



EFCA

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## GOD'S CENTURY AND MISSION TRENDS

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Dear Pastors and Mission Leaders,

Happy New Year! May this be a great year for growth in your outreach program both locally and globally. In December, I listened to a webinar put on by Todd M. Johnson, from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He talked about religious demography and mission strategy. From my notes he calls 1910 to 2010 **God's Century**. This month, I want to highlight some of the mission trends he highlighted that might help us in our mission programs.

- The world is less religious in 2010 than in 1910 but more religious than in 1970. In 1970, 20% of the world was communist and with the fall of communism the world became more religious. In 1910 the world was over 99% religious, today it is under 89%.
- One in ten people in the world today is an atheist or an agnostic.
- Smaller religions have the highest growth rate, like Daoism and the Baha'i faith.
- Africa has seen the largest growth rate in the past 100 years. It now has 48% of the population claiming to be Christians (495 million people).
- 200 million people are on the move today. Over 720 million people have settled outside their culture's main country. Almost one-half of these are Christians.
- The global north (Europe and North America) have under 40% of the world's Christians today.
- 700 million Christians are considered Great Commission Christians.
- 86% of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists don't know a Christian. The whole church needs to be involved in inviting people to consider Jesus Christ.
- Christianity is fragmented in 41,000 denominations. Churches are failing to show a united front.
- The global Christian population is 2,293,000,000 in 2010.
- Christians are experiencing unprecedented renewal in the global south.
- Christians in the global south represent 60% of all Christians but have only 17% of the Christian income. This puts them at a great disadvantage in many areas of life.
- Spanish is the number one mother tongue of Christians. The others in the top five are English, Portuguese, Russian and Mandarin.
- There is enough evangelism to reach the world by sheer quantity, however, Asia and Northern Africa have the lowest amount of evangelism but the largest non-Christian populations.
- Most Christian outreach never reaches non-Christians. Over 85% is aimed at other Christians and does not reach non-Christians. There is a shift in the past decade toward work with non-Christians.

- Many of the responsive people in the world today are in the least reached areas. Muslims, Hindu's and Buddhists are receptive to the gospel today. There is an increase with insider movements-defined as "movements to Christ where the Gospel flows through pre-existing communities and networks, believing families remain inside their socio-religious communities, retaining their natural identity while living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of scripture."
- Missions in the world's largest cities needs to be remembered. Over one-half of the world's population now live in cities.

As your mission team meets this year, take some time to consider which of these trends affect your church and your mission outreach program. Ask your team what are the top important trends for your church to discuss and study further this year. What trends do you want to address in your mission efforts this year with your time and your budget?

Blessings,  
Steve Austvold