



## “Correct Me If I’m Wrong”

The quarterly bulletin of the Global  
Community of Mission Information Workers

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As this edition of the bulletin is being published, we are acutely aware of the great suffering occurring in India at this moment from COVID-19. Our prayers are with churches in India as they minister in many and varied ways.

### World Inquiry India Consultation II 2021

by Joseph Sam

The 1990s watchword of the **AD 2000 And Beyond Movement** was, “A church for every people and the gospel for every person by the year 2000.” When evangelical missions moved “Beyond” the year 2000, many sensed that a renewed vision was needed. The World Inquiry (Short for Evangelizing Our World Inquiry), a global quantitative and qualitative research project conducted over three years (2001-2003), was catalyzed by Luis Bush and others to discern a fresh mission vision from God. Luis Bush wrote, “The purpose of the World Inquiry was to listen to hear and look for expressions of the *Missio Dei* (the mission of God).”

In his book *“Transformational Action”* Richard Howell, writing about the World Inquiry India consultations held from January 6th to the 27th 2003, said “a pattern emerged as city after city inquiry led immediately to action plans. Certain questions of the inquiry became the basis for very distinct action steps.”

Today, in response to an invitation from Richard Howell for a decade of prayer and revival (2020-30), a new “India Inquiry” seeks a fresh mission vision to reach *“India: The Greatest Challenge to World Evangelization”* (Mission Frontiers, May/June 2019). While Luis Bush’s catalytic hand has helped to instigate this India Inquiry, Indian leaders are coordinating this more focused sequel to the World Inquiry.



An online questionnaire for quantitative survey and data analysis using an automated real-time analytical solution is being undertaken with the help of the global technical team of the World Inquiry. Reports of survey findings, accompanied by a compendium of papers selected from a sizable collection of new and former manuscripts, will be presented and discussed at the India Inquiry National Mission Consultation (NMC-2021) scheduled for March 2021.

Due to the prevailing COVID-19 situation and restrictions for social gathering, the scope for traditional qualitative survey methods seems bleak. There is a need to seek new models of collective listening applying both online and offline strategies for effective research and study.

The inquiry and consultation are expected to initiate catalytic dialogue for societal impact across all spheres of influence. NMC 2021 is expected to be a fusion of Church leaders, Christian organizations, mission organizations, and professionals from all walks of life creating opportunities for broad-scale collaboration to advance missions. As a run-up to the main event, several state/district level pre-conference meetings are proposed which will feed into the national event.

One of the most important objectives of the Inquiry is to listen to God and receive from God through prayer. The decade of prayer and revival (2020-30) aims to build a network of prayer teams across different regions of India interceding for the move of the Spirit of God to reach the unreached people and touch India with the shalom of God.

All eyes and ears are waiting for the new watchword emerging from the major event post-COVID-19 from South Asia praying through the window for a fresh revelation from the heart of God.

Over the past few months I have commented on the missions implications of COVID-19 using an oceanic motif. Specifically, here [<https://jaymatenga.com/navigating-waves/>] and here [<https://jaymatenga.com/different-boats/>]. I have also invested in 'reimagining' the World Evangelical Mission Commission using maritime metaphors, viewing it as a port in a safe-harbor. Aside from the fact that I live in an island nation in the South Pacific, I find maritime metaphors helpful in an era which is marked by VUCA: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity—and that was BEFORE we were hit by the COVID-19 tsunami. If missions leaders and organisations did not understand what "agile" processes meant before the pandemic, they certainly should now! There is simply no solid ground beneath us at the moment.

In my most recent blogpost [<https://jaymatenga.com/room4new/>], I quote economist and change strategist Thomas Friedman who said, "Only a crisis (actual or perceived) produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around". I go on to comment that "the ideas that are lying around" in missions seem to be vying for dominance in this threshold moment. Part of my job as a leader of a large and loose missions network is to remain apprised (as best I can) of the conversations and concerns of missions alliance, network, and agency leaders as well as the 'chatter' amongst missiologists, strategists, and trouble makers, oops, I mean innovators. How missions will change post-pandemic is not entirely clear yet, but many believe God is giving us a wake-up call. One leader shared recently that this experience has confirmed for her that "God, alone, is a strategist; we're all just playing". We are being reminded we are involved in God's mission.

There is some expectation that for all our data collecting, mapping, analysis, strategizing and effort, the Holy Spirit is going to sweep through the nations to bring people to Christ in numbers and ways we could not have hoped or imagined, let alone planned for. Those with such expectations point to a significant increase in global prayer [<https://weamc.global/covid-prayer/>] during this period as a precursor of a great turning to the Lord. At base, this is merely a prophetic hypothesis, but a broad sense of a coming global spiritual awakening should not be quickly dismissed. With God, nothing is impossible—even when trans-border missions comes to a screeching halt.

The COVID-19 tempest is tossing us about, but it will calm and we will beach on the shores of a new land with a new era of missions ahead. Missions information workers will need to keep a close eye on what emerges, because missions leaders will want good data to work with. Good information helps us discern where the Spirit is moving. Wise discernment from good information will help create coherent narratives to guide the tactics of missions in the new normals (plural) confronting the Church. Rather than rely on old assumptions and goals, we need to ask afresh, what are the new needs, where should we prioritise, how best can we invest our resources? All the while, committing to #stayonmission.

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## See You There ... with a Difference!

We usually include a note of conferences that we know mission information workers will be at and we offer to connect and meet up with likeminded people over a coffee or a meal. There have been many good connections made and friendships renewed this way. But it doesn't work so well in the current global situation.

Instead, we will try something different. We have scheduled a Zoom meeting specifically for mission information workers (any degree of involvement, any skill level, any special interests, anywhere in the world). There is no agenda. Let's see if this is useful.

The date is Thursday August 20th. To make it easier for your time zone and schedule there will be three different connection times to choose from. They will be spaced at six hour intervals throughout the day:

06:00 UTC (e.g. 6pm in New Zealand, 2pm in Singapore and 7am in Nigeria)

12:00 UTC (e.g. 8pm in Singapore, 1pm in Nigeria and 5am in California)

18:00 UTC (e.g. 7pm in Nigeria, 11am in California and 8am in Hawaii)

Join Zoom Meeting: Meeting ID: **962 4337 3621** Passcode: **336912**

<https://zoom.us/j/96243373621?pwd=YnhySVJqdUdDSVBiVmVFd0tRYTd0UT09>

If you hope to come, it would encourage us to know. We hope to see you there!

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# Ask, Pray, Improve

By Chris Maynard

After many fits and starts, the Global Data Initiative (GDI) reached an important landmark in May with the publication of our first survey report.

We had an ABC to guide us. AIM at improvement, BEGIN by asking questions, CONTINUE in prayer. Here's what is happening under those headings. You may notice they are not in alphabetical order. Perhaps that reflects the non-linear path this project is taking.

**BEGIN WITH QUESTIONS:** In 2019 (pre-pandemic), we asked 82 mission leaders and information workers around the world in 68 different organisations about the issues they have and the information they need and use to address those. The results are available freely at ([www.ocresearch.info/sites/default/files/GDI\\_Survey\\_of\\_Mission\\_Information\\_Users.pdf](http://www.ocresearch.info/sites/default/files/GDI_Survey_of_Mission_Information_Users.pdf)). The report has encouraged some, intrigued others, and seriously troubled a few.

**CONTINUE IN PRAYER:** Following up from the report, we have established a new GDI Pray Tank. It is a cross between a prayer meeting and a think tank. It has been a delight! We are meeting every other week. We have 9 people now, born in 5 different decades from the 1950s to the 1990s praying for the future of continuous global data to support the mission of the church. It is a good forum to share possibilities. We have for instance discussed and prayed for increasing regional responsibility for parts of global data. I consider this pray tank to be now at the heart of this initiative.

**AIM AT IMPROVEMENT:** What comes out of this we still don't know. One improvement we plan is some sort of catalogue of global data resources.

My small team of co-laborers has continued to work with me to see what else might be squeezed from the data. We want the significant efforts invested in the GDI to this point to reveal the full wisdom contained in the responses we received. Do you see something in the survey report that we missed?

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## Who's Who in Missions Information

*Special Profile: Samuel Law*

### 1) [CMIW] Please tell us about yourself.

[SL] I'm an "ABC," an American-born Chinese and a third-generation pastor. My grandfather was the pastor of Trinity Dutch Reformed Church in Gulangyu (Xiamen) China and my father served in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Seattle. My wife is Taiwanese and I have four children, ranging from 24 to 14. We're thankful the Lord has also called my oldest into the ministry and he is currently serving as a youth pastor in a UMC congregation in Houston.



I was called to full-time ministry my first year in college with the intent of serving in Creative Access Nations in Asia, so I studied Electrical Engineering and eventually obtained a PhD in Biomedical Engineering. But it took me nearly twenty years before I returned to Asia. During my theological studies at Regent College (Vancouver, BC) required by the sending agency, God called me back to my home church in Seattle. With many second-generation diaspora Christians, there is often a "silent exodus" (see "Christianity Today," August 12, 1996). God placed the question in my heart "What use is it to bring people in through the front door of the church when so many are leaving the back?" Answering that question led me to serve in the English-speaking Ministries in my home church, the Evangelical Chinese Church of Seattle, among the Chinese Diaspora for fourteen years. It was only in 2009 that God said, "Okay, you're ready to return to Asia." We left Seattle and spent seven years at Asbury Theological Seminary in Lexington, Kentucky where I obtained a PhD in Intercultural Studies and my wife a DMin in Spiritual Formation. We were also blessed to serve at the Lexington Chinese Christian Church, a Chinese-speaking congregation. I thought God to be humorous in preparing me for Asia by brushing up my Mandarin in Kentucky!

## 2) [CMIW] **What is your current ministry?**

[SL] We left Lexington, Kentucky and arrived in Singapore in 2016 where I serve as an Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies at Singapore Bible College. I teach everything from History and Theology of Missions to Cultural Anthropology to Cross-Cultural Discipleship to Missions Research for the School of Theology-English. Since 2019, I also took on the role of Senior Dean of Academic Affairs for the College's four schools.

## 3) [CMIW] **What are the contributions you have made to world missions that have brought you the greatest satisfaction?**

[SL] I'm very thankful to be able to make small contributions in two aspects. The first aspect is to equip the next generation of pastors and missionaries in the Chinese diaspora and in SE Asia. It's my hope that I can share with them our generation's struggles and mistakes so that they may learn from them and be better servants in their generation. A key element of this aspect is in the area of contextualization – or perhaps a less loaded term, translation – of the gospel. Most Asian and Chinese diaspora churches, while blessed with growth, are generally built on Western models, and stagnate in growth by the second generation because society sees churches as “foreign;” many have become isolated from their own communities. This is because, as one of my colleagues, Dr. Jerry Hwang, loves to say, “Churches are resistant to change, and they call this faithfulness.” In other words, churches are imprinted with what they have been taught by missionaries, equating traditions with orthodoxy and orthopraxis, and are unwilling to change them. But the Bible is a story of contextualization (see Dean Fleming's book “Contextualization in the New Testament”) and churches need to realize that every culture and every generation needs to refresh their wineskins. Hence, the next generation needs to take up the mantle of translating Christianity within their cultural and generational framework if there is to be a continuing transmission of the gospel. As Garrison Wynn once said, “We are not teaching young people to live in our times. We [current generation] are living in theirs.”

A second aspect is to press for a paradigm shift in missions research to a Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) perspective. The social sciences have already made the shift ten to fifteen years ago, but unfortunately, missiology is just beginning to do so. As part of my doctoral research, I did a review of three major missiology journals (from 2010-2014 of *Missiology*, *Mission Studies*, and *IBMR*) and found that only one article by Dan Shaw out of 284 articles actually used a CAS approach even though 184 articles recognized their context as “complex” (see my dissertation/book “Revitalizing Missions on the Cusp of Change,” page 202). The danger is that if we don't have the right metaphors to analyze the data, we may misinterpret the data and miss what is truly happening (see Andrew Abbott, “Chaos of Disciplines” and Stephen Kellert, “In the Wake of Chaos”). As we move into an age of “big data” and the “internet of everything,” will we as missions researchers have the right tools and paradigms to analyze what is already a complex and “constant change” environment?

## 4) [CMIW] **What dreams do you have for your next ten years of ministry?**

[SL] By God's grace, I'd really like to do two things. First, I'd like to participate in the Santa Fe Institute's CAS summer program. I feel as if I've only touched the surface of CAS theory and would really like to learn how to model and develop programs to analyze complex data. If I'm able to do the first, the second thing I'd like to do is to get a Templeton grant (one of the few foundations that will support religious organizations) and develop off-the-shelf CAS programs for mission agencies for data analysis. If I can contribute in this way, I feel I can at least have helped, in a small way, missiology to catch up with the rest of the social sciences. More importantly, it may help sodalities and modalities better discern what God is doing in the world and how to better serve Him in missions.

## 5) [CMIW] **Is there some way you'd be willing to help the CMIW community?**

[SL] Right now, saddled by administration, research is on the back burner, so I'm not able to offer too much help other than the occasional comment in the KSKI forum. But when I finish my term as SDAA, I'd be open to participating in a working group to develop CAS models and approaches for missiology, maybe some who are willing to apply for the Templeton grant with me. God is working in so many ways around that world. It's polycentric, multimodal and continuously changing. Traditional linear and reductionist approaches are no longer valid in such a context. But if we can develop tools to “track” His work in this 21st century context, then maybe we can better see our blind spots and be more obedient to the Holy Spirit's leading.

## Information from the Word

"I don't speak on my own. I say only what the Father who has sent me has told me to say." (John 12:49 CEV). Jesus became flesh and observed and experienced much during his earthly years. Even so, he depended upon the Father in everything. We who are involved in missions research normally immerse ourselves in our data and information, knowing that it is our responsibility to communicate well our acquired knowledge. Do prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit dominate our discernment of how and what knowledge needs to be disseminated?"

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### Final Details:

- With the help of God this bulletin is now produced quarterly in English, Portuguese and Spanish.
- The Editorial Team is comprised of Chris Maynard, Duane Frasier, Larry Kraft, Nelson Jennings, Rodrigo Tinoco and Stephanie Kraft.
- Please send any comments, suggestions or ideas to us at [info@globalcmiw.org](mailto:info@globalcmiw.org).
- Back issues can be found at [www.globalcmiw.org](http://www.globalcmiw.org).