

Next 40 Years...

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1974

When Ralph D. Winter shared the vision for the unreached at Lausanne, most church and mission leaders around the world knew little about the concept. Information from around the world was hard to get. What Winter did learn compelled him, with Roberta, to start the U.S. Center for World Mission (now Frontier Ventures) in 1976. The original vision has not changed. Our bylaws state that we:

...serve the mission enterprise by identifying barriers and pursuing solutions toward Kingdom breakthrough to see the gospel of Jesus Christ unleashed and unhindered among the least reached, so that “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” – Habakkuk 2:14.

My wife and I joined staff a bit later, about 35 years ago. Few were talking about taking the gospel to unreached people groups without any viable fellowships. Workers were going to every country of the world but not every people and the vast majority of the Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist groups had no one reaching out to them at all.

We felt a clear call to mobilize a movement of people to pray and engage in this task. Our “audience” was mission sending agencies, churches and students.

Getting information about what was happening was hard and required relationships and people “on-site” among the unreached. In many places,

nothing was happening—but we needed to know that too. We (and others) started regional centers in the U.S. and networked a little with global centers for world mission to spread the vision—this was always central to how we worked out our vision.

But things changed

Amazingly, God allowed us to be “successful” in spreading our vision. We tried to learn all we could and pass that on to *MF* readers, William Carey Library, Perspectives, WCIU... But now:

- The internet allows information to be shared easily.
- There are a number of other organizations dedicated to specific aspects of our original vision like student mobilization and of course, training. We don’t have to focus on that as much.
- The sending movements globally are growing, maturing and leading the way in many unreached areas.

Yet there were a few things in our original hope and dreams that did *not* happen—at least not as much as we had planned.

- We did create a “collaborative mission center” and many things were birthed here (including the founding of the agency called Frontiers). But because most cutting-edge ministries were “out there” we never saw the full collaboration we had hoped for in Pasadena. Instead it was happening globally.

- We began to realize that more important than merely mobilizing new workers, we needed to give more energy to helping all workers know what *they need to do once they get out there.*

- So, collaboration and learning was *happening out in the fields/regions of the world.* While we did see a lot of connecting of people into the ministries God was calling them to—and with more effectiveness—the on-the-ground missiology was being honed globally, not in Pasadena alone.

- Perhaps most exciting was that the global church was stepping up beyond what we could have imagined. Patrick Johnstone, author of *Operation World* at the time, noted that about 1987, more workers were sent from East than the West.

Now, I spend a great deal of time around the world away from Pasadena, doing what we used to do here: serving new movements (where we are asked) to help them mobilize, train and strategize. These folks will never come to Pasadena or the U.S.—and frankly, I hope they do not — we don’t want to ruin them with our models of church and mission that don’t fit their context or budgets.

So what do the next 40 years look like?

All of this is causing us to feel compelled again to strengthen and expand our ministries around the U.S. and the world. The Frontier Ventures Board has decided to *expand our efforts and become more intentionally multi-site.* While it will involve much of what we have been doing, we don’t fully know how it will change.

We invite your input—so feel free to post a comment on this article at: www.missionfrontiers.org 