

# How TW 2020 is a Catalyst for Church Planting

By Luis Bush and Paul Eshleman\*



*Jesus prayed to the Father, "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:22). Church planting catalytic impulses have been constant since Pentecost. These impulses include a God-given purpose, renewal and prayer as a means, the building of a committed core of servant leaders co-laboring in healthy partnerships, and conferences leading to structures and focusing on the unengaged and unreached people groups.*

Transform World Connections (TWC) which led to Transform World 2020 (TW2020) took place in May 2005 at a prayer rally in Jakarta with links to fifty-four satellite locations hosting transformational prayer events throughout Indonesia. TW was born out of a three-year World Inquiry in the listening mode, in response to the question: "What is God saying to His servants around the world at the beginning of a new century?" The term Transform World Connections emphasizes the mission of connecting God's people and the nations wherever they serve with the paradigm of "mission as transformation."

The second phase of the TW movement, TW2020, was launched in October 2012 in Bali, Indonesia, in response to seven global challenges engaging a committed core of Christians in the seven spheres of cultural influence.<sup>1</sup> TW2020 encompasses all ten defined regions of the world, spanning three generations. One of the seven global challenges is Christ's Missional Challenge in response to Christ's Great Commission. It is chaired by Dick Eastman and facilitated by Paul Eshleman and incorporates several strategic partnerships: Joshua Project, Finishing the Task, Issachar Initiative, Every Home for Christ, and the Center for the Study of Global Christianity.

TW2020 seeks to build communities of servant catalysts everywhere to establish a committed core of God's people by means of open communication, mutual commitment, accountability, trust, and attention to results. Meaningful interaction and successful execution constitute the currency that resources the network. TWC related events play a role as platforms for sharing knowledge, experience, ideas, and relationships, while the focus groups serve as communities of servant catalysts who set up practical agendas for local and global transformation. TW2020 is a catalyst for church planting by means of catalytic events, catalytic partners working together as one body, and catalytic focus on the unengaged and unreached people groups.

## **TW2020 Catalytic Events for Church Planting**

Beginning in 2012, TW2020 annual summits have frequently catalyzed church planting movements among the unreached. For example, after the TW2020 annual summit in Bangkok in 2017, following the presentation of Paul Eshleman, Mangthianlal Thangniang, a delegate from the state of Manipur in NE India, wrote an email titled Christ's Missional Commitment as follows: "I cannot help but my tears just come out when you spoke on the topic: 'How long will they have to wait?' I sensed the anointing of God in your life flowing into me. And as I entered the room

again to catch up with the group, tears for these Unengaged Unreached people groups swept over my face. I had to leave the room. The Holy Spirit prompted me from your challenge ... we will commit, as an organization, that, by the end of December 2017 we will reach thirty-three of the Unengaged Unreached People Groups (UUPGs) including the following: *Bangladesh*: Dalu & Ushoi; *Bhutan*: Dzalakha, Kurtop, Lakha, Matpa, Nyenpa, *Tibet*: Tseku; *India*: Badi, Baira, Barae, Bot, Dhobi, Jalkeot, Kachera, Kahar, Kalabaz, Paharia, Pandithar, Parenga, Purig-Pa, Raddi, Santia, Sofi, Sutradhar, Telengi, Velar; and *Myanmar*: Central Thai, Punjabi-Eastern, Tai Khun, Tai Leng, Tai Nua.”<sup>2</sup>

This commitment by a participant at the TW2020 summit catalyzed the first gathering of Christian leaders in Manipur in the twenty-first century according to Mangthianlal. He wrote: “The Manipur Summit exceeded 350 registrations; the maximum capacity set by the Hospitality Committee. More than fifteen denominations provided financial support to the Summit and sent the highest decision makers in their churches as delegates. Furthermore, nineteen key educational institutions participated which ‘marks a new dawn of hope.’” The key focus of Transform Manipur 2017 was threefold: 1) Transform Manipur; 2) Transform Trans-Asian Highway and 3) Transform Trans-Asian Highway.<sup>3</sup>

***Christ’s Missional Challenge TW Research Conference in Bihar***: If the core of the 10/40 Window is North India then Bihar state would be considered the core of core of the 10/40 Window with 103 million people and 39,073 villages, where the Christian population is currently estimated at around 0.3% facing the highest levels of socioeconomic challenges. A group of front-line church planters, mission executives and global researchers gathered in Patna, Bihar in January 2014. The report by Dr. Alex Phillip, TW2020 facilitator for South Asia, concluded with these words: “We sense a kairos moment in the history of the Church in Bihar!”<sup>4</sup> Pioneer church planters and leaders, evangelists, mission activists and practitioners focused their attention toward those who have never heard the Gospel and among those where a vibrant disciple-making initiative is lacking.

***Finishing the Task Events***: Year after year Finishing the Task has convened events at Saddleback Church with Pastor Rick Warren calling God’s people to support the effort to adopt unengaged unreached people groups UUPG(s) and engage them with long term workers. There were sessions at the conference where people can come forward to “say yes” for specific UUPGs to be adopted by their organizations in hopes of all leaving the last day with the UUPG list at zero. The call is for engaging partners to send at least two national workers for three years to do evangelism, discipleship, and church planting.

## **TW2020 Catalytic Partnerships for Church Planting**

### ***Every Home for Christ (EHC)—Dick Eastman, chairperson of TW2020 Christ’s Missional Challenge***

EHC is a church planting catalyst through prayer, outreach, witness to people living in homes, and the establishment of Christ Groups. EHC has been working actively throughout the world with more than 500 mission agencies and denominations to strategically plant the gospel message in hundreds of millions of homes through door-to-door, face-to-face evangelism contacts in 192 countries. To determine the number of Christ Groups since the launch of TW2020, Dick provided up-to-date information from November 2012 to July 2018: “Homes reached were 583,812,528. Christ Groups begun were 142,721.”<sup>5</sup>

### ***Issachar Initiative—Paul Eshleman, Facilitator of Christ’s Missional Challenge***

The Issachar Initiative is a collaborative effort serving the Global Church as an advocate for the least-reached people of the world. It is designed to challenge Christian organizational leaders and Kingdom donors to send both workers and initial financial support to the most neglected corners. Issachar is committed to be a trusted source of information on the progress of the Church in fulfilling each biblical element of the Great Commission. It is committed to the following Scriptural mandates:

1. Scriptures translated into EVERY language—Romans 10:17
2. Disciples made in EVERY people group— Matthew 28:19-20
3. The Gospel proclaimed to EVERY person (Evangelism)—Mark 16:15
4. The Gospel in story form for EVERY oral learner (Orality)—Matthew 13:34
5. The church planted in EVERY village, neighborhood, and high-rise. —Matthew 24:14

### ***Finishing the Task (FTT)—Paul Eshleman***

The mission of FTT is to form a global network of local churches, denominations, church planters and mission agencies that are willing to work together in partnership to see church planting initiatives launched among the

remaining Unengaged, Unreached People Groups (UUPG). Christ remains unknown and unacknowledged among these people who have no church, no mission agency, and no person that has yet taken responsibility to tell them of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. These groups are at the very heart of the unfinished Great Commission task.

FTT keeps track of each of the unreached people groups so reports are submitted as soon as a group is engaged. FTT keeps a detailed accounting which includes an identification number and name of the people group, country where they are located, which entity is reporting, the names of outside partners, the network, denomination, and the local partnering ministry.

### ***Joshua Project and the Unreached Peoples— Dan Scribner***

This organization seeks to bring definition to the unfinished task of the Great Commission by highlighting the least-reached people groups of the world. It seeks to answer the questions that result from the Great Commission's call to make disciples among every nation (people group):

- Who are the ethnic people groups of the world?
- Which people groups still need an initial church-planting movement in their midst?
- What ministry resources are available to help outreach among the least-reached?

Joshua Project gathers, integrates, and shares people group information to encourage pioneer church planting movements among every ethnic group in the world and to facilitate effective coordination of mission agency efforts. Joshua Project compiles the work of numerous missions' researchers to develop a list of all ethnic peoples that is as complete as possible.

For the 30 days in the month of June 2018 Joshua Project had 192,000 users who took part in 253,000 sessions looking at 1,195,000 pages. Some users participated in more than one session. That means that there are typically 6,400 users taking part in 8,400 sessions looking at 39,800 pages per day.

### ***Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary— Todd Johnson***

The Center for the Study of Global Christianity collates and analyzes data on church membership and evangelistic activities collected around the world by Christian denominations. Combining this with other relevant data, the Centre provides an authoritative view of global Christianity available to various constituents for research and strategic planning.

### ***Disciple Making Movements (DMM)***

David Watson, a former church planter in Northern India with International Mission Board (IMB), recognized the emerging Disciple Making Movements (DMM's) leading to Church Planting Movements (CPM's). Watson reported that 40,000 churches had been started in the previous fifteen years in North India. Based on that experience he described the process of starting CPMs as follows: 1) church planter finds access to friendship with disconnected people; 2) church planter serves and loves disconnected friends; 3) church planter identifies a person of peace out of those friends; 4) church planter works with person of peace to invite his/her social unit (family or affinity group) into a 15-30 week inductive Bible study led by person of peace or someone else from social unit; 5) the group decides to follow Jesus and becomes a church; 6) new churches send out church planters to start the process again.

Watson's strategy of DMM catalysts emphasized not so much knowledge but obedience, not so much doctrine but doing. Foundational for a DMM catalyst was to find a man/woman/son of peace as the Lord commanded, and mentor those he was training to reproduce what he was sharing with them as the Lord said to his disciples "And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you" (Luke 10:6). From the very beginning, each person in the group is encouraged to make disciples by starting groups of their own to reproduce what they are discovering in Scripture.<sup>6</sup> They teach practical topics such as the art of intercessory prayer, engaging lost people, finding a "person of peace," and facilitating "Discovery Bible Studies" that leads to a DMM which in turn becomes a CPM.

David Garrison, in his former capacity as Associate Vice President for Strategy Coordination of the IMB, wrote a piece on CPM's, profiling the growing number that are appearing around the world and describing the qualities and characteristics of this phenomenon. He defined a CPM as a rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment.

Garrison identified ten universal elements including prayer, abundant gospel sowing, intentional church planting movements, Scriptural authority, local leadership, lay leadership, cell or house churches, churches planting churches, rapid reproduction, healthy churches. He recognized ten common findings, including worship in the heart language, evangelism that has communal implications, rapid incorporation of new converts into the life and ministry of the church, passion and fearlessness, a price to pay to become a Christian, perceived leadership crisis

or spiritual vacuum in society; on-the-job training for church leadership; leadership authority is decentralized; outsiders keep a low profile; missionaries suffer.<sup>7</sup>

## **TW2020 Catalytic Focus on the Unengaged and Unreached People Groups for Church Planting**

### ***The Unengaged Unreached People Groups (UUPGs)***

According to the IMB there are 7,072 Unreached People Groups (UPGs) on their list with less than 2% Evangelical and with a total population of 4.4 billion.<sup>8</sup> FTT takes a derivative of the IMB list which are those groups that are not yet known to be engaged. Then, FTT processes it further by removing Christian background groups and the people groups that have been reported as engaged with full-time workers. Using this approach, the current list from Finishing the Task still shows that there are 963 UUPGs that have no known active on-site long-term worker engaged in church planting ministry in the local language. These UUPGs total nearly 34 million people.<sup>9</sup>

As of November 2018, FTT reports that there are more than 981 organizations, denominations, and churches that have made commitments to send full-time workers to Unengaged, Unreached People Groups, and 377 of these organizations have sent 45,694 full-time vocational workers to 2,798 groups in the last five years. They have planted 135,946 churches and seen over 3,148,041 new believers raised up.

Mission research organizations are meeting frequently, trying to resolve the different lists of people groups and to work on more common definitions among them. As the global church keeps expanding towards the unreached corners of the planet, new groups will be found that were unknown previously. Churches, places, and language groups will be uncovered that will need to be evangelized or re-evangelized. It is likely that more lists will emerge to help us ensure that no language group, or ethno-cultural group has been ignored. Finishing the Task is looking at possible lists of diaspora groups, groups that are still “under researched,” and possibly a listing of ethno-cultural communities’/caste groups related to India and South Asia. So, as we attempt to finish the task, we realize that we are just finishing the task of beginning. We are beginning to go to new territories, beginning to translate the Bible into new languages, beginning to plant churches... all so no people group is neglected. And, as we reach them, we begin making steps to teach them “all things I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20).

### ***The 50 Largest Unreached People Groups (UPGs)***

At the October 2012 Global Summit in Bali, Transform World set a goal of reaching the 50 largest unreached people groups (UPGs) and the 50 largest unengaged unreached people groups (UUPGs) by 2020.

#### **As of July 30, 2018, ...**

- These 50 unreached people groups are comprised of 1.4 billion souls
- One in five people on earth live in these 50 largest unreached peoples
- All these people groups have less than 2% Christ-followers and limited access to the Gospel
- None have an indigenous church capable of taking the Gospel to the entire group

#### **Groups removed in 2012 from 50 Largest Unreached Peoples list:**

- Han Chinese, Hakka in China—moved above 2% Evangelical, no longer considered unreached
- Han Chinese, Min Nan in China—moved above 2% Evangelical, no longer considered unreached
- Jat, Sikh in India—population revised down to 9.2 million, below largest 50 minimum
- Pashtun, Northern in Afghanistan—population revised down to 2.6 million, below largest 50 minimum

#### **Groups added in 2018 to replace those removed above:**

- Kazakh in Kazakhstan
- Fulani in Nigeria
- Arain (Muslim traditions)
- Somali of Somalia

At first glance it appears unusual that the Top 50 Ethnolinguistic Unengaged Unreached People Groups (UUPGs) data totals 24.9 million people while the 50 Largest Unreached People Groups (UPGs) totals 1,457 million people. The reason for the difference is that they represent two distinct ways of looking at the unfinished task. Comparing UPGs and UUPGs is like comparing apples and oranges. The reason for the differences in counts and populations is that UPGs and UUPGs are different categories of people groups. UPGs are people groups with less than 2% Evangelicals and less than 5% Christian Adherents as reported in the Joshua Project list. On the other hand, UNENGAGED UPGs (UUPGs) are people groups with less than 2% Evangelicals and *no reported workers* in their

midst. All UUPGs are UPGs, but most UPGs are not UUPGs. For this reason, one would expect the total population of the top fifty UUPGs to be small compared to the total population of the top fifty UPGs.

### **Conclusion**

TW2020 acts as a catalyst for church planting in different ways of which three are described in this article. First, TW2020 catalyzes church planting by means of like-minded partners in this same mission, working together as one body. This is in keeping with the calling for unity of the body of Christ in the high priestly prayer of Jesus for his committed followers to whom he gave the Great Commission to disciple all people groups. He prayed to his heavenly Father that they may all be one, “just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, ... may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Second, TW2020 serves as a catalyst for church planting by focusing on the unengaged and unreached people groups. Third, TW2020 hosts catalytic events that substantiate and sustain the long-term nature of the church planting initiatives toward the goal of a church planting movement in every people group on earth.

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**Dr. Paul Eshleman** is Vice President of Partnerships for Cru. Paul founded the JESUS Film Project and served as its Director for twenty-five years. He currently serves as the Director, Finishing the Task Network, and President of the Issachar Initiative.

### **Notes**

1. The domains, also called spheres or mountains of cultural influence, include the arts, business, church, media, education, family, and government.
2. Mangthianlal Thangniang e-mail message to author, October 27, 2017.
3. Ibid, July 20, 2017.
4. Alex Phillip, e-mail message to author, January 14, 2014.
5. Dick Eastman, e-mail message to author, July 9, 2018.
6. Mark R. Kreitzer, *Contagious Disciple Making*, November 14, 2007, <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/2023/4526>
7. David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Monument, CO: WigTake Resources, 2014)
8. 2018-04\_GSEC\_Listing\_of\_Unreached\_People\_Groups.xls <http://www.peoplegroups.org/258.aspx>
9. The full list can be seen at [www.finishingthetask.com/downloads/FTT\\_UUPG\\_List.pdf](http://www.finishingthetask.com/downloads/FTT_UUPG_List.pdf)

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