



I start with a question. When did mission become a task only for 'missionaries' and 'mission agencies'?

Let us look at the biblical history. God chose Abraham and through him Israel as an entire nation to be the missionary that would reach out to the whole world. God sent prophets to remind them of their calling. Then, at the right time, God sent His son Jesus Christ as a missionary. Jesus welcomed disciples to join that mission, "fishing for people". The first disciples were also missionaries, going about Judea announcing the coming of God's kingdom. After Jesus' death and resurrection, and most importantly, with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the mission exploded out from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, including India.

Wherever the disciples were (all the followers of Christ not just the apostles), at home or anywhere else, they told others about the Saviour they had met, the Spirit they had received, and the Father who loved them. Some spread of the gospel happened because of a deliberate mission thrust to take it to other places. This happened when people migrated to work, and during persecution. (This is probably how Christianity first came to India.) An example is that the church in Antioch assigned Paul and Barnabas to go to other lands to proclaim the message.

However, an even larger part of the spread of the gospel happened because nobody then thought that only a few should proclaim the message of Jesus. Those whose lives were transformed naturally told others in their neighborhood about it.

This can still be our model in our own churches. Local churches can disciple and nurture those whom God brings to faith in Christ. Later these too may nurture and disciple yet more

people in their neighbourhood or further away.

Now let us look at Christian history. After Christianity became the state religion under the Emperor Constantine, the disciples of Jesus seemed to lose their missionary zeal. Later, during the crusades against Muslims and Jews, a misguided perception of mission and Christian zeal bound church and state together in a way that twisted mission into imperialism and colonialism which lasted for many centuries.

Glimmerings of change showed in the medieval era when a passion for missions emerged in some Roman Catholic orders, and monks like Francis Xavier went around the globe with the message of Christ. Designated missionaries like Robert de Nobili, Ziegenbalg and his associates were sent out with the purpose of communicating God's kingdom to 'the heathen'.

The coming of William Carey to India in the 18th century revived the passion for missions in its true sense. As a local Baptist pastor Carey, felt that it was the duty of every Christian to spread the gospel. He was rebuked by his contemporaries, who felt that, "When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine" (John Rylond, cited in Timothy George, 1991:53). But Carey's example and methodology spread, and as a result mission-minded people began to set up organizations which would send out men and women to proclaim the gospel. Most established churches in India began through such efforts by denominational and inter-denominational mission societies from the west.

Interserve (then Zenana Bible and Medical Mission) is an example, founded as an inter-denominational society in 1852 to serve along with churches to seek and disciple new

It was only natural that people whose lives were transformed should tell others about it.

Leprosy sufferers begging at the doorstep of our churches in India are a common sight. The same lepers, having heard and believed the gospel, worshipping along as part of the body of Christ inside the church, is not so common.

Visiting my home church in Chennai, I saw such a transformation. Lay people actively helped the lepers to grow spiritually and fit into the fellowship and Sunday worship and helped families with innovative ways of making their living. This is only one of the programs of these lay people reaching the neighborhood, while they also support several missionaries in Tamil Nadu and North India through prayer and finance.

If only all the churches in India were so active in mission both at home and away, then the vision of discipling our nation would not be a distant dream.

What do we understand by the word 'church'? It is not a building or an organization. The 'Church' as the body of Christ is universal, expressed locally as people gathered in Christ's name, 'ecclesia', characterized by worship, prayer, fellowship, apostolic teaching, breaking of bread and witnessing. Other aspects vary with the denomination and are non-essential. When people gather in the name of Christ in an organized way, we call it a 'church'. Distinctions like main-line, denominational, traditional, independent, ecumenical, evangelical, liberal, charismatic and contemporary are incidental.

God provided structures like the tabernacle, the Levite priesthood, the Jerusalem temple, and the various ecclesiastical structures we use now. But God cannot be pleased by our misguided loyalty to structures rather than to Himself.

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believers. Mission is not about keeping mission societies going, but about churches reaching individuals and communities around them. It is God who makes churches grow, and we are His fellow workers in this process (1 Corinthians 3:7&9).

And what does mission mean today? In earlier days, mission was only understood geographically, joining mission societies and going to distant lands. That thinking, thankfully, is changing. Globalization has made mission possible both locally and across boundaries. We are recovering the true meaning of mission as God's work; we are his disciples wherever we are, participating in God's mission. Disciples learn from the master, and do as he does. As God is a missionary, his followers are also missionaries. As God's people belonging to many different local churches, we are making disciples, whether to our own culture or across cultures.

At least we should be! But most Christians still seem to be stuck thinking that 'the foreigners' are the real missionaries (even the South Indians in North India) and mission is their job. As a result, missions are left to those designated as missionaries. What happened to discipleship and witnessing? Are not all Christians disciples? Have they not had their lives transformed

COUNTRY TEAM LEADER'S

HEART TALK



Structures may be good but they should not become an idol that affects our relationships. God uses our imperfect structures, but He often works beyond these structures to fulfill His purposes. The Old Testament prophets, Jesus

Christ, the apostles, the church fathers, reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin, revival preachers like John Wesley and George Whitefield, modern missionaries like William Carey and Hudson Taylor all served outside the existing religious and political structures.

Structures are shadows of the reality, like scaffolding to support the construction of a building. But just as scaffolding is not more important than the building, church structures and infrastructures must not displace the purposes of God's people. God gifted some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service. (Eph 4:11&12)

One of the churches in Mumbai, have a study program for all their members once a week in small groups that meet in homes apart from the weekly Sunday public gathering. The pastors and teachers most of whom continue their vocations in the market place equip the other members in those groups. They lead their own neighbors and colleagues to know Jesus Christ. They disciple new believers and equip them to do likewise. They also support the work of other God's people far and near. We at Interserve are committed to equip pastors, teachers, lay leaders and the congregations in local churches and denominations to become actively involved in missions in their neighborhood as well as across cultures. May all who gather in the name of Christ, be disciplined to disciple others!

John Amalraj

**As God is a missionary,
his followers are
also missionaries.**

by him? Should not the local church join in transforming the communities they live in? Should they not care for communities who live in distant lands? Every individual Christian and the local church is naturally a participant in God's kingdom mission! If the good news has truly transformed our lives, we must share it in words and actions. We all have a part to play. Mission can be the heartbeat of every disciple of Christ. We need to recover the breath and urgency of the early church, where all were called to proclaim the message of Jesus.

All of us in missions should lead our fellow worshipers in local churches (that means everybody), to revitalize our thinking on missions. Teach it, preach it, run seminars on it, talk to people one to one about it. If every Christian in India took their role as a 'missionary' seriously, we could calculate three missionaries (including children) for every one hundred people. And that would be a pretty good ratio for getting the message out to the whole country!

So, let us remember, you and I and our Christian acquaintances are Christ's missionaries here and now, in your place my place, and their place.

Jessica D

Interserve, ever since its inception, has partnered along with local churches to fulfill God's vision. Empowering and serving Churches therefore is not a new concept to us. Here are the profiles of three of our partners (among many others) who work towards

servicing churches, both in their local context, and also in the larger context of building the Body of Christ. Their rich and varied experience makes them the role models for many who are involved in similar roles. Uphold them in your prayers.

body builders

Chungnunga and Hliri are both teachers, with more than 30 years experience in the field. They have served in Mizoram as teachers for over 20 years, before they moved to Delhi to work in obedience to God's call for cross-cultural missions with Interserve. After having served as Development Secretary travelling widely across India for 3 years, he joined the All Nations in London for further studies in missions. Presently, Chungnunga serves as the Principal of the prestigious

Chungnunga and Hliri

Serampore College. As the Principal, he gives leadership to the arts, science and the theological courses offered by the College. Chungnunga also serves as the Secretary of the Senate of Serampore University with 50 seminaries in India and Sri Lanka affiliated to it. Chungnunga and Hliri have mentored hundreds of students envisioning them

with the need for missions. Chungnunga is also an ordained elder of the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram and as a couple they have been actively involved with their home church in various volunteer capacities for over 3 decades now. They have three children; Emmanuel, Elizabeth and Michael. Emmanuel and Elizabeth are married and serve the Lord along with their spouses. Michael is an undergraduate student in USA.

Luaha and Dineni, qualified in Arts and Philosophy, have wide experience in various kinds of missions. After serving in various capacities in Mizoram in partnership with the Synod Mission Board they were challenged for cross cultural ministry. They served in Dehradun for three years before moving to Delhi, where they served in the Interserve Office. Dineni worked with

Luaha and Dineni Renthlei

the Griha Shiksha Project, ensuring home schooling for gospel workers' children, while Luaha worked as the On Track Coordinator and Admin Coordinator in the office. It was during this time that they heard God's call to serve to strengthen the Nepali churches in India. They met with individual pastors,

encouraged them and facilitated their working together. Their contribution in the past few years in serving the Nepali churches in Delhi is exceptional. Dineni is actively involved in running a Sunday school for Hindi speaking children in a local church as well as in the Mizo church in Delhi. Luaha and Dineni have three sons studying in school; Hmangaiha, Puia and Benjamin.

Regi with a masters in Political Science served with UESI as a staff in Kerala, discipling university students before coming to Pune to study theology. After his theological studies, he served with the Marthoma Church as a missionary for five years in Maharashtra. During this time he married Mary who is a civil engineer. On the professional front, Regi is now a social worker and Mary a structural designer. But what makes them

Reji and Mary Thomas

unique is how they use their training to build communities transformed by Jesus Christ. In 1993 they founded a wholistic ministry aptly named as Mukti Udharan Seva Trust, working in the slums, both for the mukti (salvation) and udharan (transformation) of the downtrodden people in the slums. They have already

made an impact in many slums in Pimpri an industrial twin city of Pune and planted many transformed worshipping communities. They now serve in around 25 slums along with 12 staff and several volunteers involved in community development programs including envisioning the slum youth. Reji and Mary have two sons, Jeevan and Sujeev in junior college and junior school respectively.

goals at a glance

Strengthen Member Care
Caring for those on the field

Equip Local Churches in Missions
Getting more people involved

Recruit more Tentmakers
Facilitating more people to go across cultures

Mobilize Indians to be placed overseas
Enlarging our vision globally

Network with other Mission Agencies
Working together with others

FAST FORWARD 2010
Action Plans

fast forward 2010 - action plans

The Fast Forward 2010, is on the threshold of taking off through the following action plans that have been developed to fulfil our strategic goals. Pray for God's resources (people and money) to be multiplied to make these plans a reality. For more information of how you can partner with us, please write to isvindia@postworld.net

1. Antioch: Serving Churches through Mission Education

Interserve Partners will be available to local churches and denominations. To educate the laity and clergy with a diverse approach, to become actively involved in missions far and near.

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fast forward 2010 - action plans (Continued from Page 3)

2. Aquilla & Priscilla: Promoting Tent making Models

Equipping and envisioning professionals in the market place to become effective disciple makers in places where there is no access to the Good News.

3. India Dawning: Serving through Media

Equipping Christian media professionals in the public arena and be a catalyst to distribute relevant literature to disciple the influential middle class through media.

4. Lydia: Promoting Business as Mission Model

Equipping Christian entrepreneurs and business leaders in the business world and envisioning them to create business and serve people in need.

5. Macedonian Call: Sending Indian Partners Overseas

Mobilizing and sending Indian Christians as bearers of the Good News to other needy countries overseas and participating in the global mission endeavour.

6. MANI: Serving the Nepalese church in India

Equipping the Nepalese church pastors with leadership skills so that they can reach out to their own people through integrated ministry.

7. MK Care: Serving MKs in India

MK Care is to serve the various needs of the missionary children in India, in partnership with other mission agencies by organizing camps and also meeting their educational needs in different ways.

8. Timothy: Building Capacity of Indian Partners

Developing Indian Partners through continuous education and skill training would create a ripple effect in mentoring hundreds of leaders across the nation, disciplined in wholistic mission values.

9. Zacchaeus: Serving the Middle Class Indians

Discipling the great Indian Middle Class of more than 300 million people needs extensive research, profiling and innovative ministry models. We seek to pioneer this movement.



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Interserve Family Reunion

The Interserve India Family Reunion was held at UBS, Pune from Dec 29 - Jan 2, 2006. The theme was , Unchanging Gospel in a Changing World. Over 120 Partners and their children came together for a wonderful time of fellowship, learning and sharing. The MKs led us in praise and worship everyday. The morning devotions were a much needed reminder to go back to the roots of the unchanging gospel and its transforming power. One senior Partner quipped that it was the 'best Reunion' he had attended. Praise God for His guidance to John and Janine who coordinated the Reunion with the support of many others.

News from Partners

Rajesh Agarwal was ordained as a Pastor by the North India Church Mission Association in Nov 2006.

Kaushik and Frany Mehta, our Partners in Training became proud parents of Krupa, their daughter, who was born on 11th Nov, 2006.

Chungnunga and Hliri's son Emmanuel got married to Laltei on the 6th Jan, 2007.

Malcolm and Debby Rogers, serving at Hebron, left the Interserve fellowship. We praise God for their service and commitment.

SYIS Workshops

SYIS (**Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills**) workshops are designed to enhance the knowledge, attitudes and skills of Christian leaders and missionaries as to how they relate to one another, family, co-workers, friends and those from other cultures. The cost for the workshop is Rs. 5000/-. Eappen John, our Training Coordinator, will be coordinating these workshops along with other facilitators.

26th Feb - 3rd March 2007 - Khandala
6th - 11th May 2007 - Dehradun
24th - 29th August 2007 - Bangalore
2nd - 7th November 2007 - Kolkata

Please write to the Office for more details and registration.

Please write to us your comments, criticisms and suggestions for improvement of the newsletter. Your feedback is valuable for us as we publish our future issues.

All donations (DDs/cheques) to be made in the name of 'Interserve (India)' payable at Pune (Indian donations) and Delhi (overseas donations). Your donations help us serve the people better.

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