

## FINDING BALANCE

By Bill Moberly

From the Editor, January 2024

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### Ongoing Challenge

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One of the ongoing challenges in Global mission is maintaining the primacy of preaching the Gospel and making disciples, while also engaging in fruitful humanitarian ministry that is clearly done in the name of Jesus. My friend Pastor Doug Schoelles (St. John Lutheran Fort Wayne) wrote an important article addressing this question recently, called “[Not Your Grandma’s LWR](#)”.



If you’ve not seen it, I urge you to check it out!

What happens when we lose our “Gospel voice” for the sake of doing humanitarian relief? More than 30 years ago the late [Rev. Dr. Carl Braaten](#) (left) said:

*“The church spends prime time on concerns for which it has no unique competence, but neglects the one thing needful which only the church, and no other agency in the world, has been commissioned to accomplish....The apostolic mission of the Gospel created the church; we call it evangelism. God has*

*given the church this commission to go with the Gospel to all who do not yet, or who no longer, believe. It is an assignment God has given to no other people in the world.” [1]*

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### Christians Welcome

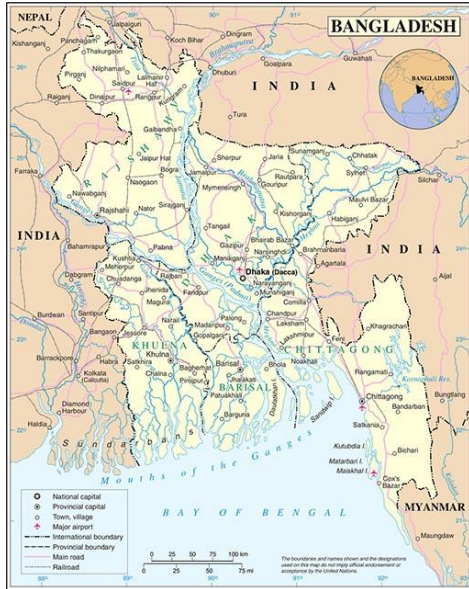
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I saw another side of this in [Bangladesh](#) recently while visiting our [ALWM](#) Mission Partner Swapon Sarker of the Bangladesh Evangelical Lutheran Church ([BELC](#)). Bangladesh is 90% Islamic and less than .3% Christian! As we drove near the border of India after leaving the airport, I was reminded of the restrictions on believers there. I asked him about Bangladesh, since I had just crossed the border and understood the word “missionary” used several times as



Swapon Sarker, Founding Chairman of BELC

the border guards discussed briefly the approval of my visa upon arrival. That was very smooth, so I asked Swapon why it seemed so different than their neighbors.



Map of Bangladesh

Swapon said, “our government has seen the excellent humanitarian work Christians have done, so they welcome Christians. World Mission Prayer League (WMPL), for example, built a wonderful hospital here, as well as perhaps the best school in the country.”

So front line humanitarian work done in Jesus’ name has opened doors also to the preaching of the Gospel!



WMPL hospital in Bangladesh



I had a two-man motorcycle police escort to one of the villages where BELC has a small church. They stayed around during our 3-4 hour visit, including the worship and preaching. Afterward, as we walked around the village with the police leading the way, one of them said to me (through translation), “I hope your organization can help this village. There are many needs and they need what you are bringing here.”

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## Atheist Says, “Africa Needs God”

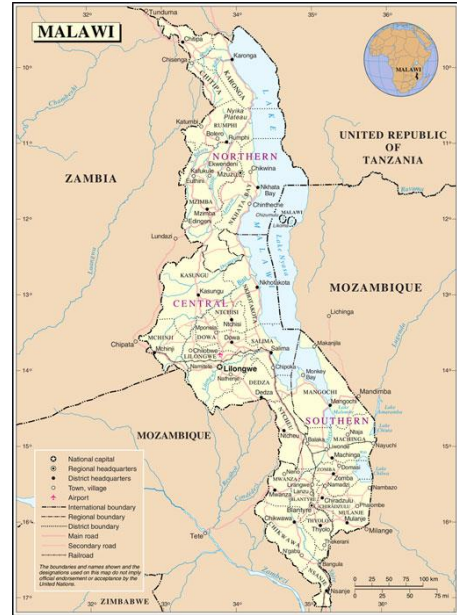
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I came across an article from an atheist that stated the same truth, though grudgingly! A man named Matthew Parrish wrote an op ed titled “*As an atheist, I truly believe Africa needs God*”



near Christmas perhaps 15 years ago. He had returned to his birthplace in what is now Malawi (East Africa) after 45 years away.

“Travelling there refreshed a belief; one that I’ve been trying to banish all my life, but an observation I’ve been unable to avoid since my African childhood. It confounds my ideological beliefs, stubbornly refuses to fit my world view and has embarrassed my growing belief that there is no God. Now a convinced atheist, I’ve become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa; sharply distinct from the work of secular NGOs, government projects and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. In Africa Christianity changes people’s hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good.” [2]



Malawi in East Africa

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## Gospel Intertwined with Humanitarian Relief

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The Christ-centered, mission-driven ministries I know (such as WMPL, FOMM and SON), that are consciously rooted in Jesus’ call to “*go and make disciples of all the nations (ethne)*,” are intentional about doing both! It’s not Gospel vs. humanitarian relief, it’s both intertwined as the specific call of the mission agency and needs on the field come together. Ministry in Jesus’ name meeting real human need is not just a “bait and switch” to bend an ear to our “sales pitch”, but rather is a genuine manifestation of God’s love for the hungry, the thirsty, the lonely, the poor, the brokenhearted and much more, as we see in Jesus’ public ministry!

At ALWM, our relief efforts – schools, wells, medical care and more – are always in cooperation with local churches and their leaders, who are at work through the year preaching the Gospel and making disciples! It’s the first question we ask as we weigh invitations to partner in new countries (now nine on four continents!).



Water filtration system in Vietnam



Map of Vietnam



Outreach Vietnam:  
Doctor talks with 4 girls in his office



Cambodians learning about reading glasses



Map of Cambodia

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## Investing in the Global Great Commission

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As you and your church invest prayer, time and treasures in the global Great Commission, make sure you are supporting ministries that have a genuine and clear evangelical focus! Anything less misses the heart of God's command to take the Gospel to every tongue, tribe, people and language.

To God be the Glory,  
Rev. Bill Moberly, Founder and Director of ALWM  
Co-Founder and Editor of Celebrating Global Mission

**Notes:**

[1] Carl Braaten, "The Mission of the Gospel" (1991).

[2] <https://goodfaithmedia.org/christian-mission-vs-humanitarian-relief-cms-13674/>

**About the Author**

Rev. Bill Moberly, director of Awakening Lives to World Missions (ALWM), helps churches with global mission outreach. He authored Igniting a Passion for Missions: A Guide for Church Leaders. He and wife Sally have 7 children, 21 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren, and have traveled to 23 countries to share the Gospel and equip leaders.

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**Links (underlined in text):**

Not Your Grandma's LWR: <https://outofthekiddiepool.com/2023/08/29/not-your-grandmas-lwr/>

Rev. Dr. Carl Braaten: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl\\_Braaten](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Braaten)

Bangladesh: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bangladesh>

ALWM: <https://www.alwm.org/>

Cambodia: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cambodia>

Vietnam: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Vietnam>

Malawi: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Malawi>

World Mission Prayer League: <https://wmpl.org/>

ALWM: <https://www.alwm.org/>

BELC: <https://www.alwm.org/bangladesh>

FOMM: <https://www.madagascarmission.org/>

SON: <https://sonetwork.org/>