. By 2050, it is estimated that 75-80 percent of all humans will live in cities. Cities are where the people are and where they will be in the future.

One of the first things you realize about a city is that the city is where you meet people from many dissimilar backgrounds. If you go to New York City, Boston or Chicago, you meet people who aren't like you. Megacities create all kinds of tensions within them: global versus local, community versus isolation, diversity versus homogeneity, cosmopolitan versus tribal and rich versus poor—and that's just the tip of the iceberg. Consider the economic tensions at play in some of these megacities. More than 1.6 billion humans live in shantytowns or slums now. As the economy of the countryside collapses around them, people rush to the shantytowns and slums of these megacities. It is hard to imagine how any individual can solve these economic issues of distribution, but it's into all these issues that Christians must go, because that's where the people are.

It is estimated today that the United States is the most racially, ethnically and linguistically compli-

Globalization spurs rapid growth of cities



Globalization brings shifting demographics

The foreign-born segment of the U.S. population reached its lowest point in the decade of the 1970s when the percentage fell to 4.7 percent. The decade with the highest percentage of foreign-born population was the 1890s. From the 1860s to the 1930s, foreign-born population remained in double digits, ranging from 13.2 percent in the 1860s to 11.6 percent in the 1930s.

After the low point in the 1970s, the percentage of U.S. foreign-born residents has steadily increased:

1980 – 6.2%; 1990 – 7.9%; 2000 – 11.1%; 2010 – 12.9%

The latest estimates put the current percentage of U.S. foreign-born population at over 13 percent. That translates to 40 million people. By comparison, California, the most populous state, has 38.8 million residents.

Immigration trends support the numbers. For instance, the African-born population in the U.S. has increased over the last four decades—from roughly 80,000 in 1970 to about 1.6 million in 2012. The African-born population in the U.S. has nearly doubled every decade since 1970.

In addition to the increase of foreign-born residents in the U.S., another effect of globalization is the growth of urbanization, resulting in an increase of megacities—urban areas with over 10 million inhabitants.

- There are roughly 35 megacities. (The actual count varies as populations continually shift.)
- China and India have the most megacities and are also the two most populous nations.
- New York City became the world’s first megacity in the 1950s.
- The 10 largest megacities include Tokyo, Delhi, Shanghai, Mexico City, Mumbai, São Paulo, Osaka, Beijing, New York City and Cairo.

Sources: Brookings Institution, IMB Global Research, *The Guardian*, United Nations, U.S. Census Bureau

cated country on earth. In fact, some sociologists are now indicating that America may soon be a majority-minority nation—a fact that is already a reality in some states. This means the world is coming to us. And this reality provides a massive and unprecedented gospel opportunity. If our churches are truly going to represent the kingdom and be gospel churches, then our churches are going to start to look more and more like our nation’s changing demographic map.

Global: God’s idea

Christians should understand that globalization—care and concern for the global community—has been central to the biblical vision for God’s people from the very beginning. The mandate given to us by our Creator in Genesis 1:28 is a mandate to multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Even more urgently, the Great Commission tells us that we are to go into all the world and make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). Thus, in both the Old Testament and the New, God commissioned His people to have a global perspective long before technology and communications made globalization a matter of secular awareness.

The Church, when it is faithful, always thinks in global terms. The world now thinks of globalization as a great economic, technological and political fact. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as those commissioned with taking the gospel to all

PHOTO BY EMIL HANDKE



Al Mohler has devoted a large part of his research to discovering effective ways for Christians to embrace lives on mission, recognizing the changing nature of the world around them.

the nations, understands global missions as a command and as a mandate from the Lord. While the world may debate globalization in terms of its economic and sociological effects, the Church must see globalization as an unprecedented opportunity—an opportunity to see the gospel of Jesus Christ reach every corner of the earth. Globalization may be a surprise to sociologists, politicians and the titans of business, but it comes as great

promise to followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The current generation of Christians has unprecedented opportunities to proclaim the name of Jesus in all of the world and see tribes, tongues and nations bow the knee to Jesus, the King. **[OM]**

R. Albert Mohler Jr. serves as president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.



Discover how you and your church can connect with the globalization happening in your city at namb.net/Mobilize-Me. Explore how you can engage people groups around the globe at imb.org.

City forecast

Urbanization, community and the Church in a disconnected age

City planner Aaron Fortner and missiologist Aaron Coe explore what the future of church planting promises in an increasingly urban world. Fortner shines light on how churches involved in the Send North America strategy can intentionally engage the existing and emerging urban areas of North America. The conversation is part of a video series on the Church's role in urban contexts.

AARON COE: The Send North America strategy is the way Southern Baptists are engaging North America with the gospel, and much of our work is focused on 32 of the most populous cities in North America.

I recently read a couple of books written in the late 1950s by a thinker and city planner named Jane Jacobs. She wrote *The Death*

and Life of Great American Cities and Downtown is for People. She argued that what was happening in cities at the time was a decentralization of people.

People moved out and away from each other because they believed density was bad. But now people are starting to believe we were meant for connectivity and community. And so, as it relates to the Church, what are some tangible ways you've seen for the Church, church planters, pastors and other church leaders to become catalysts for engaging people, and reversing some disconnection?

AARON FORTNER: I've spent a lot of my career thinking about how the planning of a community or city affects the humans in those cities. The urban story is really just another way of saying the human story, and the physical structure of cities affects that

PHOTO BY JOHN SWAIN



story for better or worse—and, really, cities affect everyone, no matter where they live.

If you think about it a church is one of the only organizations that can care about gathering people and connecting people to people without also trying to get something out of them.

The opposite of this is the shopping mall. Malls became popular not for buying stuff but as a gathering place. Only the mall doesn't want you to just hang out at the mall. The mall needs you to buy something, and then go ahead and move on.

So especially in the suburbs where urbanization is most swiftly on the rise, we've never really had a place that is for people. I believe the Church can

provide the environments for people to connect simply for the purpose of connecting.

Imagine a church that saw their space or their property, and what they could do with it, as an opportunity to help people connect together above the priority of, "We need to make money on that," or, "It's got to be a new business venture." In some of these cities, whether it's an old city or an emerging city in a suburb, a church may have the resources and the property to create the places where people want to [gather].

They may be in the exact right location. Maybe the church that's been thinking about leaving actually needs to stay right where they are to be effective. Maybe they're in the right spot to help create the



new center of town. Also, I would say that every church has a unique position to be on mission to help meet people's needs. We should think of our churches as hubs for identifying a community's needs and then helping meet some of those needs.

AC: You mentioned emerging cities. Is there a place for the Church at the table as cities are writing their city's plans for the future?

AF: Cities are always looking for who is going to write the next chapter of their history, and you're absolutely right. Every community has a plan. And a church can get involved by finding the local government or local municipality and asking the question "Hey, I would love to know what the plans are for this area."

There are a couple of things that can happen with that. One is that you find the plan, you digest the plan and you start to see things in a different way. This may give you a chance to participate as an area is developed and determine how your church will decide on a location that somehow helps bring this plan to life.

But you also may find that there are some things that the plan did not address, because, oftentimes, the city or county would never even think to have a vision to solve certain long-standing problems. They just think, "That's never going to get solved." And so their plans are really about things that can be done. But there may be some needs in the community that they've never even dared to plan for, because they never thought it could ever get fixed.

And your church could help define and address those problems.

AC: I would imagine that a church planter or a pastor getting involved with the city plans may help the church avoid some landmines.

AF: Absolutely. When you arrive in a community, and you're immediately doing something that's against what that community's vision is, then you could quickly be labeled an outsider. It's very hard to become a part of the community when you start off that way. Maybe you can get over that at some point, but if you're a church you would not want to start off that way.

You want to start off by asking questions about how you can serve the existing vision of the community. As a first step for any church coming into a community, you need to spend a tremendous amount of time getting to know and becoming part of the community.

AC: Can you talk about how the Church can address the effects of sin in a community in a way that serves that community's vision and goals? One of the things in city design, and city planning, is a hope for utopia. There's a hope for, "Hey, if we just design the perfect city everything's gonna be great here." But we know as believers that this is not reality. So what would you say about the Church's role in that conversation?

AF: It's something I wrestle with as a believer, who's also a city planner. I know we will never have perfection here. But one of the best things a church can do in a city is to just be at the nexus of where people can meet people and where you can connect with other people. Whether it's depravity or just the brokenness and degeneration of communities in the suburbs, when the church is so disconnected from people geographically, you have a harder time leading and addressing the real needs and concerns of the community. So mission and location are often two sides of the same coin. And when a church in a

“As a first step for any church coming into a community, you need to spend a tremendous amount of time getting to know and becoming part of the community.”

city has become a center of gravity in the community, when brokenness happens, and it surely will, if the church can be accessible, that's the best thing I think a church can do. **[OM]**


Aaron Fortner is a city planner and a principal and founder of the Atlanta-based Canvas Planning Group. He holds a Master's degree in city planning with a focus on urban design from Georgia Tech. Aaron Coe, a church planter and a missiologist living in Atlanta, serves as editor in chief for On Mission and president of Future City Now.



View a video of the full interview at namb.net/Fortner. The segment is part of a three-part series on churches and urban engagement.



Explore more about church planting and how you and your church can connect at namb.net/Mobilize-Me.



Dahl, a Nepalese patriarch, made a life-changing move with three generations of his family to leave their homeland, abandon their idols and embrace new life in Christ.

Beyond bloodlines and borders

Nepalese refugees embrace Christ through Nashville church

Dahl did not know what to expect. He knew he was in trouble but wasn't sure how it would all play out. How much was this incident going to cost him? Would he or his son be going to jail? Would they lose their new friends? He wasn't sure what would happen, but what unfolded was far from his expectations.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN WHITLEY

By Meredith Yackel

Dahl is the patriarch of a close-knit Nepalese family. He and his wife, Chhali, live in neighboring apartments with five of their children, their children’s spouses and nine of their 20 grandchildren. It is important to their culture in Nepal for family to stay together.

Dahl is a hard worker. He forged a career as a farmer, harvesting vegetables, and any crops that brought a profit, since he was 17. The work is challenging, but he loves it. Farming is imbedded in his identity.

Over 150 years ago Dahl’s ancestors were invited to farm an uninhibited area in the nearby nation of Bhutan. Many Nepalese, including Dahl’s family, kept their language and culture all along—never

“Once I was saved I immediately went out to reach the unreached,” says Medhin. “I wasn’t well trained but I had this passion to be on mission.”

assimilating into Bhutan. But about 24 years ago, a new king decided it was time for them to go back to Nepal. Once a landowner in Bhutan, he prided



Dahl’s wife, Chhali (far left), worships in their home with their children, grandchildren and neighbors. Bible study and fellowship are at the heart of their gatherings.

himself on his beautiful trees and gardens. Dahl no longer harvests his own land, but even after 50 years in the trade, he is still passionate about farming.

New city, new friends

When the family relocated they were welcomed into their new community by a group of friendly strangers. Dahl and his family inhabit a warm, inviting household and love hosting people in their home. The first person they met was a lady named Eden Medhin, who helped them settle in and

showed them around their new city. The next day she brought some friends with her—one of whom was missionary James Harvey.

The family was excited to have friendly faces in their new home and asked for them to share their story. Harvey, Medhin and the group who came along with them were not used to being asked about their story. They were typically the ones asking others to share their story. They saw this as an open opportunity though. Harvey later said, “Whenever we are asked to tell our story we always include ours within

the story of Jesus.”

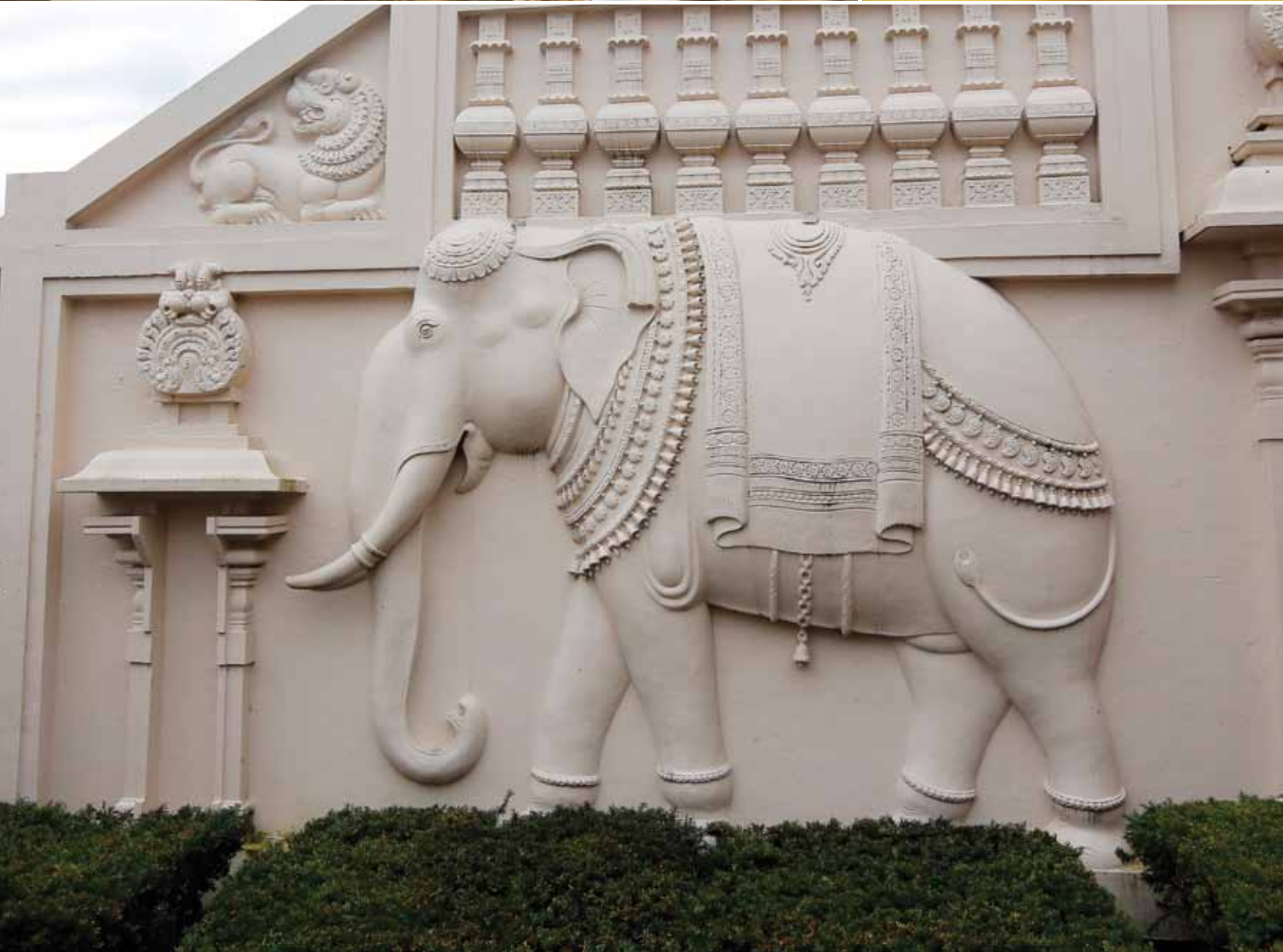
Medhin went on to share the gospel—something she is always excited to share.

“Once I was saved I immediately went out to reach the unreached,” says Medhin. “I wasn’t well trained but I had this passion to be on mission. God saved me, and that still burns in my heart. God continues to use me because of His mercy and love.”

Her passion has continued to burn so much that she



TOP PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO



Like other Hindus in Nepal, their home was plastered with other gods — there to protect them, bring them success, guide them to deeper spiritual knowledge and give them everything else they felt they needed. Now they were being told to cast out their multiple gods for one God.

says she doesn't stay in one place too long. Once people come to faith in Christ, Medhin has someone lined up to disciple them, and then she goes on to the next house. She cannot even count how many people she has been able to lead to Christ but keeps most of their pictures so she can pray for them whenever she sees their faces.

Dahl and his family were quick to accept this Jesus they were told about—that was the easy part. These new friends had been so sincere and loving, Dahl knew whatever god they worshiped must be a loving god as well. There was one issue though—they would not be baptized.

They were a devout Hindu family and had been for countless generations in Nepal. They could easily accept Jesus as just another god. But to be baptized they knew they must accept Jesus as the one and only true God. This was something they were not ready to do.

Like other Hindus in Nepal, their home was plastered with other gods. These gods were there to protect them, bring them success, guide them to deeper spiritual knowledge and give them everything else they felt they needed. Now they were being told to cast out their multiple gods and idols for one God.

It was time for Medhin to leave and continue sharing, but Harvey remained for the next few weeks continuing to share the gospel and asking them to repent and be baptized. Again, they continued to accept Jesus as a god but deny Him as the only God.

Everyday missionaries

Harvey prayed about what he should do and felt the Lord tell him they should continue discipling them because this was a "house of peace" (Luke 10:5-6).

However, he also felt someone else needed to continue this discipleship process. Dahl and his family were still open to learning and continued to show signs of being a house of peace. Harvey prayed, asking for a family to rise up, and, shortly after, Jan and Debbie Esterline felt called to leave the comfort they had known for years inside the church and take their faith to a new level by discipling this family outside the church.

The Esterlines are ordinary people. They are quick to point out that everything they do is through the strength and mercy of the Lord. They had their own jobs but knew they were called to be everyday missionaries and adopted Dahl and his family as their own—to disciple them, love them and just live life with them. They shopped together, watched the grandchildren over the weekends and

helped out when they faced medical emergencies or sicknesses.

The Esterlines also continued to meet with them on a weekly basis and share with them stories from the Bible. It was simple. They would read a story and

“We all need each other so desperately, and so often the body goes off and does things as individuals,” says Jan. “God wants us to be in community.”

then ask a few questions to discuss what it meant. Dahl and his family continued to learn more about Jesus and what it meant to follow Him. However, they had still not cast out all of their idols. The Esterlines were patient though. They continued to see tremendous change in the hearts of the family toward Christ.

Their relationship took a quick turn for the worse, however—or so Dahl thought.

Totaled

Jan Esterline had promised to teach one of Dahl’s sons to drive. In the country driving had not been

a necessity, but now he had to drive to get to work in the city. During the lesson Dahl’s son totaled the Esterline’s car in the parking lot where they were practicing.

Dahl was terrified. This move, although necessary, had already been hard enough on the family. What would this accident mean for them? Would the police get involved? How might it affect their lives? What followed surprised them all.

The surprise came through a single act of love and compassion like none other they had experienced. The Esterlines continued to show up at their home, give them hugs and tell them they loved them—charging them nothing in damages—and no police. After it all, the Esterlines continued to be a part of their lives.

Dahl was blown away and so was the rest of his family. After eight months of discipleship they made the decision to cast out all of their idols and put their faith in the one and only true God.

Living water

Dahl insisted on being baptized in living (running) water. Being a farmer for so many years, this symbolism was important to him. The Esterlines, Medhin, Harvey and several others shared the excitement of the day. Even more exciting though, Dahl’s wife, children and all the grandchildren old enough



to understand and accept the gospel were baptized as well. Three generations receiving the grace, love and acceptance that come only through being a part of the body of Christ—a family that extends far past bloodlines or borders—even in Nepal.

The Esterlines are convinced Dahl and his family have been an even greater blessing to them.

“We all need each other so desperately, and so often the body goes off and does things as individuals,” says Jan. “God wants us to be in community.”

Debbie Esterline laughs because for years she would pray to become pregnant, and others would even tell her she would one day be a “mother of many.” She never had biological children, but God has blessed her with more than she could imagine. She watches over and lives life with all nine of Dahl’s grandchildren and truly has become a mother of many.

This group of Christ followers is a part of The City Church Movement, started by pastor David Kaufmann in 2011. James Harvey serves as the training pastor of the church. Eden Medhin, an Ethiopian caseworker for a local non-profit, still spends her nights and weekends sharing the gospel with the families she assists during her day job. The Esterlines have now been discipling Dahl and his family for two years. They are looking to take on a new family soon. Dahl will take over the role of discipleship to his family and other Nepalese in the community. Dahl and The City Church Movement are preparing to baptize six others from their Nepalese community in the same creek where he was baptized a year ago.

This is what it looks like for everyday missionaries to live out God’s mission in their community.

Dahl and his family moved to a new world. Their country was Nepal. Their new city—the city where

Dahl recently visited Nashville's John Seigenthaler Pedestrian Bridge with some of his grandchildren (from left) Beku, Arjun, Dahl, Babita and Awn.



they met Harvey and Medhin and the Esterlines—is Nashville. Welcome to North America. [OM]

Meredith Yackel is a contributing editor for On Mission.



Is your corner of the world a new home for refugees? Explore how you can make them feel at home at namb.net/LoveLoud. Discover how you and your church can be involved in church planting at namb.net/Mobilize-Me. Read more about Dahl and his family's ordeal as refugees and their journey to Nashville at namb.net/Dahl.



Part of Dahl's story can be traced back to the discovery work done by Lewis McMullen of the Tennessee Baptist Convention and others in partnership with PeopleGroups.Info. Learn more about how you can engage unreached people groups in North America and around the world at this site, a partnership of the International and North American mission boards: peoplegroups.info.

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An aerial photograph of the New York City skyline at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The Empire State Building is prominent on the left, with its spire illuminated. Other skyscrapers are visible, including the Freedom Tower in the distance. The Hudson River and New Jersey are visible in the background. The text 'NYC' is overlaid in large, white, bold letters at the top. On the right side, there is a vertical strip showing a map of New York City with labels for 'New York', 'Central Park', 'Liberty Island', 'Manhattan', 'Queens', 'Bronx', and 'Richmond'.

DUBAI

A high-angle, long-exposure photograph of the Dubai skyline at night. The Burj Khalifa is the most prominent feature on the left, its spire reaching into the dark blue sky. To its right, several other skyscrapers are visible, some with distinctive architectural features like a large circular opening. In the foreground, a multi-lane highway curves through the city, with light trails from cars creating a sense of motion. The city lights are a mix of warm yellows and oranges from streetlights and cooler blues and greens from building interiors and signage. The overall atmosphere is one of a bustling, modern metropolis.

New York City

New York City

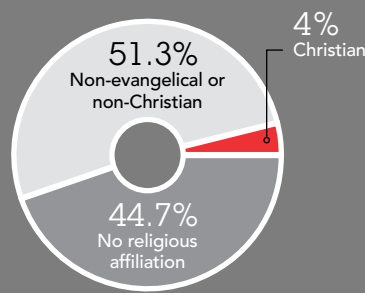
Over the span of 2009-2013, a full 37% of New York's population was foreign born.

8.4
million
people

New York City boasts a population of **8.4 million people** on a mere 301 square miles of land area, which is nearly 30,000 persons per square mile.

1:83,296

Currently there are **270 Southern Baptist churches** in the city, which provide only 1 church for every **83,296 residents**.



Of the 8.4 million people who live in New York City, **96% are without Christ**. 51.3% of the population is affiliated with either non-evangelical or non-Christian bodies, and 44.7% claim no religious affiliation at all.

New York City—the colossus that makes non-stop tidal waves in the ocean of culture. This city is a primary source of global influence in fashion, finance and entertainment. Sometimes heralded as the litmus test of survival—the metropolitan area boasts a population of 22.5 million. Although this density may appear overwhelming at first, the “small town feel” often surprises people in this metropolis of small neighborhoods strung together to form a massive city.

Within this density is extreme diversity. Urban missiologist Dr. Ray Bakke once asserted, “The nations aren’t coming to the U.S. They are here.” Perhaps there is no greater evidence of the nations migrating to the States than New York City, boasting a foreign-born population of 37 percent. Many Southern Baptist churches have discovered the opportunity to evangelize and disciple the same unreached people groups in New York City that they pursue on international mission fields.

Points of light:

Southern Baptists are contributing to the city’s changing population at a rapidly growing rate. Over the past decade alone, there has been exponential growth among believers within the city. Some estimates show a 40 percent increase in evangelical presence. Much of this growth occurs from new churches throughout the city’s five boroughs. NAMB has helped begin many churches such as:

- The Bridge Church (Brooklyn)
- Evangelical Bengali Church (Queens)
- The Journey Church of Staten Island (Staten Island)
- Christ Crucified Fellowship (Manhattan)
- A Better City Movement (Bronx)

Yet the city begs for more attention. Steve Canter, the NAMB Send City Missionary, says, “We need more workers. We don’t have a harvest problem; we have a labor problem.”

Points of prayer:

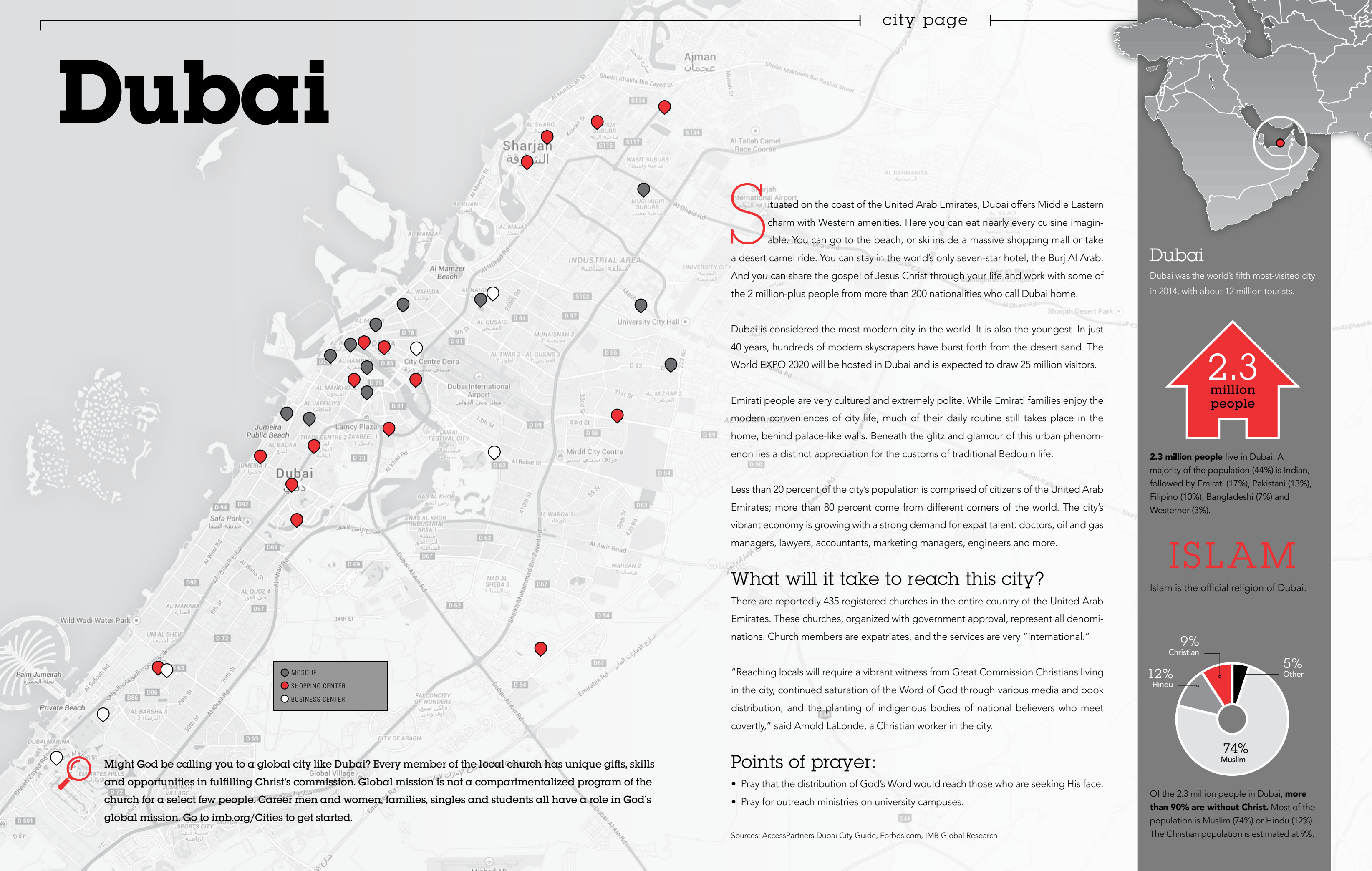
- That Southern Baptists will continue to root themselves in the city, thus influencing the world from this epicenter of global culture.
- That the Lord will strengthen newly established churches, causing them to give birth to other new churches.

Sources: NAMB Research, 2010 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregation & Membership Study. Compiled by D.A. Horton and J. Ryan West.

Learn more about New York City and serving there at namb.net/NewYorkCity.

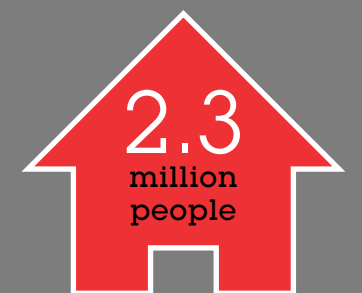
To explore more about New York through video, visit namb.net/NewYorkCity/Videos.

Dubai



Dubai

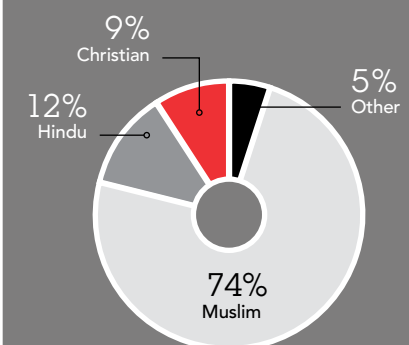
Dubai was the world's fifth most-visited city in 2014, with about 12 million tourists.



2.3 million people live in Dubai. A majority of the population (44%) is Indian, followed by Emirati (17%), Pakistani (13%), Filipino (10%), Bangladeshi (7%) and Westerner (3%).

ISLAM

Islam is the official religion of Dubai.



Of the 2.3 million people in Dubai, **more than 90% are without Christ**. Most of the population is Muslim (74%) or Hindu (12%). The Christian population is estimated at 9%.

Situated on the coast of the United Arab Emirates, Dubai offers Middle Eastern charm with Western amenities. Here you can eat nearly every cuisine imaginable. You can go to the beach, or ski inside a massive shopping mall or take a desert camel ride. You can stay in the world's only seven-star hotel, the Burj Al Arab. And you can share the gospel of Jesus Christ through your life and work with some of the 2 million-plus people from more than 200 nationalities who call Dubai home.

Dubai is considered the most modern city in the world. It is also the youngest. In just 40 years, hundreds of modern skyscrapers have burst forth from the desert sand. The World EXPO 2020 will be hosted in Dubai and is expected to draw 25 million visitors.

Emirati people are very cultured and extremely polite. While Emirati families enjoy the modern conveniences of city life, much of their daily routine still takes place in the home, behind palace-like walls. Beneath the glitz and glamour of this urban phenomenon lies a distinct appreciation for the customs of traditional Bedouin life.

Less than 20 percent of the city's population is comprised of citizens of the United Arab Emirates; more than 80 percent come from different corners of the world. The city's vibrant economy is growing with a strong demand for expat talent: doctors, oil and gas managers, lawyers, accountants, marketing managers, engineers and more.

What will it take to reach this city?

There are reportedly 435 registered churches in the entire country of the United Arab Emirates. These churches, organized with government approval, represent all denominations. Church members are expatriates, and the services are very "international."

"Reaching locals will require a vibrant witness from Great Commission Christians living in the city, continued saturation of the Word of God through various media and book distribution, and the planting of indigenous bodies of national believers who meet covertly," said Arnold LaLonde, a Christian worker in the city.

Points of prayer:

- Pray that the distribution of God's Word would reach those who are seeking His face.
- Pray for outreach ministries on university campuses.

Sources: AccessPartners Dubai City Guide, Forbes.com, IMB Global Research

Might God be calling you to a global city like Dubai? Every member of the local church has unique gifts, skills and opportunities in fulfilling Christ's commission. Global mission is not a compartmentalized program of the church for a select few people. Career men and women, families, singles and students all have a role in God's global mission. Go to imb.org/Cities to get started.

A South Sudanese believer worships with Maridith Lane (far right) and other believers at the Echelon training camp in Northern Uganda.

Hope in South Sudan

Globalization brings the gospel to the nations — those living next door and around the world

By Stephanie Lane and Marie Curtis

Moving to South Sudan, a war ground of turmoil and strife in northeast Africa, has been a major risk for IMB missionaries Robert and Maridith Lane. They telephone their teammates in Uganda daily to assure them that they are alive.

In this young African country, people face constant threats of violence and find little hope for prosperity or peace. Halfway around the world in the U.S., South Sudanese refugees face not only the struggle to survive in a different country, but also heartbreak for their homeland, which remains a battleground.

Southern Baptists are responding to the South Sudanese with the only hope they can count on: Jesus.

Worth the risk

When the Lanes visited South Sudan in 2010, their hearts became burdened for the unreached peoples of the nation. South Sudan, which became independent of Sudan in 2011, has more than

400,000 people unreached by the gospel.

The Lanes' journey began with two years of preparation in neighboring Uganda. Gunshot echoes and cattle raids were common, but the couple also learned about other realities, such as cooking from scratch with local ingredients and learning which gospel-sharing methods work best with cattle-culture people groups.

IMB PHOTO BY JOANN BRADBERRY



Robert Lane shares a community meal and Lord's Supper with the Echelon Team. For two hours, the team focuses conversation on Jesus and what is on each person's heart. This is what church looks like for the team.

In November 2013, they moved to their new home in South Sudan. Now, they are learning to live a life more difficult than they've ever experienced. They see it as a risk worth taking if it means following God in obedience to reach the Dinka Rek people group, who number nearly 3 million.

"We need to be ready for hardship, ready for difficulty, ready to be used as a sacrifice for Christ as we try to make His name famous," Robert explains.

The Lanes, along with their teammates, Selvin and Laurel Jeremiadoss, attend language classes five days a week and immerse themselves in the culture every day—building relationships with tutors, neighbors and local church leaders.

The Lanes admit life is not easy in South Sudan because of the hot climate, political conflict, water scarcity and high food prices. Raising two young sons, Shepherd and Roscoe, in such an environment requires a lot of prayer and a strong marriage, Robert says.

"It's a challenge to live and work in a country where even the local people find it, at times, too difficult and move away," he says.

A monumental challenge they face is trying to teach a warlike people group to love. The Dinka take pride in their cattle, raiding other groups to expand their herds and defending their own by force.



How might God be leading you to join in His mission to take the gospel to the nations—those next door and around the world? Visit IMB.org/Lanes to learn more about praying for, giving toward or joining God's mission in South Sudan. View a video of the missions efforts of the Lane family and their team.

As the Lanes work to make a home in South Sudan, thousands of South Sudanese refugees try to make a home in the United States. Nearly 10,000 of these refugees have settled in Omaha, Neb.

However, the Lanes have no doubt South Sudan is where God has called them. Getting into the country is usually difficult, Robert says, but they were able to gain access, set up a house and build relationships with local people relatively quickly.

"It's not been easy by any stretch of the imagination, but in a lot of ways we've been able to do something that should really be impossible, and I

see that as a big confirmation of God's will to have us in South Sudan," Robert explains.

"It's taken a strong dependence on Jesus Christ and understanding the truth and reality of the message. The only reason we do what we do is because there's such a great, wonderful, beautiful, eternal reward, not simply for us but for the glory of God."



The Arabic Community Church of Omaha, Neb., meets in the Omaha Baptist Center.

Not a 'lost boy' anymore

When I met James Aguto at a local Omaha pancake house, I knew he had been one of Sudan's "lost boys"—a common term used for the thousands of Sudanese boys forced out of their country by the civil war from 1983-2005. Many were orphaned when their villages were burned and their families were killed while they tended cattle in the mountains.

I offered to buy James a meal while we talked, but he said he didn't really eat before evening. In Africa he had gone days, even weeks, without food.

"How old are you now?" I ask.

"Here's what it is. I don't know how old I am," he answers me.

Few in the villages of South Sudan know their exact ages because they do not have formal birth certificates. When James and his friends were processed as refugees, they were given the birthdate Jan. 1, 1981. He suspects he was born around 1975 and was probably 10 when he was taken from his family and forced to walk to Ethiopia with hundreds of other boys.

James understands that the term "lost boys of Sudan" is common, but that doesn't mean he likes it.

"I don't like the name because it's not meaningful," James says. "That's what I can say because we were not lost." He prefers simply "refugee," and that's certainly descriptive of how he's lived his life.

James became a Christian through a church at a refugee camp in Ethiopia, and his spiritual growth has continued.

"If you believe in God, it can lead you to a better life," James says. "You can suffer, but you know that one day you will not suffer. God can turn it around for good. That's what I've been believing."

In 2001, he was given the opportunity to come to the U.S. with four others as part of the lost boys resettlement program. Their group was sponsored by First Baptist Church, Bellevue, Neb., who provided apartments and helped them establish life in the U.S.

Though life was initially difficult, James has done well. He's kept the first job he found in the United States on the cleaning crew of a local hospital, and he graduated with top honors from a local community college where he earned his associates degree. He even managed to save enough money for a South Sudanese bride.

"How much is a bride price?"

"Thirty-one," he responds.

"Thirty-one ... dollars?" I ask.

"Cows," says James.

James is a success story. Life still isn't easy for him, but he has his faith, family and Christian friends who continue to provide encouragement.

I could say many things about James that I learned in just a short time. He's hardworking, dedicated, smart, faithful. But one thing is certain—he isn't lost.

—Marie Curtis

IMB PHOTO BY PAUL W. LEE



Echelon team member Maridith Lane (right) holds a Karamajong woman's baby as the woman holds Maridith's son, Shepherd.

IMB PHOTO BY JOANN BRADBERRY

As the team forms ministry plans, they recognize the best method is to bring in trainers from Uganda who can adequately equip believers in church leadership. Trainers will not only help the local believers build their confidence as leaders, but it will also strengthen their faith and their understanding of church. The hope is that these leaders will one day plant churches among their own people.

The Lanes are grateful for the strong support they have through their team in South Sudan and Uganda, along with the prayer and financial support of partnering churches back home.

Outreach in Omaha

As the Lanes work to make a home in South Sudan, thousands of South Sudanese refugees try to make

a home in the United States. Nearly 10,000 of these refugees have settled in Omaha, Neb.

Mark Elliott, director of missions of the Eastern Nebraska Baptist Association, says several churches responded to the need to reach out to the refugees. Bellevue First Baptist Church sponsored five “lost boys” in 2001. In 2003, LifeSpring Church began sponsoring families who were relocating to Omaha.

Sponsorship included setting up the refugees’ apartments, providing for their initial expenses, teaching them English and helping them find work.

“We pulled alongside them and walked with them through daily life,” says Carl Fletcher, an active member of LifeSpring and participant in this ministry.

James and Sarah Gwek are one of those South Sudanese families. The couple was in Lebanon, where James was studying at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, when their country was devastated by war. They could not return and had to accept refugee status and come to the U.S.

James says he looks for the hand of God in their circumstances, though the adjustment to Omaha and U.S. culture has been difficult.

“We need to see that God has opened doors,” he reminds his family and other South Sudanese. “The God who brought us here will take care of us.”

When Elliott and leaders at LifeSpring got to know James and witness his call to the ministry, they asked him to pray about planting a church among the South Sudanese in Omaha.

Under the guidance of caring Christians, and with support from the North American Mission Board and the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists, the Sudanese Evangelical Church was founded. Though James works long hours at a local retail store to support his family, his primary passion is to lead his people to hope in Christ and urge them not to abandon their faith.

They’ve come from places of starvation, survival in the bush, torture and refugee camps. They now face family strife, financial burdens and cultural clashes.

“It’s a challenge to live and work in a country where even the local people find it, at times, too difficult and move away.”

Though their suffering is never far from their minds, James says he trusts the hand of God. He wants others to do the same.

“Are we really faithful?” James asks his congregation during Sunday worship. “It’s a question I have to ask myself every day.”

After pointing out the many blessings in their lives, he encourages them, “Be a faithful servant, so Jesus will welcome you home.”

The Lanes decided to give their lives to do whatever it takes to share the gospel with those who have never heard, and believers in Omaha work to welcome refugees from South Sudan. Globalization is creating new bridges for the gospel, all around the world. **[OM]**

Stephanie Lane served as a semester missionary with IMB. Marie Curtis is a writer and editor with IMB.



The race marked out

In many ways, Liz Olear's life stretched out in front of her like a track. She could see the defined lanes, the turns and the terrain all predictably leading her to athletic stardom on an international level.

By K. Faith Morgan

"I started running track at the age of 6, I was competing nationally at 8 and internationally at 15," Olear says. She discovered her affinity for running not long after her family relocated from Nigeria to Los Angeles. "It was one of those God-given talents I didn't deserve, and, looking back, I pretty much took for granted.

"My senior year of high school was the peak," says Olear. Her high school seasons were marked by success after success, culminating when her U.S. National relay team broke the junior world record

for the sprint relay and went on to win gold at the world Junior International Association of Athletics Federations Championship in Beijing. "They say pride goes before a fall, right? That was my pride."

Shifting focus

Thanks to her strong natural gifting and impressive stats, Olear was offered a track scholarship to the University of Southern California. But after a triumphant high school career, she began to hit roadblocks.

"My fall was the injuries," she says of her college

journey. “My freshman year through my senior year—and ultimately even after that—I suffered eight injuries in seven years. It was constant.” That’s when the sport that had once been her idol took an unexpected turn toward Christ.

“I could tell the stories and quote Scripture, but I didn’t necessarily know or trust any of it. I didn’t have a relationship with Jesus. He was my good luck charm.”

Although Olear grew up in a devout Catholic family, her connection with God was minimal. “We went to church every Sunday, Bible study every Monday and youth group every Thursday. I could tell the stories and quote Scripture, but I didn’t necessarily know or trust any of it,” she says. “I didn’t have a relationship with Jesus. He was my good luck charm.”

At the invitation of a friend, Olear attended an Athletes in Action (AIA) meeting as a freshman. Through that ministry, she heard the gospel with fresh ears.

“I had heard it, and I had recited it before, but this was eye-opening,” Olear explains. “That was a turning point for me.” She was later baptized on Manhattan Beach by one of her AIA friends.

Pride to platform

“God really used it,” Olear says of her athletic setbacks. Sidelined by repeated injuries, she found herself without her usual excuse to stay away from church retreats and Bible studies. “Before, I would say, ‘I can’t because I have track practice,’ or ‘I have a track meet.’ He used injuries to draw me near to Him and forced me to depend on Him—not my sport.” And as she grew in her relationship with Christ, Olear began to recognize ways she could use her status in the track world to reach other students and athletes.

“I think what really happened, ultimately, was that instead of track being a god, God showed me that track was a gift from Him, and it was supposed to be a platform to glorify Him. In everything I did, whether it was running a race to show people that this is what God gave me, or not running a race because I was hurt and putting a smile on my face, so when people asked me why, I could say it was because of Him.

“I want to help impact college athletes. I know that a lot of them find their identity in their sports. You get told that every day—you are what you do,” says Olear of her continued volunteer service with AIA. “A lot of them are just looking for who they are. That’s such a huge platform to share the gospel.”



Liz Olear worships with her church family at Blueprint Church in the urban heart of Atlanta, Ga.

A different kind of team

A couple years following graduation, Olear moved to Atlanta to join the Nigerian training camp in preparation for the 2012 Olympics. After three months of focused conditioning, she flew to Nigeria for the team trials. Another injury prevented her from qualifying for the Olympic team. Undeterred, she continued her training in Atlanta—moving to the metro area with no place to live, no job and few friends. She began attending Blueprint Church.

“They’re just so intentional about living in community with one another, and they took me in,” she says—both spiritually and literally. Church planter

Dhati Lewis and his wife, Angie, invited her to live with them and their six children while she trained and looked for a job. “They weren’t just inviting me to stay in a room in their house; they were inviting me to be part of their family,” she says. So from family nights to the food in the refrigerator, Olear shared their home and their daily lives in profound and personal ways. “I know I came here for track, but God connected me to people like never before.”

It was through her time with Blueprint and the Lewises that Olear was first introduced to the North American Mission Board’s short-term mission strategy for young adults, GenSend. One of the church’s pastors was the GenSend city coach for Atlanta. He



Olear’s experience as a young immigrant taught her how to connect with a broad range of people. “I can always find something in somebody to relate to,” Olear says. “It may not be our skin color. It may not even be our language, but there is always some connection.”

asked Olear for her help picking up some of the participants at the airport when they first arrived for their assignment.

“I remember asking, ‘What are you guys doing? Why are you here?’ And after hearing their responses I thought, ‘I want to do that.’” Olear’s introduction to GenSend correlated with the final chapter of her professional running career.

“In the summer of 2013, I got hurt again. It was my final injury,” she says. “I talked to my coach (who is a believer), and I had complete peace about being done.” Freed from her training responsibilities, Olear joined the next session of GenSend in Atlanta.

During her 10 weeks of service, Olear and her team learned what it meant to live a life on mission in a practical way. It was a mission that included everything from intentional conversations with strangers on the bus to organizing a free community skate night at a local rink in an effort to foster relationships that would build a bridge to the gospel and gospel community.

“One thing that GenSend did for me was it kind of put a seal on top of what Blueprint had been trying to impress on my life for the past two years,” she says. “It’s one thing to be intentional about who you’re spending time with and the type of conversations you’re having, and it’s another thing to specifi-

cally identify, invest, invite and increase. For me, it just changed how I view relationships with people.”

Running through the wilderness

Right after she completed her GenSend experience, God opened the door for Olear to once again immerse herself in the sports arena. She was offered her dream job in San Diego coaching athletes of every discipline—from figure skaters to NFL prospects—helping them become faster. While she loved her work, the sparkle quickly faded from the life her career offered.

“The problem with sports in general is your work hours are going to look very different from everybody else’s.” Olear explains. With her reverse schedule of free mornings and nights and weekends spent coaching, she was starved of community and ministry opportunities. “I don’t think that time was wasted, and God absolutely allowed me to have long hours with Him because nobody else would be around,” she says. “I was completely free in the morning, and I had the best quiet times. I would go for a run and then go sit on the porch and just read and write and spend time with Him. The problem was that I could never get into community, and after the connection I had with Blueprint and with the ministry of GenSend as the exclamation point at the end of that experience, it wasn’t something I could shake or ignore.”

Defining a mission: GenSend

“The GenSend city coach made us each come up with a vision statement for our life,” explains Liz Olear. “Mine basically stated that I exist for three reasons.”

1. “I exist to cultivate relationships.”
2. “I exist to help visions come to life.”
3. “I exist to live a life on mission.”

GenSend is a church planting development experience—not just an internship. The goal of GenSend is to help individuals understand the city from a missionary perspective in hopes of one day planting more churches within that city. It’s a process that allows participants to grow in their understanding of who God has made them to be and how He wants them to love and serve His people during 6-10 weeks in an urban context. Explore more at sendnetwork.com/GenSend.

After only five months, Olear gave up her promising career to return to the city she had grown to call home. She resigned from a prestigious position to accept a job as an assistant with the GenSend leadership team. It’s an occupation that allows her to live a purposeful, connected life on mission helping her peers identify and define the mission God has given them.

During her 10 weeks of GenSend service, Olear learned what it meant to live a life on mission in a practical way—from intentional conversations with strangers on the bus to organizing a free community skate night at a local rink in an effort to foster relationships that would build a bridge to the gospel and gospel community.

"I've always felt like the Lord has called me to sacrifice something, and, this time, it was sports. I was willing to put my career to the side because I just value ministry and community so much more," she says.

Surveying the course

"One of the books we read in GenSend was called *To Be Told*," says Olear. "It explains how God is writing a story of your life, and in order to know how the book is going to end, you should go back and read the first chapters." It's a concept that still defines her daily journey to identify God's purpose and plan for her life. "God has written 26 years of my story. I can look back and see where He's taken me, why He's created me and what He's shown me

so far. Those experiences aren't in vain. He's allowed me to go through all of that for something. It helps me discern what He wants me to do now and in the future," she explains.

"We're all called to do ministry. It's about finding your platform," Olear says. "Track was my platform at one point; He made me in a specific way, so I could do ministry in that context. Right now, my platform is NAMB, but I'm still called to do the same things. I'm still called to connect people; I'm still called to make visions happen; I'm still called to disciple and be disciplined. It's all part of the story God is writing." [OM]

K. Faith Morgan is a contributing editor for On Mission.

Every Life On Mission Matters



Get motivated and equipped to join the everyday mission of God. Find out how you and your church can be part of the Life On Mission Pilot Project by visiting lifeonmissionbook.com/pilot.

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Watch Liz Olear share more of her story at namb.net/LizOlear.



GenSend is a student mission experience in an urban setting. Learn more at namb.net/Mobilize-Me or visit sendnetwork.com/GenSend.



Interested in finding the best way to use your life on mission? Start by identifying your natural strengths and talents using one of these free assessment tools: discpersonalitytesting.com or 16personalities.com. Then visit namb.net/Mobilize-Me to learn more about ministry opportunities in North America.



Generosity

A life on mission demonstrated

They will glorify God for your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with others through the proof provided by this service (2 Cor. 9:13, HCSB).

By Joe Conway

You need go no further than the founding document of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to find the expectation that giving to missions was at the heart of the fledgling confederation of churches.

Article II from the May 1845 proceedings outlines the desire of the founding delegates: “It shall be the design of this Convention to promote Foreign and Domestic Missions, and other important objects connected with the Redeemer’s kingdom, and to combine for this purpose, such portions of the Baptist denomination in the United States, as may desire a general organization for Christian benevolence, which shall fully respect the indepen-

dence and equal rights of the Churches.”

During their inaugural gathering, those same delegates collected two missions offerings—one for foreign, and the other for domestic, missions. Fast forward 170 years, and you find missions generosity still on the minds of Southern Baptists looking to fulfill the Great Commission. From talent to time to treasure, giving generously remains a hallmark of Southern Baptist cooperation.

But leaders of the two entities most responsible for coordinating SBC missions efforts, IMB and the North American Mission Board (NAMB), have expressed the need for greater cooperation, at all levels, and more efficient methods to accomplish their assigned task.

A new way

Five years ago, NAMB president Kevin Ezell re-focused the organization to target the most unreached and underserved areas of North America through Send North America, an evangelistic church planting strategy. Through the cooperation of, primarily, southern state Baptist conventions, NAMB is helping redirect millions of missions dollars into areas of greater need. In his first full year as president of IMB, David Platt shared a vision for expanding SBC

“God could provide those resources by having dollars rain from heaven if He wanted to, but He doesn’t. He chooses to use His people.”

international missions reach by “empowering limitless missionary teams.”

That desire for greater reach, and more effective missions with resources, has led Ezell and Platt to explore closer cooperation between the missions entities. If prayer is the fuel of missions, capital is perhaps the missions engine.

Giving is personal

Cardiologist Dale Touchstone has had an active life in international missions. Based out of his home in Meridian, Miss., Touchstone has found joy in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of people while he served on short-term trips to Honduras, Peru and Haiti. A recent mission trip to Cuba provided opportunities for him to encourage Cuban physicians to share their faith in their own working environments.

“Jesus often met physical needs before meeting spiritual needs,” Touchstone says. “I look at medicine as being a servant to the gospel, or helping encourage people to come to the gospel.”

For the doctor, a physical presence on the mission field is not his only method for reaching the world for Christ. Early in his career, he and his wife, Beth, realized they earned much more money than they needed for living. They realized their abundance could be used for God’s glory, both through savings and diversified investments.

“To do [missions], it takes resources, and those resources have to come from somewhere,” Touchstone says. “God could provide those resources by having dollars rain from heaven if He wanted to, but He doesn’t. He chooses to use His people.”

Some of the Touchstones’ donations have been through a planned giving model, called appreci-

That desire for greater reach, and more effective missions with resources, has led NAMB President Kevin Ezell and IMB President David Platt to explore closer cooperation between the missions entities. If prayer is the fuel of missions, capital is perhaps the missions engine.

ated stocks. This and other giving structures provide significant tax incentives, so more of their donations go toward intended kingdom causes.

“I think obedience is so much better than sacrifice, and we’ve tried to be obedient,” Touchstone adds.

God loves a cheerful giver

Churches are recognizing that caring for the forgotten opens doors to an expanded gospel platform. Through NAMB, IMB, state conventions, associations and local churches, Southern Baptists demonstrate the embodiment of 2 Cor. 9:13 through Disaster Relief, Global Hunger Relief, chaplaincy, church planting, missions volunteers and an investment in full time missionaries. Treasure is important to capital-intensive efforts, like bringing the gospel to locations with high costs of living.

Whether it is Shanghai, New York, Vancouver or London, should the relative cost of living in a location dictate access to the gospel, or the lack of it?

Because expensive cities call for greater investment, these are precisely the kinds of places where new methodology and new thinking can expand gospel reach and gospel community.

The desired future state of giving would bring mission support to a level such that NAMB or IMB would no longer have to say no to an opportunity. The mission entities strive to implement effective missions strategies that are targeted and focused to help reach the greatest pockets of lostness. Rather than simply throwing money at missions activities, NAMB and IMB are laser-focused.

“We are incredibly thankful for how generously Southern Baptists continue to give to missions,” says Ezell. “But we also recognize that current levels of giving will not come close to keeping pace with the vast needs before us.” **[OM]**

Joe Conway serves as managing editor for On Mission. John Jarvis, an IMB video producer, contributed to this story.

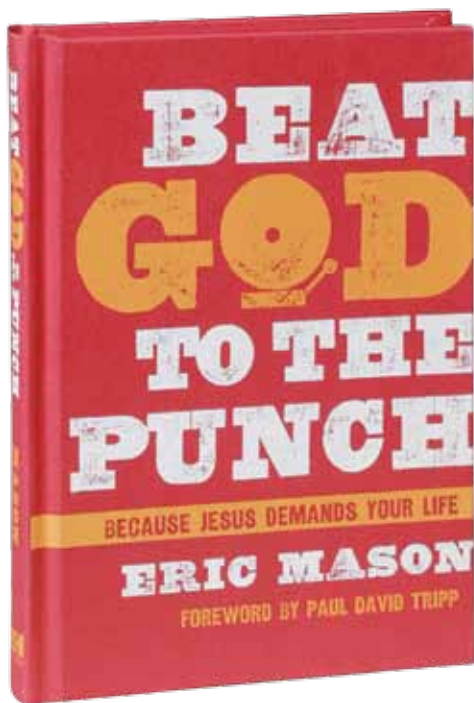


Your generosity opens doors to the gospel in the places of greatest need. Visit imb.org/Giving to donate to the IMB or AnnieArmstrong.com to give to NAMB.



Learn more about the Send North America strategy at namb.net/Mobilize-Me. Learn more about IMB's international mission strategy at imb.org.

Gospel Mission



Beat God to the Punch

Eric Mason
(B&H Publishing Group, 2014)

Grace—as evangelicals we talk frequently about it but rarely marinate in it. God’s unmerited favor makes an amazing sound bite, yet it often seems impossibly tough to believe. As difficult to understand as grace can be for those inside the Church, it’s even tougher for those on the outside. *There’s no such thing as a free lunch* isn’t just a cute, pithy saying—it’s an often-unquestioned expression of the North American psyche.

Eric Mason’s *Beat God to the Punch* explores grace not just as our entry point into the Christian life but as the life-transforming change agent that daily propels us into a deeper relationship with God and a more fulfilling relationship with others. In this short book—only 83 pages—Mason explores multiple facets of grace, from Jesus’ call for us to become His disciples through what he phrases “the completing work of grace.”

But the book is much more than a sterile recitation of doctrine. Born in the heart of a church planter in the inner city of Philadelphia, this book will remind readers of the critical place of grace in all aspects of our lives. It will be a great book to help you marinate in the biblical reality of God’s grace. It’s also a tremendous discipleship tool you can use to walk beside someone else who needs to fully embrace the amazing grace of Jesus.

Tobin Perry serves as a church planting intern in Seattle, Wash.

Counter Culture

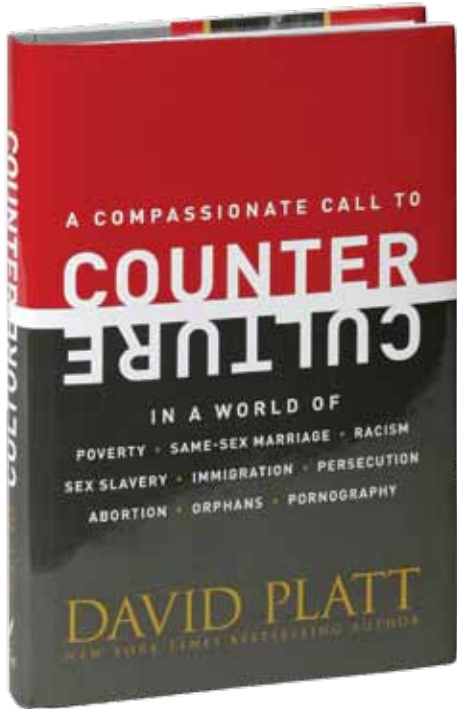
David Platt
(Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2015)

In his newest book, David Platt brings us a truly relevant and “counter-cultural” message. Platt tackles some of the biggest hot-button topics in our culture (poverty, same-sex marriage, racism, sex slavery, pornography, abortion and others) with a savvy combination of biblical teaching, personal experiences, stories and data. Platt’s own raw honesty and sacrificial lifestyle, which has long characterized his ministry, make him a credible voice for and to the Church on these issues.

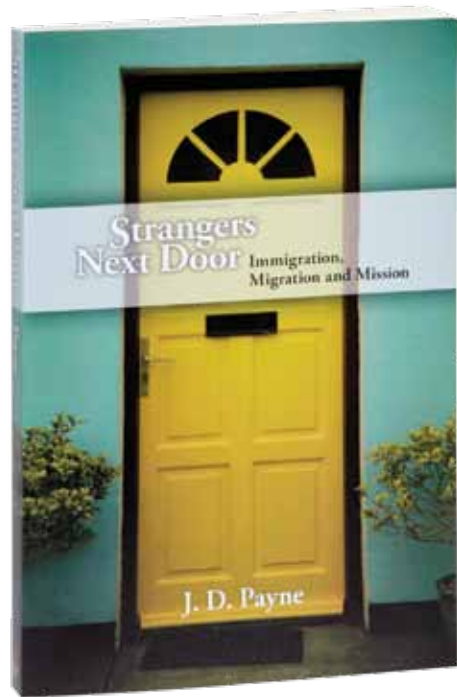
Counter Culture will prepare believers and churches to engage the world around them with biblical conviction and Christ-focused compassion that ultimately leads to gospel renewal. Each chapter closes with practical steps to spur believers to “Pray, Participate and Proclaim” in transformative ways. This resource will clarify biblical truth on important issues and lead believers to personal repentance and renewed conviction in areas where churches have often been silent or allowed the outside culture to infiltrate.

The goal of Platt’s treatise is to inspire the readers to action, not as a result of “a low-grade sense of guilt,” but rather from “a high-grade sense of grace.” *Counter Culture* is a must read for every church leader and church member, and a great resource for preaching, teaching and engaging the culture.

Warren Mainard is lead pastor at Essential Church, a church plant in Bellevue, Wash.



Mission Ministry



Strangers Next Door

J.D. Payne
(InterVarsity Press, 2012)

Not long after we arrived in Hawaii as church planters, my son told us there were Samoan, Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Filipino students at his school. We knew we were ministering in a global community—that experience drove this reality home. Many assume this is true of Hawaii, but what about the rest of the U.S.?

In *Strangers Next Door*, J.D. Payne has two objectives. First, he wants the western church to be aware of the enormity of global migration to the West. Second, he wants to cast a vision of missions that uses the current migration as a springboard for missions around the world. Christians in the West must understand who is moving into their communities and how this fits into the Great Commission.

Payne uses eye-opening statistics to demonstrate this movement and shows how God has used such migrations throughout Scripture to further His purpose. He also includes practical guidelines for reaching unreached people groups within western communities.

Readers may find some of the statistics tedious. (Payne includes a lot of data to back up his claims.) But data is important for establishing the claim that more unreached people groups are migrating to western countries than most Christians realize.

As migration continues and grows, churches must adjust to not only reach their communities but also fulfill their calling of missions. Payne provides an excellent rationale, vision and strategy for just that.

Aaron Davis planted Aloha Community Church in Ewa Beach on the island of Oahu, Hawaii.

For the City

Darrin Patrick & Matt Carter
(Zondervan, 2010)

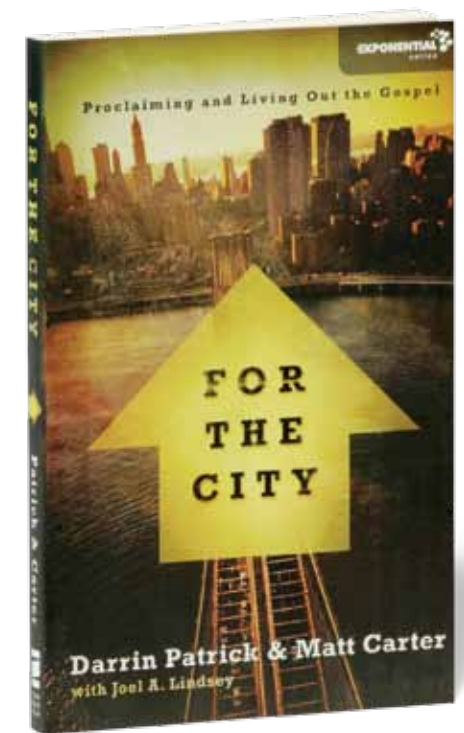
For the City, written by Darrin Patrick and Matt Carter, invites us to do two things as we live on mission in our city—trust the Spirit to equip us and empower us, and recognize cities as places filled with opportunities. The authors advocate that these are opportunities the Church needs to pursue.

Using their personal experiences as illustrations, Carter and Patrick write that the Church should use these occasions to be a “church for the city”—a church whose heart is for the flourishing of the city and for the proclamation of the gospel. They especially highlight the importance of contextualization and community in the process of serving the city, something with which the authors have firsthand experience.

These are not authors locked in their offices, writing about good ideas they’ve never implemented. Instead, this book is based on the successes and failures in their own attempts to give legs to urban ministry and from hearts pressing toward continual growth.

If you are looking for a book that will challenge you to be a person “for your city,” it is a must read. It will leave you looking toward the Creator of your city and asking Him how to love, care for and serve it well.

Abigail Hughes is a student at Washington State University in Pullman, Wash., and is serving this summer as a NAMB GenSend missionary in New York City.



True freedom worth the fight

By Tony Kitchens

A person's brokenness often leads to captivity. Nowhere is that clearer than in America's prisons—an environment typically devoid of positive



self-reflection and restorative processes. This can set in motion a continuous cycle of recidivism.

The mass incarceration of America's citizens is a symptom of a larger problem. It is the manifestation of choices made and a broken system, all evidence of an underlying sin problem. A multitude of America's inmates are condemned by their brokenness to concrete, emotional and spiritual prisons, where many never experience true freedom—

a transformation of the spirit into Christlikeness.

Reentry is a destination; reintegration back to God, family and community is a journey—a day-by-day process that allows former inmates, like me, to reach a higher level of sustainable change. Like a baseball player making his way around the bases, recovery has three elements—accountability, possibility and sustainability.

Reintegration is not about hitting home runs; it's about getting a base hit. Accountability—taking personal responsibility—gets you to the first bag. Believing in the possibility of reintegration gets you on second in the reintegration process. Getting to third is about spiritual transformation—being able to respond appropriately to problems from a position of strength and accountability.

God is the only one who can transform individuals after their incarceration—just like He transformed me. It's not the programs or the halfway houses or anything else—it's just God. [OM]

Tony Kitchens walked out of Georgia's Walker State Prison in 1985 and never returned. He now provides leadership to Healing Communities, SBC, a restorative reentry initiative. Kitchens' 30th anniversary of freedom was recognized by family, friends, peers, inmates and the State of Georgia, at Walker State Prison earlier this year.



Keeping it personal in a fragmented world

By Kevin Ezell, President (@kevezell)

One great contradiction of our 21st century world is that we live in closer proximity to each other, but the technology that instantly connects us around the globe has turned our neighbors into strangers. For the Church this is the blessing and the challenge of our day. We can board a plane and minister on the international mission field within a few hours, but we might miss thousands of immigrants from a foreign land who live just across town.

How can we do better? For Southern Baptists I believe the answer lies partly in much greater collaboration between IMB and the North American Mission Board (NAMB). The mission fields we serve are unique and need to be approached differently, but the people we want to reach are growing more similar all the time.

As IMB connects local churches with unreached people groups across the globe, NAMB can help the same church connect with a city in the United States or Canada that needs new churches to serve that same people group. Similarly, NAMB can connect churches to the IMB that have a heart for a specific people group.

IMB's new president, David Platt, and I are committed to reaching people and mobilizing churches in the most efficient ways. This edition of *On Mission* demonstrates how our two entities can partner more effectively. We will have similar approaches at this June's SBC and the Send North America Conference, Aug. 3-4 in Nashville.

As the world comes together—and pulls apart—this closer collaboration will help Southern Baptists more effectively take Christ to those who need Him wherever they are located. [OM]



To learn more about Healing Communities, SBC, visit namb.net/LoveLoud.



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