

MEET PTS



WORLD MISSION INITIATIVE LEADERS WRITE BOOK ABOUT ENGAGING EFFECTIVE MISSION SERVICE

Hunter Farrell sees no reason to keep reinventing the wheel—so he’s writing a book to give mission leaders in churches the knowledge and tools they need for engaging their congregations in effective mission service. “This book has been in the making for at least five years,” notes the PTS director of the **World Mission Initiative**, “and it’s the result of multiple surveys and conversations with more than 1,400 mission leaders across Christian traditions—mainline Protestants, evangelicals, and Roman Catholics.”

In the process of gathering information from all these sources, Hunter came to see that many, if not most, were “fighting the same battles”—a realization that surprised him. “They may frame mission differently, both in the way they understand mission and describe it, but they’re engaging in the same strategies: child sponsorship, short-term mission trips, prepared meal-packaging events, and support of orphanages,” he observes. “Global Christians are responding with some constructive criticism—namely, that we’re following cultural scripts, not biblical scripts. They’re saying, ‘You’re not some secular do good organization, so share what God is doing in your life—tell people why you’re really here!’”

Further, most churches take groups to different mission destinations from one trip to the next. “At the most, a congregation will go to a particular community twice,” Hunter notes. “But the lack of long-term relationship in that model doesn’t foster effective evangelism or effective justice work,” he says. “In contrast, Jesus spent 30 years engaging with the people around him before launching his ministry. We need to take that seriously.”

But why is it that today our mission efforts seem to be no better coordinated than they were after the Edinburgh Mission Conference of 1910? At least in large part because of a shift in who deploys and finances mission efforts, according to Hunter. “Fifty years ago, those roles were played by mission agencies and denominational leaders. Now, at least in the United States, seemingly every individual church does mission work. Now the churches are in charge, but they feel unprepared for these leadership roles—for how to engage their people, and how to decide where to go.”

Because nearly all the people Hunter has heard from speak to feeling unconnected with other mission leaders, and because they express a desire to learn best practices for drawing their people more deeply into God’s mission, Hunter has written a very practical guide that addresses the most frequently identified needs for guidance. At the same time, it addresses biblically based mission theology, anthropology, and development studies to give leaders tools for better congregational leadership. “The book uses a lot of stories and offers concrete tools, such as a six-session, short-term mission orientation ‘course,’ as well as resources for post-project evaluation,” Hunter explains. “There’s no magic bullet,” he adds, “but WMI associate director Bala Khyllep and I have been testing the book’s topics on the road, and there seems to be a lot of energy around this project.” With portions of the resource completed by the Rev. Khyllep, Hunter anticipates the book will be published in 2020, so mission leaders—stay tuned!

In the meantime, Hunter and Bala have been conducting orientation sessions to prepare 13 PTS students for WMI trips from Jan. 10-21, 2020—a return trip to Colombia, and a new, domestic trip to southwestern Florida, since “God mission is everywhere—as soon as we walk out of the church doors. In Florida,” he continues, “we’ll see how three Christian groups have responded to the needs of migrant farm workers, with responses ranging from feeding programs to clothes closets to community organizing.” Internationally, PTS students visiting Reformed University of Colombia will look at the church’s witness among migrants. The trips will form the experiential portion of an official J-term course, which also includes post-trip reflection in the classroom.

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