

# 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.