Dear Friends,

This is my last letter to you as Director of the Institute of World Mission. But I trust it isn’t the last communication we have with each other. The General Conference has asked me to be Director of the Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relationships. This means I will still partner with many of you in your ministries, but from a different context. For the immediate future, at least, I will still be located here at Andrews University and will even give IWM a hand now and then—if they ask nicely!

The last 4.5 years has been a very rewarding time for me. My assignment has been to help prepare cross-cultural workers for their new fields, but every one of you who I have associated with during this time has made an impact on my life, too. I have learned so much, especially from those of you with mission experience who have shared during the Institutes. Lynn and I have gained many friends serving around the world. You truly are great people in God’s family and in His vineyard.

Those of you who have attended an Institute during these last 4 years, have observed how the IWM has worked together as a team. We have enjoyed our privilege of working with missionaries and it has been fun blending our experiences, talents, and personalities in order to team-teach successfully. I am going to miss being part of this team! Please pray with us that God will send the right person to be the third person in the new IWM team.

I wish God’s blessings for each of you. Do not grow tired of doing God’s work. I hope to see many of you on my trips around the world as well as to continue hearing from you by email and Facebook. If there is any way I can help you within the context of my new responsibilities, please let me know. Maranatha.

Lester Merklin

INSIDE...

We are in transition. Lester has taken a new job and we began a new teaching venture—cross-cultural training for Division and Union leadership. We enjoyed our time in WAD and SUD and pray that increased awareness of the cross-cultural issues in the church will benefit the mission of those divisions. Another important transition is reported in our center article on GC structures for mission.

Plans are being laid for the GC Session next June. If you will be there please let us know and look us up at the Adventist Mission booth. We would love to see you!

Cheryl Doss

IWM Schedule of Events

April 5-24, 2010
Mission Institute-Asia

June 15-20, 2010
Andrews Family Re-entry

June 15-20, 2010
Andrews Teen Re-entry

June 23-July 3, 2010
General Conference Session

July 15-20, 2010
Mission Institute--Andrews

West-Central Africa Division
Leadership Meetings
Lester Merklin Takes New Assignment

For the past four and a half years Lester Merklin has been the director of the Institute of World Mission. During that time Lester’s leadership and mission vision has benefited the Institute and missionaries around the world. Recognizing his skill in facilitating dialogue and cordial relationships, Adventist Mission has recruited him to be the director of the Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations. On December 1, he assumed oversight and coordinating responsibility for the growing number of ministries and contacts between Adventist and Muslims.

Lester has served the church in a number of capacities. Beginning his ministry as an academy chaplain and Bible teacher, he has served as a pastor, a teacher of theology in Pakistan, a professor of mission at the Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies (AIIAS) in the Philippines, and as the Dean of the Seminary at AIIAS.

Lester and his wife, Lynn, have one son, Paul, who is director of accounting at Glendale Adventist Medical Center, and a beloved Golden Retriever, Zerena. Lynn will graduate with her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from Andrews University School of Education next May.

While it is with regret that we say goodbye to Lester, we recognize the value of his skills for this pivotal time in our church’s relationship with the Muslim world and wish him every blessing as he takes up his new work.

Leadership Meetings in India

November, 2009
Visit us at
THE ADVENTIST MISSION
BOOTH

General Conference Session
Atlanta, GA
June 23 - July 3, 2010

Register & get a pin
Share your stories at the booth
Missionary get-together meal
MK pizza party

Write IWM@andrews.edu and let us know if you’ll be attending

Hope to see you there!
PMM Sends More Missionaries

The Pioneer Mission Movement of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division has been sending young pastoral families to do church planting in the unentered territories of their division and elsewhere. They receive a stipend, language training, and an apartment in the neighborhood where they are to plant a church. Numerous congregations have resulted from their efforts. Six more families were at the training in September preparing to go to China, Mongolia, and Kyrgyzstan.

You Know You're an MK When...

You have to tell the travel agent the 3 letter airport code for the destination you’re traveling to, what connections you will need to make, and what airlines fly there.

From “You Know You’re an MK When” by Andy & Deborah Kerr, 1997.

MK Corner

One day God talked to a man named Abraham. God told Abraham to move away from his family and friends. Abraham loved God and listened to Him.

God also told Abraham that He would have lots of children and be a great people. He told Abraham that He would bless him.

Abraham obeyed God and traveled where God told him to go. Abraham took his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, and all his stuff and traveled.

God kept His promise and helped Abraham. We need to love God and obey Him. Thank God for loving us and always keeping His promises.

Find the words below in the puzzle to the left.

GOD CALLS ABRAHAM

The Adventist Church has come a long way. From a tiny group of 3,500 believers in 1863 when the Church was formally organized, it has grown to 15.7 million baptized members in 2007. The year 2007 was the sixth time in the history of the church when more than a million people joined the Adventist communion annually. No less astonishing is the fact that we have established work in 201 of the 230 countries and areas recognized by the United Nations. This is to say nothing of the 168 hospitals and 433 clinics, 62 publishing houses, and 7,300 schools spanning the globe.

The success story is somehow belied by a troubling trend of disproportionate growth. It is well documented that the Latin American and African continents have been engines of growth for years. The two continents represent 73 percent of world membership. On the other hand, the European continent accounts for about 2.6 percent of world membership. In terms of accessions, the three European divisions make up only 1.5 percent of world accessions.

The same trend of disproportionate growth is also noted in the population per member ratio. While Latin America and Africa generally have low ratios, elsewhere the ratios are incredibly high. For example in Jamaica or Saint Lucia, the population per membership ratio is 12 to 1. But in Turkey it is 986,227 to 1, or in Mauritania 624,800 to 1. The colossal disparity is a cause for concern.

The phenomenon of uneven growth extends to the 10/40 Window as well. The European divisions are located in or near the Window, having 30 out of the 65 countries in their territories. Along with WAD, SSD, ESC, and ECD, all these divisions face the mammoth task of reaching the 3.2 billion people (two thirds of world population) living in the Window. On top of that, NSD, SSD, and SUD have the additional challenge of working in some of the most populous nations on earth, many of them having huge cities of more than 10 million people.

How has the church tackled the situation of uneven growth? There have been numerous responses from official quarters, as well as supporting ministries, to fulfill the Great Commission. Formally we have the Inter-Division Employee (IDE) program for cross-cultural mission, the Adventist Volunteer Services (AVS) program for short-term mission, and Global Mission (GM) pioneers for unentered territories. These formal programs are augmented by many supporting ministries as well as short-term mission projects sponsored by conferences and institutions.

Our study shows that IDEs were deployed in 63 percent of the 10/40 Window countries in 2008. AVS volunteers covered about 34 percent while GM pioneers 63 percent of the 10/40 Window countries. Three significant trends have developed through the years. First, there is a notable shift from frontline mission to institution maintenance. About 56 percent of IDEs in 2008, for example, were institutional missionaries. Most AVS volunteers are teachers working in well-established Adventist institutions. Second, there is a shift from proactive to reactive mission. Most missionary calls come from existing ministries and institutions and are seldom related to frontline mission. Few missionaries are sent for strategic reasons. Granted, in recent years we have sent missionaries to Yemen, Mauritania, and Syria. But such initiates are few and far between compared with mission in the 60s and 70s. Third, there has been a shift from pioneer mission to mission of least resistance. The church is predisposed to repeatedly spending time and resources in areas where the work has already been
well established. For example, the Philippines, Jamaica and Saint Lucia have become countries of choice for short-term missions. Mission taking the path of least resistance is fine as long as it doesn’t exclude itself from reaching other more difficult people groups who also deserve the right to hear the gospel and be called children of the living God (Romans 9:25-26).

Mission as we know it today is being defined by the reality of a huge disparity in the distribution of resources. Making the situation even more untenable is the lack of coordination and leadership in mission to correct the current autopilot syndrome. Mission appears to be running by default without a coordinating body to oversee the strategic interests of mission. Which entity in our organization is responsible for mission? The logical answer is Adventist Mission. A closer scrutiny, however, reveals that other entities are also inextricably involved. Presidential is a stake holder in mission by way of its association with the IDE Budget Oversight Committee (IDEBOC), a committee that allocates and keeps track of IDE budgets around the world. Secretariat is in partnership with mission by virtue of its role in identifying, recruiting, training, and sending missionaries. Treasury works through the Financial Planning and Budgeting (FP&B) Committee as well as with Secretariat in the financial aspects of mission through the Interdivision Employee Remuneration & Allowances Committee. Sabbath School/Personal Ministries department as well as Adventist Mission oversee and promote the 13th Sabbath mission projects. World divisions identify mission projects and request funding from the GC. Media ministries such as the Hope TV and Adventist World Radio contribute much through the airwaves and cables. Supporting ministries are at the forefront. Each of these entities works almost independently with separate silos and agendas, raising funds for their causes. So which agency is really responsible for mission? When everyone is responsible, nobody really is.

To remedy the current state of affairs, it seems imperative that the church adopt strategic direction. In warfare, mission command and control is critical to provide purpose and direction. The church needs a mission command and control to provide global leadership in redressing imbalance in mission, identifying human and financial resources, channeling these resources to unreached areas, starting new initiatives, and realigning territories if necessary.

The church leadership is aware that mission is too critical to be relegated to autopilot. It is convinced of the urgent necessity to give coordination and attention to mission and to assume a global leadership role commensurate with the immensity of the task remaining. To streamline operations, steps are being taken to merge IDE functions in the GC secretariat and TRIPS. Three mission-related committees are being eliminated in favor of a more centrally coordinated committee. On top of that, a high-power strategic planning and budgeting body is being established to give strategic direction to mission. That body is chaired by presidential and members include leaders in the secretariat, treasury, and Adventist Mission.

We are hopeful that as the result of these significant changes, mission under the Lord’s guidance will again find its focus and direction to move forward valiantly until “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” Hab 2:14.

G.T. Ng, General Conference associate secretary, serves as the secretariat liaison between the GC and three world divisions: Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD), Southern Asia Division (SUD), and Trans-European Division (TED).