

WHY ASIAN CITIES

NEW WINESKINS FOR ASIA

Mac Pier
Timothy Wong

Foreword by Edmund Chan & Promod Haque

Afterword by Bob Doll & Steve Green



In this fast-moving account, Mac Pier and Timothy Wong present inspirational stories of prayer, friendship, innovation, and collaboration across the breadth of Asia, home to 60 percent of the world's population. Building on biblical insights as well as demonstrated principles from Movement Day, they chart a path to impact 500 cities of Asia over the coming decade. With the eyes of the world increasingly focused on Asia, these accounts of God at work could not be more timely as signs of hope and fuel for prayer.

David W. Bennett, DMin, PhD
Global Associate Director
Congress Director Seoul-Incheon 2024

Mac Pier and Timothy Wong have written a highly readable, compelling, and gripping account of why Asian cities are so significant and important in the context of global missions. *Why Asian Cities* “provide signs of hope ... despite enormous challenges ... God is moving in powerful ways across the region... One of the signs of hope is a new expression of united prayer — in this case, particularly for Asia.” I was challenged and inspired, and better appreciated the huge opportunity and responsibility for the church to respond to the call to reach Asian cities at this time.

Ram Gidoomal CBE
Chairman, South Asian Concern
Former Lausanne board chair

Much of the Asian church is drinking the cup of suffering, and this has produced a deep dependence on God. Such dependence can move God to rend the heavens and come down so Asia would see His glory. However, there is a great need for a backbone organization that can bring the church together in united prayer, strategy, and action. Movement Day is a move of God to do just that. Every page of this book is bathed in passion for God, for Asia, and for the gospel! Several times I had to stop reading and earnestly pray and dream for my own city and for Asia.

Asiri Fernando
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka
Author of Unstoppable: Total Devotion to the Gospel (A Study of Philippians)

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Movement Day Publishing is the publishing ministry of Movement.org, an organization that catalyzes leaders in more than one hundred cities to see their cities flourish spiritually and socially. Movement.org trains leaders globally to create their own Movement Day Expressions. For more information, visit movement.org.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of Canon James Wong. Just as God used Canon Wong's life to bring a new wineskin to grow Christianity in Singapore, he has inspired thousands around the world who are believing God for a New Wineskin to emerge in impacting Asia with the gospel.

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Asia by Population (as of 2023¹)

UN Member States	Population
India	1,428,627,663
China	1,425,671,352
Indonesia	277,534,123
Pakistan	240,485,658
Bangladesh	172,954,319
Russia	144,444,359
Japan	123,294,513
Philippines	117,337,368
Egypt	112,716,599
Vietnam	98,858,950
Iran	89,172,767
Turkey	85,816,199
Thailand	71,801,279
Myanmar	54,577,997
South Korea	51,784,059
Iraq	45,504,560
Afghanistan	42,239,854
Saudi Arabia	36,947,025
Uzbekistan	35,163,944
Yemen	34,449,825
Malaysia	34,308,525
Nepal	30,896,590
North Korea	26,160,822
Syria	23,227,014
Sri Lanka	21,893,579
Kazakhstan	19,606,634
Cambodia	16,944,826
Jordan	11,337,053
Azerbaijan	10,412,652
Tajikistan	10,143,543
United Arab Emirates	9,516,871
Israel	9,174,520
Laos	7,633,779
Kyrgyzstan	6,735,348

UN Member States	Population
Turkmenistan	6,516,100
Singapore	6,014,723
Lebanon	5,353,930
Oman	4,644,384
Kuwait	4,310,108
Georgia	3,728,282
Mongolia	3,447,157
Armenia	2,777,971
Qatar	2,716,391
Bahrain	1,485,510
East Timor	1,360,596
Cyprus	1,260,138
Bhutan	787,425
Maldives	523,787
Brunei	452,524

States with limited, but substantial recognition	Population
Taiwan	23,923,277
Palestine	5,371,230

Special Administrative Regions (SAR) of China	Population
Hong Kong	7,491,609
Macau	704,150

¹ "Population Division: World Population Prospects 2024," *United Nations*, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://population.un.org/wpp/>.

FOREWORD

In March 2018, I was invited by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association to write an “Asia Report” for *Decision* magazine. Here’s the gist of what I reported — and mind you, the needs of Asia keep growing exponentially!

Asia is a vast and complex region covering 50 independent countries from Afghanistan to Japan. According to *Operation World: 21st Century Edition*, more than 83 percent of the 4.4 billion non-Christians in the world live in Asia.¹ The needs are great, but the presence of God is glorious.

In the historic “Christian” West, the demise of Christianity to the lure of secularism and skepticism has long been documented. Conversely, during the same period, churches in East Asia were growing by 360,000 converts annually, and in South Asia by 447,000 converts, according to researcher D. B. Barrett. Today, new churches continue to be planted daily. Asia has seen its share of Christians nearly double, from 7.8 percent in 1970 to 15.2 percent in 2010. By God’s grace, Protestant Christians in Asia increased exponentially in the last century, from under 4 million in 1900 to more than 193 million in 2000.²

The global Christian demographics have shifted, but the harvest is still plenty and the laborers still few. Therefore, as Jesus said, “Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2 ESV).

The word *pray* here is from the Greek word *deomai*, which is an intense word. In unadulterated language, *deomai* is a rather provocative word that communicates the idea “to beg.” That’s why it has been translated as “beseech” (NASB) or “pray earnestly” (ESV).

Jesus was not talking about making a casual request to God. Rather, He was intentionally pointing toward a desperate intercessory determination.

When people come to Asia, they see both the dark desperation and the divine opportunity. Asia confronts us with a poignant polarity that should lead us toward a collaboration of passionate intercession and missional intentionality.³

At the risk of oversimplification but with the intent of giving a strategic overview of Asian evangelism, four pertinent movements should be considered to better advance the Great Commission work in Asian cities.

To begin with, the **City Movement**. With Asia's urban explosion, a city movement must be strategized in our missional roadmap. The battle is won or lost in the cities.

Next, the **Unity Movement**. We cannot do it alone. A citywide unity movement must be forged to bring people together, across denominations, to be intercessors and ambassadors for Christ.

Furthermore, the **Marketplace Movement**. Think for a moment. Where do the majority of men and women spend most of their time interacting with the lost world? At church? In the neighborhood? No. In the workplace. Hence, it's crucial to equip the saints for missional engagement that crosses the sacred-secular divide.

And finally, the **Discipleship Movement**. Asia has witnessed many converts. The mass conversion in China and India alone is staggering. Yet, without discipleship, the effort is self-defeating. An urgent need in Asian Christianity is to return the church to her disciple-making roots in order to raise the next generation of missional disciples who are rooted in the Scriptures and empowered by the Spirit.

In the light of these pertinent movements of God, I am excited about Movement Day. Co-founded by Mac Pier with Tim Keller in 2010, and joined by Bob Doll in 2011 as the third critical partner, Movement Day draws these God

movements toward a missiological reformation. I'm therefore equally excited that Mac Pier and Timothy Wong have co-labored to give to us this strategic book, *Why Asian Cities*.

With competent research and keen missiological reflection, the authors ably present the keen juxtaposition of the desperate needs of Asia along with the tremendous opportunities therein. Consistent with the Movement Day impetus, their expressed aim is "to bring together a gospel ecosystem of 'strategic initiatives' and 'gospel stewards' to ponder the state of affairs . . . and to discern what steps may be taken to course correct" (Tim Wong, chapter 2).

I heartily endorse that!

Reading *Why Asian Cities*, I have been inspired by the God stories, challenged by the compelling statistics, and motivated afresh to be part of God's redemptive movement in Asia!

For anyone who is keen to be a missional disciple, or anyone who wants a glimpse of God's marvelous movement in Asia, I highly recommend this book. For indeed, a new wineskin is here. And it beckons us toward a radical shift from building monuments to empowering movements!

**Edmund
Chan**

Leadership Mentor
Global Alliance of Intentional
Disciplemaking Churches

¹ Patrick Johnstone, Robyn Johnstone, and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition* (UK: Paternoster Lifestyle, 2001).

² Edmund Chan, "The State of Evangelism in Asia", *Decision* (March 2018), 34-35.

³ Edmund Chan and Tan Lian Seng, *Discipleship Missions* (Singapore: Allon Distribution 2016), 106,119,123,289-297.

This book is an excellent collection of stories recounted by Asian leaders and other marketplace and ministry leaders who are well connected and very familiar with Asian culture.

Asia has a very large population — about 4.8 billion people — 59.2 percent of the world's population. Cities in Asia have extremely large populaces, as urbanization is intense. Much of the urbanization of large cities is driven by production and technology centers that are close to airports and seaports.

Also, the demographics of these urban cities are young-people centric. This age group is very willing to learn new things — technology, cultural trends, Western economies, and spirituality — which creates an immense opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them as they have more open minds than their ancestors did.

This opportunity creates a need to mentor Christian marketplace leaders and also to connect them with churches. Doing so will allow them to collaborate and innovate ways to reach this younger generation with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Movement Day is doing a tremendous job getting marketplace leaders, church leaders, and new scholars to come together. It provides mentoring opportunities and teaches how to collaborate to spread the gospel in multiple cities around the world. This book details this vision and the need that exists to go into the entire world and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Promod
Haque**

General Partner
Northwest Venture Partners

INTRODUCTION

Why Asian Cities is a modest attempt to tell some of the stories of God stirring across the great continent of Asia. Having travelled across the continent for forty years it is my conviction that Asia remains a primary arena for the expansion of the gospel.

This book is by no means intended to be exhaustive of what God is doing in Asia, nor in telling the contexts of each nation in this vast continent. Rather we are providing an overview of the continent by region, and some common threads that are impacting and are needed to impact Asia — especially in the arenas of prayer, Bible initiatives, disciple-making movements, and the collective impact of leaders collaborating. The select photographs within point to signs of hope in Asian cities.

Our intention is to introduce the reader to modern-day saints doing incredible work across the five regions of Asia — the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Central Asia. One of the common threads in this book is the work in Asian cities engaging Movement Day as a vehicle for church unity and mission. Movement Day is the Lausanne expression for cities and in fourteen years has convened 60,000 leaders from 900 cities. In September 2024, Movement Day will be presenting to 5000 delegates from 200 nations at the Lausanne IV congress in Seoul on God's vision for cities.

We will discuss this idea of creating a new wineskin to reach the more than 4 billion Asians who have yet to respond to the gospel. Our missional frame of reference are the 500 largest cities in Asia. We began in 2024 to pray daily for two Asian cities leading into our SG500 Asia Cities Forum happening September 18-20, 2024.

We believe that this new wineskin will need to adopt an understanding of collective impact. Collective impact has become a vehicle to describe the power of intelligent, informed, and coordinated efforts by multiple organizations and churches toward a common outcome. This model relies on the leadership of a backbone organization. We will speak to this role throughout the book.

I want to especially thank Timothy Wong for his generous leadership and extraordinary understanding of the continent of Asia. He is extending his father's legacy in creating a new wineskin to impact multitudes of people as well as embodying a generous heart for hospitality.

Our prayer is that this book will help us learn from some of the great and contemporary models to create seismic impact. Whether it be the hundred-year Moravian prayer movement in the eighteenth century or the modern-day phenomenon of Arise Asia, we pray that God will grant us speed and scale to reach every person for whom Jesus has died — in Asia.

Dr. Mac Pier

June 2024



Burj Khalifa, Dubai, UAE



1

CHAPTER

Why Cities?

Mac Pier

A Personal Journey into Asian Cities

My wife, Marya, and I made our first international trip in 1983, to India. As a staff member with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in the United States, I was on loan to Operation Mobilization for a ten-week immersion experience.

It was almost four years prior, on December 30, 1979, when Marya and I responded to Billy Graham's challenge at the Urbana 1979 Missions Conference. First held in 1946, the Urbana Missions Conference has become one of the largest missions conferences in church history. In 1979 alone, 17,000 university students had gathered at the University of Illinois in Urbana, Illinois. During the conference, Marya and I committed before God that we would go anywhere in the world that He would send us.

Our first step in this forty-year journey had us flying from New York City; transiting through Frankfurt, Germany; and arriving in Delhi, India, in June 1983. Our trip continued on to Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, then Ranchi, Bihar. India is a nation of 1.4 billion people today, the largest population in world history. At the time of this writing, Uttar Pradesh is approximately the size of the United Kingdom¹ and has 240 million people.² That means 1 out of every 33 people in the world live in Uttar Pradesh. As for Bihar, it is slightly larger than Austria at 94,163 km² with 100 million people.³ In the forty years since 1983, we've returned to India many times.

Unbeknownst to us then, our initial time in India was preparing us to move to New York City (NYC) a year later in 1984. In 1986, we moved to Flushing, Queens, a neighborhood that represented the convergence of many of the world's cultures in the Big Apple. After President Lyndon Johnson signed the 1966 Immigration Act, immigrants came pouring into the city — especially Flushing — from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Flushing went from having an Asian population of 10 percent to a staggering 50 percent in seven years, becoming the second Chinatown in NYC. With this influx, New York City also became the beneficiary of spiritual renewal movements that were happening in East Africa, the Caribbean, Korea, and South America. In Northern Queens alone, 300 Korean churches were established within thirty years.

Marya and I have lived in Flushing for thirty years. Our neighborhood speaks one hundred languages, and our local church has congregations speaking Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, and English. Our family also became a wonderful blend of cultures. Our son-in-law Basanth is from Andhra Pradesh. He and our daughter Kirsten have two daughters. Our son, Jordan, married Christine, from a Filipino background, and they have two sons. Our eldest daughter, Anna, married Lucas from Brazil, and they have two daughters. From multiethnic neighborhoods to familial multiplication, our lives significantly expanded to see and include the world beyond our four walls.

From New York City to Singapore

In 1984, I commenced my work with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in Metro New York City as area director, and oversaw five staff and fifteen campuses including Columbia University, New York University, Julliard School of Music, and several state universities. At the same time, Tim Keller began coming to New York City in the mid-1980s to research the city for an upcoming church plant. At that time, it was estimated that of the 1.5 million people on the island of Manhattan, only 9,000 were attending evangelical churches — less than 1 percent.

While I was serving with InterVarsity, I began to collaborate with the staff of Cru Inner City (a ministry of Campus Crusade) to host Concerts of Prayer gatherings in 1988. These gatherings brought leaders from across the Metro NYC region to pray together as congregations, as pastors, and as organizations. The emphasis was on creating visible unity and praying for God's greater purposes for our region.

Keller moved to the city, and Redeemer Presbyterian Church was planted in Manhattan in 1989. The church grew exponentially, attracting a large number of second-generation Asian Americans. In the past thirty-five years, Redeemer and its nonprofit organization City to City have planted 750 churches in cities globally. Keller told me that the primary reason the planting of Redeemer Presbyterian was successful is that 500 Presbyterian Church of America

congregations had prayed every day for the church — something that has not happened before or since.

Keller and I became friends during the 1990s when he would attend our Concerts of Prayer events and consultations. In 2000, we had breakfast with two colleagues from Redeemer, Glen Kleinknecht and Dick Kaufmann. This was when Keller asked me to co-create with him an initiative to plant new churches in Manhattan and the rest of the city — regardless of denomination. The operating theory was that churches ten years and younger were eight times more effective in reaching new people. Hence the Church Multiplication Alliance (CMA) was born.

In 2009, we commissioned research to assess CMA's efforts. To our amazement, we saw a 300 percent church growth from 1989 to 2009!⁴ Of the churches surveyed, 39 percent had started in or after 2001 (see appendix 4). Out of this assessment, Keller and I and our respective teams decided to establish a gathering called Movement Day. It was to be a consultation where leaders in cities could share what they were learning and discern what God was saying to the collective church about their respective cities.

The inaugural Movement Day was on September 30, 2010, at Calvary Baptist Church on 57th Street in Manhattan. Eight hundred delegates from thirty-four US states and fourteen countries attended. Three weeks later, Keller and I met with Bob Doll at the Third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town, South Africa. Doll became the marketplace partner of our three-legged stool of minister, marketplace leader, and missionary.

From 2010 to 2015, Movement Day met annually in New York City. Then Dallas began to host Movement Day gatherings in 2014, and Pretoria and Port-au-Prince became the first international cities to host their own locally designed Movement Days. In 2016, Movement Day Global Cities launched in New York City, hosting 3,000 leaders from 400 cities and 95 nations. Many of the teams that came were from Asia, including Hong Kong, Jakarta, Chennai, Mumbai, and Dubai.

I made my first trip to Singapore in 2015 at the invitation of Ezekiel Tan from the Singapore Bible Society, during which I participated in the Jubilee Day of Prayer. I learned that the dramatic growth of Christianity in Singapore in the 1970s grew out of the leadership of Canon James Wong. In 1978, Wong and others had hosted Billy Graham for a crusade where Graham, whose influence over global Christianity was breathtaking, prophesied that Singapore would become an Antioch for Asia.

In the past decade, I have made twenty trips to Singapore and have had the honor of meeting James Wong and his family. His sons Tim and Jon caught the Movement Day vision and introduced it to Singapore at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Serendipitously, my final interview with Tim Keller was in preparation for the Singapore Movement Day. It was just a month later that Keller received his pancreatic cancer diagnosis, from which he passed on May 19, 2023.

In October 2022, Singapore under Tim and Jon's extraordinary leadership hosted Movement Day Asian Cities for 500 leaders from 33 nations and 120 cities. This represented two-thirds of the nations in Asia — a partial fulfillment of Graham's prophecy forty-four years later.

Crucial to the developing work across Asia's cities has been Tim Wong's research and understanding of Asia demographically (see next chapter). At 4.75 billion people, Asia today comprises 60 percent of the global population. Of this 4.75 billion people, approximately 4.36 billion are outside of Christianity. This 4.36 billion is 1.1 billion people more than the combined population of all the other five continents.

The SG500 Asia Cities Forum is the fruit of my friendship with Tim and Jon Wong, and a natural outworking of the Movement Day strategy that now has a leadership team that spans all five regions of Asia, namely South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. It is time to take the next step in moving farther and deeper in reaching the cities of Asia.

Why Cities Matter to God

The Bible begins in a garden and ends in a city. As we study 4,000 years of redemptive history, we observe that God has slowly and deliberately been drawing people to cities.

In the Old Testament, Jerusalem takes center stage as the epicenter of God's affection. In 2 Samuel 5, David captured Jerusalem. Under his leadership, the city became the political capital and spiritual center of the nation of Israel. Described as the "city of the Great King" in Psalm 48:2, Jerusalem has maintained its status as the religious capital of the world for the past 3,000 years.

As a nation, Israel is approximately 200 miles north to south, and 40 miles east to west. This is about the size of New Jersey. Israel is the 150th largest country in the world, with only 46 nations being smaller, and El Salvador the next largest.⁵ Even though it is a tiny nation, Israel is the connection point between Europe, Asia, and Africa, and between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. It was always God's plan to bring the people of the globe into contact with the people of God, and Jerusalem is at the epicenter of this plan.

In the writings of Isaiah, God makes it clear how He wants to include the foreigner in the worship of Israel's God. Isaiah 56:7 records God declaring that His house will be a house of prayer for all nations. Jesus affirms this when He quotes Isaiah 56 as His rationale for clearing the temple, because the leaders of the time were making it impossible for the nations to come and pray (this is expanded in chapter 10).

The role of cities in God's story continues in the New Testament. In their book *Why Cities Matter*, Stephen Um and Justin Buzzard state that by AD 100, the early church had grown to 25,000 followers of Jesus. In AD 312 when Constantine the Emperor declared himself Christian, the number of followers was 20 million.⁶

The church had grown 800 times in 200 years. How did that happen? A primary reason was the influence of cities in Western Asia and Southern Europe. As recounted in the book of Acts, the apostles and early disciples were sent out to cities across the Roman Empire to preach the gospel and build the church.

Early church father Augustine noted that the early church also began to transform their cities. The Christians gave themselves to one another and to care for the most vulnerable in their cities. When the plagues came, Christians stayed in cities burying the dead and adopting the orphans as their own. Because of their faith and deeds, more and more people came to Jesus.

The New Testament has to be understood as the story of two cities principally. Jesus went to die in Jerusalem, the religious capital of the world, and Paul went to die in Rome, the political capital of the world. These two cities are not geographic accidents.

Throughout his time with the early disciples, Jesus prophesied about His coming death in Jerusalem, and the final week leading up to His crucifixion and resurrection were in the city. Jesus understood that cities propel movements. Cities represent a constellation of people groups, ideas, culture, and influence. *Cities shape culture, the gospel can shape cities, and leaders can catalyze movements into cities and churches.*

A Model for Redeeming Cities

The book of Nehemiah is our best Old Testament case study in seeing urban transformation. In the opening four verses, Nehemiah asks the two most pertinent questions for any believer in any city:

- “How are God’s people doing in the city?”
- “What is the condition of our city?”

Upon hearing the devastating news that Jerusalem’s walls were broken down and its gates burned with fire, with the Jewish people in great trouble and

disgrace, Nehemiah modeled a response worth following. He sat, he wept, he mourned, he fasted, and he prayed (Nehemiah 1:1 – 4).

When we look at the spiritual and physical condition of our own cities, we should enter into the same grief. I remember sitting on my couch on September 11, 2001, just hours after the attack that killed 3,000 fellow New Yorkers, weeping uncontrollably. Nineteen terrorists had shaken our city to its core. Thousands of parents would not be returning home that night.

Nehemiah demonstrated consequential leadership. After praying for four months, he created a plan to rebuild the city and to restore dignity to the Jews in Jerusalem. In his prayer in chapter 1, he used a telling word, referring to himself and to the Israelites as “servants.” The word is *ebed* in Hebrew, and it is the same word used in Genesis 22 when Abraham is commanded to slay Isaac as a sacrifice. With arm raised and knife poised to take his only son’s life, Abraham was interrupted and identified as one who feared God. This is the essential characteristic of a servant.

Nehemiah reached a moment in his relationship with God where God’s reputation was more important to him than the longevity of his own life. He went to the king to petition a request, an act that could have cost him his life. In God’s sovereignty, the king agreed to Nehemiah’s plan, and granted the provision of material to rebuild the wall as well as political permission to travel across hostile regions en route to Jerusalem. Nehemiah made the 745-mile journey to rebuild Jerusalem, and miraculously, the wall was rebuilt in fifty-two days (Nehemiah 6:15).

The great lesson in Nehemiah’s leadership is that he spent more than twice as much time praying (four months) as he did rebuilding the wall (seven weeks and three days). If nothing else, this book is an invitation to pray radical, transformative prayers for cities across Asia.

Commissioned to the City

In the story of Paul's conversion in Acts 9, we read about three "conversions." The primary conversion was to the person of Jesus. Paul had an explosion of truth in his heart and mind on that Damascus Road, realizing that Jesus was the fulfillment of both Torah and Temple.⁷ He would never forget how Jesus in His remarkable grace reached down and saved him.

A second conversion was to the unity of the church. Jesus asked Paul an important question in Acts 9:4, "Why do you persecute Me?" (NIV). Not "persecute the church," but "persecute Me." Paul would forever understand that Jesus is so intimate with His church that to persecute the church is to persecute Him.

The third conversion was to Paul's assignment. In Acts 9, Ananias was to tell Paul that he would be a witness to the gentiles and their kings. The king of the gentiles was Caesar, and Caesar lived in Rome. Paul knew then that he had a date with Rome.

Paul traveled to the major cities of the first century in Western Asia and Southern Europe, including Jerusalem, Philippi, Corinth, Athens, Ephesus, Thessaloniki, and Rome. His time in Ephesus in Acts 19 is perhaps the best New Testament case study on how the gospel disrupts a city.

Ephesus: A New Testament Missiological Model

Located in modern-day Turkey, Ephesus was one of the largest cities in the Mediterranean world, a provincial seat for the Roman government.

When Paul went to Ephesus, the gospel moved so powerfully that the silversmiths who created the shrines for their idol Artemis were losing business. Their reaction was so intense that an assembly of Ephesians gathered and shouted for two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Political officials needed to get involved to quell the uproar (see Acts 19:23 - 41). Paul had disrupted three things in Ephesus:

Paul disrupted the religious community.

Paul spoke for three months in the synagogue (see Acts 19:8 – 9). After the rejection of his message, he moved to the town hall of Tyrannus, which would be like a modern-day university. Remarkably, Acts 19:10 says that all of Asia heard the word of the Lord in *two years*. This speaks to the importance of universities in major city centers.

Paul disrupted the spiritual environment.

Acts 19 records that Paul healed the sick and delivered the demon possessed. He demonstrated that the gospel has power to heal and deliver (see vv.11 – 12).

Paul disrupted the commercial and political environment.

As the gospel was preached and demonstrated in power, there was a time of public confession with the burning of scrolls from those practicing sorcery. The value of the scrolls was 50,000 drachmas — equal to 136 years' worth of labor of that time.

On to Rome

Beginning in Acts 21, we read about Paul's final trip to Jerusalem. He was arrested by the Roman guards and accused of heresy by the Jewish religious leaders. He stayed in prison and met with Roman leaders Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa. If I were Paul, I would have been wondering if my life's mission had ended as I languished in prison.

Remarkably, in Acts 23:11, Jesus appeared to Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome" (NIV). Eventually, Paul did end up in Rome and fulfilled Jesus's word.

A Missiological Reformation

What do all of the above have to do with us?

Two things. First, our prayer is that each of us will grasp God's desire for us and our unique and collective calling to impact the great cities of Asia. Second, that we will become ambassadors for this vision to impact Asia over the next decade with our collective prayers, efforts, and sacrifice.

As previously mentioned, the result of Paul's preaching in the town hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus was that *all of Asia heard the gospel in two years* (see Acts 19:10). In this book, we want to ponder what God could do across the great cities of Asia.

There needs to be a missiological reformation. Martin Luther made the Bible accessible to people in their own languages, marking the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Today, given the outsized realities of Asia with its population density and notable hostility to Christianity, there needs to be a **missiological reformation**. A missiological reformation is the alignment of personnel, prayers, and resources proportionate to the scale of Asia.

How will we know when this is taking place? When leaders and organizations across the world begin to align their efforts and resources to address the greatest challenges facing the gospel globally. When I returned home from India in 1983, I realized that there were three times more Hindus in India than there were Americans in the US — a truth that awakened me to the great need of laborers in Asia. More of us need to similarly awaken and respond in strategic action.

I believe that God is inviting us to “put all of our chips in the center of the table” to see what He can do with the loaves and fishes of our lives. Forty years after Marya and I said yes to God in 1979, as twenty-one-year-old college students, we have seen and testify how God can do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine when we respond to His call.

¹ “Uttar Pradesh (India) size comparison,” *Mapfight*, accessed May 1, 2024, <https://mapfight.xyz/map/uttar-pradesh/>.

² “Uttar Pradesh Population | Sex Ratio | Literacy,” *Population Census 2011 India*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/uttar+pradesh.html>.

³ “Bihar (India) size comparison,” *Mapfight*, accessed May 1, 2024, <https://mapfight.xyz/map/bihar/>.

⁴ Tony Carnes, *Manhattan Center City Evangelical Churches 2009*, Values Research Institute. 2009.

⁵ “How big is Israel compared to a state?” *Quora*, accessed May 1, 2024, <https://www.quora.com/How-big-is-Israel-compared-to-a-state>.

⁶ Stephen Um and Josh Buzzard, *Why Cities Matter* (Wheaton: Crossway Publishing, 2013), 123.

⁷ N. T. Wright, *Paul* (New York: HarperOne, 2018), 52.



*Church of the Holy Sepulchre,
Jerusalem*

2

CHAPTER

Why Asia?

Timothy Wong



My Journey with Movement Day

2008

As the second son of an Anglican pastor in Singapore, I often heard the question growing up, “When are you going to go into ministry?” In 2008, I felt the Lord stirring my heart with a question: Am I going to spend the rest of my life as a banker, or would I be willing to work on behalf of the 600 million people in Southeast Asia who could potentially perish into a Christless eternity having not heard the gospel? Believing this to be a call to full-time ministry, I started to explore a midcareer pivot. However, none of the doors seemed to be opening.

Feeling frustrated about the lack of progress, I asked the Lord why. This was when I felt Him reaffirm the call to give the rest of my life to see his kingdom expand in Asia — yet He had not asked me to quit my job as a banker. This brought a great deal of clarity to my life calling and also released significant pressures on the work front. Since God wanted me to remain in my current vocation, He would take care of my career while steering me along the right paths to accomplish His purposes for Asia.

I share this because it’s an important context to what I believe is essential to see all of Asia reached with the gospel. God does not need all Christians to become “full-time” workers, but every Christian does need to see their redemptive calling in their various vocations. To this end, Christian leaders in the marketplace need to unite with leaders in churches and nonprofits to contend and collaborate for gospel transformation in their cities.

2018

I first heard about Movement Day when Mac Pier and Bob Doll visited Singapore in August 2018. I received a copy of Mac’s book *A Disruptive Gospel: Strategies and Stories for Transforming Your City*, along with an invitation to the Global Marketplace Summit happening in November that year at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, DC.

Providentially, I happened to be in the US on the East Coast at the time of the summit and was able to join the gathering. One of the things that caught my attention there was a prayer booklet for Indian cities. As I leafed through this

booklet, it dawned on me that while Singapore might not necessarily need a Movement Day expression (as several established Christian unity movements were already ongoing at the time), cities of Asia with a low percentage of Christians would most certainly benefit from it. This kept me tracking with Movement Day. My brother, the Reverend Jonathan Wong, and I helped to arrange for Mac and Bob to meet with other leaders on their subsequent visits through Singapore.

My late father, Canon James Wong, was called home to be with the Lord in April 2022. As we remembered how God had used him in his sixty years of ministry, three themes stood out: church planting and mission, unity of the body, and ministry in the marketplace. We had a sense that a baton was being passed from one generation to the next. This provided the impetus to proceed with the first Movement Day Singapore gathering in May 2022, and in October of that same year, the very first Movement Day Asia Cities gathering.

The Power of the Gospel: A Return to First-Century Missionary Methods

Since Paul and Barnabas were first sent out by the Holy Spirit from Antioch, the gospel has traveled across the globe in a westward direction. Europe was evangelized first, then Christianity went with the settlers to North America and, via colonial conquests, to South America. In the twentieth century, the work of the gospel also gained strength in sub-Saharan Africa. Asia remains the last reached continent on the planet. It is also the most populated.

In spite of 250 years of modern missionary influence, the percentage of Christianity in Asia is still in the single digits. Will it be possible, in the remaining ten years before the 2000th anniversary of the Great Commission, to finish the task that Jesus left His disciples?

Missional strategist Neil Cole, in his 2021 paper “The Final Push,” makes a compelling argument why and how this can be accomplished within the next decade:

The apostle Paul in only ten years launched multiplication movements in five different regions of the Roman Empire and was on his way to Spain after that. He also catalyzed movements on the islands of

Cyprus, Crete and Malta. This stands in stark contrast to the way we attempt missions in more recent times. I believe Paul is meant to be an example for us to follow, and I believe we can do more.

What could Paul have done if he had air travel and modern communication devices? Would he be able to triple or quadruple the number of regions reached? We are in a better position to reach the global mission fields than Paul ever was, yet we have been far less productive because we have been doing it wrong.

And, what if we had more than one Paul? What if we had a handful of mature apostles like Paul, and an equal number of mature prophets to go alongside them into hostile mission fields? What if all of them were more concerned with getting the job done than getting credit for the job done? What if all the energy and resources usually spent starting and building another organization were just spent on the work? Can the gospel, relationships and the mission be a better glue than any brand or agency?

I believe that we can finish the task in a decade or so if we just did the right things and stopped doing the wrong ones.¹

The Power of Strategic Unity: Convening the SG500 Asia Cities Forum

As of mid-2022, The Center for the Study of Global Christianity (at Gordon-Cornwall Theological Seminary) estimates that the 2.6 billion Christians in the world have a total personal income of US \$53 trillion. Giving to Christian causes totals \$896 billion annually. Of this amount, \$360 billion goes to churches, and another \$540 billion goes to parachurch and institutions. In contrast, the amount that goes to global foreign missions is \$52 billion. To add insult to injury, the amount estimated lost to “ecclesiastical crime” is \$59 billion.²

While \$52 billion sounds like a staggering number, let’s consider the per capita basis to put these numbers into perspective. Given the task of reaching 5.3 billion people on the planet, this amount works out to a mere 98 cents per person per year.

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him?
And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him?
And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And
how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the
Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring
good news!”

(Romans 10:14 – 15 NLT)

If Jesus were to return on the 2,000th anniversary of His ascension, in the year 2033, I wonder what He would have to say about the state of global Christianity. Have we been faithful stewards of the resources He has entrusted us with? Will we hear Him say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!” (Matthew 25:23 NLT)?

In response to this urgent situation, a proposal was made in the aftermath of the Movement Day Asia Cities 2022 gathering to convene a forum in Singapore to bring together a gospel ecosystem of “strategic initiatives” and “gospel stewards” to ponder the state of affairs as described above, and to discern what steps may be taken to course correct.

We envision a gathering of 150 key individuals who will come together to seek the Lord over three days. The key question to ask is what it would take to see Asia substantively reached with the gospel in the coming decade.

We have prayerfully drawn up a list of individuals who are practitioners with prayer movements, Word of God, new media, and community / disciple-making movement initiatives. Movement Day will act as a platform to connect believers in churches, the marketplace, and nonprofits in cities across Asia. We have also invited gospel patrons to consider how they may form a philanthropic

community to strategically channel resources for maximum gospel impact in Asia in the coming decade.

The Power of Prayer: Four Prayers for 500 Cities

In anticipation of the SG500 Asia Cities Forum in September 2024, the idea emerged that the best way to prepare for this historic gathering is to pray for these cities in Asia. We began on January 1, 2024, praying for two cities a day, starting with Tehran and Jerusalem (see appendix 3).

As we have been praying each day, there has been a growing sense that an answer to these prayers is the key to seeing 4.8 billion in Asia reached for Christ. Jesus Himself reminds us about the power of prayer:

I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

(John 14:12 – 14 NLT)

As we engage in this daily discipline of praying for the cities, the Lord has begun to download a simple blueprint, giving us great hope in the power of the gospel for even the largest cities of Asia. We went from praying for individual cities to praying for the millions of individuals dwelling in each city.

We pray for the cities in this order, lifting up four petitions to our heavenly Father daily.

January	The Middle East
February to March	South Asia
April	Southeast Asia
May to August	East Asia
September	Central Asia

Petition 1

Open Heavens

The first prayer we pray is for open heavens. We pray that God will unite the saints in each city, to gather as one. We pray for the formation of prophetic prayer communities in each city, where prayers will ascend to heaven night and day.

In praying earnestly for open heavens, we are unlocking the power of the first Pentecost on each of the 500 cities.

A few interesting thoughts surfaced as we prayed through each city. The first thing we recognized is that many cities in the Middle East have very small (and mostly hidden) communities of believers. But we take comfort in the story in Acts 2, where a small nucleus of 120 believers gathered in an upper room on the day of Pentecost and then unleashed a movement transforming the Roman world within decades.

This gives us hope that the prayer for open heavens in each city is the right starting point for a city gospel movement. When believers come together in unity to exalt Jesus as King, He is enthroned over the city. Where the King goes, people bow.

As incense bowls in heaven are filled (see Revelation 5:8), I am convinced that it will catalyze a chain reaction on earth that will result in billions encountering the risen Christ within the coming decade.

Petition 2

Open Hearts

As the heavens open over each city, key individuals within the city become unsuspecting recipients of God's irresistible grace.

We were encouraged by a vision Brian Alarid shared at the Movement Day Asia Cities 2022 gathering, about a bold-faith initiative to have all 8 billion people on the planet prayed for by name. This initiative takes reference from Paul's encouragement to Timothy:

I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.

(1 Timothy 2:1 – 4 NLT)

Brian then offered a simple call-to-action that believers can adopt to follow through with the vision — a model known as the BLESS strategy developed by Dave and Jon Ferguson.³ This involves five simple rhythms that turn every believer into a missionary wherever God has placed them.

B **Begin with prayer.** Bring in regular prayer five people whom the Lord lays on your heart. Not everyone has the courage to witness personally to another, but everyone can pray for someone else in their secret place. As C. H. Spurgeon once said, “Prayer is the slender nerve which moves the muscle of God’s omnipotence.”⁴ As we bring individuals before the Lord in prayer, hearts are softened and the spiritual process of redirecting souls from hell’s gates to heaven’s doors begins. Everyone can pray, and no one can resist the power of prayer. Even the devil trembles when the weakest Christian gets on their knees.

L **Listen.** As you pray for each person, listen to the Holy Spirit for what He will have you do to bless them. Also, find opportunities to listen to these people, to take a genuine interest in their lives, and to look out for specific things you can pray over them.

E **Eat.** We eat anywhere from fourteen to twenty-one meals in a given week. Make a deliberate habit of sharing a meal with each person on your BLESS roster. As you share meals together, Jesus is present and connections are established.

S **Serve.** As we listen to their needs and also to the Holy Spirit, there will be opportunities to serve them in practical ways that will further open their hearts to the love of God.

S **Story.** We graciously take the opportunity to tell a gospel or faith-related story. This can be as simple as sharing about what Jesus means to you and what He has done in your life.

As the heavens are opened over cities, hearts of believers are also ignited with the love and compassion of Christ. As believers begin to adopt a simple missional lifestyle to engage five people in their workplaces, families, or neighborhoods, missionary movement takes place. It does not require a special event or building, or specially trained or talented individuals, nor does it require permission from the authorities. It begins in the secret prayer closet, then finds a visible expression at the dinner table. When unleashed in cities all over Asia, it will be an unstoppable force for the gospel. It becomes an epistle written on the hearts of men and women across the continent of Asia.

Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This “letter” is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.

(2 Corinthians 3:3 NLT)

Petition 3

Open Highways

It is clear that the exponential rise of the internet as a means of communication is the new Roman Road. This gives us great hope that everyone in Asia (and across the globe) can have access to the gospel, and that this can happen simultaneously and instantly.

With the development of generative AI, the Word of God can come alive in ways that can engage the senses. And with the development of the metaverse, the gospel can be embedded in virtual worlds, allowing every person to engage with the Scriptures in new and immersive ways.

With Bible translation initiatives like Every Tribe, Every Nation (illumiNations), and media assets like the Lumo Bible, *The Chosen*, and “He Gets Us,” there are opportunities to contextualize content in ways that can engage the billions in Asia at a very low marginal cost. Online evangelism initiatives like Jesus.net, the availability of Scripture resources on super apps like YouVersion, as well as accessible Bible study resources like The Bible Project, have unlocked the potential for the living Word of God to touch lives all over Asia as never before.

Petition 4

Open Homes

Having been involved in running the Alpha Course at the Book Café in Singapore over the past two decades, I have witnessed firsthand how Alpha is really a “beta” church. It allows for the formation of a gospel community that then combines with the gospel Word to bring transformation to lives. We have found, in this experience, that engaging seekers in neutral environments like a café allows for a more natural progression in the journey to faith.

This experience has given us the confidence to pray for micro church communities to spring up in homes and workplaces in cities all over Asia. Our hope is to see a church-planting movement in the 500 Asian cities, resembling the movement seen in the first century. Three specific reasons for a new wineskin approach to church planting have become apparent:

1. Given the hostile religious context for the majority of the 500 cities that are in China, India, and the Middle East, micro church expressions are the most efficient way to disciple new believers.
2. In the natural world, babies are best nurtured in homes, not institutions. Hence the ability to disciple large numbers of newly formed babes in Christ is possible in this context. The discipleship process is particularly important given the likelihood of rising persecution against the bride of Christ in these last days before His return. Micro communities can be supplemented by teaching and discipleship resources made available at scale via online channels.

3. Even in cities with relatively high levels of religious freedom, like Singapore and Hong Kong, we believe that “doing church where life happens” could be a key to unlocking new opportunities for growth in the body of Christ. The reality is that believers spend 5 percent of their week in church-related activities, but spend 45 percent in workplaces and 50 percent in homes.

There is a growing sense that a new wineskin is needed to contain the new wine soon to be poured forth by the Holy Spirit. In Asia, Christianity is still very much seen as a Western religion. For the gospel to impact Asian cities, it will need to return to its first-century West Asian roots and be contextualized to the other parts of Asia. We look at the example of Paul, who started from a Jewish context and then was able to “become all things to all people” (1 Corinthians 9:22 ESV), presenting the gospel as relevant to the Greek and Roman cultures that dominated society in that day.

Singapore as an Antioch for Asia

Our ongoing prayer for Singapore is that it will step fully into its calling to be an Antioch for Asia. Singapore is a relatively small city in the overall scheme of things, but it has demonstrated potential to have outsized influence in terms of economic development and financial intermediation, and as a model for urban development and governance.

From a kingdom perspective, we see three ways that Singapore can help to provide strategic influence for the other cities in Asia.

Serve as a new wineskin prototype

As we have been praying through the four petitions for the cities daily, there is a growing hunch that the Movement Day expression in Singapore is closely intertwined with its Antioch calling.

When the idea of Movement Day was introduced, there was some ambivalence as to what specific role it would play in Singapore. The city has been blessed with several unity movements. This includes the National Council of Churches in Singapore (which represents all mainstream denominations), The Love Singapore network (which organizes among other things the annual Pastors’

Prayer Summit), and more recently the Association of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Singapore. There is also the Festival of Praise (started by my father in 1986), which has since morphed into FOPx, a unity expression among the youth in Singapore. Hence, it seemed that another unity initiative would be crowded out for attention.

At the same time, Singapore is blessed with several mega churches who have the capacity to organize large-scale resourcing and teaching events to bless the entire body of Christ island-wide. Many of these churches also have significant community service arms, in addition to social service outreach by the mainline denominations.

While counting these blessings, there is a sense that more needs to be done. Fresh expressions are needed to see lasting gospel impact on the rest of the city.

In 1970, Protestants accounted for just 2 percent of the population (similar to the current situation in Asian cities where Christianity is a slim minority). A sovereign move of the Holy Spirit then resulted in a wave of renewal for mainline churches.

My father and then Anglican Bishop Joshua Ban-It Chiu were two of the first clergymen to be renewed by the Holy Spirit in late 1972. This resulted in a wave of church planting and evangelism, which crescendoed with the Billy Graham crusade in 1978. Protestant Christianity grew most visibly in the 1970s. Growth slowed to 5 percent in the next three decades, and between 2010 and 2020, slowed further to just 2 percent.

The Singapore church today is largely middle class, English speaking, and of Chinese ethnicity. One question this raises is what it would take to engage the remaining 80 percent of the four million Singaporean citizens and permanent residents with the gospel. Additionally, there are two million guest workers and expatriates in Singapore. Again this group represents an untapped opportunity for gospel engagement.

Singapore's diverse religious and cultural fabric positions it as a testing ground for cross-cultural missional engagement. All four dominant religious systems of

Asia are represented in Singapore. The Movement Day Singapore expression, empowered by prayer and embedded in research, is focused on the opportunity to experiment with new ways to present the gospel to city dwellers from a variety of religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The Singapore government is highly sensitive on the issue of religious harmony. Hence, there will be a need to present the gospel with sensitivity and respect for the religious beliefs of others. Unfortunately, expressions of Christianity as a religion come with a great deal of Western and colonial baggage. We must not substitute the offense of culture for the offense of the cross. Learning how to navigate cultural sensitivities, while allowing for the proclamation of the gospel in word and deed, is crucial for engaging Asian cities.

The apostle Peter shares wisdom on propagating the gospel in hostile contexts:

Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

(1 Peter 3:15 – 16 NLT)

The second unique proposition that Movement Day brings to the city of Singapore is to provide a platform for leaders from the churches, marketplace, and nonprofits to come together and collaborate for gospel flourishing in the city. The current unity landscape tends to be dominated by clerical leadership. Giving marketplace and nonprofit leaders a share of voice significantly widens the potential for the gospel to impact every sphere of society.

The third opportunity for Movement Day in Singapore is to mobilize the next generation of leaders. If we think in terms of the next three to four decades, leaders who are currently in their twenties and thirties need to be engaged and mobilized to respond to the changing needs of the city.

It is hoped that as Movement Day pilots new wineskin expressions in Singapore to reach across cultural and demographic barriers; to unite marketplace, nonprofit, and church leaders for collective impact; and to give voice to the next generation of leaders — that it can provide useful learnings that can be applied and contextualized to other cities in Asia.

Function as a philanthropic hub

There is no doubt that Singapore is blessed to be a blessing. Singapore has gone from third world to first world in under fifty years. It has the second highest GDP per capita (PPP basis) globally, just behind Luxembourg. The Singapore church is also blessed with a large representation of people with higher educational backgrounds and socioeconomic status. There is great opportunity for the body of Christ in Singapore to sow generously into the completion of the Great Commission. We detail what this could mean in specific terms.

If half of the Singaporean Christian population (i.e., 200,000) set aside a mere \$5,000 (5 percent of the nominal per capita GDP of \$88,000) a year for work related to the gospel in Asia, this would represent an annual resource of \$1 billion. This sum is equivalent to the estimated annual tithes and offerings collected by the church in Singapore. By raising this amount annually and deploying it to the work of the Great Commission, it would send a clear signal to the rest of the body of Christ globally on how to reorder finances in a way that would help to hasten Jesus's return.

If deployed equally across the four strategic ministry streams, this would represent \$250 million per year to help fund city prayer movements, \$250 million per year to complete Bible translation and development of new media channels, \$250 million per year to fund disciple-making movements, and \$250 million to resource city gospel expressions via the Movement Day platform (\$500,000 annually for each of the 500 cities).

These resources, invested strategically and consistently over the coming decade, would significantly enhance the work of the gospel in the 500 cities of Asia. This would in turn impact billions of lives in Asia for eternity.

When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.

(Luke 12:48 NLT)

Embody the ministry of hospitality

The Movement Day Asia Cities gathering in October 2022 was a faith initiative that underscored the importance of the ministry of hospitality. Singapore was privileged to host 500 leaders from 33 nations and over 100 cities. Singaporean Christians gave generously and sacrificially to help offset accommodation costs and provide airfare subsidies and meals for the delegates. The clear sense in the lead-up to this gathering was that the assignment for the Singapore church was to host the delegates well. This was particularly poignant coming out of COVID-19-related travel restrictions and lockdowns.

It was a blessing to witness firsthand delegates coming from different cities in Asia representing church, marketplace, and nonprofits. Together they were exalting Jesus, learning from one another, and believing for gospel movements to transform the fabric of their cities.

While Singapore is an expensive city to host such gatherings, the generosity of the churches went a long way in demonstrating one of the church's key functions as an Antioch for Asia.

If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah, I tell you the truth, that person will surely be rewarded.

(Mark 9:41 NLT)

Next Steps: A Tale of Two Asia City Beats

The only person who can win Asia for Christ is the Holy Spirit. Our role is to prepare a new wineskin so that when the new wine of revival is released, the

wine will not be lost. While we cannot engineer a revival, we can prepare our hearts to receive it when the new wine is poured out.

How then do we move forward in this seemingly impossible endeavor? There are distinct rhythms to which we can step.

One is what we can call the “Babylon Boogie.” In this instance, we begin by casting an ambitious vision. The vision then serves as the basis on which we recruit people and raise resources to support this vision. We then pray and ask God to bless our efforts. Relationships are secondary to the task at hand.

The alternative approach can be labeled as the “Jerusalem Jive.” We see this demonstrated throughout the book of Acts. Covenant relationships are prioritized. The church started with a group of friends praying and dreaming together. The work begins when the Holy Spirit releases seasonal vision. When the season ends, friendships remain and the people simply wait on the Holy Spirit for the next set of instructions.

The Jerusalem Jive allows us to pursue the dream of seeing 500 Asian cities transformed by the gospel from a place of rest. It is the Holy Spirit’s prerogative to direct the actions of the church. All that is needed is for us to minister to the Lord in prayer and fasting, and to await His instructions. When He directs activity, He will also provide the resources.

¹ Neil Cole, “The Final Push,” May 9, 2021.

² Gina A. Zurlo, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing, “World Christianity and Religions 2022: A Complicated Relationship,” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 46, no. 1 (December 22, 2021): 71–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23969393211046993>.

³ Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson, *B.L.E.S.S. - 5 Ways to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World*, (Washington, DC: Salem Books, 2021).

⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Sermons*, Volume 12: 1866.



Arise Asia 2023 participants

3

CHAPTER

Generation 2.0: Time for New Wineskins



A God Story

Kevin Lee grew up in Canada as a member of a Chinese immigrant family. In high school, he made a missionary commitment to move to China. He then went off to college and designed his studies around this vision, intent on creating something significant to impact China.

He founded China Youthology, a research firm using anthropology and sociology to study the next generation of China and determine what moves them. The work is 95 percent commissioned by Fortune 500 companies including Nike and Apple. Lee lives in Shanghai with his wife and two children and has been part of church plants in Beijing and Shanghai.

Lee makes several important observations: “There are 400 million Gen Z and Gen Alpha in China today, and a total of 2 billion Gen Z and Gen Alpha across Asia. That means that 1 in 4 people on the planet who are under the age of 28 live in Asia. Young people have become completely urban in the last two generations, with the rise of individualism completely parallel to the rise of urbanism.”¹

The result of this urbanism and individualism is that young people in China are influenced by social media and modern values. Paradoxically, though there are 400 million Gen Z and Gen Alpha in China, the nation’s birth rates are plummeting. Only 9 million children were born in 2023 in a nation of 1.4 billion citizens. Lee once asked a room full of young people, “How many of you plan to have children?” Not a single hand went up.²

Lee described the current generations of young Chinese as the first generation of individualism with no foundation. The root cause of this is the aftereffects of the Cultural Revolution. Lee explained, “There haven’t been many values the previous generations are built on other than to stay loyal to the country and to do everything you can to make money.”

A symptom of this is parents moving to the cities to work and provide for the family, leaving their children behind to be raised by grandparents. But even when parents are in the picture, the outcome is the same. “Even with parental figures present, many do not offer guidance of values, morals, life wisdoms, and

identity — neither in individual nor group capacity,” Lee said. “The brokenness and often emptiness of the previous generations is telling this next generation that having children is more a burden than a value. No one has shown them why caring for someone else is valuable, hence they would rather focus on maintaining their own security and sanity by not having children.”

At the same time, the next generation is realizing that they will be poorer than their parents, having to support a rapidly aging population. These factors contribute to the mindset of the young Chinese in wanting to have smaller families. It is similar to what the Japanese went through in the 1980s and 1990s, with Japan now having a median age of forty-eight years.³

Jess Chin has worked in corporate marketing for Grab and WhatsApp, and most recently as chief marketing officer for Algorand Foundation. She said, “There is a lot of tension and conflict in how the next generation is being raised in China and Taiwan. There is an absence of spirituality with great pressure from both political and family perspectives to rise up.” Chin commented that an entrepreneurial spirit has emerged, resulting in a trust in self. Nationalism is also gaining strength as the youngest generation has known only one president, President Xi Jinping.⁴

David Ro, Lausanne East Asia regional director and Arise Asia founder, commented, “In 1979, communism began to lose its grip on China because of the introduction of capitalism through the Open Reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping. A house church movement exploded in growth first in the countryside, then the cities. However, the Communist authorities have attempted to curb the growth. Religious freedoms began to tighten under President Xi in 2018-2019. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, and the entire nation went into lockdown. Now there is a potential for a new season of growth.”⁵

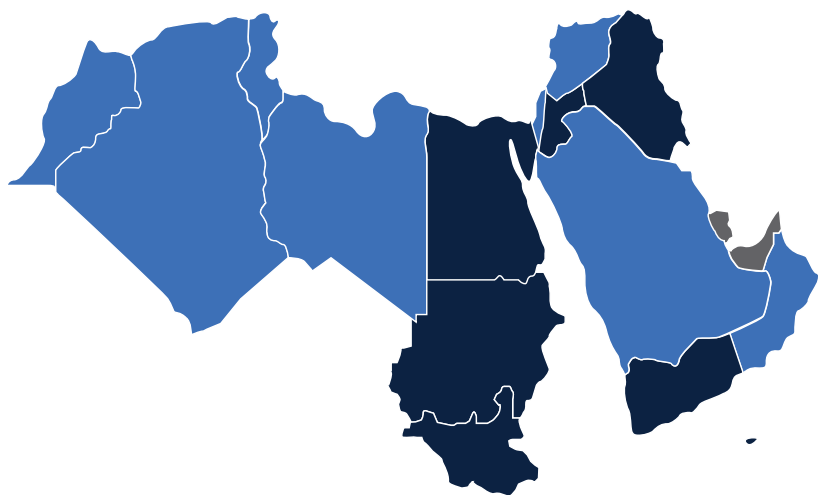
Let’s not forget the next generations in other parts of Asia. In the MENA (Middle East North Africa) region, there are 453 million Muslims under the age of twenty.⁶ Many of these young Muslims are living in nations with limited opportunities, inciting rising frustrations and religious fanaticism.

In India, the median age is 28.7 years.⁷ South Asia has 100,000 young people entering the job market every day without access to the necessary education and skills.⁸

Given the sheer size of the next generation across Asia, all of these issues result in both challenge and opportunity equally enormous in magnitude.

Population in the MENA Region Under 20 Years Old

Source: Nabil Costa (presentation, Beirut, February 12, 2024).



Morocco	37M	Egypt	109M	UAE	9M
Algeria	44M	Sudan	46M	Qatar	3M
Tunisia	12M	South Sudan	11M	Bahrain	1M
Libya	7M	Jordan	11M		
Syria	21M	Iraq	44M		
Israel/Palestine	14M	Yemen	33M		
Lebanon	6M				
Kuwait	4M				
Saudi Arabia	36M				
Oman	5M				

453 Million

Percent of the population
Under 20 years of age



21 - 40 %



41 - 60 %



1-20 %

Signs of Hope: Hungry Hearts and Strategic Mobilizers

Though hard to verify, David Ro believes that the number of Christians in China may be as large as 90 to 100 million — 6 to 7 percent of the population. The house church movement is estimated to be 50 to 60 million Protestant, with 30 to 40 million official Three-Self Church Christians, and 10 to 15 million Catholic.⁹ The rapid growth of believers in China in the past fifty years is one of the greatest achievements of the gospel in the two thousand years of church history.

Lee comments that with all the changes happening in the lives of the young Chinese, there is a large awakening and hunger for more. He said, “Despite the increased government restrictions, the next generation in China is open to the gospel. In my house church despite the lack of any advertising, people are walking in and falling to the floor encountering Christ. This is happening across the country to this day.”¹⁰

Organizations like OneHope interact with 40 to 50 million young people annually across Asia. Their strategy is to distribute Scripture to every child on the continent. They run campaigns with their own literature, such as *World Without Sickness*, and screen shows like the Lumo Project films and *The Chosen* in local dialects. OneHope operates in five of the eight most populous nations on the globe.¹¹

The Nxt Move is a next-generation movement that has identified high-caliber leadership globally. Under the leadership of Jurie Kriel, Nxt Move was birthed in Dubai in 2019 as part of the Movement Day gathering that year, and is partnering with the Lausanne Movement to help shape discipleship strategies for the next twenty-five years, until 2050.

Arise Asia

David Ro saw a trend of Western missionaries retreating from Asia. After the Lausanne Cape Town Congress in 2010, he began to think about a new missions movement for young people across Asia. Working with Seth Kim, a pastor in Hong Kong, and Philip Chang, the Lausanne regional director of Southeast Asia, together they birthed Arise Asia.

This movement seeks to parallel the impact of the Urbana Student Missions Conference that began in 1946 in the United States. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship–run conference has been the largest missions conference in church history. When I became an InterVarsity staff member in 1981, 70 percent of all known interdenominational missionaries in the United States had gotten their start at the Urbana Missions Conference.

Hence, Arise Asia has a similar vision to spread that same heart for missions across the entire continent. They want to challenge the young people of Asia to “go where there is no gospel,” giving at least a year of their lives to work among an unreached people group, city, or country. The first Arise Asia gathering took place in Bangkok in July 2023, with 1800 people in attendance. From that first gathering, more than 400 people made one- to two-year commitments, and 229 made long-term commitments to go and reach the unreached.

The vision for Arise Asia has quickly taken root across Asia. Over the next two years the following cities have committed to host Arise Asia events:¹²

Arise Bangladesh	Dhaka	Arise Mongolia	Ulaanbaatar
Arise Cambodia	Phnom Penh	Arise Myanmar	Yangon
Arise Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Arise Nepal	Kathmandu
Arise India	Mumbai	Arise Pakistan	Lahore
Arise Indonesia	Bali	Arise Philippines	Cebu, CDO, Butuan, Davao
Arise Japan	Tokyo	Arise Sri Lanka	Colombo
Arise Macau	Macau		

Arise Asia and Movement Day

In just two years, Arise Asia has already convened leaders from hundreds of cities and 37 nations. Incidentally, Movement Day is concurrently working in 22 of the same cities in India and 31 cities overall where Arise Asia is present.

Ro said, “Movement Day is very strategic in connecting cities to the pastors already in those cities. It will help reach young people where there is no gospel. Cities are the spiritual, cultural, financial, and political hubs for their nations, and university students are aggregated in those cities.”¹³

Chin commented, “Movement Day does the hard work of convening people into strategic and comprehensive conversations. This happens as people unite in prayer to move the needle forward.”¹⁴

There is significant relational and strategic overlap with Movement Day. Movement Day emerged in 2010, under Tim Keller’s and my leadership and after a twenty-year prayer and church-planting movement. The movement seeks to convene pastors, marketplace and NGO leaders, and civic leaders to collaborate for the good of the city. This collaboration takes place in the arenas of evangelism, discipleship, and humanitarian and civic ventures for the flourishing of the city. We have interacted with 900 cities in the past fifteen years on 6 continents.

A case study among the next generation for Movement Day’s work is in Kochi, India, as led by Emmanuel Pothan, one of our Movement Day scholars. Kochi is a city of 3 million people having engaged the world for centuries in its spice trade. The city has had a long Christian presence in South Asia, benefiting from the work of the apostle Thomas who arrived in Chennai in the first century. With such a history, Kochi has been a missionary-sending city to North India for the past fifty years.

Kochi has at least a 30 percent Christian presence in the city. Many young people in Kochi are struggling with high percentages of drug usage, crime, and suicide — some of the highest percentages in India. Also, a great deal of nominalism has crept into the church, with young people feeling that Christianity is their parents’ religion.

The Kochi Transformation Network (KTN) began in 2016 and started engaging young people in 2019. In 2020 during the pandemic, the first Youth Movement Day was held on Zoom with 320 participants from 60 churches and organizations. The Movement Day framework used included gospel preaching, worship, panels, and research. This created an awareness of the city that few had had before.

At the second Movement Day in 2023, led by young leaders under thirty-five, an intergenerational team was formed to discuss ten-year outcomes for the city.

These outcomes included gospel conversations with 100,000 people led by younger leaders. Outcomes include the issues of entrepreneurship, women's empowerment, and mental health.

One of our initiatives is the Movement Day Scholars Program, which trains practitioners in cities to scale the impact of their work in collaboration with others. Each scholar graduates by creating a ten-year plan to impact their city. There are working groups that meet regularly to execute and evaluate the ten-year plan moving forward.¹⁵

Seth Kim, one of the co-founders of Arise Asia and a Movement Day Scholars alumnus, said, "The scholars program provides a global community where it fosters an environment with leaders so that we can learn from one another, and where we are given a framework and language to reach the city."¹⁶

New Wineskin

Given the sheer enormity of the next generation of young people in Asia, we believe there needs to be a new wineskin. This wineskin is both missiological as well as tactical.

David Howard, director of the Urbana Missions Conference, and brother to Elizabeth Elliot and brother-in-law to Jim Elliot (*In The Shadow of the Almighty*), said that most mission movements are started by young leaders under the age of twenty-eight.¹⁷ There are now 2 billion young people in Asia under twenty-eight. God has all the raw material and leadership in Asia alone to move the global church forward in a new season.

What should be the characteristics of this new wineskin?

**A muscular
unity.**

The unity of the church is a necessary and urgent pre-condition to see God move on a massive scale. God is looking for leaders who will go anywhere and do anything to further the unity of the church in their city, even at the cost of their lives.

A commitment to rigorous and multiplying discipleship.

Kevin Lee commented on how much of the church in China are sheep without shepherds. Radical discipleship is the only antidote to nominalism and individualism. There is no substitute for the foundations of Scripture and prayer both privately and corporately.¹⁸

Aggressive prayer.

Jesus said that the kingdom is advancing by force (Matthew 11:12). Though prayer is a mystery, we know personally and historically that united prayer is the great mysterious means by which Jesus accomplishes His purposes on earth.

Entrepreneurism and evangelism.

Jess Chin noted, “We need to build ecosystems where communities can work together on a large scale. We need to disrupt traditional models and accelerate change holistically while tapping into relevancy. We need to address areas of pain and purpose, removing barriers for those who need a voice. The vision is that the global church be known as risk takers, a movement full of love and truth.”¹⁹

Robust global and continental partnerships.

These partnerships should meet regularly in venues similar to the SG500 Asia Cities Forum.

As we look over the next decade, our vision is to see a muscular expression of unity that includes like-minded practitioners and philanthropists across the globe to reach Asia’s next generation.

¹ Kevin Lee, interview with Mac Pier, April 9, 2024.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jess Chin, interview with Mac Pier, April 9, 2024.

⁵ David Ro, interview with Mac Pier, February 6, 2024.

⁶ Nabil Costa, interview with Mac Pier, March 11, 2024.

⁷ “Field Listing—Median age,” *The World Factbook*, accessed May 16, 2022, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/median-age/>.

⁸ “More than half of South Asian youth are not on track to have the education and skills necessary for employment in 2030,” *Unicef*, accessed October 30, 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-half-south-asian-youth-are-not-track-have-education-and-skills-necessary>.

⁹ Ro.

¹⁰ Lee.

¹¹ Jeremy West, interview with Mac Pier, April 10, 2024.

¹² Seth Kim, interview with Mac Pier, January 20, 2024.

¹³ Ro.

¹⁴ Chin.

¹⁵ Emmanuel Pothén, interview with Mac Pier, February 7, 2024.

¹⁶ Kim.

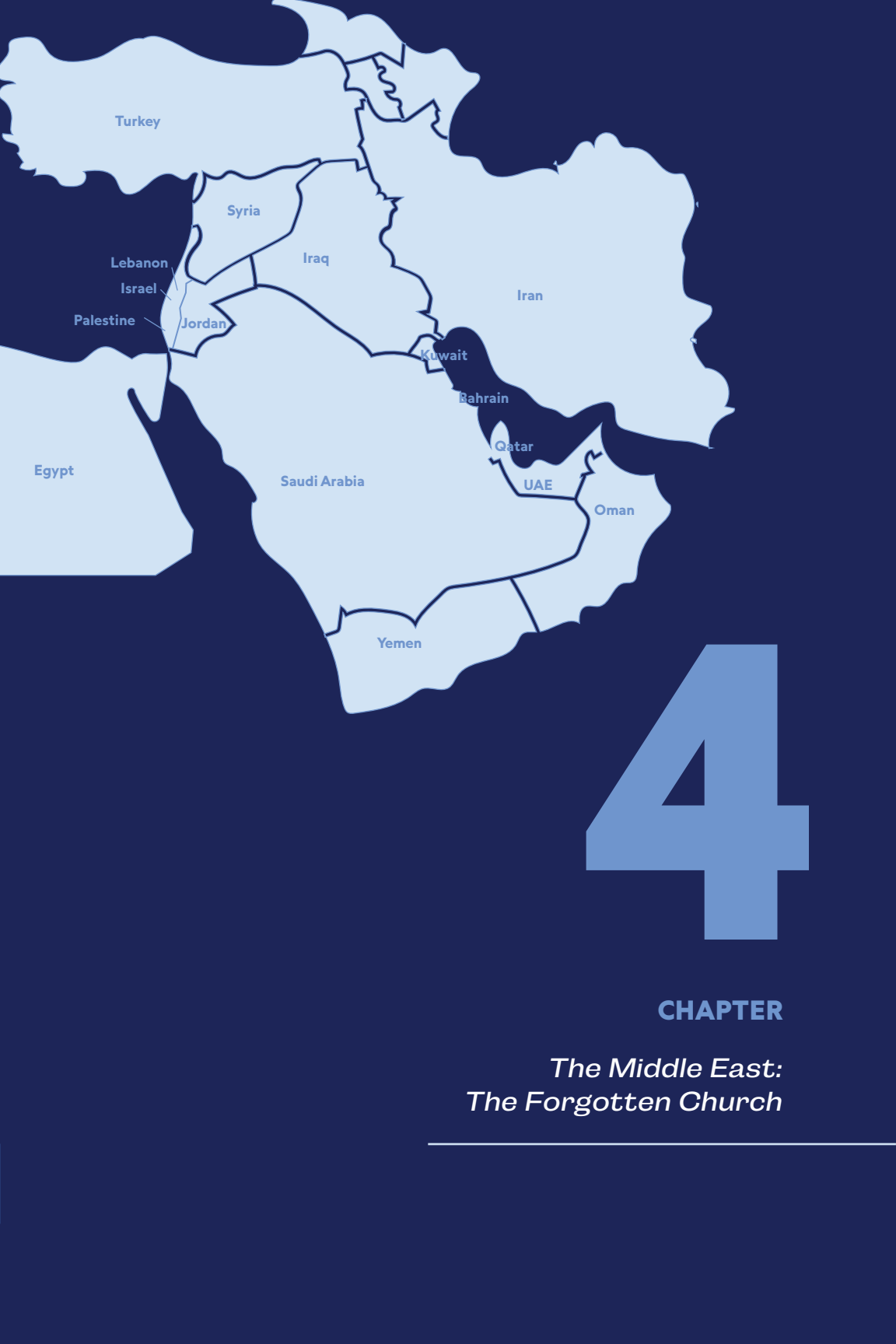
¹⁷ David Howard (lecture, Student Discipleship Training Conference, Bear Trap Ranch, Colorado, August 15, 1981).

¹⁸ Lee.

¹⁹ Chin.



*Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque,
Abu Dhabi, UAE*



4

CHAPTER

The Middle East: The Forgotten Church

A God Story

Missionary doctors Pat and Marian Kennedy arrived in the Middle East in 1960, at the invitation of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and his brother Sheikh Shakhbut. At that time, it was estimated that the infant and maternal mortality rates in the emirates were 50 percent and 33 percent respectively. Additionally, diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria were devastating the region. The net population was declining.

The Kennedys established the Oasis Hospital in the desert in the city of Al Ain. By 1964, their team was able to build the hospital's first concrete building block which housed twenty patient rooms, a nurses' station, a nursery, and a utility room. The hospital was the only source of medical treatment for Al Ain and the city's surrounding region, seeing up to two hundred patients per day.¹

In thirteen years, the infant and mortality rates lowered so significantly that the population began to grow. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was organized as a nation in 1971, and the work of the Kennedys has been described as the birth of a nation. In fact, the hospital they built is the birthplace of the current president, Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.²

The hospital has since been renamed Kanad Hospital in honor of the Kennedys. On the hospital grounds there is also a church compound where thirty-three churches share space every weekend to congregate. When I visited the hospital and grounds in November 2022, it was a remarkable experience to observe in-person the legacy of this world-class medical facility that delivers nearly 4,000 babies per year.

Because of the Kennedys' pioneering work, the United Arab Emirates leadership has taken a posture of religious tolerance toward the church. The city of Dubai alone has four hundred churches with a vibrant Christian community. At our Movement Day gatherings in Dubai in 2019 and 2023, the government of Dubai had a representative come and address our gatherings. It was an important statement that the government of Dubai is eager to engage the church for the welfare of Dubai.

The Levant Countries and the Gulf Countries

The Middle East can be said to be composed of two primary regions. The Levant countries, also considered the Near East, include Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Cyprus. It is in these Levant countries that we see the beginnings of both the Old Testament story and the New Testament story.

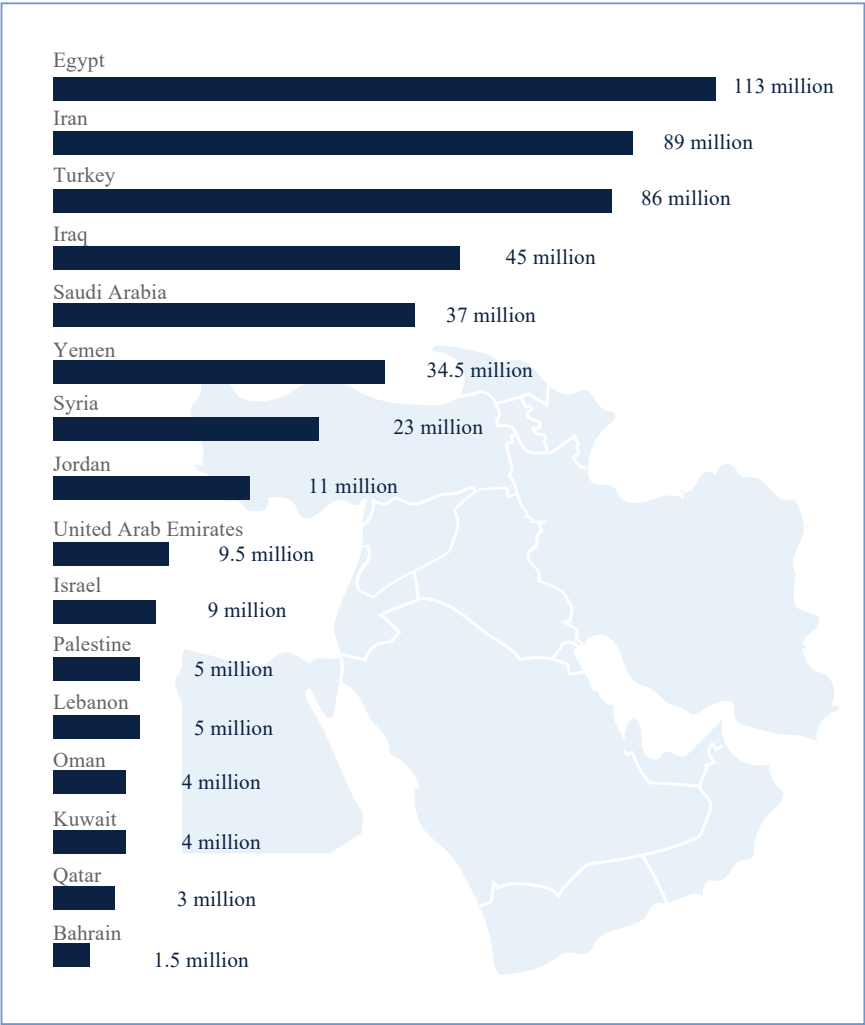
Syria is home to Damascus, where Paul was first converted. Mount Nebo in Jordan is where Moses died, and where one can see Jericho, Jerusalem, and the Mediterranean Sea from a distance. Israel is home to Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, and Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified and resurrected. It is believed that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is the site of both the crucifixion and the resurrection. Also, the nation of Lebanon is mentioned more than seventy times in Scripture.

The Gulf Countries include Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Iraq especially represents a rich history in the Bible, housing Ur of the Chaldeans, Abraham's homeland; Babylon, where King Nebuchadnezzar lived; and Nahor, the hometown of Rebekah, wife of Isaac.

Since 2003, the conflicts in the Levant region have decimated the church. Because of the advent of ISIS and the activities of other terrorist groups, the region has been engulfed in violence. This violence has also devastated the economy, with countries like Lebanon being considered a failed state now that the functional use of their currency has all but disappeared.

It is estimated that in Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Turkey, Iraq, and Israel, as much as 90 percent of the church population has left the region. In Iraq alone it is estimated that the church in Iraq has declined from 3 million to 300,000 attendees. People have fled for safety reasons and for better opportunities elsewhere in the world.³ In one of history's greatest ironies, the church in the cradle of Christianity has been decimated and is struggling to regain ground.

Leslie Doll, a member of the Strategic Resource Group community, travels to the Middle East several times a year. She reflected on the massive trauma experienced by the Syrian church in light of their earthquakes, civil war, and the carnage of ISIS, quoting a Syrian pastor who said, “We are completely traumatized. The entire country needs to be put in a psychological hospital; we need the global church more than ever.”⁴



Reverend Doctor Jack Sara, president of the forty-five-year-old Bethlehem Bible College, reflected on the conditions in Israel and Palestine for Arab Christians, “Arab Christians have been here for twenty centuries over one hundred generations. Christianity was the dominant religion in the first through fourth centuries. Now, the Arab Christian community is 9 percent. In spite of which, we have withstood centuries of persecution from the Muslims and nearly five hundred years under Ottoman rule.”

Today, in the region encompassing Israel and Palestine, there are approximately the same number of Jews and Palestinians, with 7.5 million in each group.⁵ Here, the Christian community has largely disappeared. The hostility in the region has intensified since the Hamas attacks on Northern Israel on October 7, 2023. Sara told me that Arabs living in Bethlehem, which is under Palestinian authority, are not allowed to travel into Jerusalem. Even before the conflict in October, Gaza was the largest open-air prison in the world. Arabs have been living under apartheid conditions in their own homeland, while Arab Christians are caught in the middle of the conflict. Conditions have only worsened.⁶

Pastor Butros Ghrayeb lives in Haifa, Israel, in the north. He leads the Christian council for his region which includes thirty-five churches and fifteen organizations, all Arabic speaking. He said to me, “We want the global church to know we are here. We are in a spiritual and military conflict, often feeling misunderstood and forgotten. From the Jewish side we are considered lowly Arabs, while from the West we are considered enemies and maniacs.”⁷

Lebanon has a unique history. It is the only country in the Middle East with a mix of equal power among Christians and Muslims. As a former French colony, a government was put in place that required a Christian president while Muslims and Christians share power in the Parliament.

Despite the shared power, Hezbollah has gained control of the country, bringing increased risks of terrorist activity. In August 2020, a port explosion in Beirut resulted in 218 deaths and 7,000 injuries. In the past twenty years, the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon has grown to 2 million, comprising more than one-third of the 5.3 million Lebanese population.

Nabil Costa, CEO of Thimar, a leading educational and development organization in the region, said, “We go to sleep every evening not knowing what the morning will bring to us. It feels like we are living without a government, in a region of 453 million Muslims under the age of twenty.” He and his four hundred staff have built a remarkable footprint in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, caring for refugees, educating disabled children, and training seminary leaders in the region.⁸

Hikmat Kashouh leads Resurrection Church in Lebanon, which has grown to over 4,500 attendees. He described the demographics of Lebanon this way: “Although there are no official statistics for the number of Christians here, it is estimated that one-third of Lebanese are Christians, and two-thirds are Muslims (approximately 50 percent Shiite and 50 percent Sunni), with 18 officially recognized religious groups. Among the evangelical Christians, there are 139 churches and approximately 15,000 evangelical believers.”⁹

Kashouh’s vision is for the church to be positioned with great influence on the country. He explained, “We want to have a prophetic voice in business, government, media, entertainment, and education to promote peace and to share the gospel in all spheres of life. We want to see a transformational vision for the unity of the church.”¹⁰

Christian Presence in the Gulf

Since the forming of the UAE in 1973, parts of the Gulf have experienced an economic transformation. Because of the posture of tolerance by the UAE government, Dubai has become a city made up of 90 percent expatriates from two hundred nations. Approximately 3 million immigrants from India and the Philippines live in the UAE among the 10-million strong population.

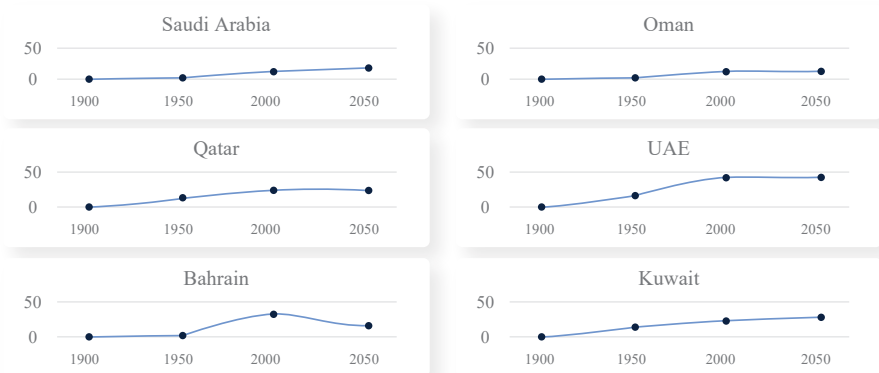
It is estimated that there are 100,000 Catholics and 50,000 Protestants now living in Dubai. The entire country may be 10 – 15 percent Christian based on migration patterns. There is also the strong presence of the Orthodox Church in the UAE.

The United Arab Emirates has led the world in thinking about and being proactive in a policy of tolerance. Of the fifteen countries with the largest migrant population in the world, eight of them are from the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia has been in the news with its efforts toward modernization and engagement with global culture. They seem to be learning from the modernization of Dubai in order to attract tourism and investment from the globe. The LIV Golf League, for example, began in 2022, attracting golfers from around the world.

Even though Islam was birthed in the Gulf in Saudi Arabia, there are signs of fresh spiritual interest in Christianity. In Dubai, my wife, Marya, and I met a couple who were part of the planting of Fellowship Church in Dubai, which has now grown to 4,500 members. The state of Christianity in the Middle East is in flux: even though the actual number of Christians is shrinking in the region, there is growth in the number of Christian expats finding a new home in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. This number of migrants is expected to grow exponentially in the next 20 – 30 years. Bill Koogler, a staff member of Fellowship Church, has done remarkable work tracking the migration trends of the Middle East.¹¹

Increase % of Christians



Decrease % of Christians



Signs of Hope: Marketplace Fellowships, Church Planting, United Prayer

In addition to the great signs of hope in Lebanon, God is stirring throughout the region. In Dubai, under the leadership of Pastor Jim Burgess, Fellowship Church has become a place of extraordinary hospitality to the world. It has been a galvanizing church for other churches and movements in the city. Sona Kazanjian, who is part of the Fellowship Church team, has been a liaison to the government of Dubai and has maintained a trusted role between very diverse communities.

In March 2023, Fellowship Church hosted leaders from 156 cities and 45 nations for Movement Day Middle East at the Two Seasons Hotel. The gathering reflected the city, with the attendees hailing from all over the globe.

Current pastor of Fellowship Church, Ray Galea said, “The vision of Fellowship Church is to reach the lost, to grow the found, and to make intercultural disciples who multiply themselves in their own countries.”¹²

I traveled to Lebanon in September 2023 and February 2024, and met one of the most talented leadership teams I've seen anywhere in the world. Thimar, the organization that Nabil Costa and Wissam Nasrallah lead, oversees a wide range of programs. Their Beirut Baptist School has 90 percent Muslim students. Their SKILD program for children with disabilities cares for 75 children. Their publishing house has produced more than 250 titles. The Arabic Baptist Theological Seminary has 200 students and is the only seminary in the Middle East that can freely accept students from the region.¹³

A close associate to Thimar is the Langham Partnership. It was founded by the late Reverend Doctor John Stott and is now helmed by Reverend Doctor Riad Kassis, board chair and adjunct professor of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, another close associate together with the Dar Manhal Al-Hayat publishing house. The Langham Scholars Ministry has over 350 PhD graduates from 95 nations, with the Middle East and North Africa as their priority regions.¹⁴

Kids Alive Lebanon is another associate organization to Thimar. The home for children is led by Denise Dagher. Dagher's husband was a pastor who contracted meningitis in May and died in July that same year at an early age. She became a widow at thirty-two and a single mother with two young children. Because of her experience, she was able to identify with the pain of the Syrian refugees who had lost everything. That empathy led her to become the director of Kids Alive Lebanon. The orphanage is now seventy-five years old and has grown to two sites to impact refugee women and 170 children from 7 different nations — all of whom are Muslims.¹⁵

The Strategic Resource Group is a community of forty families that have committed to invest in Middle East initiatives. Leslie Doll commented, "In the midst of the trauma of the Middle East, record numbers of people from different backgrounds are coming to faith in Jesus. The hardship of their lives has driven them to ask new questions, and Christianity is providing answers. One Muslim man came to the church with only a backpack and a towel to be baptized. It was a sign of how God is drawing people in the hardest places in the hardest circumstances to Himself."¹⁶

Hikmat Kashouh took Leslie Doll and me to a visit with a former senior government official in Beirut in September 2023. The respect that this senior leader had for Kashouh was palpable. Even though he was of a different religious background, he recognized that Kashouh and he shared the common desire for Beirut to prosper in the midst of great uncertainty.

Perhaps the greatest sign of hope is the dogged commitment of all these leaders to stay in their assignments in the Middle East. Costa commented that if the remaining Christians leave the region, the terrorists will control everything.

The Contribution of Movement Day

Pastor Joseph Kassab, president of The Supreme Council of Evangelical Community in Syria and Lebanon hosted the first Movement Day Lebanon on February 14, 2024. It was also the first Movement Day in Arabic in the fifteen years of the movement's existence. The event took place at the Moore Conference Center on one of the Lebanese hills overlooking the capital city of Beirut. Pastor Kassab said, "We need Movement Day to help us unite the church and to think critically about how we work together."

Hikmat Kashouh commented, "Movement Day is a reminder to work together as pastors, business leaders, and the community. This cooperation breaks down tensions to form better partnerships."¹⁷

Jack Sara said, "Movement Day provides an understanding of the wider spectrum of the city, challenging us to go out of our four walls. We need to think of different disciplines — education, medicine, and commerce. We now know we can go pray for the mayor and people in the community."¹⁸

Wissam Nasrallah stated during Movement Day Beirut in February 2024, "We can no longer be successful alone. We have to be successful together." Within six weeks of that gathering, business leaders had follow-up meetings to discuss ways to collaborate. There were also one hundred next-generation leaders who met to create their own strategy to impact their peers.¹⁹

Ray Galea from Fellowship Church said, “Movement Day has created a dynamic allowing people to think about the good of the city. It has been a catalyst to think imaginatively about the kingdom of God creating a larger presence in our city. God is partnering with us to impact the world.”²⁰

Leslie Doll, who has journeyed beside her husband Bob, our board chair, had this to say: “Leaders in the Middle East who have felt forgotten feel listened to. Movement Day’s work has fostered unity and collaboration with pastors reaching out and praying together. There is a new level of focus and vision. Highly respected leaders see their peers involved and it brings great hope.

“Movement Day reminds us of the centrality of united prayer. This is where the battle is won. We need to remind ourselves that since the onslaught of Islam in the seventh century, the greatest prayer meeting in all the world has been taking place. Muslims have been praying five times a day for 1300 years. This really is a spiritual battle that will only be won through the prayers of God’s people and His work through the body of Christ.”²¹

¹ “Our History,” *Kanad Hospital*, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://kanadhospital.org/our-history/>.

² Movement Day Dubai, “Movement Day Dubai 2019 – Story: Oasis Hospital,” YouTube, April 7, 2019, https://youtu.be/0Ru_t5dy1ow?si=7MVTustHxwtKqEp4.

³ Bill Koogler, “Gulf States: State of Christianity” (presentation, Movement Day Middle East, February 24, 2024).

⁴ Leslie Doll, interview with Mac Pier, April 8, 2024.

⁵ “Jews now a 47% minority in Israel and the territories, demographer says,” *The Times of Israel*, August 30, 2022, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/jews-now-a-minority-in-israel-and-the-territories-demographer-says/>.

⁶ Jack Sara, interview with Mac Pier, April 24, 2024.

⁷ Butros Ghayreb, interview with Mac Pier, March 15, 2024.

⁸ Nabil Costa, interview with Mac Pier, March 11, 2024.

⁹ Hikmat Kashouh, interview with Mac Pier, March 19, 2024.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Sona Kazanjian, Ray Galea, and Bill Koogler, interview with Mac Pier, January 31, 2024.

¹² Kazanjian, Galea, and Koogler.

¹³ Costa.

¹⁴ Riad Kassis, interview with Mac Pier, February 13, 2024.

¹⁵ Denise Dagher, interview with Mac Pier, February 13, 2024.

¹⁶ Doll.

¹⁷ Kashouh.

¹⁸ Sara.

¹⁹ Wissam Nasrallah, interview with Mac Pier, March 12, 2024.

²⁰ Kazanjian, Galea, and Koogler.

²¹ Doll.



Taj Mahal, India



CHAPTER

South Asia: A Flourishing Church amid Suffering

A God Story

I had breakfast with Promod Haque in Manhattan on May 2, 2024. Haque has been a member of the management team at Norwest Venture Partners for more than three decades, and has spent significant time serving in the leadership of his church and as a board member at Biola University. His wife, Dorcas, was raised by missionary parents in Africa and shares the same heart for God's work.

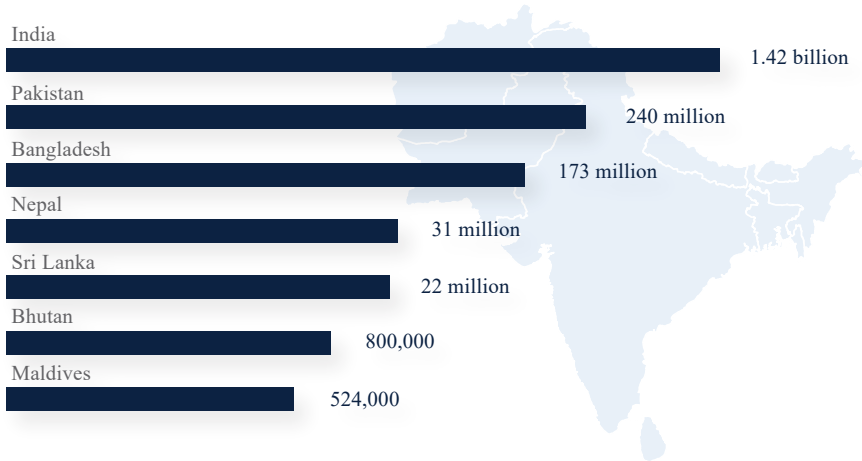
During breakfast, Haque recounted the story of his great-grandfather, Zahur-ul-Haqq. Zahur-ul-Haqq had been raised in a prominent Muslim family in Tihar, India. In 1854, he heard the gospel preached on the streets of Bareilly. His heart turned toward Christ, and he was baptized on July 24, 1859. It was remarkable to see a former Muslim make a public declaration of his faith in Jesus.

Zahur-ul-Haqq became a teacher and a preacher and taught in a mission school that was the center point for 146 villages with nearly 1,500 Christians. In 1882, Zahur-ul-Haqq became the first Indian Presiding Elder in the Methodist Church. In the four districts he served, the Christian community grew to 50,000.¹

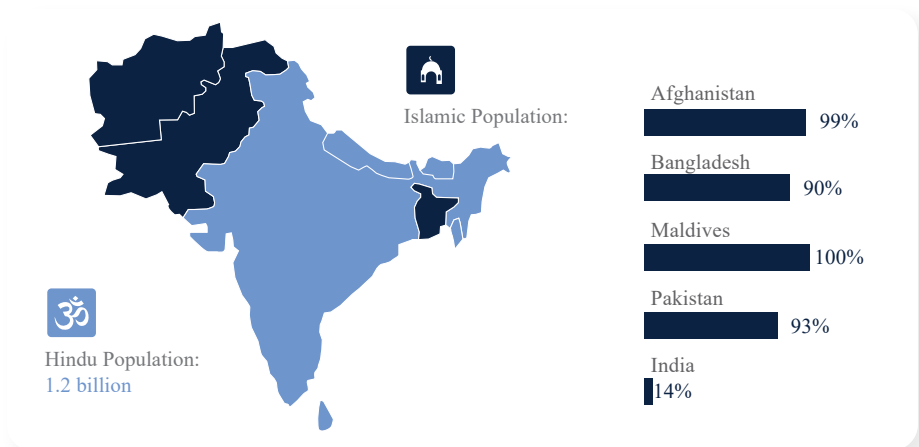
South Asia Today

Zahur-ul-Haqq's story is relevant to South Asia today. It speaks to both the enormous challenges and the extraordinary signs of hope in contemporary South Asia. In 2023, India became the largest population in world history, surpassing the 1.4 billion mark. That means 25 percent of today's global population live in South Asia.

These are the countries of South Asia by population: ²



Mark Visvasam, team leader for Movement Day Asia and a resident of Chennai, India, has shared the following demographic framework for South Asia:



- ✦ **By 2050 India will have the largest Muslim population in the world at 310 million.**
- ✦ **Less than 3 percent of South Asia is currently Christian.** Only India (2.3 percent) and Sri Lanka (7.4 percent) have more than 2 percent of a Christian presence.³

On the flip side, South Asia is becoming increasingly urban. By 2050, 55 percent of South Asia will be living in sizable cities. Three of the largest megacities today are located in South Asia — Mumbai and Delhi in India, and Dhaka in Bangladesh, with a combined population of more than 60 million people. Dhaka and the Pakistani cities of Lahore and Karachi are three of the largest Muslim cities globally. Against this backdrop, the church in South Asia is suffering intense persecution due to religious nationalism, dictatorial paranoia, and ethno-religious hostility. Visvasam recounted the burning of hundreds of churches in the eastern district of Manipur, India. Pastors are being routinely imprisoned for preaching the gospel. Visvasam also spoke of an Australian missionary family in which the husband and two sons were burned alive while sleeping in their car.⁴

Challenges Women Face in South Asia

In an interview with Kavitha Emmanuel, founder of Disruptive Women South Asia, she shared the following, “Women in the region face some of the harshest realities of any group of women globally⁵ — violence, discrimination, and abuse,⁶ on top of institutional and societal gender inequality. This has also contributed to a mental health pandemic among women.⁷ We have 295 million adolescent girls in South Asia, and more than 50 percent of women here are under twenty-five years of age.⁸ In 2016, 36 percent of all suicides globally were among Indian women.”⁹

It is in response to these issues that Emmanuel launched Disruptive Women South Asia (DWSA). She was inspired to take action after learning — through Movement Day’s connections — about Letitia Shelton’s work among women in Australia. The vision of DWSA is to empower women within churches and NGOs to organize, strategize, and collaborate toward measurable outcomes for women in cities. DWSA was presented at Movement Day Asian Cities in Singapore in October 2022, and the first Disruptive City Women Summit was hosted in Goa, India, in 2023 with women attending from seventeen cities.

Emmanuel elaborated, “We have Disruptive Women chapters in about seventeen cities across India. Every city is taking up an issue to address. Kochi has taken up suicide among young women. Mumbai is focusing on mental health and sex trafficking.¹⁰ Chennai is addressing domestic violence. Our vision is to invest in young women and build them up as future leaders. We need new contextualized leadership. We believe the gospel is disruptive to bring the shalom of God to women in our vast cities.”¹¹

Signs of Hope: Marketplace Fellowships, Church Planting, United Prayer

Against this enormously challenging backdrop are scores of signs of hope. Jake Emmanuel, husband to Kavitha, spoke about the explosive growth of marketplace fellowships across India. He said, “There has been a spontaneous outbreak of the gospel in the marketplace in Chennai. Marketplace fellowships have been established in every industry, including banking, legal, software, automotive drivers, film, and the government.” Movement Day Chennai in August 2023 featured hundreds of marketplace leaders gathering at New Life Assembly of God, a church led by Pastors D. Mohan and Chadwick Mohan.

Leaders from Chennai who participated in the Movement Day Scholars Program have envisioned planting 4,000 new churches to bring the city’s total to 10,000 churches. Their vision is to see 10 percent of the Chennai population become Christian through the new churches.

Aligned with this vision, City to City in South Asia, with whom Jake Emmanuel works, has trained 500 church planters as part of a bigger vision to train 3,000 church planters in the next seven years. Concurrent to that is the vision to train 1,000 Christian professionals and entrepreneurs in the next five years.¹²

Arthur Thangiah, a pastor and leader in the Mumbai Transformation Network in Mumbai for the past forty years, shared in our interview that though only 2.6 percent of India is Christian, Christians run 71.6 percent of the schools.

Thangiah is also at the center of an extraordinary prayer movement in Mumbai and across India. Within Mumbai, he helped to formulate and expand the work of the Mumbai Transformation Network. In this network, he explained, “A prayer meeting commences every morning to pray for transformational issues across the city and nation. This continual prayer effort has been running for more than 900 days.”

Tom White, an American colleague of the South Asia Movement Day leadership, has conducted more than 800 Pastors’ Prayer Summits. The majority of these were held in South Asia. White has also trained dozens of leaders to establish Pastors’ Prayer Summits city by city in the region.

These are unique gatherings of spiritual leaders who come together for one to three days to build friendship, take communion, and pray for the expansion of the gospel and for the unity of the church. Together, White and Thangiah’s leadership have been foundational to the flourishing of thousands of leaders and movements across South Asia.¹³

An Accelerant for Unity and Measurable Impact

During his presentation at the Museum of the Bible on May 20, 2024, Mark Visvasam commented on the speed of growth of the gospel movement across Asia. He outlined the following timeline:

- 2003: Formation of Chennai Transformation Network
- 2017: First Movement Day in Chennai
- 2020: Movement South Asia working in 4 cities
- 2020: Movement Scholar Program begins
- 2021: 5 City Catalysts join the team; 16 cities envisioned
- 2023: 8 City Catalysts join the team; 109 cities envisioned; **550 leaders** participated in the scholars training
- 2030: 100 City Catalysts; 500 City Gospel Movements initiated, led by **5,000 scholars**¹⁴

As leadership teams cast their visions for their cities, they begin a sequential journey that follows these steps:

- ♦ Gather to **pray in unity** and hold a Prayer Summit.
- ♦ **Research** and map cities according to needs and the assets of the church.
- ♦ Plant and establish healthy, **reproducing churches**.
- ♦ **Disciple** the “now” generation for Christ.
- ♦ Create a **kingdom marketplace** ecosystem.
- ♦ Empower and engage the **marginalized**.¹⁵

What Happens During Movement Day?

Movement Day is an in-person gathering of church leaders, marketplace leaders, NGO leaders, and civic leaders who gather to do the following:

- ♦ **Celebrate** that Christ is Lord of the City in worship and teaching.
- ♦ **Consider** compelling research on the city regarding its greatest needs.
- ♦ **Convene** specific conversations around strategies to work together.
- ♦ **Collaborate** together toward one- and ten-year goals for the city.
- ♦ **Commission** one another to work in unity for the transformation of the city toward a specific outcome.

The Movement Day Scholars Program

Leaders are invited to participate based on their leadership and influence, and are to invest three years in a transformational journey. The Scholars curriculum is built on five convictions:

- ♦ **The Leader’s Spirituality** — The width of our influence is in proportion to the depth of our intimacy with God. *Lectio Divina* is used to foster this deepened spirituality.
- ♦ **The Bible and the City** — We want leaders to become theologically fluent with the centrality of the city in the Bible.

- ♦ **Becoming Subject Matter Experts** — We want the smartest Christian leaders with the biggest hearts to really know their cities.
- ♦ **Building Alliances** — Spiritual movements are about aggregating like-minded leaders and accelerating efforts through alliances of church, marketplace, generations, and women.
- ♦ **Decadal Plan** — Every city team declares a “North Star” for their city, something they would like to ask God for over the course of a decade. In Chennai, it’s the planting of 4,000 churches (see appendix 2).

The training is done in two days with five modules each day, and is repeated three times over two to three years. Books are read and reports are written to demonstrate an assimilation of knowledge and practice.

Scholars graduate when they create a ten-year plan for their city that can be shared and improved upon over time. Of the 1,000+ leaders in the Movement Day Scholars Program, more than half are from South Asia.

This has happened in part due to the extraordinary leadership of South Asia Team Leader Jerince Peter, and Scholars Coordinator Abelasha Joshua. Movement Day South Asia has attracted world-class talent with highly committed leaders to accelerate the gospel across South Asia.

In its six years of existence, from 2017 to 2023, Movement South Asia has grown from engagement with just 1 city (Chennai) to engagement with 109 cities. The primary driver of this growth? Movement Day Scholars.

Kolkata: A Movement South Asia City Case Study

Kolkata was made famous by the heroic work of Mother Teresa. The city of more than 15 million people is divided into 249 pin codes. In a 2020 Movement Day gathering, it was determined that 103 of these pin codes were without a single church.

Within three years after that Movement Day gathering, with research and united prayer, 22 pin codes had churches planted. The vision for South Asia, according to Mark Visvasam, is to see this model replicated across 500 cities in the region by 5,000 Movement Day scholars.¹⁶

The Contribution of Movement Day

Jerince Peter, leader of the work in South Asia, commented, “Prior to 2017, the church thought primarily of rural areas. Movement Day revealed to us that our vision had not been well channeled, and gave us a vision for cities.”¹⁷

Arthur Thangiah from Mumbai said, “Movement Day has given us assurance that this can be done, and with that to expect large outcomes from God. We are learning from a global community of best practices that inspire as well as sharpen us.”¹⁸

Kavitha Emmanuel reflected, “Movement Day has been instrumental these past four years in giving us space to initiate city gospel movements for women, freedom to have difficult conversations, and different forums that enable momentum. We needed a voice in the global church, and Movement Day made that possible.”¹⁹

Jake Emmanuel said, “Movement Day in Chennai and in other parts of the world has the power to convene Christian leadership. The three-legged stool of minister, marketplace leader, and missionary has catalyzed unity like never before across all spheres of influence. We can attribute to Movement Day 100 re-envisioned fellowships in Chennai.”²⁰

Emmanuel Pothan from Kochi stated, “Movement Day has given us a platform to bring a very loose vision to ground level. It’s given us language, format, and knowledge from the global community. Hearing the successes of New York City has really helped us.”²¹

Mark Visvasam said, “Movement Day came along when city work was small with little idea on how to move forward. We have been empowered in training, thanks to Movement Day consultations in Singapore and Dubai, along with the investment of expertise into more than 500 scholars across South Asia.”²²

The Possible

Saint Thomas came to Chennai as a first-century disciple of Jesus from Israel. I have seen his tomb underneath the Saint Thomas Cathedral Basilica in Chennai and have often reflected that if a first-century Jew can impact South Asia, then certainly a twenty-first-century South Asian can impact the globe.

Just as Zahur-ul-Haqq was instrumental in influencing 50,000 Christians in Uttar Pradesh in the nineteenth century, nothing is too hard for God in South Asia today.

- ¹ "Zahur-ul-Haqq," The Historical Marker Database, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=236333>.
- ² "Southern Asia Population (LIVE)," Worldometer, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/southern-asia-population/>.
- ³ Mark Visvasam, "South Asia" (presentation, The 1000 Cities Summit, Museum of the Bible, Washington, D.C., May 20, 2024).
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Belinda Goldsmith and Meka Beresford, "India most dangerous country for women with sexual violence rife – global poll," Reuters, June 26, 2018, accessed June 24, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/india-most-dangerous-country-for-women-with-sexual-violence-rife-global-poll-idUSKBN1JM075/>.
- ⁶ Martin Raiser, "Standing Up to Fight Gender-Based Violence in South Asia," World Bank, December 9, 2022, accessed June 24, 2024, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/endpovertyinsouthasia/standing-fight-gender-based-violence-south-asia>.
- ⁷ Arundhati Biswas Kundal, "Fundamental health services for women: Analysing gender disparities," Observer Research Foundation, October 9, 2023, accessed June 24, 2024, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/fundamental-health-services-for-women-analysing-gender-disparities/>.
- ⁸ UNICEF South Asia, "Rewriting the Narrative for the Second Decade with and for Adolescent Girls," UNICEF, December 2022, accessed June 24, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/reports/rewriting-narrative-second-decade-and-adolescent-girls>.
- ⁹ Dana G. Smith, "More Than a Third of Female Suicides Are Committed by Indian Women," Scientific American, December 1, 2018, accessed June 24, 2024, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/more-than-a-third-of-female-suicides-are-committed-by-indian-women/>.
- ¹⁰ "Prevention of Human Trafficking," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed June 24, 2024, <https://www.unodc.org/southasia/en/topics/frontpage/2009/prevention-of-human-trafficking.html>.
- ¹¹ Kavitha Emmanuel, interview with Mac Pier, January 19, 2024.
- ¹² Jeyakaran Emmanuel, interview with Mac Pier, February 9, 2024.
- ¹³ Arthur Thangiah, interview with Mac Pier, January 30, 2024.
- ¹⁴ Visvasam.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Jerince Peter, interview with Mac Pier, February 6, 2024.
- ¹⁸ Thangiah.
- ¹⁹ Kavitha Emmanuel.
- ²⁰ Jeyakaran Emmanuel.
- ²¹ Emmanuel Pothen, interview with Mac Pier, February 7, 2024.
- ²² Visvasam.



Merlion Park, Singapore



6

CHAPTER

Southeast Asia: A New Wineskin

A God Story

In 1978, Billy Graham preached to 337,000 attendees at his Singapore Crusade. Hosted by a team that included Canon James Wong, a leading Anglican pastor in Singapore, Graham prophesied that Singapore would become an Antioch for Asia.¹ Historically, Antioch was one of the cities instrumental in the spread of the gospel and the growth of the first-century church. The prophecy was declared at the 254th of Graham's remarkable 417 crusades, which spanned the globe from 1947 to 2005.²

Since hearing Billy Graham at the 1979 Urbana Missions Conference, I have observed Graham's legacy on global cities. In New York in 1957, Graham preached for 100 consecutive nights at Madison Square Garden. In 1991, he preached to 250,000 people at Central Park. I met him for the first time in June 2005 as co-chair of his last crusade, which concluded in Flushing, Queens, where I lived. Billy Graham is a thread that has run through my family, through the Wong family, through Singapore, and through New York City.

Thirty-seven years later, in 2015, I visited Singapore for the first time at the invitation of Ezekiel Tan, general secretary of the Singapore arm of Bible Society. Bible Society was co-founded on July 4, 1837 by William Wilberforce, the man who drafted the slavery abolition legislation in England.

During that visit, I joined 51,000 others in the Jubilee Day of Prayer at a soccer stadium, commemorating fifty years of nationhood for Singapore. After twenty trips to Singapore in the coming nine years, I began to appreciate the prescience of Graham's prophecy. In its nearly sixty years as a nation, Singapore has experienced a powerful transformation. The nation was named the seventh most influential city in the world in 2018, according to AT Kearney.³ Given its church history and pool of Christian talents, there is no more strategic city in the world than Singapore to impact the globe.

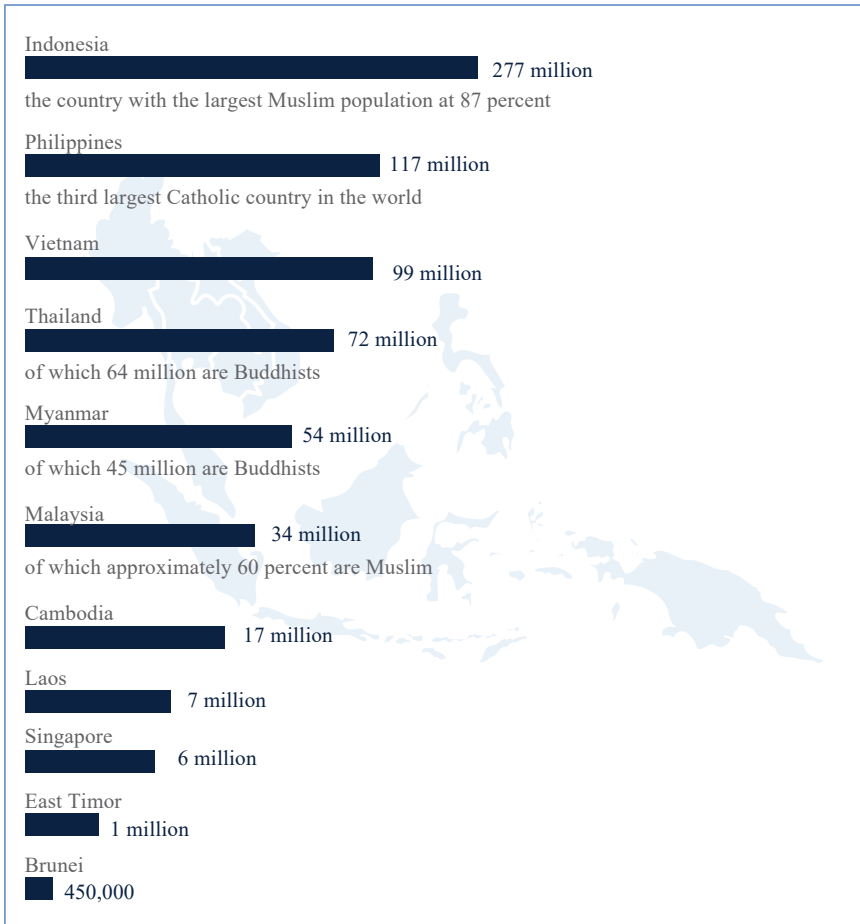
Canon James Wong

One of God's human instruments to lead the transformation of Singapore was Canon James Wong. I was privileged to meet Canon Wong as well as his family — wife Esther and sons Jonathan and Timothy. Jon is an Anglican pastor and Tim is a bank researcher and strategist, and both are graduates of Oral Roberts University. Not only did Wong play a role in inviting Graham to Singapore, but he was also a point leader for the renewal movement in the nation.

After Wong passed away on April 8, 2022, he was remembered at his funeral in the following ways:

- ♦ He served faithfully for forty-one years with the Anglican Diocese of Singapore.
- ♦ He planted more than twenty churches, including Marine Parade Christian Centre, Chapel of the Resurrection, Chapel of Christ the King, and Chapel of the Holy Spirit.
- ♦ He initiated and helped to organize the Singapore Billy Graham Evangelistic Crusade in 1978 and later established the Festival of Praise movement.
- ♦ In 1973, Wong experienced and then led the charismatic renewal movement that swept across Singapore. The Protestant church would grow by 400 percent from 1970 to 1990 (2 percent to 8 percent).⁴

God moved in unusual ways, bringing the charismatic renewal movement to the Anglican Church. Canon Wong's leadership represented a new wineskin in Singapore back then, and there is a strong sense that God is again preparing a new wineskin for the region today.



The Southeast Asia Context

Within four hours of flight travel, Singapore has contact with 4.5 billion people. Southeast Asia alone is home to 690 million people hailing from 11 nations.⁵

In Southeast Asia, 1,000 native languages are spoken, with 705 unreached people groups representing 332 million people. An unreached people group is a defined community without a self-propagating Christian church.⁶

All this extraordinary religious and linguistic diversity makes Southeast Asia one of the most culturally complex regions on the planet. The challenges facing

this part of the globe are enormous given the population density as well as religious pluralism.

Myanmar has been experiencing civil war since 2021, with nearly 50,000 killed.⁷ Indonesia has more than 20 million people living on \$2 per day in multidimensional poverty.⁸ Furthermore, the nation comprises some 17,000 islands, making it one of the most complex nations in the world to govern. In the Philippines, 18 percent of the country lives below the poverty line, representing 20 million people. Thousands of Filipinos emigrate daily looking for a better way of life.⁹

The church in the region has also faced enormous challenges. In Indonesia, according to Pastor Anton Tarigan, two-thirds of young people have not returned to church since the pandemic. Tarigan said that the church is not well coordinated at a city or national level. Despite the relative religious freedom in Indonesia, there is a great need for the church to increase its collective impact.¹⁰

In Singapore, despite the extraordinary church growth over two decades, the past decade has seen a plateauing of the church community with an aging population. Joshua Sng, a next-generation leader, highlighted that the Singaporean church still has a long way to go in learning how to reach both the very poor and the very rich in the nation — those who are beyond the current demographics of the church.¹¹ According to research by Tim Wong, twice as many millennial and Gen Z Singaporeans claim “None” as their religion as those who claim to be Protestant.¹²

Signs of Hope: An Emerging Wineskin

Despite enormous challenges, God is moving in powerful ways across the region. In Indonesia, the Indonesian Prayer Network has developed a 700-city prayer community. This group hosts some of the largest prayer gatherings in the world. In 2016, I met Nus Reimas, a forty-year career missionary with Campus Crusade and a highly respected spiritual father to the nation. He brought

twenty-two leaders from Indonesia to the 2016 Movement Day Global Cities gathering, and advocated for Anton Tarigan for the national leadership role for Movement Day. Tarigan is now serving as board chair for the Indonesia Arise Asia movement.

In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Philip Chang, regional director of the Lausanne movement, is working effectively among Iranian immigrants. Damansara Utama Methodist Church, led by Dr. Daniel Ho, started a midnight service for the hundreds of Myanmar immigrants who work long-hours day jobs. These Myanmarers are predominantly first-generation Christians who demonstrate enormous spiritual passion for their newfound faith.

In the Philippines, Herman Dionson has served with Youth Alive, Philippines, an arm of the Assemblies of God. Dionson joined the Nxt Move team in building a global network of next-generation practitioners. He told me, “We have begun to see enormous collaboration inside of the Philippines, using best practices including digital ministry to reach younger leaders. This movement is beginning to send missionaries to other countries as well as reaching 100 campuses. We are working closely with Campus Crusade, InterVarsity, and Youth With a Mission.”¹³

Singapore is seeing enormous signs of hope. Jason Lee, senior director at the Milken Institute Asia office, notes the resilience of the Singaporean economy. He said, “Singapore thrives in the midst of a very diverse society. We are embracing technological innovation and community stability.”¹⁴

Joshua Sng noted, “Younger leaders have quickness in both their ability to learn and agility to act. These leaders could be thrust into missions much quicker than before if they were effectively empowered. We are already beginning to see generations walking together to create a common future.”¹⁵

Jon Wong commented, “Since before the advent of COVID-19, we are seeing many more of the nations of Asia coming to Singapore for work. Even though the Singapore church is only 19 percent of the population, we have very influential leadership in government, in the marketplace, and in broader culture, in a nation that has one of the highest standards of ethics in the world. The church is punching above her weight.”¹⁶ Singapore may have the most robust Christian presence in the marketplace of any city I’ve seen in the world, including the medical, legal, governmental, and commercial spheres.

One of the signs of hope is a new expression of united prayer — in this case, particularly for Asia. Tim Wong initiated the *SG500 Asia Cities Prayer Guide*, which began on January 1, 2024. Every day for 250 days, the team behind this prayer guide posts on social media a call to pray for two cities, sharing those cities’ history, demographics, religious orientation, and unique influence. As outlined in chapter 2, the prayer themes are “Open Heavens, Open Highways, Open Hearts, and Open Homes.” Hundreds have been mobilized globally to participate in this prayer movement. We are praying for the firm establishment of a strong remnant in each city from which to build an Asian network of leaders sharing best practices with one another. We envision this prayer effort becoming more global over time.

The Contribution of Movement Day

Our first Movement Day in Singapore took place in 2020 during the early days of the pandemic. For the event, I had interviewed Tim Keller to present his thoughts on impacting cities through a united church. The Singapore Movement Day expressions have given a platform for next-generation leaders to lead, upholding a strong theme: to identify, to convene, and to listen to next-generation voices.

We have had Movement Day expressions in Indonesia as well, with two gatherings led by a strong leadership team under Anton Tarigan’s guidance.

Tim Wong commented, “Movement Day brings an understanding of cities, prayer, and unity which are needed for the flourishing of cities. I have seen Movement Day’s favor in the regions of Asia. When I attended the 100 City Summit in 2018 in Washington, DC, I saw the caliber of prayer leadership from India, which drew me to the movement.”¹⁷

Jon Wong reflected, “Though nascent, Movement Day has connected us with younger leaders in Singapore who are now entering their season of leadership. They have forty years in front of them to pass on what they have received.”¹⁸

Joshua Sng said, “Movement Day has shaped our thinking and broadened our network. We are now meeting people from around the world. We are thinking with greater intention about demographics and allowing data to tell a story. Research is critically important.”¹⁹

Jason Lee responded, “Movement Day has been a game changer. It has propelled our efforts, especially in integrating faith with the societal and technological fabric of Singapore. The global connections and insights have been invaluable. Movement Day has not been an event. It has been a catalyst for us, pushing our mission to the forefront of ethical and spiritual leadership in a technologically advanced society.”²⁰

Movement Day Asian Cities

Part of Singapore’s destiny as a church is its hospitality to the globe. As an island nation, Singapore has always struck me as the Manhattan of Asia, holding a unique influence across the world.

As we were all emerging from COVID-19 in 2022, the Wongs and I felt prompted to create a gathering for Asian leaders in Singapore. We discovered that it was easier for leaders to travel from India to Singapore to meet than to travel within India to meet due to government restrictions.

The timing of the event was especially meaningful considering Canon Wong's passing in April 2022. Many churches and individuals supported Movement Day Asian Cities to honor Canon Wong's memory.

Tim and Jon Wong built a host team to take on the responsibility for creating a 500-person gathering from 120 cities and 33 nations. Remarkably, we were able to provide lodging for the international guests thanks to the generosity of the Far East Organization. Several individuals and churches also generously contributed to make the gathering possible. Tim led forty days of prayer on Zoom in preparation for the gathering, joined every day by his mother, Esther.

The gathering was an extraordinary achievement, involving heavy logistics with moving 500 leaders across multiple venues and providing meals as well. Before the gathering, on October 3 – 4, 2022, we hosted the Movement Day Scholars Training for 250 leaders at Jon's congregational facilities at the Church of the Good Shepherd (Anglican). This was our first in-person Movement Day Scholars Training since we began virtually in September 2020. We have now crossed over the 1000th leader who has been trained in this model.

After the Movement Day Scholars Training, the 500-strong gathering happened. We had faculty that joined us from Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Colombo. Presentations were made in breakout sessions covering a breadth of topics including church planting, next-generation leadership, and empowerment of women in leadership.

The vision is to catalyze teams of leaders city by city who will discern what God is doing and what He wants to do in their city through a united church.

I firmly believe that this gathering in October 2022 was a partial fulfillment of Billy Graham's prophecy regarding Singapore's destiny as an Antioch for Asia. Singapore is globally unique in its ability to host a gathering of this type, bringing the church of Singapore and the global church together in a unique

way pointed toward a unique destiny. The dream is to build on the lessons learned from the past five years to build a roadmap for the next ten years across Asia to impact 500 cities together. If only 2 percent of all of Asia were brought to faith in ten years, that translates to 100 million souls being eternally impacted.

- ¹ “Melody Zaccheus, “Christians in Singapore remember evangelist Billy Graham’s 1978 crusade as a milestone,” *The Straits Times*, February 23, 2018, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/christians-in-singapore-remember-evangelist-billy-grahams-1978-crusade-as-a-milestone>.
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- ³ Andres Mendoza Pena, “2018 Global Cities Report,” *Kearney*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.kearney.com/service/global-business-policy-council/gcr/2018-full-report>.
- ⁴ Galven Wong, eulogy spoken at Canon James Wong’s funeral, April 12, 2022.
- ⁵ “South-Eastern Asia Population (LIVE),” *Worldometer*, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/south-eastern-asia-population/>.
- ⁶ “South East Asian Languages Overview: What are the SE Asian Languages and Where are They Spoken?,” *Tomedes*, February 2, 2024, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://www.tomedes.com/translator-hub/southeast-asian-languages>.
- ⁷ Teresa Cabrián Aranda, “Thousands flee Myanmar for Thailand amid flare up in civil war fighting,” *PBS*, May 24, 2024, accessed May 24, 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/thousands-flee-myanmar-for-thailand-amid-flare-up-in-civil-war-fighting>.
- ⁸ “Poverty Data: Indonesia,” *Asian Development Bank*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.adb.org/where-we-work/indonesia/poverty>.
- ⁹ “Poverty Data: Philippines,” *Asian Development Bank*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.adb.org/where-we-work/philippines/poverty>.
- ¹⁰ Anton Tarigan, interview with Mac Pier, February 7, 2024.
- ¹¹ Joshua Sng, interview with Mac Pier, February 6, 2024.
- ¹² Timothy Wong, interview with Mac Pier, March 10, 2024.
- ¹³ Herman Dionson, interview with Mac Pier, April 11, 2024.
- ¹⁴ Jason Lee, interview with Mac Pier, January 31, 2024.
- ¹⁵ Sng.
- ¹⁶ Jonathan Wong, interview with Mac Pier, March 15, 2024.
- ¹⁷ Timothy Wong.
- ¹⁸ Jonathan Wong.
- ¹⁹ Sng.
- ²⁰ Lee.



Great Wall of China



7

CHAPTER

East Asia: Good News for China

A God Story

I made my first trip to Hong Kong in January 2017, and was stunned by the impact of the Alpha course there. Alpha began as an in-house course at Holy Trinity Brompton Church in London in 1977, and was repositioned by Nicky Gumbel in 1990 as a course for people outside the church to explore the Christian faith. It is formatted as a series of talks and conversations.¹

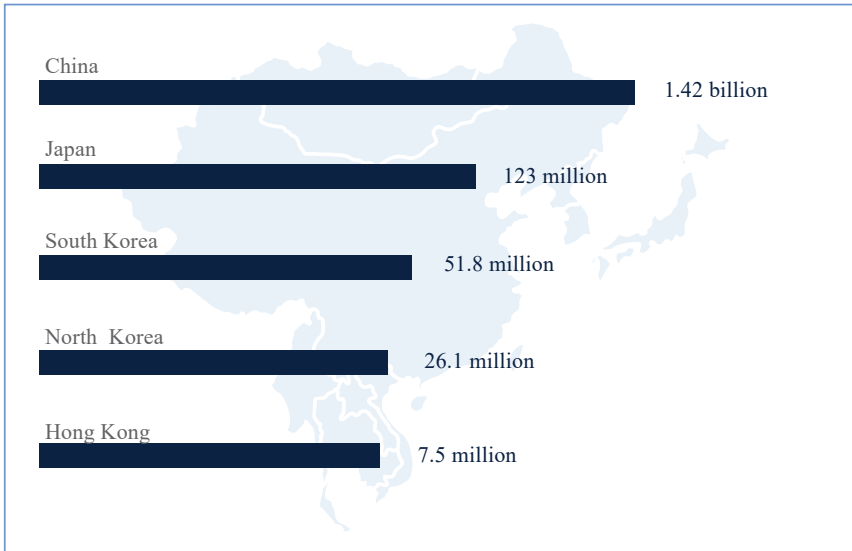
In 1993, Alpha went global and within thirty years, 28 million people had taken the course.² The Alpha Hong Kong office in particular opened in 1999,³ and more than 600 churches in the city have participated in the Alpha course in the twenty-five years since.⁴

The Alpha course in Hong Kong involves Cantonese, Mandarin, and English-speaking churches, and has been providing a common language for the entire church of Hong Kong to express its unity. This unity is manifesting itself in multiple remarkable ways, as will be described in a later section.

In 2023, the Alpha course saw exponential growth in the Asia-Pacific region. In this region, 418,000 people went through the Alpha course, a 38 percent increase in number from 2022. Also, 11,700 churches, organizations, and individuals had run 19,650 courses — a 25 percent and 34 percent increase respectively from the year before.⁵

East Asia Demographics and Challenges

The largest nations in East Asia have the following populations:⁶



In an interview with two Asia policy experts in Washington who have served in government, I asked for their perspective on the Asia-Pacific region. They described China as “awakening to its identity” in the current political environment.

In China, democracy is being challenged in the periphery in the city of Hong Kong. As mentioned in chapter 3, Chinese population is facing a slowdown much faster than expected due in part to extremely low birth rates. With urbanization and separation of families, China has become largely urbanized in the past two generations, with many of the younger generation raised by grandparents as parents move to the city to find work.

The Chinese discussion has been of particular interest to the United States as a competing superpower. Because of China’s growing military presence, the United States is trying to determine its best Pacific Islands military basing strategy and continues to spend more money on defense.

Japan is also facing massive issues due to aging. As mentioned in chapter 3, the median age of the Japanese is forty-eight. Both Korea and Japan rely on the United States in the defense realm in relation to China.

When asked what they thought Asia would look like in 2050, the Asia policy experts I spoke with felt that countries were vulnerable due to unplanned urbanization. There was also an interplay between changing weather patterns and the clustering of cities on the coastline. Urban populations are vulnerable when there are major weather incidents. In coastal China, 60 percent of the population lives in twelve coastal provinces with as many as 1,600 people per square kilometer. This population density is vulnerable to dramatic changes in climate. All these multiple realities can create destabilizing forces for such a large population.⁷

As they reflected on the enormity of possibilities and challenges in East Asia, the Asia policy experts concluded, “All of the material opportunities for people in East Asia don’t fill the human heart. The church has an opportunity to speak of the only One who can fill the human heart.”⁸

David Ro, the Lausanne regional director for East Asia, reflected, “The church in China has been stepping into this opportunity with great growth, especially since the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. Many intellectuals came to Christ in cities, and the church grew rapidly in the countryside. The church also grew very rapidly in the cities in the 1990s and 2000s.”⁹

Since 2018, freedoms of religion in China have been tightening under President Xi. From 2020 to 2022, China was in complete lockdown due to COVID-19. Younger people were especially frustrated, and the church was trying to navigate in this space of less freedom.

There are three great challenges facing the Chinese church:

1. Restrictive environment — pastors wrestle with continuing worship services.
2. Insufficient number of pastors — churches close as a consequence.
3. Population decline — China is aging with fewer younger people.¹⁰

Hong Kong: A Signs of Hope Case Study

In 2016, Natalie Chan, founder of the Institute for City Transformation (ICT), brought a team of Hong Kong church leaders to Movement Day Global Cities in New York City. She describes Hong Kong as a city of 7.4 million people with a Chinese majority and a good mix of expatriates and ethnic minorities. Chan was the initial catalyst to bring Movement Day to Hong Kong in 2018.

Prior to her current work at the ICT, Chan was director of the Bethel Ray Bakke Center for Urban Transformation. The Bakke Center produced dozens of graduates trained in city exegesis and program development to impact urban centers. Chan and I shared a common link in that we both had Ray Bakke as a doctoral mentor. Bakke was perhaps one of the most knowledgeable people on cities in human history.

In response to the widespread pro-democracy protests in 2019, the National Security Law (NSL) was introduced in 2020. The law made illegal a wider range of dissenting acts, resulting in weakened autonomy as argued by some critics. Hong Kong has since gone through a shift of population mix with over 200,000 people emigrated and more arrivals from the mainland through a talent recruitment scheme.

“Hong Kong used to enjoy a very strategic position bridging the East and the West. However, with the escalation of geopolitical tension, this edge is fading fast,” Chan said. Property price has since declined some 25 percent and the stock market remained largely where it was in 1997. Chan added, “So far,

religious freedom remains largely intact. People become more spiritually open when the goings get tough. We must take full advantage of the situation to share the gospel.”¹¹

A Heart of Service for the Community

Against this backdrop of massive changes in Hong Kong, God was stirring the church to work together. God raised up Dr. Susanna Ma Hui to lead the Hong Kong Church Network for the Poor (HKCNP). The network has grown to include more than 600 churches with some 1,000 partners in the city of Hong Kong.

The network created pilot projects in response to a gap in services for the community. During the unrest created by the protests, they piloted the Youth Upward Mobility (YUM) program to provide Christian mentors, community, and hope for the young people who felt lost and hopeless.

Hui described, “During the COVID-19 pandemic, many government-funded social services were suspended and churches were not allowed to open for gatherings. HKCNP mobilized the churches to venture outside their four walls and respond to the huge social needs of their community. Congregations were trained on how to serve and to provide timely resources such as face masks, test kits, food, and jobs to the poor. Pastors were excited to lead their congregations in bringing transformation and *shalom* to their community.”

Since 2023, the stock market index has dropped 33 percent. Foreign companies have left or moved their headquarters out of Hong Kong, and the median income level has not been able to reach the inflation rate. A huge migration wave left behind many elders in the city without care.¹² It also impacted the church community with 11.4 percent of church members having left, and 11.3 percent having plans to leave.¹³ Besides all these, suicide rates among the young and the elderly are increasing.

With all these socioeconomic challenges, the churches are realizing both the power and the need for collaboration. The network members have been praying, strategizing, training, empowering, providing, and journeying together.

In December 2023, I spoke to leaders in the network at a restaurant in Hong Kong. Hui had mobilized seventy leaders on short notice to come and hear my presentation on the fruitfulness of urban ministry. It was very evident the influence and respect that Hui had earned from this network.

In early 2024, a fire broke out on the street of that same restaurant, claiming five lives. The church network swiftly responded, pulling together resources and volunteers to help victims of the blaze. This is one of many examples of the network's efforts. Another effort is an annual event called Peace Box. In 2024, HKCNP and its partners distributed over 10,000 Peace Boxes containing necessities and gifts to the underprivileged all over in Hong Kong. The campaign closes every year with a public singing of worship songs at a mall.

The mission of the HKCNP is to care for the poor through Christian network partnership, bringing community transformation and the ministry of the gospel. The network is building collaborations within each of the eighteen districts Hong Kong, pairing off churches and agencies through relationships and a coordinated strategy. Hui serves as a selfless leader, building this network of enormous kingdom impact.¹⁴

A Strategic Christian Presence

Besides Hui, one of the most effective bridgebuilders is John Snelgrove who immigrated to Hong Kong in 1988 with his wife, Sandra. He came as a marketplace leader and became deeply involved in the Hong Kong church scene. Snelgrove was led to leave his marketplace profession and pastor an international church called The Vine. He sees himself having spent twenty years in Hong Kong as a businessman and twenty years as a pastor.

Snelgrove has functioned as an apostle for unity for the Hong Kong church. Church leaders highly respect him even as he sits on many boards, including Alpha, and preaches regularly to very diverse churches. Snelgrove and Sandra also have an extraordinary gift of hospitality, having hosted me on every trip to Hong Kong since 2017.

On the significance of being an Englishman in Hong Kong, Snelgrove reflected, “This city has been a British colony for 150 years, and the bedrock of this relationship has been Christianity. More than half of the schools here are Christian, a high percentage of the charities are Christian, and the YMCA presence here is one of the most robust in the world.”¹⁵

Snelgrove sees Hong Kong as a Gateway City at a crossroads, with 1,300 Cantonese-speaking churches, 100 international congregations, and less than 100 Mandarin-speaking churches. Within Hong Kong, he believes that Christianity is highly respected. Despite the respect, though, he estimates that only about 6 percent of Hong Kong residents attend church.

Either way, Snelgrove is optimistic: “We are free to preach the gospel in Hong Kong, where Christianity is respected by everyone here. And because of its relationship to mainland China, Hong Kong is one of the most strategically positioned cities in the world.”

Across the border where Snelgrove maintains some relationships, Christianity is still regarded as foreign. “China has the opportunity to become the largest church in the world if it isn’t already. What we are trying to do is to communicate a Christianity that is fully Christian and fully contextual to Chinese culture,” he said.¹⁶

Like Snelgrove, Seth Kim (mentioned in chapter 3) has been active with Movement Day and is a church planter who has worked primarily with university students who establish campus churches globally. He grew up in the

United States and has planted churches in Detroit, Austin, Chicago, Indonesia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. He is also part of a pastoral coalition that has been gathering for the past twenty years to pray and to do common missions together.

Hong Kong has eight official universities. At six of these, Kim's team has presence. In the next six years, the vision is to plant various churches and microchurches throughout Hong Kong and other university campuses in global cities throughout Asia and beyond.

Impacting young people is the dominant thread in Kim's leadership. He is an innovator working on many initiatives that make the gospel come alive, especially for young people. One of the initiatives is CityServe, an outreach to serve the city instead of meeting in the four walls of the church, designated on a Sunday two weeks before Easter every year. It is a powerful companion to the Hong Kong Church Network for the Poor.

Besides that, Kim is in discussions with other local ministries to partner together in reaching the imprisoned young people charged with sedition. He speaks to them on the purpose of life. He has also partnered with David Ro and Philip Chang (see chapter 3) to launch the Arise Asia movement and mobilize young people into missions. Besides the Urbana Missions Conference, they have drawn inspiration from the Student Volunteer Movement, founded in 1886, which had mobilized 20,000 young people into missions — out of whom a group founded the YMCA.

With all the tumult in Hong Kong, Kim sees this as an extraordinary season of opportunity for the church to reach the restless young people, and to mobilize the serious-minded next generation into missions.¹⁷

The Contribution of Movement Day

John Snelgrove was one of the original team members who came to Movement Day Global Cities in New York City in 2016. Regarding that gathering, he

observed, “I saw a beautiful expression of church unity that was rooted in prayer and that was intentional about raising up the next generation. It was also a level playing field where everyone including Tim Keller was given an equal eighteen minutes to speak.” Movement Day Hong Kong later focused on areas like the poor, united prayer, and the next generation, and brought Chinese and international churches closer together.¹⁸

As a graduate of the Movement Day Scholars Program, Kim commented on the program, “It gave a framework and common language to reach the city. I see a kindred spirit among leaders across the globe to reach cities. Movement Day has opened the door to more robust partnerships across Asia and the globe.”¹⁹

Susanna Hui remarked, “Movement Day gave our work global exposure. We had the opportunity to present our network’s impact during the Movement Day Learning Community online gathering, and were able to bring important knowledge back to Hong Kong after attending the New York City gathering in 2016.”²⁰

David Ro said, “I encouraged forty Chinese leaders to attend Movement Day Global Cities in New York City in 2016. They did attend and were powerfully encouraged to connect with the global church. Movement Day is accelerating our connections in new regions which include the Middle East and Latin America.”²¹

Natalie Chan reflected, “Movement Day gave us a framework on how to think about the city. We saw a way to express our unity in practical, tangible ways together. It connected the teachings of Ray Bakke to practical applications in Hong Kong.”²²

Just as God has powerfully used Alpha across Asia for the past three decades, we believe that God will use these new wineskins to complement that great work. The new wineskins see churches serving the poor together, planting churches

on campuses, and mobilizing young people into missions. For the sake of the 4.8 billion people in Asia who live outside of the gospel, God is choreographing greater creativity and conviction than ever.

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- ¹ “About Alpha,” *Alpha International*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://alpha.org/about/>.
 - ² Ian Paul, “What has been the influence of the Alpha Course?,” *Psephizo*, September 7, 2022, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.psephizo.com/reviews/what-has-been-the-influence-of-the-alpha-course/>.
 - ³ “About Alpha,” *Alpha Hong Kong*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://alpha.org.hk/en/about/>.
 - ⁴ “Alpha Asia Pacific Impact Report 2023,” *Alpha Asia Pacific*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://asiapacific.alpha.org/aap-impactreport/>.
 - ⁵ Ibid.
 - ⁶ “Eastern Asia Population (LIVE),” *Worldometer*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/eastern-asia-population/>.
 - ⁷ Anonymous, interview with Mac Pier, February 4, 2024.
 - ⁸ Ibid.
 - ⁹ David Ro, interview with Mac Pier, February 6, 2024.
 - ¹⁰ Ibid.
 - ¹¹ Natalie Chan, interview with Mac Pier, February 7, 2024.
 - ¹² Irene Chan, “Over 27,000 Hong Kong students left city’s schools last year amid emigration wave,” *Hong Kong Free Press*, July 12, 2023, accessed June 22, 2024, <https://hongkongfp.com/2023/07/12/over-27000-hong-kong-students-left-citys-schools-last-year-amid-emigration-wave/>.
 - ¹³ “移民潮衝擊下的教會發展,” *Christian Weekly*, December 19, 2021, accessed June 22, 2024, <https://www.christianweekly.net/2021/ta2041166.htm>.
 - ¹⁴ Susanna Hui, interview with Mac Pier, February 6, 2024.
 - ¹⁵ John Snelgrove, interview with Mac Pier, February 5, 2024.
 - ¹⁶ Ibid.
 - ¹⁷ Seth Kim, interview with Mac Pier, January 20, 2024.
 - ¹⁸ Snelgrove.
 - ¹⁹ Kim.
 - ²⁰ Hui.
 - ²¹ Ro.
 - ²² Chan.



Samarkand, Uzbekistan



8

CHAPTER

Central Asia: A Next-Generation Vision

A God Story

Ruslan Zagidulin was born in Kyrgyzstan into a typical Soviet family in 1976. His family, though having Muslim and Christian roots, was spiritually agnostic. After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, he was wrestling with his father's Muslim heritage and his mother's Christian background.

Initially not wanting to make a decision about faith, Ruslan grew to hate all religions. When he turned seventeen, in 1993, he had a friend who converted to Christianity and observed that he began to act differently. Ruslan began to bully him and tried to correct him.

To his surprise, Ruslan's friend was both polite and strong, a transformation he couldn't understand or explain. Then Ruslan found a book that described the church in the first century. Struck by the joy of the disciples despite their persecution, he asked himself, "How can this be?"

One day, he read the story of Saul on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians. When he came to the conversation between Jesus and Saul in which Jesus asked, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" (Acts 9:4 NIV), Ruslan understood that his reaction to Christianity had been the same. He was not rejecting Christianity – he was rejecting Christ Himself. Ruslan prayed and asked God as well as his friend for forgiveness. He began to attend church.

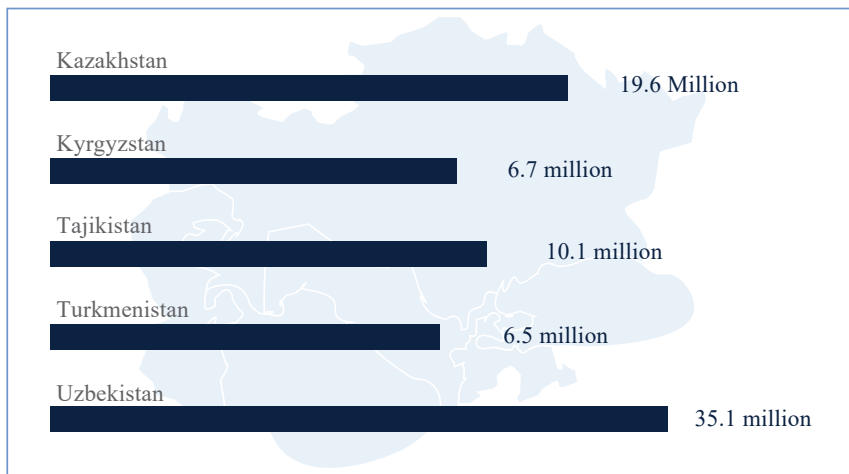
After finishing secondary school, Ruslan finished a degree in engineering at Kyrgyz Technical University. He also received a bachelor's degree in Christian education and a master's in theology at Prague International Baptist Theological Seminary.

In the coming years, Ruslan worked with a range of mission organizations, including Tear Fund, Mission Eurasia, and OneHope (see chapter 3). He was part of the Lausanne gathering in Manila in 2019 as a marketplace leader, after which he agreed to become co-regional director for Eurasia (which includes

Central Asia) along with Pavel Kolesnikov from Moscow.¹ Kolesnikov pastors a Baptist church in Moscow, and has also served as the general secretary for the Commonwealth of Evangelical Churches, which includes 800 churches across Russia.

Central Asia: The Five Former Stans

Central Asia is made up of five former Soviet regions. The five regions and their populations are:²



If you add Mongolia and Afghanistan, the population of the region is 120 million people.³

Central Asia is a region that is both young and poor. According to the International Monetary Fund, the GDP for citizens within Central Asia is between US \$5,900 and US \$16,400 per year.⁴ Ruslan commented, “The populations of Central Asia are young. More than 60 percent is under the age of thirty-five, and the numbers are growing quickly and lowering the average age of our populations. As a young and poor region, many Central Asians are restless. We are fighting to take our countries back from the dependence on Russia.”⁵

In my interview with the two policy experts quoted earlier, they commented, “Central Asia is in a place of complete political stasis.”⁶ This struggle between the Central Asian nations and Russia has created economic stagnation. Furthermore, the political environment is one of tribalism. Allegiance to tribal leaders is more important than having a vision or goal for the region.

Central Asia is an interesting fusion of the Russian language and deep Islamic spiritual roots. Islam does have a strong influence, as it is so dominant demographically. Both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are more than 90 percent Muslim, influenced by the Sunni expression of Islam. Sunni Islam claims to represent the Muslim consensus concerning the teaching and habits of the prophet Mohammed. Shi’ite Islam focuses on the lineage of Mohammed’s family through a series of imams.

Additional challenges include an ideological gap between the historic communistic view of collectivism and the notion of living in a free market. This results in a lack of identity, as many Central Asians see themselves as a post-nomadic people.⁷

There are major instances of domestic violence in the region. Afghanistan is believed to be the least safe country in the world for girls and women, and Kyrgyzstan has had a difficult history with the abuse of women with special needs.⁸

The lingering influence of Russia causes people to be careful in their thoughts and speech. There is a reluctance among the people to express what they think, and citizens feel as though they have limited influence in their society.

On the economic front, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have become exporters of gas. There is irrigated agriculture in the south, while in the north we find both light and heavy industries.

I asked Ruslan the question, “What does the global church need to understand about Central Asia that it probably isn’t conscious of?” He responded, “We are a region with both a huge population and a huge territory. We feel a lack of concern by the global church. Rather, we are associated with terrorism such as the Boston Marathon bombing. The church needs to know that on the other side, our enemies are concerned about the region and are recruiting for their own goals.”

The Russian Orthodox Church has a presence in Central Asia at approximately 7 percent of the population. However, according to Ruslan, the Russian Orthodox Church is more ideological than spiritual, as demonstrated by its support of Russia in the Russia-Ukraine war. Ruslan believes that the Christian evangelical population in Central Asia is approximately 0.01 percent. He and his colleague Kolesnikov dream of God growing the evangelical Christian church to 2 percent in the coming decade.⁹

I was privileged to attend and speak at a conference of Russian Baptist churches in December 2017. Even though the evangelical Christian presence is very small in Moscow, a city with a metro population of 13 million, the leaders of the body of Christ there were filled with boundless joy. During the conference, they were together from eight a.m. to ten p.m. every day!

Holding to hope, Kolesnikov commented, “For the last forty years, we experienced freedom from Russia with the ability to express our voice. We have had great partnerships with the Western church and especially with business leaders. The evangelical church in Russia grew in the nineteenth century, particularly after the Bible was translated into the languages spoken in Russia.”¹⁰

Signs of Hope: Raising the Next Generation

I first met Ruslan in Singapore when Kolesnikov and he joined us for Movement Day Asian Cities. They brought with them a small team of young Russian-speaking church planters who were very energized by the gathering of leaders hailing from across Asia.

During lunch with the Central Asia team on the Friday of the conference, I was struck by the energy of these younger leaders. They were eager to learn and to connect with the global church, fueled by a great vision for their cities and for their region of the world.

The same team of leaders then joined us in Dubai in March 2023 for Movement Day Middle East. They participated in our Movement Day Scholars Program and loved the training even though we had yet to provide materials in Russian.

Ruslan said, “Our greatest sign of hope is these younger leaders. Our vision is to encourage, equip, and empower them. We encourage them by gathering them with the global church and helping them cast a vision for what is possible. We equip these leaders with leadership and skills development. We empower them by creating social structures and connecting them to resources.

“We are needing to use NGO models (missionary, nonprofit) to harness their potential. Most churches in our region are more interested in preachers and singers to make their church services strong, rather than in being outward-facing toward the city. Our vision is to launch a virtual church-planting movement in 2025; we can reach many more people online than conventional services.”

As part of equipping the next generation, Ruslan and Kolesniskov are planning to register thirteen leaders into the Movement Day Scholars Program. These leaders come from the cities of Baku (Azerbaijan), Almaty (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Dushanbe (Tajikistan), and Tashkent (Uzbekistan).¹¹

How Movement Day Has Accelerated Efforts

Commenting on the gathering in Singapore, Ruslan said, “Movement Day Asian Cities created momentum for us to impact our cities. We were able to accelerate our training model with a view to creating a vision for the whole region. Movement Day has shifted our focus from a broad region to specific cities. We are now working with denominations that are more focused on cities and overcoming our sense of fragmentation.

“We need the global church to relate to us as a big brother. In the next few years, we need support from the global church with its reputation and network. We need to bring attention to the region. We need to develop marketplace Christians. Most importantly, we need a movement of prayer over our region and its cities. Movement Day has fostered all of this for us in the past few years.

“Our younger leaders are looking for ways to express themselves creatively. We dream of a day when local society will recognize the church positively, in a very different way than it does today.”¹²

Kolesnikov commented similarly, “Movement Day has introduced us to extraordinary models globally. We long to see the great cities of Russia engaged as well. In addition to Moscow, there is St. Petersburg with 5.5 million people. In fact, there are twenty-one cities in Russia with more than 1 million people. We long for more missionaries like David Westrum, who has translated *The Power of a City at Prayer* into Russian. We need stories that help us dream of what God can do, just as He is already doing in other challenging regions of the world.”¹³

¹ Ruslan Zagidulin, interview with Mac Pier, May 20, 2024.

² “Central Asia Population (LIVE),” *Worldometer*, accessed May 21, 2024, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/central-asia-population/>.

³ “Population, total – Afghanistan, Mongolia,” *The World Bank*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=AF-MN>.

⁴ “World Economic Outlook Database April 2023,” *International Monetary Fund*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2023/April>.

⁵ Zagidulin.

⁶ Anonymous, interview with Mac Pier, February 4, 2024.

⁷ Zagidulin.

⁸ “Abused by Relatives, Ignored by the State,” Berlin, December 14, 2023.

⁹ Zagidulin.

¹⁰ Pavel Kolesniskov, interview with Mac Pier, January 20, 2024.

¹¹ Ragidulin.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Kolesnikov.



Petronas Twin Towers, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Why Movement Day?



What Is a Movement Day?

Movement Day is a consultative gathering of faith leaders from the same city on the same day. It is at the gathering that, the collective of pastors, nonprofit leaders, marketplace leaders, and civic leaders attempts to answer three questions together:

- What are the three to four greatest challenges we face in our city?
- What do we want to be true in ten years? We call this a North Star.
- What can we practically do together in the next year?

Movement Days have been attended by 60,000 people across five continents and 900 cities. What has been compelling about Movement Day is that it is not prescriptive. Every city is unique with its particular challenges. The leaders of Movement Day believe that whatever God wants to do in a city, He has put it in the hearts of the city's leaders. The purpose of Movement Day is to unearth those God-placed desires.



Movement Day Asia Cities 2022

It Started with a Friendship

The root of Movement Day is the friendship that I enjoyed with Tim Keller dating back to 1988. In his preparations to move to Manhattan, Keller had visited New York for two years to do research before planting Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

Keller had called me on my home phone to introduce himself. We had a mutual colleague, Glen Kleinknecht, who was on staff with Cru Inner City, Campus Crusades' urban ministry. Keller and I shared similarities in our backgrounds.

We both had been shaped by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in college. Keller came to faith at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania through the outreach of InterVarsity, while I had been shaped by InterVarsity at the University of South Dakota. We both had sat under the teaching of Barbara Boyd, the founder of Bible and Life, a national discipleship program for InterVarsity. We also had a keen sense of the priority of united prayer toward revival in churches and in the nation.

During the 1990s, Keller attended several of our gatherings including our Pastors' Prayer Summits and the three urban consultations with Ray Bakke in 1995, 1997, and 1999. Keller was an extraordinary student of the city. In the early days, he would have up to forty conversations per week with New Yorkers to understand their worldview and pains. Keller used this knowledge to shape his sermons, which led to his preaching being described as “fly paper against the culture.”

When Keller planted Redeemer, there had never been a successful Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) church plant in urban northern United States. The PCA did two things differently this time — they gave Redeemer a \$250,000 grant, five times larger than the usual grant, and more importantly, they mobilized 500 PCA churches to pray every day for the successful planting of Redeemer. As mentioned in chapter 1, this magnitude of mobilized prayers for a PCA church plant was unprecedented and has not been repeated since.

Movement Day has been shaped by these early themes of united prayer, city-centric focus, and thoughtful research to inform action.

Breakfast at Sbarro's Pizza Place:

The Birth of the Church Multiplication Alliance

In the year 2000, Keller, Kleinknecht, and Dick Kaufmann met with me at a Sbarro's restaurant for breakfast. There, Keller laid out the urgent need for church planting in Manhattan and the rest of the cities. We believed at that time in the 1980s that Manhattan was less than 1 percent evangelical Christian.

Keller said to me, “We urgently need new churches in New York City, and they aren’t all going to be Presbyterian. We can’t do that without you.”

I was thrilled to collaborate with Keller’s team for the rest of that decade. We officially began the Church Multiplication Alliance in 2003. My organization’s responsibility was to convene diverse leaders and denominations into gatherings to hear and catch a vision for church planting. I was also the primary fundraiser for the alliance that decade. The beauty of the alliance is that it didn’t matter what your denominational background was as long as you were an orthodox Christian and wanted to spread the gospel through church planting. As stated in the first chapter, we believe that churches ten years and younger are eight times more effective at reaching new people than churches older than ten years.

In 2009, we commissioned the Values Research Institute to research the churches and measure progress in Manhattan. We were stunned by the results that indicated a 300 percent church growth in a span of twenty years from 1989 to 2009 (see appendix 4). This represented 15,000 more people in church in Manhattan than in the 1980s. We unveiled the research findings at a gathering with Bob Buford, the founder of Half Time, and George Gallup Jr., one of the premier pollsters in America.

The Birth of Movement Day: September 30, 2010

After the release of the 2009 research, the Redeemer team and my team shared a common stirring that God was doing something unusual in New York City. We decided to have a one-day consultation and invite New York leaders to gather, to be envisioned, and to speak with one another about accelerating collaboration across the city. We were shocked to see leaders traveling in from thirty-four US states and fourteen countries to attend Movement Day.

Leaders across the globe were eager to come and hear Keller teach and to learn what God was doing in New York City. By the end of that consultation, leaders from ten US cities came together and formed a 10 City Alliance that agreed to meet the day before Movement Day every year for five years.

The Redeemer team and our team created an initiative titled the New York City Movement Project. Our five-year goals included planting 100 churches in New York City, training 20,000 leaders, and establishing Movement Day. For this new initiative, we had a reception the evening of September 30, 2010 — one day after our Movement Day gathering.

We anticipated meeting Bob Doll, a prominent marketplace Christian, that night. Due to rainy weather, the leaders who were to be at the reception were unable to attend. Our plan to envision marketplace leaders regarding the New York City Movement Project would have to wait until an opportune time.

Having Keller be a voice for Movement Day from 2010 to 2016, and then in 2018, was an extraordinary gift. City to City, the organization that Keller founded and chaired, has planted 750 churches globally. Keller himself had more than 6 million books in circulation worldwide. God had uniquely anointed him to influence the global church on the centrality of cities and the power of collaborative mission. Today, Movement Day has very dynamic collaboration globally with City to City across Africa, Asia, and South America.

A Marketplace Champion Emerges: Bob Doll

Though we were scheduled to meet Bob Doll on September 30, God in His providence allowed us to meet three weeks later in Cape Town, South Africa, at the Third Lausanne gathering. At that time in 2010, Doll was the chief equity strategist of Blackrock, as well as one of the most visible Christian leaders on Wall Street. As many as 200,000 people globally have read his weekly column.

Keller and I met with Doll over breakfast at Cape Town and introduced the vision of the New York City Movement Project to them. After a few months of consideration, the Dolls agreed to become an early investor in NYCMP. More importantly, Bob exercised his influence with other marketplace leaders globally to join the Movement Day effort. We began to see the synergistic power of a minister (Keller), a marketplace leader (Doll), and a missionary (Pier) working together in the same city.

This became our three-legged stool. Keller often commented that Christian marketplace leaders have more influence in cities than do ministers and missionaries. He mused that marketplace leaders bring their strategic expertise, cultural influence, and philanthropic capacity to bear on cities.

In the coming years, Doll would join the Movement.org board, and he has since become board chair. He has spoken for Movement Day in New York City, Washington, DC, London, Dubai, Jakarta, and Singapore. He is also the board chair for the Lausanne Movement at present. His wife, Leslie, has spoken for us in Dubai and Beirut as well. Doll and I have covenanted to journey together for the next several years to make the greatest possible impact.

Nothing is more powerful than covenantal relationships with the goal of impacting the cities of the globe.

The Three-Legged Stool in Cities

In his book *Center Church*, Keller introduced this idea of a gospel ecosystem. The conviction is that every city has a constellation of churches, nonprofit organizations, marketplace Christians, and initiatives, and they are all contributing to what God is doing in that city (see appendix 5).¹

My conviction is that the speed of the gospel in a city is proportionate to the depth of unity among the diverse members of an ecosystem. It is possible to have a large number of church institutions and Christian initiatives in a city with limited impact. What makes Christianity, Christianity, is the Incarnation — Jesus among us. The more present Christian leaders become to one another, the more present God becomes to the city.

Movement Day is an ecosystem gathering of the church. Each member of the body of Christ, or of the ecosystem, has an irreplaceable contribution to make to the furtherance of the gospel in a city.

Ministers bring their spiritual authority as they lead churches. They are often the best spokespersons in understanding how God is applying the truth of Scripture to the realities of cities. They have a prophetic role to play.

Marketplace leaders bring their professional expertise. They often understand the conditions of cities and the dynamics of markets. They bring a unique perspective as persons who daily interact with people from the culture across a very broad belief system.

Missionary leaders are mobilizers. They are catalysts and propel action. They can often take the gist of good ideas and create a structure to implement those good ideas.

Civic leaders bring the important lens of uniquely understanding the city. They have unique knowledge about the conditions of the city. In the United States, I've observed that some of our biggest fans are mayors in cities, as they see the church as an indispensable army to do good for the city.

A Backbone Organization

How do these diverse communities come together for a day or multiple days, and to what purpose? Movement Day functions as a backbone organization to execute and express that for the common good of the city.

What is a backbone organization?

A backbone organization is an entity that functions independently as a centralized management team for partnership efforts. Stanford University in its research has identified the indispensable need for backbone organizations to achieve large outcomes (see appendix 1). The *Stanford Social Innovation Review* had reported, "Backbone organizations are needed to hold the center of a collective strategy."²

Without the work of a strong, trusted backbone organization, the ultimate objectives of a collaborative effort will fall short. Conversely, when a strong backbone organization is at work, the results become exponential, as illustrated in the New York City Church Multiplication Alliance story.

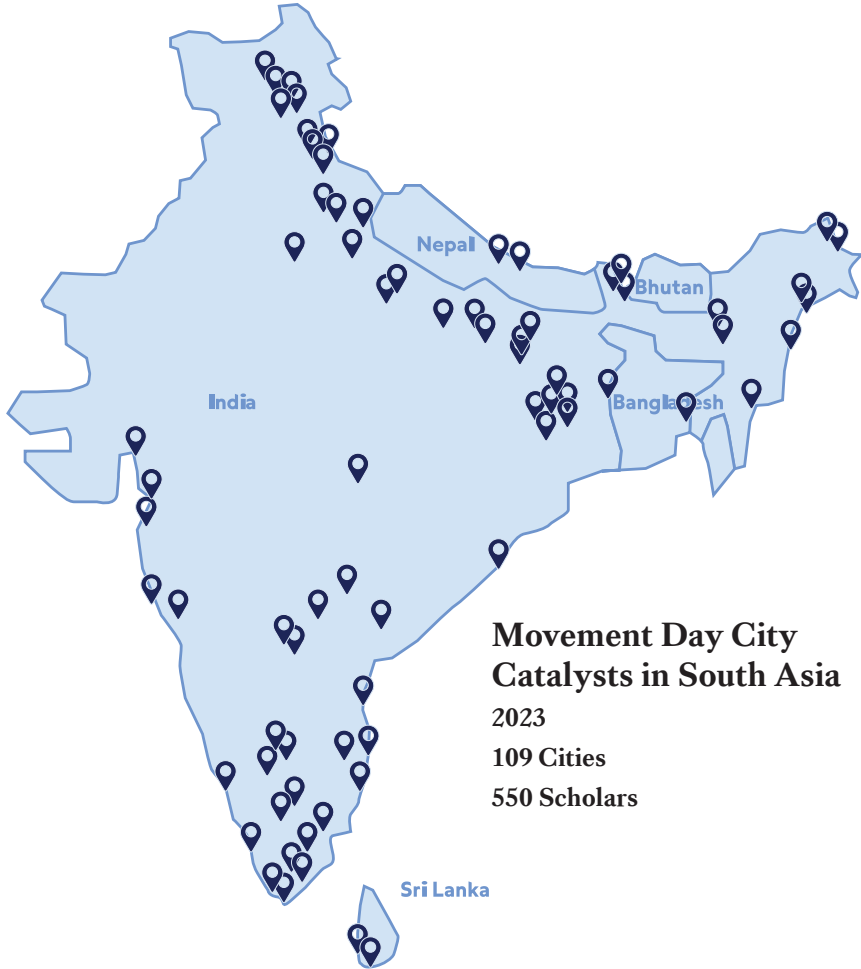
Backbone organizations, more than anything, can convene leaders in a common room. An additional five other functions have been identified for effective backbone efforts:

- ♦ Lead a united prayer effort for the cause at hand
- ♦ Create a common agenda for all the stakeholders
- ♦ Create mutually reinforcing activities
- ♦ Continuous communication
- ♦ Backbone support³

In the preparations for the SG500 Asia Cities Forum, several of these backbone elements are at play:

- ♦ Common agenda: The SG500 Asia Cities Forum toward one purpose
- ♦ Reinforcing activities: Monthly gatherings (Movement Day Learning Community; Movement Day gatherings in cities like Singapore, Dubai, Chennai)
- ♦ Continuous communication: Use of WhatsApp chats; monthly progress reports
- ♦ Backbone support: Convening leaders for events; fundraising

In the past fourteen years, we have seen the exponential impact of Movement Day across the globe. Leaders are empowered to create highly researched and creatively designed efforts for their cities. We believe strongly that leaders own what they design. God is inviting us into a space to dream, create, collaborate, and execute together.



Why Movement Day?

We begin with the premise that every person on the planet is eternally precious to God, and a person for whom Jesus died. Today, across Asia there are approximately 4.8 billion people, of which an estimated 8 – 9 percent are Christian. That means that approximately 4.36 billion people in Asia are outside of Christianity. This number is 1.1 billion more than the combined population of all the other five continents combined.

A secondary premise is that the unity of the church matters to Jesus. In His longest recorded prayer less than twenty-four hours before his death, Jesus prayed that we would become one that the world might know His saving purposes (John 17:20 – 26). It seems that the urgency of a united church across the globe and across Asia has never been as critical as now.

Movement Day believes that convening leaders in the same room is the pragmatic step to fostering unity in a city. Once convened, thoughtful and humble leaders can scale their impact by working together, united by a common vision.

The design of a Movement Day is left to the leaders of cities or regions. Expressions have ranged from a leadership dinner to a multi-day gathering. The common elements of a Movement Day are typically:

- Dynamic worship reminding us of who we belong to collectively
- Exposition on cities in the Bible
- Presented research, as we believe good research compels action
- Case studies of best practices in a city, where God is at work
- Breakout discussions with relevant topics pointing toward collective action
- A roadmap into the future — opportunities for meeting, training, research, publishing

When do we know if we have a movement? It is typically indicated by the following:

- Christianity is growing faster than the general population.
- Measurable change is being made against a social challenge (poverty, education, incarceration, homelessness).
- Christians are finding themselves in positions of professional influence.

Movements in the Bible

As noted earlier in the book, Christianity as a movement grew 800 times in 200 years — from 25,000 followers by AD 100, to 20 million by AD 312.⁴

How did this happen?

The seeds of this movement were set by Jesus and Paul especially. Jesus made the strategic decision to die in Jerusalem as both a fulfillment of prophecy as well as launched a historic marker made in the religious capital of the world. Later in Acts 1 – 2, He launched the movement of the Christian church from Jerusalem.

Paul died in Rome, the political capital of the then known world. In Paul's conversion story in Acts 9, God told Paul through Ananias that he would preach to gentiles and to their kings. The king of the gentiles was Caesar. Paul knew early on that he had a date with Rome.

The remarkable growth of the early church was accelerated by the presence and sacrifice of the early church holding all things in common. The early Christians chose to stay in cities even when others were leaving during times of plague. The early church gave of themselves sacrificially to help the most marginalized in their society.

Why We Need an Accelerated Gospel Movement Across Asia

The sheer demography of Asia demands a fresh look at the continent.

God is inviting us to enter into His concern for each person, each ethnic group, and each nation. The need and the opportunity to work together has never been greater.

God is raising up a new wineskin that is visionary, collaborative, and sacrificial at its core. When we see previous church movements like the Moravians, who prayed unceasingly for 100 years and thrust 300 missionaries into the world, anything is possible.

God is stirring the next generation in new ways in efforts like Arise Asia and The Nxt Move. Organizations like Alpha and OneHope are already impacting people in the tens of millions. Efforts like illumiNations are attempting to translate the Bible into the final 750 language groups across Asia.

As we gather together and see how God is urbanizing the planet just as He is uniting the church, I believe we are seeing a New Reformation. This New Reformation is not primarily theological. It is covenantal, forged out of a united church that has a shared desire to reach every nation in every city across Asia.

¹ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 13.

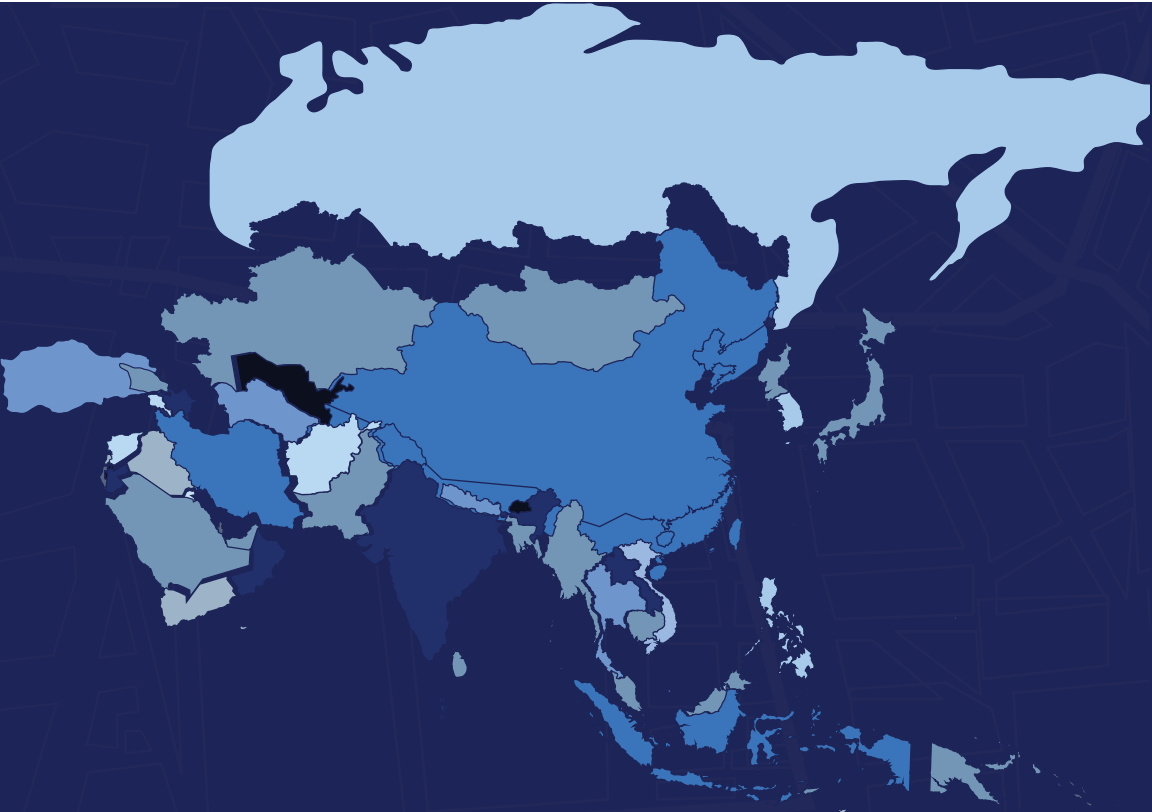
² Richard Crespin and Helen Moser, "Six Proven Practices for Backbone Organizations," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, July 5, 2018, accessed June 12, 2024, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/six_proven_practices_for_backbone_organizations#.

³ "Collective Impact & The Role of the Backbone Organization," *Missouri Foundation for Health*, February 2016, accessed June 12, 2024, https://mffh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Collective-impact_Info_Sheet-IMRI.pdf.

⁴ Stephen Um and Josh Buzzard, *Why Cities Matter* (Wheaton: Crossway Publishing, 2013), 123.



Jerusalem



10

CHAPTER

Toward a 2033 Asia Vision

A God Story

In His sovereign timing, God the Father sent God the Son into the world as an Asia-born baby in the Middle East. Later, Jesus became an African refugee. Today, more than 18 million refugees are from Africa. From the Asia-born person to the African refugee, the message of the gospel is that Jesus identifies with every person in every circumstance across Asia.

In nine years from this writing, when we reach the year 2033, we will celebrate the 2000th anniversary of His ascension from Asia to heaven. Our sole desire is to see a greater number and percentage of Asian residents experience the lifesaving and transforming power of Jesus's gospel. Even if only 2 percent of Asia were to respond to the gospel in a decade, it represents more than 100 million people.

What is Jesus's vision for Asia in 2033? There is no simple blueprint to answer that question. Yet, perhaps we can look through the lens of the great prophet Isaiah to identify priorities that can shape the future of the church in Asia. Isaiah predicted with stunning accuracy the birth and death of Jesus more than 600 years before the events. He can also offer us a road map toward 2033.

The book of Isaiah can be seen in three broad movements. Isaiah 1 – 37 could be titled “The Book of the King,” as it declares God's supremacy over the nations in judgment. A coming Emmanuel who will save His people is announced (Isaiah 7; 9). This section ends with the story of King Sennacherib from Assyria defying God. God's response was to put 185,000 Assyrian soldiers to death and to deliver Judah, while King Sennacherib was then put to death by his own son. The God of Israel is King over Asia.

The second movement is Isaiah 38 – 55, “The Book of the Servant.” In these passages, Isaiah describes a God who comes to serve and suffer for the nation. The climax of this section is Isaiah 53, which describes how Jesus died. It concludes by saying that Jesus makes intercession for the transgressors.

The third movement in Isaiah is chapters 56 – 66 on “The Anointed Conqueror.” In this final section, Isaiah describes the character and behaviors of God’s people. It looks ahead toward the consummation of God’s work around the world.¹

From these movements and sections, we draw five priorities to pursue God’s plan for Asia by 2033 — radical holiness, radical prayer, radical unity, radical justice, and radical gospel proclamation.

A Movement of Radical Holiness (Isaiah 6)

Our vision for Asia must begin with our vision of God Himself. In one of the most consequential encounters in world history, Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up. The cherubim encircled the throne crying out, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3 NIV). The doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke.

The greatest challenge we will face is never money, space, or programming. The greatest challenge is always perspective. Isaiah was so overwhelmed by this encounter with God Himself that all he could do was confess his own wickedness. The thrice repetition of the word holy in the Hebrew context is saying that God is infinitely holy. Think about that.

Our starting point in this grand enterprise of impacting Asia begins with God’s dominion over every inch of Asia — all 17.226 million square miles of the continent. We confess God’s absolute knowledge and providence over Asia. He knows every hair on every head and has numbered every day of every life. Across the sweep of Asia, He is concerned for every person in every nation and city on the continent. The mystery of this is mind bending.

Isaiah 6 demonstrates God’s desire to do two things. One, He desires to cleanse us just as He used a live coal to touch Isaiah’s lips and atone for his sin. Second, God asks, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isaiah 6:8 ESV).

The degree of our passion to go as a witness for God is in proportion to the depth of our understanding of our forgiveness by God. It is one of the great mysteries of the universe that a holy God can use such unholy vessels to represent Him.

What does this holiness look like? From one perspective, this is an impossible question for any human to answer. From another perspective, we do know that God wants us to constantly review our holiness of character, our holiness of motivation, our holiness of speech, and our holiness of behavior. Beyond that, from the story in Isaiah 6, holiness can be seen in our sense of radical abandonment to God's grander purpose.

A Movement of Radical Prayer (Isaiah 62)

Isaiah 62:6 – 7 says, “I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth” (NIV).

These two verses compelled the Moravian community from 1727 to 1827 under the leadership of Nikolaus Ludwig, count von Zinzendorf, a twenty-seven-year-old living in Germany, to initiate a 100-year prayer meeting. Every day for 100 years, prayer went unending for the missionary cause of the church. From the Moravian community, 300 missionaries were raised up, many of whom went to the United States. The Wesley brothers were both greatly impacted. We cannot understand American Protestantism apart from the Moravian movement.

There are powerful expressions of prayer across Asia. This includes the great prayer gatherings in India and Indonesia, as well as the work of Jason Hubbard and the 110 Cities initiative with the vision to mobilize 100 million intercessors. Tim Wong pioneered the *SG500 Asia Cities Prayer Guide*. Brian Aldrich has been mobilizing prayer across Asia in the Pray for All strategy. Tom White of City Advance has led more than 900 Pastors' Prayer Summits, primarily in South Asia.

As an application from the SG500 Asia Cities Forum, could we agree on promoting and adopting at least one expression of united prayer across Asia? There is a great need to provide discreet updates on how God is answering prayer across the region. Can the leaders in the 110-city prayer initiative become part of the core group connected with Movement Day to guide the direction of efforts in those same cities?

A Movement of Radical Unity (Isaiah 56:4 – 8)

In John 2, we read the story of Jesus clearing the temple and quoting Isaiah 56:7: “For my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” (NIV). Jesus’s vision was for all peoples from everywhere to be gathered in united prayer and worship. This is a radical vision whether it be in the first century when Jews and Romans hated each other, or in the twenty-first century as followers of Jesus who are Chinese, Arabic, Korean, Indian, and Thai gather in one place.

When Jonathan Edwards began the Concerts of Prayer Movement in 1747, his vision was for visible unity and explicit agreement. That vision fueled renewal movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There is nothing more visually powerful than diverse followers of Jesus visibly declaring unity with and love for one another.

One of the great challenges in cosmopolitan urban communities is gathering people from diverse backgrounds. The church often takes on a tribal expression when we worship with only people who look like us. Contrarily, the words of Isaiah are radical as he refers to the eunuch and the foreigner. God commands us to include those who are different. In an age of xenophobia, our gathering of diverse people is a powerful reminder of the radical inclusivity of God.

At one New York City Movement Day, Keller preached a message reflecting on Acts 2 and Pentecost. He commented that what made Pentecost so powerful was that every world religion up until Pentecost was identified with a primary language — Judaism was identified with Hebrew, Islam was identified with Arabic, Hinduism was identified with Sanskrit. At Pentecost, everyone heard

the gospel in their own language. God was communicating that Christianity belongs to everyone. The curse of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11, with everyone speaking a new tongue in a spirit of independence from God, was now reversed in the gospel.

One of the great moments of Movement Day Asian Cities in October 2022 was seeing Chinese Christians providing hospitality for South Asian Christians, Middle Eastern Christians, East Asian Christians, and Central Asian Christians. Our visible unity must have a strategy and an intention to demonstrate to the world that when people love Jesus and love each other, they can do anything.

To foster this unity, it is imperative that we have disciplined avenues for gathering that are monthly, quarterly, and annually. These gatherings are often prayer focused. We can also discern ways to meet in-person across Asia.

A Movement of Radical Justice (Isaiah 58:6 – 11)

There have been powerful moments in church history when revival led to freedom for others. In the United States, the Fulton Street Revival in New York City took place from 1857 to 1858, just before the Civil War. Ten thousand businessmen and women had been praying every day at noon. The movement spread across the United States, and within two years, 2 million people were converted from a national population of 30 million.

Emerging from the Civil War, Baptist and Methodist missionaries taught freed slaves how to read. This resulted in a wave of conversions among freed slaves through the reading of the Bible. There was more church growth among freed slaves between 1865 and 1900 than any other ethnic group in American church history. This was a dramatic answer to prayer.

God calls forth in Isaiah the need to loosen the chains of injustice, to share our food with the hungry, and to clothe the naked. The sheer humanitarian needs across Asia require global attention.

The International Justice Mission has rescued more than 76,000 people from slavery in its various forms, in its first twenty-five years of operation from 1997 to 2022.² In Southeast Asia, it is estimated that 70 percent of the population is unbanked or underbanked. This lack of access to financial services impedes economic growth and opportunity.³

A movement of radical justice cannot be underestimated. In countries like Lebanon, as many as one-third of the population are now Muslim refugees from Syria. Amid enormous heartbreak, Isaiah's words are coming true as Muslims are encountering Jesus because of the generosity of God's people. As described in the chapter on the Middle East, it was the fifteen-year effort of the Kennedys, Christian OB-GYN doctors, that lowered infant mortality in the United Arab Emirates from 50 percent to 0.5 percent — a work described as the birth of a nation.

Perhaps as much as any other arena, the humanitarian work of the church will create the path to seeing larger and larger responses to Jesus. As we pray for radical justice across Asia, our prayer must lead us to incubate efforts that will lead people to Jesus.

If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry, and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

(Isaiah 58:9 – 10 NIV)

A Movement of Radical Proclamation (Isaiah 61:1 – 3)

In Jesus's inaugural address before commencing His public ministry in Luke 4, He quoted Isaiah 61. He particularly identified the gospel as good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, and to release people from darkness.

At the center of the Movement Day journey is church planting, something that began with the influence of Tim Keller and Redeemer Presbyterian Church. Again, we remind ourselves that younger churches ten years old and under are more effective in reaching new people, as evidenced in the 2009 research referenced in chapters 1 and 9.

There is extraordinary and creative church planting happening across the continent of Asia. It is especially in this space that new wineskins are emerging. Given the dramatic cultural differences within Asian cities, much thoughtful creativity is being exercised. Just in Singapore, the church is navigating the great cultural differences among the Chinese, Indian, and Malay communities.

One of our strong recommendations is that Gen Z and Gen Alpha leaders be unleashed to bring all their creativity to bear with new ways of sharing the gospel. This will require great intention with and great investment into the emerging generation of leaders.

New Wineskins

What should guide us as we look to the future to impact 500 Asian cities?

We look to Jesus who was the embodiment and fulfillment of the words of Isaiah. Jesus was ALL IN. In Hebrews 12:1 – 3, the author writes:

“Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (NIV).

Jesus was willing to go to the cross for us for the joy set before Him. What was that joy? It was us — that one day we would become brothers and sisters in His family.

The Hebrews writer helps us see that the capacity to persevere is rooted in the depth of our joy. I cannot imagine anything bringing greater joy than seeing all the nations of Asia worshipping our Savior together.

Tim Keller said in his book *Center Church*, “As I read, reflected, and taught I came to the conclusion that a more biblical theme for ministerial evaluation than either success or faithfulness is fruitfulness.”⁴

What does fruitfulness look like? Earlier in the book I quoted from *Why Cities Matter*, where the authors posited that the church grew 800 times in 200 years, from 25,000 to 20 million followers. What drove this extraordinary growth?

I would discern from the New Testament and from church history the following:

- ♦ The early church prioritized cities. Paul never went to a small city. His entire strategy was to eventually get to Rome, just as Jesus’s strategy was to die in Jerusalem.
- ♦ The early church shared all things in common, as described in Acts 2:42–47.
- ♦ The early church adopted a Barnabas posture of generosity, of investing in next-generation leaders, giving them room to innovate (e.g., Paul), with a mind for missions and a deep care for the poor.

What’s Next?

As we think about 2033, we think about the 2 billion young people in Asia who are Gen Z and Gen Alpha. We think about the 2 billion people living in South Asia. We think about the 4.36 billion people outside of Christianity. Through the stories shared in this book, we believe that a critical strategy to impact Asia is to accelerate best practices.

These best practices will include Alpha, Arise Asia, Nxt Move, OneHope, Movement Day, along with many other current efforts alongside the church.

In chapter 2, a philanthropic challenge was laid out to invest annually:

- ♦ \$250M into Bible initiatives
- ♦ \$250M into prayer initiatives
- ♦ \$250M into disciple-making movements
- ♦ \$250M into 500 Asian cities through Movement Day

A billion dollars may seem like a large amount in absolute terms. When viewed against a simple goal of 100 million salvations a year (2 percent of all Asians), it works out to a mere \$10 per soul (the price of a McDonald's meal in Singapore). But each soul is of infinite worth to the Lamb who was slain.

We believe that as the core groups of leaders in each city become more muscular, they become the delivery system to connect unreached peoples with the gospel through the Bible, prayer, disciple-making efforts, and collective impact through Movement Day.

As we start on this ten-year journey to impact 500 Asian cities, I would invite us to consider these tactics and disciplines:

1. Form five advisory groups — one for each Asian region — to provide counsel and direction on where to invest time and resources.
2. Define a quarterly and annual meeting rhythm. Movements require a discipline of gathering.
3. Track the impact across the region in the various cities.
4. Define the role of the backbone organization to provide communication, convene gatherings, and hold a common agenda for the vision.
5. Invest as radically as possible to impact as many people as possible over a decade.

Conclusion

God gave Isaiah and John a vision for the future. Isaiah saw a day when the blind would see, the deaf would hear, and a Highway of Holiness would be established (Isaiah 35:5 – 8). John saw in Revelation 5:6 – 14 a cosmic prayer meeting attended by 100 million angels and all the nations of the earth. In Revelation 21:1 – 4, he saw a New Jerusalem where God the Father and God the Son ultimately and finally dwell with His people.

This ten-year journey together is not a grand exercise for the sake of it. What is remarkable about this is that our collective work contributes to where God has been and is guiding all of history.

To the cities, then, we go.

¹ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 5-8.

² "IJM Celebrates 25 Years of Progress and the Heroes Who Make It Possible," *International Justice Mission*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.ijm.org/news/ijm-celebrates-25-years-progress-heroes-make-possible>.

³ "Fulfilling Its Promise: The future of Southeast Asia's digital financial services," *Temasek*, 2024, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.temasek.com.sg/content/dam/temasek-corporate/news-and-views/resources/reports/future-of-southeast-asia-digital-financial-services.pdf>.

⁴ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 13.

AFTERWORD

It has often been pointed out that there are only two things on this earth that are eternal: God's Word and man's soul. That has been a guide in our giving efforts. There are a lot of good things we can support, and we do some of those good things, but what we get most excited about giving are those things that have an eternal impact — God's Word and man's soul.

Many around the world have received God's Word, most in their heart language, through our help. The most downloaded Bible app, YouVersion, and Museum of the Bible in Washington, DC, are efforts in which we have been able to play a role. We have supported evangelists who share the gospel, universities that teach the Bible, and churches that preach the Word. But with all that we and others have been able to do, there is much more that needs to be done.

If you were to analyze the peoples of the earth, you would find that the need to share the good news of the gospel in the Asian context is very great. In this book, Mac Pier and Timothy Wong have done a deep dive in analyzing that need, but they did not stop there. With a passion and a vision to find solutions, they have come up with a plan and a strategy to have an impact, for good, in 500 Asian cities.

While any good plan is a work in progress, there needs to be a plan. This is an idea that has been dreamed about and prayed over for many years. The question for you to consider is, Do I have a part that God is calling me to play in the dream? Do I feel called to take the gospel to the Asian world and have an impact for eternity?

There is another quote that we often use in our family. It is a quote my grandmother would often tell her kids and comes from the evangelist C. T. Studd, “Only one life, ’twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.” While we may not be able to change the world alone, there is no telling what God can do if we come together and do what He has called all of us to do — share the good news of the gospel.

Steve Green
President, Hobby Lobby
Chairman, Museum of the Bible

My first direct exposure to the work of faith in Asia was in 2018, when I visited Singapore and met Canon James Wong, his sons Jon and Tim, and a group of their associates. This was near the beginning when the foundational work and heart motivation to expand the gospel in Singapore, South Asia, and all of Asia joined with Movement Day and its rich history of convening, organizing, and praying for the lost around the world.

Christianity in Asia is still seen by many as a Western religion. But we know that Jesus came for “all men to be saved” (1 Timothy 2:4 NKJV). As Paul articulated from a Jewish background, we must “become all things to all men” (1 Corinthians 9:22 NKJV) and present the gospel as relevant to people in all societies. We need to unveil Christianity in a return to its first-century West Asia roots and contextualize it to other parts of Asia.

Cities are where most things start — secular and religious. And so, this campaign to reach 500 cities is an open door to people. We will need to educate, train, motivate, and finance leaders to reach locals. People are most likely to come to Jesus through the words and actions of someone just like them.

Meeting in Singapore in September 2024 just before the Fourth Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization is an historic opportunity. And if we can launch this effort successfully, those participating could be up to something world historic. To expand on a quote earlier in the book, “I believe that we can finish this task [of reaching Asia with the gospel] in a decade or so if we just did the right things and stop doing the wrong ones.”¹

Our two authors are thinkers, visionaries, motivators, and doers. Tim’s position as a marketplace Christian is instructive for other marketplace Christians to see their “redemptive calling” in various vocations. This is carrying on the legacy of his father, Canon James Wong. Tim is the primary organizer for the Singapore symposium and, in preparation, organized a 500 Asian cities prayer movement which began on January 1 of this year, whereby two cities are prayed for daily for 250 days.

Mac Pier, the founder and leader of Movement.org and I (as chair of the Movement board) speak several times a week with the unified goal of pointing people to Jesus. I have seen Mac work tirelessly for years, as shown by his twenty trips to Singapore over the last decade to plant seeds for this work “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14 NKJV). Mac lives in Flushing, New York where the Asian population went from 10 percent to 50 percent in seven years. He is convinced that “the speed of the gospel in a city is proportionate to the depth of unity among the diverse members of an ecosystem” (see chapter 9).

Among the encouragements to me, especially as a donor, is to observe the work of the Scholars Program, which is an integral part of each city’s work to reach its people. This program increases the knowledge of how cities work and creates a cohort in each city who can work on a plan together. The activities of the three-year program culminate in a decadal plan for any one city, identifying the greatest challenges of that city, the primary goal for the next ten years (“North Star”), and what can practically be done over the next twelve months.

The themes that are important to contemplate in reaching Asia are:

1. **Incredible Urgency.** The task is enormous. That there are more non-Christians in Asia than people in the rest of the world should motivate every Christian — it is an incredible opportunity, but also an awesome responsibility. Abundant opportunities exist to pray, to give and to go — now!
2. **Realistic Responsibilities.** With Tim (connections, enthusiasm, calling) and Mac (experience, vision, track record in cities), and, most importantly, God... the history of Movement.org (ability to convene, educate and mobilize) suggests a path that is doable. As big as any task may seem....God is “not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9 NKJV).
3. **Sacrificial Generosity.** If God’s people in Singapore, greater Asia, the “West”, and the world are motivated and engaged, raising the funds necessary to organize, galvanize, and take on this task, we can witness millions of people coming to saving faith in the days and years ahead.

To quote Mac Pier again, “When we reach the year 2033, we will celebrate the 2000th anniversary of His ascension from Asia to Heaven. Our sole desire is to see a greater number and percentage of Asian residents experience the life-saving and transforming power of Jesus’s gospel. If only 2 percent of Asia were to respond to the Gospel in a decade, it represents more than 100 million people” (see chapter 9).

Bob Doll

CEO/CIO

Crossmark Global Investments

¹ Neil Cole, “The Final Push,” May 9, 2021.

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Finally, thanks to the Movement.org board who have believed in the vision to impact the great cities of the globe.

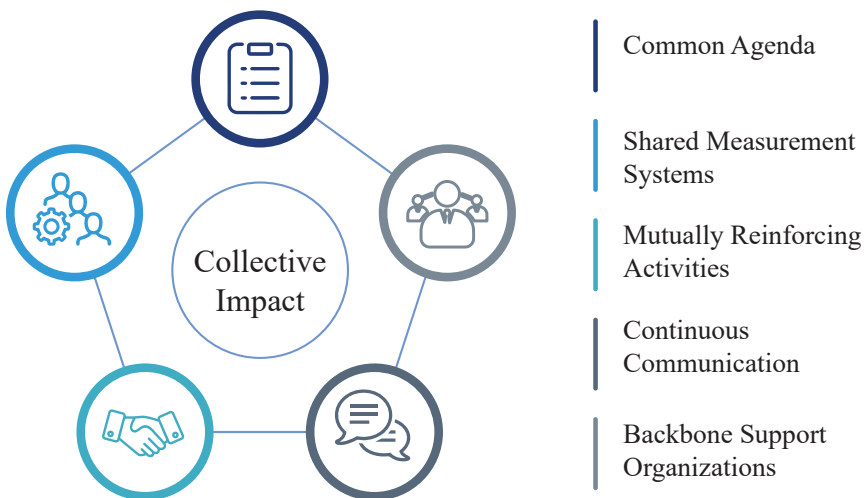
Appendix 1: Collective Impact

In 2007, a group of social impact consultants asked this question: What is the greatest obstacle to achieving social impact? The answer was unanimous: Fragmentation.

Seeking a solution, the consultants initiated three years of study, experimentation, consultation and interaction. At the end of the research, they published their findings in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* and identified collective impact to be the key.¹

What is Collective Impact?

Society is full of increasingly complex social issues that prove challenging for any single entity to solve on its own. The collective impact framework is based on the understanding that no single policy, government entity, or organization can tackle or solve these deeply entrenched social problems alone. Beyond a partnership or collaboration, collective impact calls for a longstanding commitment between multiple organizations all working towards a common goal.



There are five key elements to the collective impact framework:²

1. **Agreement upon a common agenda.** The collective impact approach calls for multiple organizations or entities to abandon individual agendas in favor of a single common agenda. This requires all participants to have a common understanding of the problem, and a mutual agreement on how to solve it.
2. **Develop a shared measurement system.** Collecting data and measuring results using a common set of performance measures ensures all efforts remain aligned, enables participants to hold each other accountable, and allows the group to learn from each other's successes and failures.
3. **Engage in mutually reinforcing activities.** The power of collective action stems from the coordination of various member activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action. Collective impact initiatives encourage participants to advance activities in coordination with the activities of other participants within the initiative.
4. **Maintain open and continuous communication.** Open and continuous communication helps group members commit and remain committed to a common agenda, builds trust between participants, and assures commitment to mutual objectives.
5. **Formation of a backbone organization.** A defining feature of collective impact initiatives is the existence of a centralized infrastructure, known as a backbone organization, with a staff dedicated to coordinating the efforts of group members, and ensuring that the activities of participants remain in concert. The expectation that consistent collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons collective impact fails.

¹ John Kania and Mark Kramer. "Collective Impact." *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 9, no. 1 (2011): 36 – 41. <https://doi.org/10.48558/5900-KN19>.

² Ibid.

Appendix 2:

Chennai 2030: A Decadal Plan

Chennai is one city that has implemented the decadal plan as proposed in the book. It is included here as an example to inspire and encourage as new decadal plans are being forged in the vision toward Asia 2033.

The Mission

Our mission is to see the city of Chennai flourish with healthy disciple-making churches who empower the now generation, develop kingdom-minded businesses, and uplift the poor by mapping the city, mobilizing prayer, maximizing Evangelism and Discipleship to increase the percentage of Christians and in turn impact the whole city of Chennai.

The Regions

- Chennai Central
- Chennai North
- Chennai South

Ten Ms of Chennai 2030

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Map the city | 7. Marginalised |
| 2. Mobilise prayer | 8. Maximise evangelism |
| 3. Movement of churches | 9. Mature discipleship |
| 4. Main streets | 10. Multiply healthy local leaders
and churches |
| 5. Millennials | |
| 6. Marketplace | |

Mission >	Focus (4S) >	Outcomes >	Impact >
Map the city	Main Streets (Streets)	Multiplying healthy churches	10% Christians
Mobilize prayer	Millennials (Stages)	Evangelizing and discipling churches	
Movement of churches	Marketplace (Spheres)	Planting 4,000 churches	
	Marginalized (Segments)	Empowering kingdom businesses	
		Impacting 1,000 businesses	
		Uplifting the poor	
		Developing 100 social projects through churches	
		Unleash the “now” generation	
		Reaching 10,000 youth	

Goals	2023	2025	2030
1. Engaging churches	100	1,000	4,000
• Envisioning the churches • Increase number of churches through evangelism • Develop healthy churches through discipleship			
2. Government recognizes Christian percentages in Chennai	7.5%	8.0%	10%
3. Churches to engage the marginalized	25	50	100
4. Churches in the marketplace	100	500	1,000
5. “Now” generation leaders to be developed	1,000	5,000	10,000

The Tracks

Prayer	Regular prayer gatherings and city prayer initiatives in the respective regions. A citywide prayer summit to be planned and organised
Youth	A track by the youth, for the youth, and of the youth to empower and engage the youth in our region.
Marginalized	To come up with a plan and collaborative efforts to take care of the poor, discriminated, ignored, and oppressed.
Marketplace	To engage the business people and professionals to impact the marketplace in the region
Movement of churches	A conscious effort to build unity within the Body of Christ to increase the number of churches and to develop the health of existing churches.
Mapping the city	A research wing to map the city with finest details of the geographical regions, statistical figures and facts .

The Guidelines

- ♦ Every region needs to form a core team of leaders interested in the given tracks
- ♦ Regions can set their own goals to impact the number of Marginalized, Millennials, Marketplace, and Movement of Churches
- ♦ Each region can choose to start with one or more tracks
- ♦ It is not compulsory for a region to choose all tracks
- ♦ The regional core team is responsible for spearheading the tracks in their region which include:
 - ♦ Envisioning more churches, marketplace leaders, ministries and non-profit organizations.
 - ♦ Empowering, engaging, and reviewing tracks periodically.

Appendix 3: SG500 Asia Cities Prayer Calendar

In the lead up to the SG500 Asia Cities Forum, participants are called to pray for two cities a day from January 1, 2024 to September 18, 2024.

The five regions of Asia are covered in prayer chronologically:

January	The Middle East
February to March	South Asia
April	Southeast Asia
May to August	East Asia
September	Central Asia

Over each city, four petitions were lifted up in prayer to God:

- ♦ **Open Heavens:** Unite the body of Christ in the city to host His presence in unceasing prayer and worship.
- ♦ **Open Highways:** Inspire and empower local believers to B.L.E.S.S. each city dweller by name.
- ♦ **Open Hearts:** Divinely appoint strategic persons of peace to encounter Christ in dreams and visions.
- ♦ **Open Homes:** Multiply gospel communities in neighborhoods and workplaces across the city, transforming it with the love of the Father, the presence of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE MIDDLE EAST

JAN	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
1	 ISR	Jerusalem	956,849
	 IRI	Tehran	9,381,546
2	 IRI	Mashhad	3,317,640
	 IRI	Esfahan	2,219,343
3	 IRI	Shiraz	1,698,584
	 IRI	Tabriz	1,643,960
4	 IRI	Karaj	1,586,825
	 IRI	Qom	1,333,404
5	 IRI	Ahvaz	1,277,613
	 IRI	Kermanshah	1,066,369
6	 IRI	Orumiyeh	822,533
	 IRI	Rasht	731,253
7	 IRI	Bandar Abbas	646,124
	 IRI	Zahedan	623,260
8	 IRI	Hamadan	591,511
	 CYP	Nicosia	200,452
9	 IRQ	Baghdad	7,511,920
	 IRQ	Mosul	1,737,101
10	 IRQ	Basra	1,413,646
	 IRQ	Kirkuk	1,051,780
11	 IRQ	Najaf	929,669
	 IRQ	Erbil	877,888
12	 IRQ	Sulaimaniya	779,320
	 IRQ	Nasiriyah	652,629
13	 IRQ	Amara	704,736
	 IRQ	Hillah	627,517
14	 ISR	Tel Aviv	4,343,584
	 QAT	Ar Rayyan	779,386
15	 ISR	Haifa	1,163,950
	 QAT	Doha	651,779
16	 ISR	Be'er Sheva	651,416
	 KSA	Riyadh	7,538,200
17	 BRN	Manama	688,588
	 KSA	Jiddah	4,780,740
18	 JOR	Amman	2,209,584
	 KSA	Mecca	2,114,675

THE MIDDLE EAST

JAN	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
19	 JOR	Zarqa	743,280
	 KSA	Medina	1,545,420
20	 KUW	Kuwait City	3,238,523
	 KSA	Ad Dammam	1,304,688
21	 LIB	Beirut	2,433,155
	 KSA	Hufuf Mubarraz	860,353
22	 OMA	Muscat	1,622,620
	 KSA	Taif	701,675
23	 PLE	Gaza	756,083
	 KSA	Buraydah	699,756
24	 KSA	Tabuk	677,042
	 UAE	Dubai	2,964,382
25	 KSA	Jubayl	654,568
	 UAE	Sharjah	1,785,684
26	 SYR	Damascus	2,502,761
	 UAE	Abu Dhabi	1,539,830
27	 SYR	Aleppo	2,098,210
	 UAE	Al Ain	634,112
28	 SYR	Homs	1,397,632
	 YEM	Sanaa	3,181,655
29	 SYR	Hamah	964,154
	 YEM	Aden	1,044,911
30	 SYR	Lattakia	686,064
	 YEM	Taiz	907,739
31	 TUR	Istanbul	15,636,243
	 TUR	Antalya	1,318,826

THE MIDDLE EAST

FEB	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
1	 TUR	Ankara	5,309,690
	 TUR	Adana	1,814,445
2	 TUR	Izmir	3,056,149
	 TUR	Gaziantep	1,773,495
3	 TUR	Bursa	2,054,748
	 TUR	Konya	1,383,000

SOUTH ASIA

FEB	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
4	 BAN	Dhaka	22,478,116
	 BAN	Chittagong	5,252,842
5	 BAN	Khulna	949,659
	 IND	Kannur	2,286,474
6	 BAN	Rajshanni	942,126
	 IND	Visakhapatnam	2,277,870
7	 BAN	Sylhet	927,856
	 IND	Vadodara	2,277,153
8	 BAN	Bogra	864,183
	 IND	Nashik	2,180,269
9	 BAN	Comilla	629,972
	 IND	Vijayawada	2,167,516
10	 IND	New Delhi	32,065,760
	 IND	Kollam	2,025,984
11	 IND	Mumbai	20,961,472
	 IND	Rajkot	1,988,607
12	 IND	Kolkata	15,133,888
	 IND	Ludhiana	1,916,772
13	 IND	Bangalore	13,193,035
	 IND	Madurai	1,798,834
14	 IND	Chennai	11,503,293
	 IND	Meerut	1,762,162
15	 IND	Hyderabad	10,534,418
	 IND	Raipur	1,760,411
16	 IND	Ahmedabad	8,450,228
	 IND	Varanasi	1,722,259

SOUTH ASIA

FEB	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
17	 IND	Surat	7,784,276
	 IND	Jamshedpur	1,661,439
18	 IND	Pune	6,987,077
	 IND	Srinagar	1,659,935
19	 IND	Jaipur	4,106,756
	 IND	Aurangabad	1,641,602
20	 IND	Kozhikode	3,920,873
	 IND	Tiruppur	1,619,469
21	 IND	Lucknow	3,854,224
	 IND	Jodhpur	1,548,048
22	 IND	Malappuram	3,816,345
	 IND	Ranchi	1,510,765
23	 IND	Thrissur	3,351,322
	 IND	Jabalpur	1,495,679
24	 IND	Kochi	3,301,294
	 IND	Asansol	1,478,266
25	 IND	Indore	3,208,722
	 IND	Kota	1,474,243
26	 IND	Kanpur	3,189,926
	 IND	Patna	2,529,210
27	 IND	Nagpur	2,991,427
	 IND	Bhopal	2,505,183
28	 IND	Coimbatore	2,934,621
	 IND	Agra	2,313,971
29	 IND	Thiruvananthapuram	2,793,173
	 BHU	Thimpu	114,551

SOUTH ASIA

MAR	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
1	 IND	Gwalior	1,442,015
	 IND	Gorakhpur	776,617
2	 IND	Allahabad	1,439,202
	 IND	Muzaffarnagar	767,107
3	 IND	Amritsar	1,425,040
	 IND	Cuttack	762,998
4	 IND	Dhanbad	1,367,686
	 IND	Kayamkulam	757,238
5	 IND	Bareilly	1,317,085
	 IND	Belgaum	752,185
6	 IND	Aligarh	1,278,555
	 IND	Malegaon	747,821
7	 IND	Moradabad	1,267,139
	 IND	Mangalore	736,027
8	 IND	Mysore	1,261,097
	 IND	Tirupati	729,109
9	 IND	Durg Bhilainagar	1,244,528
	 IND	Bhavnagar	723,845
10	 IND	Bhubaneswar	1,226,033
	 IND	Nanded Waghala	721,918
11	 IND	Tiruchirappalli	1,200,947
	 IND	Jammu	716,740
12	 IND	Chandigarh	1,191,299
	 IND	Kurnool	706,202
13	 IND	Hubli Dharwad	1,158,368
	 IND	Gulbarga	703,161
14	 IND	Guwahati	1,154,876
	 IND	Durgapur	698,637
15	 IND	Salem	1,146,334
	 IND	Jhansi	665,825
16	 IND	Saharanpur	1,133,891
	 IND	Erode	661,521
17	 IND	Jalandhar	1,096,068
	 IND	Jamnagar	658,652
18	 IND	Siliguri	1,091,949
	 IND	Bokaro Steel City	651,817

SOUTH ASIA

MAR	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
19	 IND	Solapur	1,054,911
	 IND	Raurkela	641,013
20	 IND	Warangal	1,006,935
	 IND	Kolhapur	635,405
21	 IND	Dehradun	967,454
	 IND	Patiala	633,896
22	 IND	Guntur	896,750
	 IND	Bilaspur	632,971
23	 IND	Bhiwandi	889,708
	 IND	Ajmer	630,495
24	 IND	Puducherry	877,010
	 IND	Ujjain	627,276
25	 IND	Firozabad	870,224
	 IND	Mathura	618,409
26	 IND	Cherthala	836,876
	 IND	Agartala	614,898
27	 IND	Bikaner	802,188
	 IND	Imphal	611,205
28	 IND	Nellore	794,715
	 IND	Sangli	601,522
29	 IND	Kottayam	780,349
	 IND	Thoothukkudi	594,792
30	 IND	Amravati	778,087
	 IND	Udaipur	591,710
31	 IND	Vellore	589,549
	 IND	Jalgaon	588,888

SOUTH / SOUTHEAST ASIA

APR	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
1	 MDV	Male	301,305
	 INA	Bogor	1,207,036
2	 NEP	Kathmandu	1,521,057
	 INA	Tasikmalaya	1,164,908
3	 PAK	Karachi	16,839,950
	 INA	Bandar Lampung	1,138,359
4	 PAK	Lahore	13,541,764
	 INA	Samarinda	1,071,258
5	 PAK	Faisalabad	3,624,804
	 INA	Denpasar	1,030,815
6	 PAK	Gujranwala	2,352,574
	 INA	Padang	1,015,105
7	 PAK	Peshawar	2,342,514
	 INA	Malang	906,940
8	 PAK	Rawalpindi	2,327,455
	 INA	Badjarmasin	757,329
9	 PAK	Multan	2,105,987
	 INA	Banda Aceh	235,245
10	 PAK	Hyderabad	1,925,953
	 INA	Pontianak	693,820
11	 PAK	Islamabad	1,198,035
	 INA	Jambi	648,413
12	 PAK	Quetta	1,159,635
	 LAO	Vientiane	706,455
13	 PAK	Bahawalpur	894,561
	 MAS	Kuala Lumpur	8,419,566
14	 PAK	Sialkot	736,488
	 MAS	Johor Bahru	1,065,341
15	 PAK	Sargodha	726,839
	 MAS	Ipoh	824,281
16	 SRI	Colombo	625,637
	 MAS	Kuching	631,102
17	 BRU	Bandar Seri Begawan	200,000
	 MYA	Yangon	5,514,454
18	 CAM	Phnom Penh	2,211,444
	 MYA	Mandalay	1,500,625

SOUTH / SOUTHEAST ASIA

APR	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
19	 INA	Jakarta	11,074,811
	 MYA	Nay Pyi Taw	683,265
20	 INA	Bekasi	3,622,203
	 PHI	Manila	14,406,059
21	 INA	Surabaya	3,005,385
	 PHI	Davao City	1,907,721
22	 INA	Depok	2,942,149
	 PHI	Cebu City	1,008,662
23	 INA	Bandung	2,638,090
	 PHI	Zamboanga City	944,864
24	 INA	Tangerang	2,456,106
	 PHI	Antipolo	924,888
25	 INA	Medan	2,402,401
	 PHI	Cagayan de Oro City	786,304
26	 INA	Semarang	1,937,887
	 PHI	Dasmariñas	784,218
27	 INA	Palembang	1,785,209
28	 INA	Batam	1,684,932
29	 INA	Makassar	1,642,129
30	 INA	Pekan Baru	1,271,197

SOUTHEAST / EAST ASIA

MAY	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
1	 PHI	Bacoor	722,114
	 CHN	Hangzhou	8,044,878
2	 PHI	General Santos City	678,482
	 CHN	Suzhou	7,764,499
3	 PHI	Bacolod	636,549
	 CHN	Shenyang	7,527,975
4	 PHI	San Jose del Monte	624,575
	 CHN	Dongguan	7,511,851
5	 SIN	Singapore	6,039,577
	 CHN	Foshan	7,497,263
6	 THA	Bangkok	10,899,698
	 CHN	Haerbin	6,665,951
7	 THA	Chon Buri	1,435,745
	 CHN	Dalian	5,930,140
8	 THA	Samut Prakan	1,341,605
	 CHN	Qingdao	5,865,232
9	 THA	Chiang Mai	1,197,931
	 CHN	Zhengzhou	5,690,312
10	 THA	Songkhla	992,237
	 CHN	Ji Nan Shandong	5,663,015
11	 THA	Nonthaburi	988,230
	 CHN	Changsha	4,809,887
12	 THA	Pathum Thani	937,977
	 CHN	Urumqi	4,710,203
13	 THA	Nakhon Ratchasima	792,437
	 CHN	Kunming	4,657,381
14	 THA	Samut Sakhon	593,612
	 CHN	Changchun	4,616,002
15	 TLS	Dili	277,488
	 CHN	Hefei	4,496,456
16	 VIE	Ho Chi Minh City	9,077,158
	 CHN	Shantou	4,490,411
17	 VIE	Hanoi	5,067,352
	 CHN	Ningbo	4,405,292
18	 VIE	Can Tho	1,786,437
	 CHN	Shijiazhuang	4,285,135

SOUTHEAST / EAST ASIA

MAY	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
19	 VIE	Hai Phong	1,382,031
	 CHN	Nanning	4,085,697
20	 VIE	Da Nang	1,188,374
	 CHN	Taiyuan Shanxi	4,061,003
21	 VIE	Bien Hoa	1,078,342
	 CHN	Changzhou	3,869,213
22	 CHN	Shanghai	28,516,904
	 CHN	Xiamen	3,862,882
23	 CHN	Beijing	21,333,332
	 CHN	Fuzhou Fujian	3,843,573
24	 CHN	Chongqing	16,874,740
	 CHN	Wenzhou	3,824,561
25	 CHN	Tianjin	14,011,828
	 CHN	Nianchang	3,817,888
26	 CHN	Guangzhou	13,964,637
	 CHN	Tangshan Hebei	3,693,292
27	 CHN	Shenzhen	12,831,330
	 CHN	Guiyang	3,495,855
28	 CHN	Chengdu	9,478,521
	 CHN	Wuxi	3,375,810
29	 CHN	Nanjing	9,429,381
30	 CHN	Wuhan	8,591,611
31	 CHN	Xi An Shaanxi	8,537,646

EAST ASIA

JUN	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
1	 CHN	Lanzhou	3,226,493
	 CHN	Xiangyang	1,713,433
2	 CHN	Zhongshan	2,973,878
	 CHN	Yinchuan	1,672,688
3	 CHN	Handan	2,917,786
	 CHN	Anshan	1,667,187
4	 CHN	Huaian	2,879,079
	 CHN	Yichang	1,660,148
5	 CHN	Weifang	2,834,645
	 CHN	Jilin	1,645,140
6	 CHN	Zibo	2,732,104
	 CHN	Qinhuangdao	1,634,829
7	 CHN	Shaoxing	2,722,257
	 CHN	Xining	1,625,782
8	 CHN	Yantai	2,689,227
	 CHN	Hengyang	1,618,900
9	 CHN	Huizhou	2,684,343
	 CHN	Qiqihaer	1,609,057
10	 CHN	Luoyang	2,534,195
	 CHN	Suqian	1,595,867
11	 CHN	Nantong	2,243,725
	 CHN	Anyang	1,585,812
12	 CHN	Hohhot	2,312,208
	 CHN	Jining Shandong	1,543,534
13	 CHN	Baotou	2,287,174
	 CHN	Zhangjiakou	1,502,958
14	 CHN	Liuzhou	2,286,224
	 CHN	Huainan	1,486,964
15	 CHN	Xuzhou	2,240,503
	 CHN	Chaozhou	1,472,558
16	 CHN	Putian	2,093,166
	 CHN	Yiwu	1,436,780
17	 CHN	Yangzhou	2,085,864
	 CHN	Taizhou Jiangsu	1,414,649
18	 CHN	Baoding	2,064,081
	 CHN	Ganzhou	1,405,736

EAST ASIA

JUN	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
19	 CHN	Taizhou Zhejiang	2,048,701
	 CHN	Taian Shandong	1,390,010
20	 CHN	Wuhu Anhui	2,046,187
	 CHN	Weihai	1,389,782
21	 CHN	Linyi Shandong	2,030,847
	 CHN	Jiaxing	1,373,885
22	 CHN	Haikou	1,974,244
	 CHN	Kaifeng	1,359,105
23	 CHN	Daqing	1,954,752
	 CHN	Rizhao	1,353,165
24	 CHN	Yancheng Jiangsu	1,951,122
	 CHN	Dongying	1,346,126
25	 CHN	Lianyungang	1,933,605
	 CHN	Zunyi	1,345,424
26	 CHN	Zhuhai	1,847,411
	 CHN	Zhanjiang	1,343,882
27	 CHN	Datong	1,831,912
	 CHN	Nanchong	1,339,649
28	 CHN	Quanzhou	1,814,734
	 CHN	Mianyang Sichuan	1,326,012
29	 CHN	Jiangmen	1,740,196
	 CHN	Liuan	1,322,063
30	 CHN	Cixi	1,732,743
	 CHN	Shiyan	1,318,236

EAST ASIA

JUL	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
1	 CHN	Liuyang	1,310,870
	 CHN	Panjin	1,098,267
2	 CHN	Fushun Liaoning	1,294,781
	 CHN	Fuyang	1,093,520
3	 CHN	Yingkou	1,288,451
	 CHN	Ma'anshan	1,083,048
4	 CHN	Tengzhou	1,281,380
	 CHN	Shangrao	1,081,383
5	 CHN	Maoming	1,272,048
	 CHN	Zhaoqing	1,077,519
6	 CHN	Suzhou	1,266,746
	 CHN	Jingzhou Hubei	1,072,008
7	 CHN	Ruian	1,246,135
	 CHN	Fuzhou Jiangxi	1,065,779
8	 CHN	Jieyang	1,240,240
	 CHN	Leshan	1,055,794
9	 CHN	Zhuzhou	1,231,664
	 CHN	Dezhou	1,050,796
10	 CHN	Baoji	1,230,134
	 CHN	Chenzhou	1,046,252
11	 CHN	Pingdingshan Henan	1,225,598
	 CHN	Huzhou	1,042,111
12	 CHN	Zhenjiang Jiangsu	1,225,251
	 CHN	Yueyang	1,034,517
13	 CHN	Chifeng	1,223,975
	 CHN	Xuchang	1,033,680
14	 CHN	Puning	1,223,886
	 CHN	Yichun Jiangxi	1,029,428
15	 CHN	Jinhua	1,215,822
	 CHN	Changshu	1,022,366
16	 CHN	Huaibei	1,205,931
	 CHN	Qijijing	1,008,582
17	 CHN	Nanyang Henan	1,197,901
	 CHN	Xintai	996,054
18	 CHN	Xiangtan Hunan	1,197,437
	 CHN	Guiping	980,589

EAST ASIA

JUL	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
19	 CHN	Benxi	1,196,384
	 CHN	Jixi Heilongjiang	977,845
20	 CHN	Jinzhou	1,191,977
	 CHN	Pingxiang Jiangxi	976,771
21	 CHN	Liupanshui	1,183,380
	 CHN	Laiwu	961,197
22	 CHN	Guilin	1,175,605
	 CHN	Jiujiang	960,233
23	 CHN	Binzhou	1,163,766
	 CHN	Zhucheng	960,058
24	 CHN	Pizhou	1,162,776
	 CHN	Mudanjiang	958,338
25	 CHN	Luohe	1,149,350
	 CHN	Chengde	958,210
26	 CHN	Yueqing	1,135,548
	 CHN	Guigang	943,042
27	 CHN	Xinxiang	1,120,346
	 CHN	Leiyang	939,173
28	 CHN	Bazhong	1,119,608
	 CHN	Yangjiang	934,600
29	 CHN	Xiongan	1,117,707
	 CHN	Bengbu	929,529
30	 CHN	Zaozhuang	1,117,176
	 CHN	Zangzhou	929,015
31	 CHN	Wenling	1,101,419
	 CHN	Tianmen	927,240

EAST / CENTRAL ASIA

AUG	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
1	 CHN	Hengshui	924,817
	 KOR	Incheon	2,834,132
2	 CHN	Xinyu	922,665
	 KOR	Daegu	2,184,528
3	 CHN	Linfen	922,495
	 KOR	Daejon	1,573,369
4	 CHN	Deyang	913,268
	 KOR	Gwangju	1,526,457
5	 CHN	Jiangyin	905,154
	 KOR	Suweon	1,349,905
6	 CHN	Dandong	903,644
	 KOR	Yongin	1,120,784
7	 CHN	Liling	898,864
	 KOR	Goyang	1,094,880
8	 CHN	Baishan	894,834
	 KOR	Changwon	1,054,243
9	 CHN	Changzhi	889,876
	 KOR	Seongnam	941,569
10	 CHN	Liaoyang	885,256
	 KOR	Ulsan	911,564
11	 CHN	Changde	876,395
	 KOR	Bucheon	827,868
12	 CHN	Shangqiu	873,125
	 KOR	Ansan	764,669
13	 CHN	Xingtai	868,161
	 KOR	Cheongju	723,912
14	 HKG	Hong Kong	7,643,256
	 KOR	Cheonan	696,254
15	 JPN	Tokyo	37,274,000
	 KOR	Jeonju	664,293
16	 JPN	Osaka	19,059,856
	 TPE	Xinbei	4,470,672
17	 JPN	Nagoya	9,571,596
	 TPE	Taipei	2,742,379
18	 JPN	Fukuoka	5,502,591
	 TPE	Taoyuan	2,296,368

EAST / CENTRAL ASIA

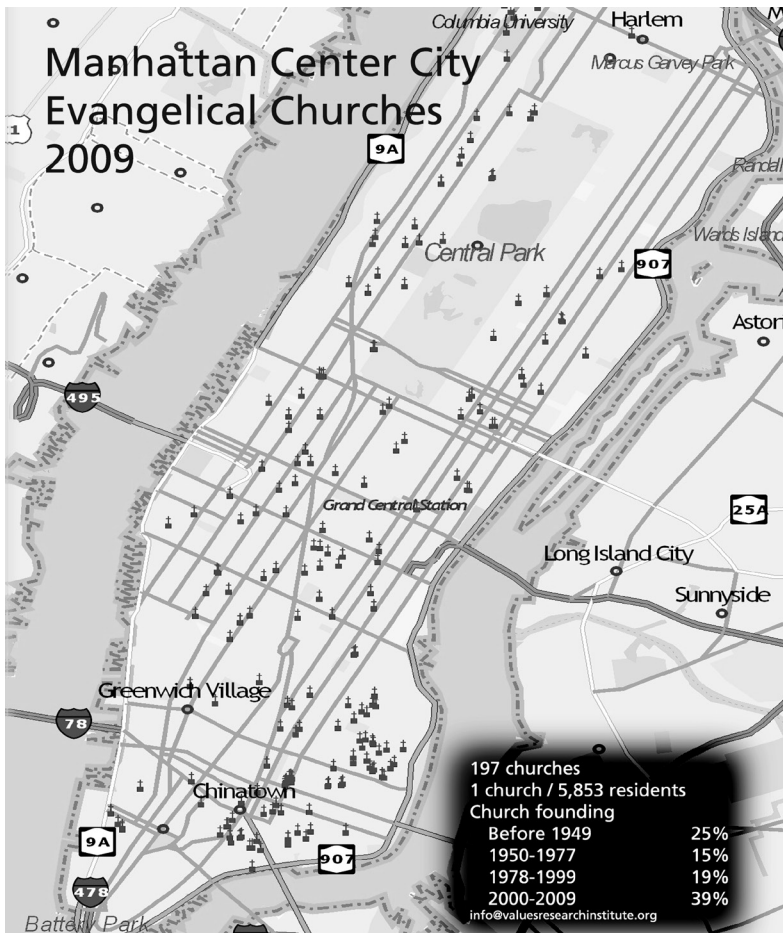
AUG	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
19	 JPN	Shizuoka	2,935,436
	 TPE	Gaoxiong	1,547,094
20	 JPN	Sapporo	2,668,982
	 TPE	Taizhong	1,354,431
21	 JPN	Sendai	2,339,991
	 TPE	Tainan	863,377
22	 JPN	Hiroshima	2,072,344
	 AFG	Kabul	4,457,882
23	 JPN	Niigata	799,832
	 AFG	Herat	665,477
24	 JPN	Kumamoto	740,067
	 AFG	Mazar E Sharif	594,551
25	 JPN	Okayama	723,296
	 ARM	Yerevan	1,092,028
26	 MAC	Macao	671,858
	 AZE	Baku	2,401,108
27	 MGL	Ulaanbaatar	1,644,544
	 GEO	Tbilisi	1,080,349
28	 PRK	Pyongyang	3,132,527
	 KAZ	Almaty	1,958,135
29	 PRK	Chongjin	648,931
	 KAZ	Astana	1,253,779
30	 KOR	Seoul	9,975,701
	 KAZ	Shimkent	1,125,804
31	 KOR	Busan	3,468,139
	 KGZ	Bishkek	1,082,214

CENTRAL ASIA

SEP	STATE	CITY	POPULATION
1	 RUS	Moscow	12,640,818
	 RUS	Tolyatti	694,127
2	 RUS	Saint Petersburg	5,535,556
	 RUS	Izhevsk	651,870
3	 RUS	Novosibirsk	1,686,236
	 RUS	Irkutsk	643,796
4	 RUS	Yekaterinburg	1,521,136
	 RUS	Barnaul	640,958
5	 RUS	Kazan	1,286,418
	 RUS	Khabarovsk	638,918
6	 RUS	Nizhniy Novgorod	1,252,917
	 RUS	Ulyanovsk	623,483
7	 RUS	Chelyabinsk	1,273,272
	 RUS	Yaroslavl	612,662
8	 RUS	Omsk	1,181,049
	 RUS	Vladivostok	609,574
9	 RUS	Krasnoyarsk	1,158,761
	 RUS	Tomsk	604,200
10	 RUS	Samara	1,157,631
	 RUS	Makhachkala	601,215
11	 RUS	Ufa	1,142,399
	 RUS	Volgograd	997,537
12	 RUS	Rostov On Don	1,138,025
	 RUS	Krasnodar	989,104
13	 RUS	Perm	1,087,878
	 RUS	Tyumen	887,092
14	 RUS	Voronezh	1,077,179
	 RUS	Saratov	839,439
15	 TJK	Dushanbe	962,139
16	 TKM	Ashgabat	883,389
17	 UZB	Tashkent	2,573,758
18	 UZB	Samarkand	603,131

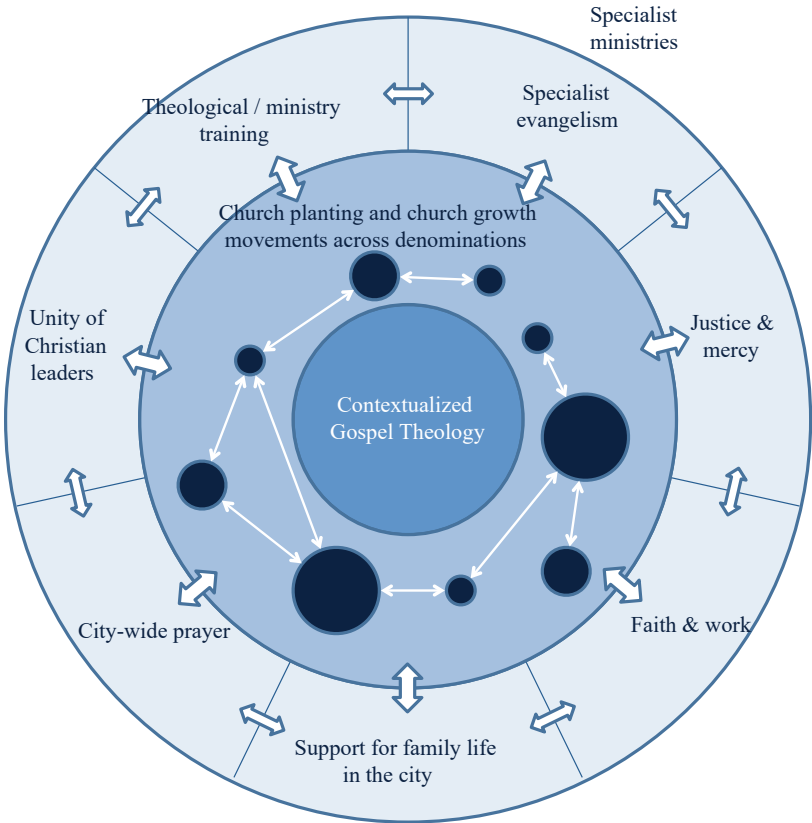
Appendix 4: Manhattan Churches in 2009

An at-a-glance summary of the research Values Research Institute conducted in 2009. The findings revealed the great impact churches ten years and younger had in reaching New York City, specifically Manhattan.



Source: Tony Carnes, *Manhattan Center City Evangelical Churches 2009*, Values Research Institute. 2009.

Appendix 5:
A Gospel Ecosystem



Source: Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012).



Dr. Mac Pier founded Movement Day together with Dr. Tim Keller. He's served with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, co-founded Concerts of Prayer and the Church Multiplication Alliance, and serves the Lausanne Movement as Co-Catalyst for Cities. Mac earned his doctorate from Palmer Theological Seminary. He has authored/co-authored 10 books including *A Disruptive Gospel*, *A Disruptive Generosity*, and *A Disruptive God*. Mac and his wife Marya have lived in New York City for 40 years, and have three married children and six grandchildren.



Timothy Wong is Managing Director and Head of Research and Strategy at a bank in Singapore. He has pioneered Antioch for Asia Ltd, a non-profit company limited by guarantee. Timothy and his brother Jonathan co-hosted the Movement Day Asia Cities gathering in October 2022 in Singapore for leaders from 33 nations and 120 cities. Timothy and his wife Shirley have three children.





The gospel was birthed in Asia, yet Asia remains the last reached continent on the planet. In spite of modern missionary influence in the past 250 years, the percentage of Christianity in Asia is still in the single digits.

In this fast-moving account, Mac Pier and Timothy Wong present the state of Asia, highlighting both the complex challenges of its five regions and the inspiring testimonies of God moving in the cities. With this big picture, they are calling for an accelerated gospel movement in Asia for the next ten years.

The strength of the movement is contingent on the role of cities in the spread of the gospel; unity and prayer among churches, nonprofits, and marketplace and civic leaders; and having a backbone organization like Movement Day to facilitate collaboration for gospel transformation.

In ten years — the year 2033 — the 2000th anniversary of the ascension of Jesus will be celebrated. What better way to celebrate than to see a greater number of Asian residents experience the lifesaving and transforming power of Jesus's gospel by then.



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