

## Reflecting on contemporary cross-cultural missionary training

### *Ruth Wall, Chair, IMTN*

This Bulletin of the IMTN is dedicated to reflecting on contemporary issues of cross-cultural missionary training. An innovative conversation has recently taken place in Nigeria. Around 60 missionary trainers from across the country, representing different denominations and agencies met at The Redeemed College of Mission, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria to discuss how they can best equip Nigerians for cross-cultural ministry. Leaders from the Nigerian Evangelical Mission Alliance (NEMA) and the training institute NEMI called this workshop in recognition that *“the world needs competent Nigerian missionaries that are strong in spiritual character, in knowledge of effective missionary practice and in cross-cultural skills.”* A network of missionary trainers in Nigeria has been launched that will be linked with the IMTN.

The hope of this Bulletin is to continue to spark relevant and creative thinking as we hear the views and approaches from other places, allowing the insights of others to shed light on our own issues and concerns.

This Bulletin presents three sections.

**Part A:** David Ruiz, the Executive Director of the WEA- Mission Commission draws out three key lessons we can learn from mission training initiatives in the Global South and East. He invites us to re-read the Scriptures asking the Holy Spirit to speak to us, especially to challenge our familiar assumptions about mission and mission practice.

**Part B:** Reflecting on missionary training from four diverse contexts; Australia, Korea, West Africa and Panama. This sample does not allow us to make global generalisations but it reminds us of the work going on and provides a view of the strengths and possibilities, as well as the needs and challenges of missionary training.

**Part C:** Articulating some current issues of missionary training. As we talk about these issues we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand how together, we can best support and serve the church in

her mission to adequately prepare and equip those sent out into the world, whether locally or across the globe.

## **PART A: Lessons from the Majority World**

**David Ruiz, Executive Director, WEA- Mission Commission**

**The Majority world has been advancing in the learning curve for cross-cultural training. What lessons can we learn from the church in the South and East as we consider any kind of mission equipping?**

1. **We need to re-read the Scriptures asking the Spirit for new insights and understandings, applications and outcomes.** This re-reading leads us to a much more organic understanding of our God on mission. I direct your thinking to a most common passage, the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20.

In a traditional interpretation of this passage it appears that we are reading only the phrase “*Go therefore ...*” and beginning with this phrase we build a missionary philosophy based on sending. As a result of this limited understanding of the passage, we contracted a condition that Dr. Norberto Saracco, a Latin America theologian, called “sending schizophrenia”. Here the focus of all missionary effort, the measure of success and the way to evaluate our commitment is encapsulated in the number of missionaries sent to reach the unreached (and we might add, the number of supposed converts or churches established!). This limited understanding of our passage affected the way the church approaches its missionary responsibility. The local church sees mission as one programme competing with many others. It is just the responsibility of a small group of specialists called “missionaries”, “global partners” or “mission workers”. The fulfilment of this important mandate from a local church point of view relies on just a small number of church members, called the “mission committee”, or the “mission pastor”, who try to reach the world with all its needs and understand how the church is to send, support and serve its missionaries. Most importantly, **the church is relying on other people to train their missionaries** and cannot see any connection between what happens in the church and missionary training.

Let us now look at the Great Commission another way: The words “Go therefore” define the very nature of the whole Christian church as a pilgrim church. The whole church is on mission. As Norwegian missiologist Engelsen strongly affirms, we understand the church as follows:

“It is a pilgrim people on the way through this world toward the final goal of the church, which is perfect communion with God ‘face to face’, and to serve and worship him forever in his new creation (Rev 7:9-17; 21:1-5; Rom 8:22-23)”<sup>1</sup>

The Church of Jesus Christ is on the move and, in the process all the members need to understand they all are called to mission and must to respond to the question, “What is my part as I am invited to partner with God in his mission?” In the words of Chris Wright, “I should ask, what kind of *me* does God wants for *his* mission?”<sup>2</sup> Engelsviken also writes “It is not possible to be a disciple of Jesus and belong to his church without also being called to mission.”<sup>3</sup>

The result of the church’s pilgrimage among all nations is that real disciples who obey Christ’s commands must be produced; that is the true measure of success for the Church. We must measure the success of the church by discipleship, or we end up in the state described by Dallas Willard: “....it is almost universally conceded today that you can be a Christian without being a disciple”<sup>4</sup>. As a result, most church members cannot properly explain the gospel of Jesus Christ and hardly demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit to transform their lives, and this affects their personal testimony and the testimony of the Church in a terrible way. They cannot be sent on mission, and if we do send them, it is a just a matter of time before they develop many problems.

## **2. We need to understand how our Western missiology has been shaped by anthropology and sociology, and especially by management principles.**

In the worst case this moves us away from God’s organic mission to a type of managerial missiology—we do the research, we make the definitions (in the USA especially), we count the numbers (especially of people groups), we establish the “targets”, we motivate our mission force, we challenge them to “finish the task”. We can then pronounce that the Great Commission has been “completed” in this particular people group and we have finished the job, and we can check to see how much of the task is left. As Dr. Steve Moon, a fine Korean missiologist, explained that if we look at the statistics, it seems we are reaching the unreached as the number of Unreached People Groups has fallen from 17,000 to 12,000 and then to 11,000, and now to 6,889, but this is not primarily

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<sup>1</sup> Engelsviken, T., “Church/Ecclesiology” in *Dictionary of Mission Theology* ed John Corrie, 51-55 (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2007)

<sup>2</sup> Wright, Christopher, *The Mission of God* (Nottingham, InterVarsity Press, 2006) 534

<sup>3</sup> Engelsviken, T., “Church/Ecclesiology” in *Dictionary of Mission Theology* ed John Corrie, 51-55 (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2007)

<sup>4</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 1998:30

caused by the progress of church-planting movements, but by confusing definitions and inaccurate data gathering and analysis by different sources.<sup>5</sup>

But in the process we forget the cities, we forget the sovereign work of the Spirit, we do not listen to our sisters and brothers who might have different definitions, different understandings of mission, and different ways of “measuring the remaining task”. “All nations” really is more inclusive than only unreached people groups, it means “*all the nation*” as well, a concept that includes the WHOLE city, all levels of society, the poor, the rich, the nationals, the immigrants, the people in business as well as the farmers, etc..

### **3. In the Global South the mission movement is driven more by the local churches and denominations than mission agencies.**

This is not true everywhere, but is largely the case in Latin America. Nations like Korea and India, Nigeria and Brazil, have large numbers of agencies, but even there probably the majority of our cross-cultural workers come out of churches.

In IberoAmerica, in spite of the fact that we had affirmed at the start of the Mission Movement there, around 1987, that the church is in the centre of the mission process and is in the centre of the mission of God, in practice we disconnected the whole missional process from the local church. As a result of realizing this, COMIBAM, in its first General Assembly in 2000, launched the “Transformation of the Church” programme as its overall strategy, and this was its most important programme and process from then until 2006. We committed ourselves and all the resources in our movement to develop a **missional mentality** in the church that effectively produced real committed Christians (the name we use instead of discipleship to avoid the idea of discipleship as a programme instead of a process).

We also coined a new term “responsible citizen”. An effective disciple-making process was shared with the churches and mentoring processes were established in many denominations and churches to help them recover discipleship as the measure of success and thus build a solid foundation for the mission movement in Latin America. This process became a unique element of the mission movement among the National Mission Movements components of COMIBAM.

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<sup>5</sup> Moon, Steve Sang-Cheol, “Response to: Refurbishing the Vision of Reaching Every People” in *Discern What is Right* ed David Hartono and Greg Young Paek (Pasadena, East-West Center for Mission Research and development, 2012) 306

## **Part B: Reflecting on missionary training from four diverse contexts.**

### An Australian perspective

“The situation in Australia is complex” writes David Turnbull, a senior lecturer at Tabor College, Adelaide, Australia. Missionary training is offered in formal and informal programmes but the number of specialist colleges solely offering mission training has declined. Formal mission training is now more commonly a subject within a Ministry/Theological College (e.g. Morling College, Sydney Mission and Bible College, Melbourne School of Theology). There are a range of non-formal programmes run by agencies (e.g. CMS 19-week residential training at St Andrews Hall) and Missions Interlink (agency network) and here competency based approaches are very evident.

David Turnbull highlights key changes to missionary training in Australia over the last 25 years including:

- I. Accreditation requirements brings much more government influence (state and federal)
- II. Numerous reasons are contributing to the growth of online learning
- III. The move from residential to non-residential
- IV. The move from full-time to part-time study
- V. Move to more flexible study options (away from one-size-fits-all 3 year degree to 1 year Diploma etc)
- VI. Increase in number of specialist programmes (e.g. TESOL)
- VII. Decline of full-time academics in missionary training role
- VIII. Decline in extra-curricular activities to promote and equip for missionary service
- IX. Increasing need to apply missiological principles and practices to local context (not just global)

### A Korean perspective

Dr Felipe Byun, Director of GMTC (Global Mission Training Centre), Seoul, South Korea looks back over 30 years of missionary training. He writes, “When the cross-cultural mission movement arose in Korea in 1980s, places to receive proper missionary training were nearly non-existent.” Therefore, “most Korean missionaries were forced to jump right into their mission work, using only what they learned from seminaries, churches, and mission groups, with no or minimal amount of cross-cultural training.” Dr Byun writes: “Dr. David Tai-Woong Lee, working together with a group of leaders of Korean evangelical churches, created GMF with the goal of “(e)stablishing a Korean mission agency with an international perspective. Dr. Lee became the first director of GMTC, the mission training

centre under GMF. Since then, GTMC has trained more than 1,600 missionaries and more than 95% of them have become cross-cultural missionaries. According to research done for GMTTC's thirtieth anniversary, out of 1,549 graduates from 1986 to 2014 (49 training terms), 1,360 (87.8%) are serving in a cross-cultural setting."

Felipe Byun describes several distinctive aspects of GMTTC training including;

- I. Its non-formal training format provides all family members with a holistic training in a community setting (over the period of GMTTCs existence, more than 1000 children have participated in the training with their parents!)
- II. Focus on producing mission leaders.
- III. Emphasis on a biblical worldview in an attempt to overcome the traditional Christian leadership centred on the pietistic spirituality of the Korean churches and the Confucian way of thinking of the Korean society. GMTTC's curriculum can be viewed as an integral discipleship training process.
- IV. GMTTC trainers embody the optimal profile, having discipleship training and cross-cultural mission experience, an adequate academic preparation and the character to work as a team player.

Reflecting on the past 30 years Felipe Byun observes that GMTTC missionary training "is not simply a formal process that produces 'certified' or 'licensed' missionaries. It must serve as a solid basis for self-understanding that comes through a thorough self-reflection and for growing as Christ's disciple." This kind of training has been "made possible through the supporting churches and other mission entities" and made effective "through the trainers' dedication and team-work."

A new initiative of GMTTC is to provide "in-service" training for long-term missionaries. Since 2015 "GMTTC has been providing a four-month long (re-)training of missionaries on furlough".

### Three West African perspectives

Missionary trainer Samuel Olatunbi, recognises the growth in missionary training enterprises across Africa. "There are more mission training schools across Africa today because many church denominations and mission agencies have grown over the years, and are now establishing their own mission training programmes suitable for their ministry contexts."

Samuel Olatunbi is the principle of NEMI in Jos, Nigeria where the training is facilitated by around 5 trainers who are resident on campus and others who serve as adjunct trainers. The trainers "are

mostly graduates of mission training schools who have gone to the mission fields to acquire practical mission experiences. Usually they volunteer their services for a number of years to work with the training institute. Some of them are young people who are singles. Others are just beginning to raise their own families while few are elderly. Ideally, trainers live with the trainees on campus for an effective and close monitoring leading to proper discipleship and mentoring.”

Segun John Adekoya is the Coordinator of Missionary Training Partners International, Nigeria. Almost all missionary training programmes in Nigeria are coordinated by Nigerians. He reflects on his own journey. “I came into mission with only Bible and theological knowledge, thinking it was sufficient for cross-cultural missions. I now know better that cross-cultural mission training is essential for a missionary.” Adekoya reflects that “Mission is not static but very dynamic and so our training methodologies must be at the cutting edge, strategic and contextualized.” He estimates that about 65-70% of those going into cross-cultural mission are trained but that “There is a great difference in the way mission training is being done by Denominations (Churches) and Mission Agencies. Schools of missions run by Denominations (Churches) lean heavily on formal models (mostly taught by theologians who lack cross-cultural mission experience), while the ones under mission agencies combine the three educational models (Formal, non-formal and informal).” NEMA report that over 4,000 Nigerian missionaries are working in the 10/40 window and “Nigerian missionaries have been experiencing low rate of attrition of recent. A good number of Nigerian missionaries have been very resilient and enduring in hostile regions except those repatriated.”

Fred Muvukor leads a residential missionary training ministry in Ivory Coast where the approach to training is BEING-KNOWING-DOING and “the task of training is a 24 hours daily affair.” Muvukor stresses that the emphasis is on “being” since “ministry is the over-flow of life” and sees practical missions involvement is an essential part of preparation. Students spend 3 months of an 18-month programme gaining field experience and while in the field there is a blend of class and practical sessions going on. Graduates on this programme go on to work “even in very difficult circumstances and there is the resolve amongst graduates of our school to keep to sound doctrine and love for the Master even in the face of challenging needs and insufficient resources in missions.” Through years of experience in Nigeria and Ivory Coast Muvukor is convinced that “training by living (modelling/mentoring) remains an outstanding way of training ... **It is not enough to teach missions, it should be lived and practiced.**” Muvukor recognises that this kind of training is “very demanding” and therefore retaining trainers is a challenge.

## Latin American perspectives

In Part A David Ruiz has encouraged us to reflect again on the focus of the church – as a pilgrim people among the nations – to be producing reproducing disciples of Jesus Christ. Missionary training is thus an aspect of making disciples who are sent out to make disciples.

Across Latin America there is huge diversity of missionary training approaches including specialist institutions (for example, the Evangelical Training Directory lists fourteen resident programs in Brazil, ten in Argentina and if one includes distance-learning options the number grows dramatically), church-based training and training provided by a mission agency (e.g. YWAM.)

Writing from Panama, mission agency director Carlos Gomez, (PAAM -Panameños Alcanzado al Mundo) explains that their perspective of missionary training is focussed on formation in six areas namely; character, relationships, spirituality, ministry competencies, specific theology/missiology/professional training, and field experience. The most relevant topics within these areas are given attention and a balancing of content, method and time is sought within the overall training experience. A reality in this context is that in “the vast majority of cases, mission candidates cannot leave their work to focus solely on study; actually, many of them must continue with their responsibilities to work, family, and church while they also attend to their mission training.” This has led to creative and innovative ways of equipping missionaries. For example, the topics that are essential in each area of formation are then covered in a variety of ways through formal training (Bible institutes, university courses etc.) and through informal and non-formal learning (seminars, videos, webinars, mentored experiences etc.) An advantage of this approach is “this has made it possible for the training to be highly focused to the most relevant topics and with a close relationship that allows learning to be simple and brief, as well as more economically accessible for the worker.”

Importantly, training is seen as an on-going process of learning and equipping with attention given to training being “on time” so that it can be maximally assimilated. Thus “some topics are more relevant to receive 1) before departure, and others 2) during field experience, and others 3) after the first term of service. In this way we have separated the training topics on the basis of the timing of a worker in his/her ministry, so that we can provide what the worker most needs to assimilate at that moment.”

### **Part C: Some current themes in missionary training**

In conversations with trainers in the last year several themes frequently emerge.

## **1. Catching the vision for equipping missionaries. Why train?**

There may not be hard, empirical evidence across the global church but whoever I talk with shares a strong hunch that cross-cultural training is still regarded as 'optional' by many local churches and mission agencies. Further, as David Ruiz points out, where training does take place the local church *"is relying on others to train their missionaries and cannot see any connection between what happens in the church and missionary training."* The vision of our Nigerian colleagues for *"competent missionaries that are strong in spiritual character, in knowledge of effective missionary practice and in cross-cultural skills"* needs to be shared.

We need to clarify the vision(s). There is a vision for missionary training that recognises the call of God on some to serve overseas – like the Antioch church commissioning Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13) and sees the vital importance of proper preparation for those being sent out. But a broader (foundational) vision for missionary training is also needed – a vision to equip the local church for cross-cultural mission, whether locally or globally. This is much broader than sending some few members to specialised institutions. We all, both as providers of training and leaders of local churches, need to work together in our responsibility to equip the church for her participation in God's mission.

Today, with more than 50% of the world's population now living in urban contexts it is increasingly likely that for church to be missional in our local context it will mean crossing cultures right where we are. As David Ruiz observes, a shared vision requires re-connecting the whole missional process with the local church and having a better understanding of the connection between mission agency, training institutions and local church.

We can learn from the example of COMIBAM, to fan into flame a "missional mentality in the church." We also need a shared understanding of training as an essential part of member care within the body of Christ and a key component of life-long discipleship.

Training is also a vital way we show respect and care to those communities who will *receive* our workers!

A clearly articulated vision for training is greatly needed and this requires training institutions, agencies and churches to begin different kinds of conversation, relationships and programmes.

## **2. From everywhere to everywhere. Cross-cultural training for all directions.**

Traditionally, specialised missionary training has been for those being sent OUT but there is a great need to provide effective orientation and equipping for those we are RECEIVING. For example, in Europe, if the potential and opportunities of *'reverse mission'* are to be realised there is a need to rethink courses making training relevant to those who are carrying their faith IN TO the traditional sending countries. How to equip for this task is a current debate for African church leaders. There has been a plethora of church planting efforts in Europe and, although there are some notable exceptions, many of these congregations are primarily pastoral outposts to their diaspora and not (yet) highly effective in bringing the good news to the indigenous people of Europe. How can training institutions together with sending churches and the local church equip our brothers and sisters to be effective in sharing the good news across the cultures of Europe?

## **3. Training as ministry – the need for suitable trainers**

The essential role of the trainer is well understood, especially if we are seeking whole-person, transforming learning, that has life-long impact. The great need is to find men and women with hands-on cross-cultural experience, of mature character, who can handle God's Word well and who can model openness and teamwork. This is highlighted by Samuel Olatunbi who observes, "Nothing limits the impact of mission training like having the wrong set of people as trainers. In mission training, the choice of mission trainers needs to be done with much care and prayers." Fred Muvukor recognises the tough challenge for trainers to identify with each cohort of students "making the trainer a 'student' for life as the groups of students keep changing."

The training, engaging and retaining of mission trainers is a vital task of the church as well as the agencies and institutions. In Argentina I encountered one training initiative that is a collaboration between local churches. Over a 9-month period pastors with cross-cultural experience share in the teaching alongside missionaries.

How can we encourage missionaries who have valuable experience and academic expertise to see training-as-ministry? GMTC (Korea) seem to be effective in this. Their six teaching staff are all GMTC graduates with cross-cultural ministry experience!

Is there more we can do as a network to encourage the training of missionary trainers?

#### **4. Focus on competency based approaches to training**

A competency based approach in which spiritual maturity, knowledge, skills and character all are addressed in an integrated manner, is not new within the IMTN network. Former IMTN leaders, Drs Jonathan Lewis and Rob Brynjolfson, have provided a good foundation for focussing on competencies in their book, *'Designing Integral Ministry Training'* – available for free download from the IMTN website <http://www.missionarytraining.org/mt/index.php/missionary-training-resource-centre/guidance-on-establishing-a-missionary-training-programme>

The momentum for a competency based approach has gathered pace and in our last Bulletin Dr. Bennie Wolvaardt clearly states the case for making this the de facto approach for mission training. Veritas College International who focus on training that equips grass roots church leaders and members to interpret Scripture and apply it to their local context, have developed competency based approach training in more than 40 countries. (See *IMTN Bulletin 8: Competency Based Training*. Available at <http://www.theimtn.org>)

Do we need to re-focus attention and energy on this issue and facilitate trainers and course-writers in working through the curricular implications?

And as important as it is that training be designed to develop clearly defined competencies, the words of David Ruiz still ring in our ears: the organic nature of life in mission with God cannot always be reduced to curriculum issues and defined competencies. If one understands “competencies” to be limited to knowledge and skill, then we miss the organic, relational nature of mission. Both competency and on-going organic, relational growth are part of the reality of cross-cultural ministry.

#### **5. The accreditation and residential debates**

The question ‘do we seek accreditation or not’ for missionary training has more than one correct answer! The move to accreditation accelerated in the 1990s but for the smaller colleges accreditation has brought a huge burden of compliance and for most accredited institutions “accreditation requirements brings much more government influence.” (David Turnbull) One advantage of accreditation is it has attracted students who see the possibility to progress their education and/or to fulfil government requirements (for example in some countries in Central Asia church pastors are required to have an accredited diploma.) In some places accreditation enables students to access student loans that make study possible.

However, many excellent cross-cultural training courses remain unaccredited for good reason. For example, for more than 10 years the “en route” course (All Nations, UK) has provided essential and robust preparation for long term service and GMTC (Korea) is intentional in providing training that “is not simply a formal process that produces ‘certified’ or ‘licensed’ missionaries. It must serve as a solid basis for self-understanding that comes through a thorough self-reflection and for growing as Christ’s disciples.” As Fred Muvukor warns us, “missions training is also producing missiologists, without practical mission involvement and this is not good at all. Certificates do not disciple the nations. We must, while certifying candidates, keep in view a dynamism for missions training that meets the set goal of bringing the nations on bended knees in worship of the risen Lamb.”

The accreditation debate remains current and important. The principal of NEMI (Nigeria) writes, “another reason why field missionaries are returning back to the classroom is the need to also acquire certificates and degrees in intercultural studies. Many denominations and mission agencies across Africa today now require missionaries to provide recognized degrees and certificates as an evidence that they have had mission training. So, the emphasis of mission training in many circles is gradually shifting from offering practical and effective mission training to degrees and paper qualifications.”

Alongside – though separate to – the issue of accreditation is the question about residential v non-residential learning and the location of institutions. A strong tradition of residential training exists in the former, traditional sending countries but this is a costly model that is difficult to maintain and has insufficient capacity to meet the training needs in the Majority world. Increasingly the question of location in the North and West needs to be addressed. For example, being in Sydney or London or the USA means the high cost of travel and the severe visa restrictions make it out-of-the-question for people from the Majority world where the numbers needing training are far greater. Some colleges, like Redcliffe College (UK) have trialled a limited number of ‘Pop-up’ modules where an MA-level module is taught in different locations (South Africa, Australia). Other institutions and associations have well developed extension programmes.

The ‘learning by extension’ approach is now well tested and used extensively and effectively in theological education. For example, the Increase Association who have around 100,000 Christians across Asia engaged in theological education at different levels. How can these models be better used for cross-cultural missionary training?

The question, ‘how best to use the internet’ in cross-cultural training is rapidly spawning a diversity of innovative approaches. Surely here lies huge potential yet there are challenges to overcome, and

specialist skills needed if we are to see the internet more effectively used as a tool for cross-cultural training. Perhaps those ahead can help others through the hurdles of developing suitable online learning, the set-up process and the maintenance of sites and curricula.

As well as on-line cross-cultural courses there are a host of ways that training is being enabled and enhanced via internet technology. A good example from Latin America is using webinars for trainers as a platform to share ideas and good practice. IMTN Bulletin 3 spotlighted examples of this approach.

## **6. On-going training for missionaries in service**

The obvious focus on pre-sending training should not obscure the need to continue to equip those serving in cross-cultural ministry. Samuel Olatunbi (NEMI, Nigeria) says, “In an ever-changing ministry and cultural context, many trained field missionaries are now returning back to the classroom in order to acquire further skills and develop attitudes needed to competently engage the work”, and Felipe Byun (GMTC, Korea) highlights the same need for providing on-going training for those serving. GMTC has now developed a 4-month programme for in-service missionaries. Carlos Gomez’ (Panama) example of “on-time” training is useful, considering what topics/experiences are best addressed before departure, what is best received at arrival on-field, and what is need later.

Just as on-going training for missionaries in service is needed, so too is on-going training for trainers. Mission training is by its nature multi-disciplinary including areas as diverse as theology, intercultural studies, anthropology, adult education, ethnography, and linguistics. Most trainers enter the field with strength in one or two of those areas. On-going growth in related disciplines will help the trainer to forever hone his/her skills.

Besides the importance of growing within the range of disciplines related to mission training, there is another important reason why trainers need to be constantly developing. Mission work deals with many realms of human endeavour and so the trainer may need to be at least conversant with issues like business as mission, medical missions, arts as mission, etc. Beyond that, the nature of intercultural study itself is changing world-wide. With over 200 million people now living outside of their birth culture, the intercultural training discipline is in demand in many professions. Gospel trainers in today’s context needs to be constantly learning because the intercultural world we live in is constantly learning.

## **7. Thinking “out-of-the-box”**

We can be thankful for the diversity of approaches to cross-cultural training that exist. I hope that within the IMTN we can support one another to keep thinking and practice moving forward.

Listening to one another is one way the Holy Spirit provides us the solutions we need for our contexts! Thank you to all who continue to share their experiences and keep the IMTN active. As we close 2017 it is good to review some of the IMTN Bulletins of the past 2 years. If you would like to re-read any of these recent IMTN Bulletins they may be found on the IMTN website [www.theimtn.org](http://www.theimtn.org) under “Bulletins”.

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Bulletin 2 Missionary training as member care

Bulletin 3 Re-thinking intercultural mission training in Latin America

Bulletin 4 (a) and (b) Two-part Bulletin: Mission training delivered by e-learning

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Bulletin 6 Some reflections, reading and a round-up from the IMTN network

Bulletin 7 The arts in mission

Bulletin 8 Competency based training

We look forward to hearing from you.

Ruth Wall, on behalf of the IMTN Steering Committee