GLOBAL MEMBER CARE

VOLUME THREE

Stories and Strategies for Staying the Course



Kelly O'Donnell & Michèle Lewis O'Donnell
EDITORS

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

Global Member Care (Vol. 3): Stories and Strategies for Staying the Course

© 2024 by Kelly O'Donnell and Michèle Lewis O'Donnell. All Rights Reserved.

For updates on the Global Member Care series, including new links and resources, visit: https://sites.google.com/site/globalmca.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with reviews. This manuscript may not be entered into AI, even for AI training. For permission, email permissions@wclbooks.com. For corrections, email editor@wclbooks.com.

William Carey Publishing (WCP) publishes resources to shape and advance the missiological conversation in the world. We publish a broad range of thought-provoking books, and the publishers and editors do not necessarily endorse all opinions set forth here or in works referenced within this book. The responsibility for the interpretation and use of the material lies with the reader and neither the publishers nor editors shall be held liable for damages arising from its use.

The URLs included in this workbook are provided for personal use only and are current as of the date of publication, but the publisher disclaims any obligation to update them after publication.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the NASB® New American Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. lockman.org.

Scripture quotations marked Amplified are taken from the Amplified Bible, Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Published by William Carey Publishing
10 W. Dry Creek Cir
Littleton, CO 80120 | www.missionbooks.org

William Carey Publishing is a ministry of Frontier Ventures
Pasadena, CA | www.frontierventures.org

Cover and Interior Designer: Mike Riester

ISBNs: 978-1-64508-591-1 (paperback)
978-1-64508-593-5 (epub)

Printed Worldwide

28 27 26 25 24 1 2 3 4 5 IN

Library of Congress Control Number: 2024939943

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

1

Prioritizing the Frontier Peoples

Strategic Implications for Mission and Member Care

Rebecca Lewis and Tim Lewis

Specialized training and member care are crucial to enable people to be effective with the most difficult people groups and places—and to stay long enough to make a difference. Without strategic awareness, mission workers can be inadvertently diverted from pioneering among Unreached People Groups (UPGs) to "easier" locations that already have higher concentrations of workers and stronger local support structures for children, families, and teams. Frontier workers must specifically be supported for the special challenges of pioneering work, or else they will tend to gravitate to "reached" people groups—i.e., those that already have indigenous Christian movements.

In this chapter, we highlight the incredible progress made in bringing Jesus into previously overlooked communities through an emphasis on people groups and through the development of new forms of member care designed to support pushes into pioneering areas. We then clarify why 25 percent of humanity remains in "Frontier People Groups" (FPGs), which are the least reached subset of UPGs. We propose the strategic priority of sending many more workers to start family-blessing movements to Christ in the largest FPGs. Lastly, we suggest ways to prepare and support today's workers to overcome the barriers that keep these groups outside the Kingdom.

We need to undertake significant rethinking of strategic training, innovations in outreach, and relevant member care for those involved in pioneering or frontier work. As this chapter explains, the remaining FPGs share specific challenges that help to explain why movements to Christ have not taken hold among these groups. Historically, the greatest progress has happened when support for mission workers is geared toward the unique difficulties of a particular mission context, such as happened with tribal people groups beginning nearly one hundred years ago. Lessons from that era still apply today.

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

Breakthroughs from Seeing with "People Group Eyes"

In the twentieth century, the rise of air transportation and radio/phone communication opened up access to isolated tribal peoples, nearly all of whom had never heard of Jesus. Great progress resulted from Cameron Townsend's insight that unless we see the world with "people group eyes," the spread of churches could give the false impression that the gospel was available to an increasing number of people groups, when actually it was not. In the 1930s, Townsend established the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Wycliffe, and "jungle camps" to train workers to survive amid even the most isolated tribal peoples, to learn their language, and to teach them literacy and the Scriptures. It quickly became clear that these difficult situations required specific types of training and specialized staff support (later called member care), which Wycliffe and others designed and provided. More recently, similar "desert camps" have been proposed to train people to work with the nomadic tribes of the desert (Philips 2002). A new training program for various types of nomadic peoples was launched in 2018, now called Nomadic Connect (Offereigns 2024).

The ethno-linguistic tribal focus was amazingly successful. The number of Protestant mission agencies more than doubled between 1945 and 1969 (Winter 1970, 54–55). The 1,500 tribal groups in New Guinea, for example, are no longer "unreached"—almost all of them have at least 2 percent evangelical Christians.

However, by the 1970s most of the denominational missions were saying the job of mission outreach was finished. "Missionaries, go home" was a mantra of some. Most mission workers worked among overseas Christians; they saw churches everywhere and assumed that the rest of the world was the same. Meanwhile, the people groups with no Christians were hidden from view. Today, after fifty years of expansion into Africa and Asia, over 80 percent of Christians still live in countries where more than 50 percent of the population identifies as Christian (Zurlo, Johnson, and Crossing 2023).

It again took "people group eyes" to reveal that, even after the emphasis on remote tribal groups, the pioneering or frontier mission task was far from finished. Moreover, many people groups untouched by the gospel were still "hidden" in highly populated areas too, not just in remote areas. In 1974, Ralph Winter conducted a famous global analysis, presented at Lausanne's first International Congress on World Evangelization. He was shocked to discover that *about 60 percent of the world's population still lived in people groups with no indigenous churches of their own* (Lewis 2018a).

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

The successful push to reach tribal peoples had somehow bypassed the major religious blocs of Islam and Hinduism, and the incredible work of China Inland Mission had been seemingly eclipsed by the Communist revolution. The stark reality was most easily seen on a pie chart Winter produced, called "Penetrating the Final Frontiers," which revealed huge areas full of "unreached" people groups without witness or churches in China, India, and the Muslim world (Lewis 2018a).

The pie chart also showed, surprisingly, that mission workers from the United States had settled almost entirely among the people groups and in geographic areas with high percentages of national Christians, helping with discipleship, pastoral training, and evangelistic outreach (Lewis 2018a). Therefore, member care resources were focused on the needs of this type of workers at that time. As the field of member care began to coalesce in the 1970s into a recognized movement, Christian mental health practitioners and people with firsthand experience in mission talked "openly and at times passionately about the challenges of mission life. Many writings from the 1970s addressed the areas of missionary preparation, selection/evaluation, field adjustment, longevity, children's issues, women's roles, and reentry: in short, how to better support and equip mission personnel" (O'Donnell 2015, 92). However, with the new data emerging on UPGs, member care personnel increasingly needed to address problems of workers facing the complexities of pioneering within huge people groups with no believers.

Astounding Progress Among Unreached People Groups

A new strategic challenge to "see" and reach out to UPGs was launched in 1975 and had taken hold by the mid-1980s. Some 17,000 UPGs were originally identified, and roughly 10,000 of them are now "reached"—which the Joshua Project defines as having more than 2 percent strongly committed or evangelical Christians and 5 percent other Christians. All believers who hold to a high view of Scripture and the need for heart conversion to Christ are considered "Great Commission Christians" or evangelicals, including Pentecostals and charismatics. Zurlo et al. (2023) estimated that there are over 2.6 billion Christians and over 400 million evangelicals globally.

Surprisingly, even though over 90 percent of global mission workers were still serving "reached" people groups, those who focused on working among UPGs made huge progress in establishing movements to Christ. As previously with the tribal peoples, whole new agencies arose to take on the

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

challenge of the UPG mega-blocs, such as Muslims, while a growing number of Indian mission agencies and churches sent workers cross-culturally to that country's many UPGs. Despite facing difficult situations, with few member care resources focused on their needs, workers banded together in new structures, organizations, and teams to tackle the challenge of UPGs.

As a result of seeing with "people group eyes" once again, astounding progress in spreading the gospel has been made during the last forty years. Not only are half of the original UPGs now "reached," but another 40 percent of the remaining UPGs had growing indigenous movements to Christ. That left only 60 percent of the remaining UPGs with no sign of progress of the gospel (representing 25 percent of the world's population).

In 2018, Chris Maynard of Transforming Information created an updated version of Winter's pie chart (unpublished), using data from the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, Operation World, and Joshua Project. The new version of this chart (shown here) (Butler, Lewis, and Maynard 2024) graphically clarifies the remaining "frontier" mission task. It reveals the location of "Frontier People Groups," defined as those UPGs that still have no known indigenous movements to Jesus and have no more than one Christian of any kind for every 1,000 people (Lewis 2018a). We have produced an animated video of this new pie chart, which is now available in multiple languages (Joshua Project; Maynard and Lewis 2018).

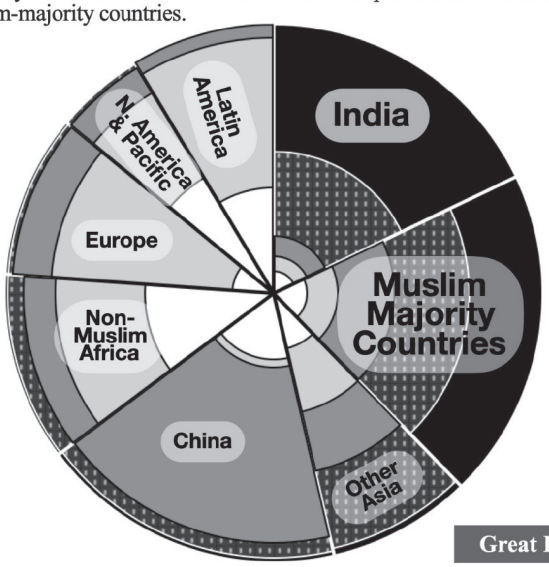
The data show global progress of the gospel beyond all expectations. For example, today the gospel has finally been established in China among the Han Chinese, where millions of believers no longer view God as a foreign God but as their Creator and Father too. The Communist push to kill faith in God did not ultimately succeed! Many movements to Christ have emerged among Buddhist people groups; fewer than 2 percent of the remaining FPGs are Buddhist or associated with tribal or ethnic religions (32 million people out of 2 billion).

Even more importantly, though the world's population has nearly doubled, in just 40 years (between 1980 and 2020) the percentage of the world's population in FPGs dropped from 60 percent to only 25 percent. And the global ratio of committed followers of Jesus to people in FPGs improved from 1:10 to 1:2, as the population of committed followers of Jesus in the world quadrupled while the population in the remaining FPGs decreased by 20 percent (see bar graph accompanying the pie chart).

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

The Remaining Frontier Mission Task

This chart shows the global distribution of followers of Jesus and non-believers, including among Unreached People Groups (UPGs), and Frontier People Groups (FPGs), which are those UPGs with **no progress of the gospel, still needing movements to Jesus**. The 25% of humanity in FPGs—shown in black—still need pioneer workers and are mostly in India and Muslim-majority countries.

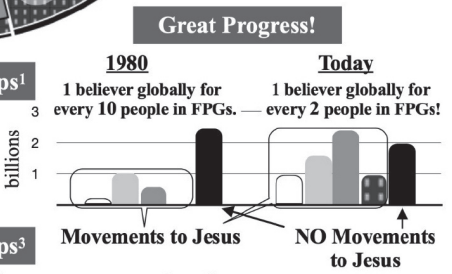


60% live in "Reached" People Groups[1]

- 12% Followers of Jesus[2]
- 21% Other Christians
- 27% Culturally-near non-believers

40% live in Unreached People Groups[3]

- 15% Limited response to the gospel (some movements to Jesus[3])
- 25% Frontier People Groups (no known movements to Jesus[4])



[1] 60% of the world live in people groups where the gospel is well known and has had significant impact. (greater than 2% Evangelical or greater than 5% Christian Adherent)

[2] Estimate based on published figures for Evangelicals, Charismatics & Pentecostals.

[3] Up to 2% Evangelical or 5% Christian Adherent. [4] No more than 0.1% Christian Adherent.

Percentages based on a global population of 8 billion people, using data from JoshuaProject.net/frontier

Adapted with permission from the Go31.org Prayer Guide—for the 31 largest Frontier People Groups

Used with permission of Rebecca Lewis.

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

Thank you for reading this preview.
To purchase a copy of this book, visit:

https://missionbooks.org/products/global-member-care-vol-3

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.