

Train the Leaders!

By Bill Moberly

From the Editor, April 2025

A Core Challenge

In this issue I want to reflect on a core challenge in global mission, but one that is not new! Ephesians 4:12 says that the role of Leaders in the Church is to “*equip the saints for the work of ministry*”. ALWM International, the ministry I serve, focuses particularly on working among unreached and least-reached people groups. In settings like this, where there has not been generations of preaching, teaching, Sunday school and so much more, where do you start?



How do you TRAIN THE LEADERS? In my first trip to Russia in 1992, while serving part-time on the staff of AIMS (Association of International Mission Services), we were planting churches in the exciting days after the fall of the Soviet Union on Christmas Day, 1991. I brought a small team to Perm, Russia, working with an established agency that had moved into Russia right away. The church planted in Perm 10 months after the fall of communism was led by Pavel, age 20 with 6 months of Bible school on the fly. His assistant was Pasha, age 16.

For ALWM, our partner ministry the Church Bangladesh Evangelical Lutheran (BELC), is one of a few small expressions of Lutherans in a country that is less than .3% Christian. Three European Lutheran mission agencies planted churches here several generations ago. My co-worker there, Swapon Sarker, mentioned recently that collectively they know of only one Lutheran pastor in that country in their history who has studied at a Lutheran Seminary. This anecdote and the larger context again raises the practical question: *how do you TRAIN THE LEADERS? Paul spent a year in Ephesus, and even where he and his teams stayed a shorter time, equipping leaders was paramount. The Holy Spirit was at work!*



Leadership Training in Bangladesh, November 2023

No Simple Answers

One method today is to send pastors/teachers from the U.S. for 3-5-day workshops. I love teaching in these workshop settings! One of the students in a late 2023 2-day conference in Bangladesh asked, “Can you come and live here? I am so hungry to learn!” My fall 2024 cancellation of workshops in Bangladesh (government collapse) and Cambodia (Pastor Sam Chim’s illness) underscores the tenuousness of this method. Clearly, events like this can’t be the only path.

On the other hand, bringing future leaders from developing nations to the U.S. to attend a Bible School or pursue an M.Div. was often disastrous and bore little fruit in the history of EEMN (now SONetwork) prior to my call as Director in March 2004. I saw this all the way back in my early days with AIMS, as one key young leader brought to study in the U.S. from Serbia stayed in the U.S. rather than return home to serve.

A wonderful recent gift to ALWM and the people of Laos in training needs is Pastor Tom Thorstad. He is experienced in the culture from many years of service, and his wife Deuane is Laotian, giving them together wonderful insight into her homeland. They moved back to Laos in 2024, sent by ALWM. Tom teaches regularly at the evangelical seminary there, and is also writing a textbook, *Christian Apologetics for the Mekong Region*.



ALWM is building ministry centers in Cambodia and Belarus at the request of local leaders in order to train the leaders, as well as to 'equip the saints'. We are also in conversation with ILT's Christ School of Theology, which offers a fully online path to an M.Div. I am grateful they have developed and offer this option! I recognize the faith formation that happens in community is so important, but there are no simple answers for brothers and sisters in developing nations half a world away.

My reflections here are meant to raise the need for prayer and strategizing about this fundamental challenge in the growth of the Kingdom. Most of all, even as we work to find better ways to make disciples who can multiply themselves, we trust the Lord of the Church to work by His Spirit to raise up the people and structures needed each new season!

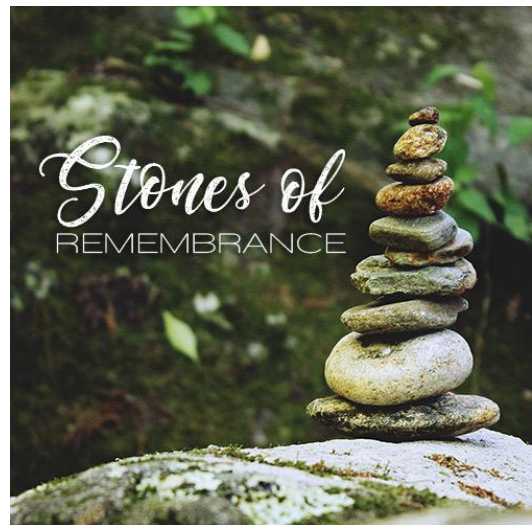
Milestones

On a different note, this issue of CGM magazine marks our 4th anniversary! We are thankful for our mission agency partners FOMM, LBT, SON, and WMPL! At the center of CGM is God's call to the nations, carried out day by day, year by year, by these partner Lutheran global mission agencies that are faithfully and diligently at work taking the Gospel to the nations. We exist to inform, inspire, and invite active participation in the Great Commission!

This is also the 10th anniversary of Awakening Lives to World Mission (ALWM), the ministry my wife, Sally, and I founded in Spring 2014.

Joshua's stones of remembrance (Joshua 4:1-5:12), are just one monument in a series of memorials commemorating the mighty acts of God on behalf of the people of Israel. Recognizing and thanking God for His powerful working is an important part of our walk of faith. Marking personal milestones that honor God's intervention at key times in our lives in forgiveness, provision, leading, healing and so much more are also an important part of our Christian walk. For my wife and I, my resignation from EEMN and the founding of ALWM is one of those powerful reminders of the faithfulness of God in our lives!

To God be the Glory!
— Bill Moberly





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:

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

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

AIMS: <https://aims.org/>

Soviet Union: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union>

Perm: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Perm-Russia>

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

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

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

Pastor Sam: <https://www.alwm.org/cambodia>

EEMN: <https://sonetwork.org/2020/06/12/telling-their-story-better/>

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

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

Thorstad: <https://www.alwm.org/laos-thailand>

Belarus: <https://www.alwm.org/belarus>

Christ School of Theology: <https://cst.ilt.edu/>

CGM: <https://www.cgmmag.com/>

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

LBT: <https://lbt.org/>

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

WMPL: <https://wmpl.org/>