

Discussion on Global Trends

Mission Interlink Conference, Sydney
First Fruits Global Trends Analysis

Growth in Christianity and Islam

- Both religions will continue to see rapid but uneven growth.
- Christianity will grow in the Global South, primarily driven by Pentecostalism and indigenous mission movements.
- Conflicts will intensify between these two religions

Prominence of the Global South Church

- The rapidly-growing Global South Church will increasingly critique Western approaches
- It will develop its own theologies based on local issues.
- Indigenous mission movements will use new and creative ways to build structures and raise funds from non-Western sources as the middle class grows within its largely Pentecostal churches.
- The spread of 'prosperity gospel' remains a serious concern.

Destabilizing Youth Cohorts

- Many will be disenfranchised with traditional institutions and religious practice and will be susceptible to ideologies, militias, radicalization and crime.
- There is a crying need for role models (in the church).
- By dealing with institutionalized issues of hierarchy, the Church could empower youth to get involved, take initiative at a much younger age, and offer fresh thinking to aging organizations.
- The Church can equip youth to become prepared for all spheres of society... by developing and practicing an 'integral theology' through education and skills training.

Renewed Vision for Societal Relevance by Evangelicals and Pentecostals

- A rediscovery... of both a more integrated theology and a trend towards social ministry.
- The 'Christian agenda' will broaden to include social justice, environmental concerns, and help for the less fortunate.
- New ways will develop for reflecting a more holistic theology and discipling believers into community and public service.

Rise of Radicalism and Grassroots Religious Persecution

- A continuing rise in radicalism, especially in failed states.
- Christ's call is higher than mere tolerance – it is to show love and respect in logic and language that is understood.
- The Church can advocate to governments to allow for a plurality of ideas and create legislation that expands the 'center'.

- Global South missionaries, especially those of a proximate culture, can be empowered to go to where radicalism prevails, while conducting missions in a way that seeks to understand and respect the local cultures.

Changing Philanthropy

- Private channels of giving... will move toward direct engagement with indigenous talent and institutions [bypassing the conventional institutional aid architecture].
- Innovative uses of technology such as with social networking will be developed to mobilize and engage donors and volunteers.
- Western philanthropy will be results-oriented to a greater extent, often pragmatically focusing on evidence-based methods and outcomes.
- Generosity is a basic Christian value.
- Striking a balance between seeking results versus relationship and valuing the tangible and intangible (treating giving as more than a transaction) will lessen the divide between the Global South and North.
- New emerging models that are effective should be continuously researched and shared.

Technology Moves Power to the 'Edges'

- The Web is the great equalizer, allowing power to move from the center to the edges, which will lead to a melting down of centralized institutions and traditional bonds.
- However, lack of accessibility to technology remains an issue in some places.
- God created us as relational beings and technology notwithstanding, fostering meaningful and supportive relationships in community has never been more important.
- Global South partners can and should participate in these wide-reaching conversations as equals.

Cultural Hybridization, Trend Toward Nominalism

- Globalization will be counterbalanced by a localization identity and community
- One common face will be materialism and a move towards religious nominalism.
- Traditional religious institutions will be eroded.
- Developed nations will see a growing worldliness in their religious congregations.
- Our Christian distinctives should remain unambiguous. We are to be relevant but not relativistic, proclaim absolute truth, and provide contrast for people who are hungry for a Kingdom activity.
- The need for investments in leadership development has never been clearer.

Non-Readers on the Rise

- Populations of predominantly illiterate, semi-literate and traditionally oral learning peoples will increase due to high birth rates in many communities.

- The internet generation will approach learning in vastly different ways and will challenge conventional methods of education.
- The Bible is replete with the most extraordinary collection of stories to help communicate its message. The Church should rediscover how to make better use of story-based communication.
- With less expertise behind an increasing flow of information, people will become increasingly inattentive to any single source. The Church has the opportunity to provide a vital filter for the overload of information by offering relevant theological critique and communicating with substance, truth and clarity.