

## Comment

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The Center for World Christian Studies, located at North Park Theological Seminary, exemplifies the spirit of this issue. Structurally, the center serves as a bridge between NPTS and Serve Globally, the international ministries of the Evangelical Covenant Church; and its director Paul DeNeui is appropriately both an NPTS professor and an ECC missionary. Theologically, the center represents the often-neglected truth of orthopraxy, which refers to “right theology” that leads to “right mission” in the world. Orthopraxy also implies that the church’s missionary and pastoral activities lead to “right theology.”

Serve Globally seeks to “practice the whole mission across cultures and around the world.” In specifying “whole mission,” this vision conveys the historical commitment of the ECC to both evangelism and justice. Practically, it aspires to operationalize around the world the five mission priorities of the ECC—to make and deepen disciples, start and strengthen churches, love mercy/do justice, develop leaders, and serve globally—across cultures and around the world.

The formula “Serve Globally seeks to serve globally across cultures and around the world” is awkward to say the least; however, it points to a very important truth about global mission—namely, its inseparable connection to the local. Serve Globally seeks to cultivate an intercultural, global witness to the missional activities of the church at home; for ultimately there is no qualitative difference between global mission and home mission, especially in the age of globalization. What the church does “over there” (at the ends of the earth, cf. Acts 1:8) is what it should be doing “right here” (in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria) and vice versa. In this light, the neologism “glocal” aptly describes the mission of the church. May the word gain acceptance some day in our official dictionaries—or

at least in the lecture halls of the theological academy.

This issue has sought to achieve this “glocal” perspective, as the contributors represent both Serve Globally personnel and their international partners. Framed by the ECC’s five mission priorities, this issue features a pair of articles for each priority, one from a North American missionary perspective and one from a host country perspective. The hope is that, collectively, these voices have the ring of a diverse but unified song of God’s mission.

Vincent Miéville, president of the Evangelical Free Church of France, provide a bird’s eye view of discipling in the country, while missionaries Holly and Jason Vandor share their perspective on what form discipling takes in the rapidly diversifying city of Marseille in southern France. Timo Heimlich, church planter and pastor in Berlin, makes a strong case for the necessity of broad collaboration—with local businesspeople, artists, and other cultural influencers as well as with the global church—for effective evangelism and church planting in a post-Christian context. Tammi Biggs Hernandez, church planter and pastor in the Dominican Republic, emphasizes the importance of accepting others, wherever they may be in their spiritual journey. The contribution of Mathew Jock Moses, president of the Evangelical Covenant Church of South Sudan and Ethiopia, demonstrates that, in a context of war and poverty, the histories of the formation of the church and ministries of mercy and justice cannot be told independently. David Husby, recently retired director of Covenant World Relief, stresses the importance of intercultural mutuality—the complete opposite of paternalism—in relief and development work.

What does mental health have to do with leadership development? Missionary Grace Shim, who is also a licensed therapist, makes a strong connection between the two, while Shekhar Singh, professor of ministry at South Asia Theological Research Institute, reminds us how social context ought to shape the formation of church leaders who are equipped to respond to the issues and needs of that context—in his case, India. Cindy Wu, program manager of nonprofit *houston welcomes refugees*, describes the rich reciprocity that occurs between refugees and refugee workers, while Julio Isaza, Colombian-born missionary to Colombia, describes how the young people of El Bagre have taught him the ways of shalom in a place of violence. Both Wu and Isaza celebrate what they have gained in working among the vulnerable and traumatized.

In framing this issue by the ECC’s five mission priorities, we sensed the need to identify and add a sixth category, namely, intercultural mission

partnership. For such partnerships, more than anything else, demonstrate the changing face of mission. The days of West-to-East, North-to-South mission are over, meaning, among other things, that the death knell has rung for Western missionary paternalism, ethnocentrism, and other stains of the colonial missions era. In the postcolonial age, mission is truly “from everywhere to everywhere.” The last two articles discuss this core principle of partnership, which strives for genuine equality between missionaries and host peoples. Mark Seversen, ECC director of missional congregations, encourages eschewing “coffeehouse discipleship” for an integral discipleship in which mission and maturity are inseparable. The issue concludes with a co-authored article by missionary David Stockamp and Jacques Vungbo, vice president of the Covenant Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo, describing a ministry that exemplifies true partnership, invaluable for the future of the church’s mission.

It has been a genuine pleasure to serve as guest editor, alongside Hauna Ondrey, in putting this issue together. May it contribute to orthopraxy, the thinking and doing of the church, for the transformation of the world.