

who is disciplined, there is hope too for the missionary who feels the shame of his or her own failures. Allen reminds us that Paul 'succeeded through failure where we often fail through succeeding' (Allen, 124). Our first principle then is that of being committed to those things that bring glory and honour to the Lord and his Bride, the Church, trusting in the power of His Spirit to guide and help us.

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THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH IN MISSION

by **GD**

GD and his family live in the Arabian Peninsula (AP). He has looked after an international church for 8 years.

International Churches (ICs) represent a great untapped resource for evangelising the people of the AP. Yet, missionaries in the AP have often been reluctant to be involved in ICs. In fact some mission boards specifically prohibit their missionaries attending, but the time has come to engage with ICs and mobilise them for evangelism. The purpose of this article is to outline some ways an International Church might be of use in Muslim evangelism in the AP.

International Churches have numbers

In our country we have about thirty-five intentional workers, and about 35,000 expatriate Christians. What if just 1% could be equipped and motivated for outreach? The result would be 350 new intentional workers! Consider also that each of these people would already have a valid job with an accompanying visa, and would also be self-funding. The first missionary society to dedicate itself to recognising, recruiting and supporting expatriate Christians will experience exponential growth in numbers at zero financial cost.

International Churches have gifts

Most intentional teams deliberately recruit people with some interest or gift in evangelism. This results in a 'body' where every member is the mouth! However, the International Church has people with a greater variety of gifts. For example, at our annual English/Arabic Passover meal we have one person with a gift of hospitality to do the catering, one to do logistics, one to provide a venue, and so on. Unfortunately, the intentional team has an evangelist doing the cooking, an evangelist setting the tables, an evangelist giving directions...

International Churches have health

Intentional workers make up less than 20% of our congregation, but, sadly, they make up 100% of those in intense counselling. I believe that the insular and mono-cultural nature of teams creates and magnifies stress. For example, in our country no weekly team meeting has survived more than a few years or provided effective support. Each of our intense counselling cases is in fact a member of one of these weekly team meetings. It seems that a group of mouths usually end up shouting at each other. By contrast, mixed growth groups from the International Church continue over many years. People encourage and support each other over the whole of life, rather than over a narrow task.

Many intentional workers privately consider other expatriate Christians to be somehow weaker or inferior, but according to the Bible the weaker members of the body are indispensable. While many international workers consider it 'not strategic' to meet with other Christians and get involved in their petty 'unintentional lives,' there's something profoundly spiritually healthy about praying for Mrs Smith's ingrown toe-nail.

International Churches have time

Intentional workers lose a lot of their time to internal team matters, with much duplication of effort. For example, between them the thirty-five people in our country are organising about eight different conferences, all with different speakers, different kids' programs and different sets of logistics even though they each have essentially the same purpose. One poor individual known to the author is attempting to organise four different conferences just for his own organisation. If you add to this the fact that each organisation has their own strategy statements, their own prayer networks and their own international administration, then the amount of time lost in duplication of effort is immense. The end result of this is that intentional workers are the busiest people in our church, but they are not necessarily busy doing evangelism.

In contrast, many IC members have time on their hands. With shorter working hours, more help around the house and a restricted amount of family interaction, people are often bored. What if we could direct some of their time and energy to outreach?

International Churches have profile

In our country we have a steady stream of local organisations asking for our help and cooperation. The only limit to the church's cooperation with local groups is the availability of the members. Being a church gets the 'Christianity thing' right out in front. You don't have to subtly direct the conversation to spiritual issues. Local people expect something spiritual up front and immediately. Recently, our church was invited to attend a mass wedding with thirty-seven grooms and 8000 guests. A microphone was thrust into the hands of the church leader, who was asked to 'say a few words on behalf of Christians.'

International Churches have contacts

Mixed marriages provide great links to communities and families. There is a unique subculture of expat ladies married to local husbands. Many have married into significant families and will stay in the AP permanently. By effectively training and encouraging them, we could be influencing hundreds of people. This would be a great opportunity for a mixed-marriage couple to have a unique ministry!

International Churches know the local situation

This is certainly better than an office in Dallas or London! Currently, some intentional workers in our country are actually prevented from joining IC outreach efforts by company policy. Yet our outreach efforts are crying out for leaders. The policy of this particular mission is effectively stifling evangelism and service in our country. Maybe it is a region-wide policy that has good reasons in other countries, but it doesn't seem to make much sense here.

International Churches appeal to 'international locals'

We live in an international city. Many locals have studied overseas and learned English well. Many travel extensively on business, owning property in several different world cities. They have a certain amount of pride in being 'world citizens.' What could be done to reach them? Many intentional workers pottering around in their make-believe jobs or flailing away in loss-making businesses have no credibility in this particular sub-culture. Yet, highly-paid members of the international church are meeting them constantly.

Conclusion

The International Church represents a great resource for evangelism in the AP, a resource that has been largely ignored by mission societies. Working together with the IC promotes the spiritual health of missionaries, frees them to concentrate on evangelism, reaches out to a broader group of locals and is the single most efficient way to increase the number of people sharing their faith in the AP.