

How the Holy Spirit Is Moving in the Global Church

The Holy Spirit is not limited by national boundaries, but sometimes Americans remain unaware of what's happening in the global church. What God is doing in the United States is just a fraction of how He is moving on the international scene. Charisma checks in with respected charismatic pastors and leaders in other regions from Asia to Latin America who share their perspectives on the state of faith in their nations.

Colombia

Andrew Corson was born in Australia but came to Colombia as a missionary kid at the age of 4 and was saved at a young age.

"At 11 years old, I had the baptism of the Holy Spirit that just transformed my life," Corson says. "I started to read all the books about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But I didn't want to serve the Lord. I didn't want to be involved in ministry. I wanted to make money to support missionaries or support pastors. But since I was maybe 12-13 years old, my dream always was to have a contemporary church, a church that is a place I could take my friends with the power of the Holy Spirit, but also something that would be very, very attractive for the next generation."

After resisting God's will for his ministry, he ended up in his parents' Bible school and later studied at Christ for the Nations. He tried going back to Australia, but his heart was to serve God in Colombia. He returned, and in 1993, started a church in Bogota, El Lugar de Su Presencia ("The Place of His Presence"), with a dozen people. Today, he says, the church's actual weekend attendance is more than 40,000 in multiple auditoriums around the city.

"We bought a shopping center, and we were supposed to start

our meetings right now. But because of the coronavirus, we had to put this on hold a little bit.”

The church has an advantage during the pandemic because it is a cell church.

“In a way, that’s why this coronavirus hasn’t affected us as a church because we continue gathering in our cell groups, we call them Connect Groups, using Zoom, and it’s been pretty amazing. Because before the coronavirus, we had 26,000 people attending our Connect Groups, and right now the number has gone up to nearly 30,000.”

Corson asserts that discipleship is more than a three-month course.

“Discipleship is something that must start the moment a person receives the Lord,” he says. “So we are very careful in getting the names of the people who come to church for the first time. We have in our church a call center that calls every new person who comes to church every weekend. I’m talking about nearly 1,000 new people coming every weekend to church, so we make sure we connect with them, and our purpose is to get them in a Connect Group.

Church cannot be “a place where the people just go and sit and watch the good preacher, and get excited and see miracles and wonders and all that, but they’re not involved in church,” Corson says.

The church takes people through discipleship that takes two years.

Once they get connected to a cell group, they go to a weekend retreat where “we want to make sure they are delivered from all the past,” including any witchcraft or strongholds, he says.

“When they go home, everyone wants to come to church, because

they're beautiful, their face has been changed, their heart has been healed, their eyes are shining, and they've got passion for Jesus," Corson says.

Eventually these believers participate in the church's leadership school. This is how Corson's church has multiplied and is an example to other Colombian churches of a congregation with a passion for Jesus that is on fire for the Holy Spirit.

Iceland

Helgi Gudnason is one of two lead pastors at the largest Pentecostal church in Iceland, Filadelfia Church in the capital city of Reykjavik.

"It's unfortunately not very hard to be the largest Pentecostal church because there aren't that many of us," Gudnason says.

Iceland became culturally Christian in the year 1000.

"We were Catholic until 1550 when, at the beheading of a Catholic bishop, we became Protestant," he says.

Christianity is still in the Iceland Constitution, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church is the national church, but true believers weren't fully free to function in the church body until the last century.

"You couldn't register a church or any religious organization other than the Lutheran church, so when the Pentecostal movement started, we actually couldn't be a church," Gudnason says.

Gudnason says he is grateful to see that "nominal Christianity is dying.

"When I was growing up, everyone considered themselves to be Christian, because they were baptized, and they were

confirmed, and that's like a social thing," he says.

But when it came to faith and doctrine, cultural Christians didn't buy into the Bible.

"When you talk to them about prayer, when you talk to them about the Bible, most people just see those things as irrelevant," he says. "I'm a Christian like I'm Icelandic. I'm a Christian like I'm alive, you know?"

Today, though, Gudnason finds the change from these social norms refreshing.

"People who aren't Christian no longer claim to be, or at least, do so a lot less, and that is actually a better position for the church because then you have a clearer witness," he says.

Gudnason comes from a long line of Pentecostals. After wandering spiritually for a while, he returned to the Lord. Not long after that, he went to Belgium to study at a Pentecostal seminary affiliated with the Assemblies of God. After returning to Iceland in 2007, he stepped into church leadership a year later when he and his wife were asked to lead the English-speaking congregation. Then he became an elder, and for five years now, he and another pastor have shared the lead pastor role.

Partly because of the history of the country, the people of Iceland tend to be independent and individualistic, which makes it difficult to build a church community.

"If you really want to lose an Icelandic audience, you tell them what to do, or you tell them what to think," Gudnason says.

The church also tends to have a problem with morality, but Filadelfia Church stands alone in making sure its leaders know they must adhere to certain standards.

"If you're living with someone out of wedlock, you cannot lead a ministry, and you cannot serve on the platform," Gudnason says. "There's a lot of things you can't do. And if you are engaged in other religions or other spiritual activity, you cannot be serving."

"If God only forgives sin but doesn't set us free from it, where's the power of the gospel?" he says. "If Jesus was able to conquer the grave but He can't help me live a holy life, what Jesus am I serving?"

The Icelandic church has also had financial struggles. This makes it difficult to hire a full-time pastor, so most pastors are bivocational.

"It is just so hard to teach Icelanders to become faithful givers," Gudnason says.

Filadelphia's English-speaking service and Spanish-speaking congregations are now growing.

The church also recently partnered with the Lutheran church to reach university students.

"We sponsored them to do some things and to just to show that, you know, we just want a Christian presence, we don't care what name it has," Gudnason says. "So we would fund something, and they just did it in their name. And then just in a year, all of a sudden, there were like four Christian ministries on campus."

Young people who have committed to Christ are showing the way in true discipleship.

"If you're going to be a Christian, you just have to draw a line and decide, 'I am going to be a Christian. I'm not going to be like the world,'" he says. "They are much more committed when it comes to those moral things. They are much more committed when it comes to prayer, when it comes to growing as

a disciple of Jesus. I think also, with the advent of podcasts, there's so much material out there that if you're hungry, you can be fed."

Russia

Natasha Schedrivaya hails from three generations of communists and, like many Russians, was an atheist. Because her great-grandfather had a Bible, he was sent to Siberia when Stalin ruled. In 1990, she became the first believer in her family, and a year later was interpreting for missionaries who came to start churches and Bible schools across the former Soviet Union.

Ordained in 1996, she was elected president of the Calvary Fellowship of Churches in Russia. In 1998, she started working with well-known American evangelist T.L. Osborn and his family.

During a conference in Russia, Osborn mentioned that there were 36,000 villages in Russia that had never heard the gospel. Schedrivaya says that simple statement became "a seed in my heart," and she couldn't stop thinking about it. "I was telling God, 'God, what are You going to do about those 36,000 villages?'"

She could relate to the people there because growing up, she had never seen a Bible and didn't believe in the afterlife.

Today her ministry has provided around 50 vans and snowmobiles to national missionaries in those areas.

After a village is evangelized, "our main goal is to start a home Bible study and talk a local babushka into opening her home," Schedrivaya says.

After establishing the Bible study, they bring in a Village Gospel Library with New Testaments, books by T.L. Osborn, Daisy Osborn and daughter LaDonna that have been translated

into Russian. "And so then people who could grow in the Lord and lay the foundation of Christianity, and of course, the church in the region oversees the work in the villages. Basically this is what Village Gospel Harvest is all about," she says.

Schedrivaya's ministry is effective in reaching people one by one, what she calls "evangelism Jesus style," not en masse. She believes the church needs to rethink the megachurch model and focus more on reaching individuals for Christ, including youth to keep the work going for future generations.

"We need to shake off our religious language, religious facade, and discover evangelism the way Jesus did it, discover the message, not the doctrines, but the message that reveals God," she says. "You cannot really give people what you don't have. If religion, you'll give religion to them. But the young generation doesn't want that. If the young generation doesn't come to our church and they don't stay, we need to change something."

Singapore

Rev. Dominic Yeo and Pastor Yang Tuck Yoong have different roles in the Singaporean church, but God is using them and their churches in unique ways. Yeo is the senior pastor of Trinity Christian Centre and also holds denominational positions as the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Singapore and the secretary of the Assemblies of God Worldwide. Yang is the founder and senior pastor of Cornerstone Community Church.

About 2005, after years in different roles at the church, Yeo was promoted to lead Trinity Christian Centre.

"I became the lead pastor of the church where I got saved, so to speak, and where I began my ministry," he says. "We have a great church. I mean, we have a membership of over 10,000 in our congregation. We've been doing streaming online for the

last few years. And so we're used to a digital cyber platform. But we have a very strong congregation that comes to our church that knows how to give to the Lord in missions as well as our capital campaign in the building projects. In fact, we raise more money for our building projects compared to a lot of other churches in Singapore and around the world as well. And we have a pastoral staff count of about 68 pastors who are on our payroll of the church. So God is good."

Yeo says the nation of 5.6 million operates under an "open heaven," meaning that there is an openness to the gospel, although it is not yet in a state of revival.

The culture in Singapore is focused on consumerism and convenience. Those two things sometimes prevent people from committing to all God has for the church.

"Because of the consumeristic and because of the convenience orientation, education is not going to break those mindsets," Yeo says. "It has to be through the power of the Holy Spirit, not by might, nor by power, but by the Holy Spirit. I think that is so important, because as I travel worldwide, in the Assemblies of God setting and even outside the Assemblies of God, I discovered more and more, most churches are wanting us to talk about the Holy Spirit. Most churches are wanting us to teach about the Holy Spirit. It's not just about who is the Holy Spirit, but it is about experiencing the Holy Spirit. And I believe until and unless a person experiences the person and the power of the Holy Spirit, then transformation cannot come."

Yang heard a gospel presentation for the first time at age 16 and accepted Christ. Later, he says he had a "marvelous experience" of the Holy Spirit. While at university, God called him into full-time ministry but kept delaying the fulfillment of that call.

"I worked for six years in the real estate arm of the largest

bank in Singapore. But all the time, there was this fire burning in my heart.”

When the company told him to expect a great future, he struggled with the call to ministry he knew he had received.

“But finally I surrendered, and I came into full-time ministry,” Yang says. “It was the most difficult decision in my life.”

He started in an Anglican congregation, but God called him out of the denomination. Then in 1995, he and his wife founded Cornerstone Community Church and later made a surprise purchase.

“In 1998, we purchased a big nightclub for our church,” he says of the first of many such purchases for church meeting places. “I tell you this, God has anointed me for nightclubs!”

As a nation, God has prospered Singapore, and Christians have also been blessed significantly. So the temptation is for the affluent church to become like Laodicea.

“One of the biggest dangers that we have faced in Singapore is affluence,” Yang says. “It’s like the Laodicean church. We’ve fallen into a bit of a spiritual rut. When you have lots of money in the bank, you think, What do I need God for?”

The good news, Yeo says, is the “great unity” among charismatic and Pentecostal churches as well as with evangelicals.

In that unity, “the Holy Spirit is moving,” Yeo says. “I wish that we could be a bit more expressive in our Pentecostal charismatic expression. Sometimes you know how it is when we have people who are not baptized in the Holy Spirit, generally, the charismatics and Pentecostals will say, ‘Well, let’s not offend anybody. Let’s tone down the meeting. And I think, Man, that’s when you should turn up the meeting and not

be ashamed of the Holy Spirit!”

Uganda

In the 1970s, Ugandan dictator Idi Amin slaughtered a massive number of Christians, and civil war ravaged the nation. But churches came together to pray for Amin, and when he left, they continued to pray.

“Uganda now is 85% Christian,” says Rev. Dr. Medad Birungi, president and founder of World Shine Ministries. “Many churches are full every Sunday.”

All-night prayer and open-air crusades are common, and “many identify as Christian without shame or fear,” Birungi says.

But there is “a lot of ‘churchianity,’” he says. “Churchianity is when people think that when you go to church every Sunday, you are Christian; you are born again.”

Discipling believers is a critical need.

“My prayer really is that the church does good teaching,” Birungi says. “And in the church, you cannot be 85% Christian, and then be one of the most corrupt countries in the world. So there is a dichotomy between church and work.”

But the Pentecostal renewal movement “has now brought a very big revival,” he says. “Many people now are consumed with the Holy Spirit. The movement is sweeping through the Catholic church, the Anglican church, the Lutheran church and the Baptist church.”

Corporate prayer continues to be significant in Uganda.

“It is a really powerful prayer move of so many hundreds of houses of prayer and establishment of prayer altars in different corners of the country,” Birungi says. “People are calling upon the name of the Lord. They are crying to God.”

Churches are growing, and many Muslims are coming to the Lord.

“God now is taking over our country,” he says. “We saw the president of Uganda repenting on behalf of all the leaders in the past who ruined the nation.”

The church also must contend with poverty.

“The church is poor. It depends on the basket collection,” Birungi says.

Uganda is a youthful nation.

“You need men and women to mentor the young ones, sharing with them and releasing them to the marketplace. And that is the chance to influence the nation, to change the national culture of corruption and the indices and so on. And there is a new generation that sees not corruption, but will be focused on Christ and transform our purpose and the whole community.”

People Group Adoption

The apostle Paul said he would not boast in another man's accomplishments but would instead reach people for the gospel who had never heard its life-changing message (see 2 Cor. 10:16).

Dr. Howard Foltz and his wife, Pat, also have a heart for the unreached. They founded Accelerating International Missions Strategies (AIMS) in 1985, the same year he became professor of global evangelism at Regent University. Based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, AIMS mobilizes churches to take the gospel where it has never been proclaimed.

To accomplish this mission, the church must shift its priorities without giving up the ministries and missions to those already reached.

“The unreached who have never heard the gospel are getting one half of 1% of the new missionary force,” Foltz says.

Today he is president emeritus of the mission and has brought on Joshua Bold as president. Bold is well prepared for this role.

“My wife, Bevin, and I served as full-time missionaries in northern Iraq for several years,” Bold says on the Strang Report podcast. “And then we’ve also served as local church pastors and missions pastors before taking this role at AIMS as missions mobilizers, and so we really have a strong value for the local church. We understand the local church is God’s distribution system and His ecosystem, and we see how He’s working to complete the Great Commission, through mobilizing missionaries from local churches around the world.”

The AIMS initiative, Light3500, is “an initiative birthed in prayer to target and reach 3,500 people groups with the gospel in a five-year period to initiate new missions movement into these 3,500 people groups over five years through developing partnerships, mobilizing training and then seeing holistic strategies deployed through national indigenous efforts,” Bold says. “Our goal would be that people could come alongside this vision in prayer and financial support. If they are themselves a part of a ministry that does some type of holistic development or discipleship training or literature creation or distribution, it would generate partnerships, and we could work together to mobilize a new missions force to these unreached groups. So we call it people group adoption.”

It takes what most Americans would consider a minimal amount of money to fund a national worker on the mission field, just \$30/month.

“I don’t propose that anyone can live well on that amount, no matter where you live,” says Bold, acknowledging the amount meets the missionary’s basic support needs. “But one thing that we try to do at AIMS is we really try to work from the get-go in our partnerships with indigenous leaders to develop strategies for sustainability. And so we want them to develop

and plant churches that can sustain the work and even begin to give to missions from their first meeting.”

Individuals can support these nationals, as can churches and other groups, and the AIMS adoption initiative makes it a simple process.

“We’ll walk an individual, a business or an organization through a people group sponsorship,” Bold says. “It can be as simple as going to our website, clicking the gift page and adopting a people group. And so we would ideally like to see \$3,600 given to every 3,500 people group. It’s not that much money, it’s about \$12 million total, to increase the number of field workers in the 10-40 window by 10%. And so imagine if we could increase the number of laborers by 10% in five years.”

AIMS makes sure its funding is going to missionaries who are truly doing the work of the Lord.

“We get reports every three months on the number of people they’ve shared the gospel with, how many people have been healed, how many people have received Christ or been baptized or how many churches are planted,” Bold says. “Our desire would be that every Christian could engage in this.”

National missionaries are ready and waiting to serve, and they only need financial and prayer support.

“We need multiple missionaries deployed for all of these people groups as soon as possible,” Bold says. “Every day over 50,000 people die, and they’ve never heard the name of Jesus.”

Perhaps Bold’s missionary zeal comes from his personal background.

“I grew up in a Christian environment, but I was not a Jesus-follower,” Bold said. “In fact, in my younger days, I was a drug addict and an alcoholic, and I had heard the gospel many times, but in April 2005, my life was transformed by an

encounter with the love of Jesus that I couldn't deny. And so we've got to get the gospel message to these unreached groups. While we're sitting here together, there will be over 1,000 people that enter eternity, never having had a choice or a chance to hear about the love of Christ. And I believe that together, through this people group adoption strategy and mobilization process, we could see that number change."

Through AIMS and Light3500's partnerships and people group adoptions, Christians can emulate the apostle Paul and effectively reach the unreached. Learn more at [. {eo}](#)

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