

Fifteenth Edition

The State  
of  
Church Giving  
through 2003

*Excerpt*  
*Chapter 6*

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## *The Potential of the Church*

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

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- A survey of 28 Protestant denominations found that in 2003, an average of less than 2¢ of every dollar donated to the local church went to overseas missions through the denomination. The term “mission” included overseas deed activity, such as relief, development, and word evangelism.
- If members of historically Christian congregations in the U.S. had given at the 10% level in 2003, there would have been an additional \$156 billion available. The potential impact of this money is seen in need statistics that could be addressed in Jesus’ name: \$5 billion could help stop the majority of 29,000 deaths a day around the globe among children under five, most of whom are dying from preventable poverty conditions; \$7 billion could provide basic education for the world’s children; \$124 million could launch a massive word evangelism effort in the “10-40 Window” (area of global need).
- An analysis of 2003 Overseas Missions giving as a portion of Total Contributions, and membership changes between the late 1960s and 2003, found that a set of communions with a higher ratio of Overseas Missions giving to Total Contributions in 2003 also reported membership growth between 1968 and 2003.
- Congregations are able to give significant portions of their budgets to overseas missions, as demonstrated by two congregations in Maryland, and a 4,000-member church in South Korea that has chosen to give over 60¢ of every dollar to international missions.

## NARRATIVE

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***Per Capita Giving to International Missions.*** A survey of a group of 28 Protestant denominations found that, on average, less than two cents of each dollar donated to their affiliated congregations in 2003 funded international missions through the denominations.

A total of thirty-two communions were sent a request for information. These communions were part of the composite denominations analyzed in chapter 1, plus the Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church. The communions surveyed had also reported Overseas Ministries Income to the *Mission Handbook* series, a series that has reported Overseas Ministries Income for Protestant denominational, interdenominational, and nondenominational mission agencies for the past five decades.<sup>1</sup> The empty tomb, inc. research survey form used the term included in the *Mission Handbook* questionnaire regarding “overseas” ministries, and provided the denomination with the most recent Overseas Ministries Income figure for that denomination reported in a *Mission Handbook* edition. The term “overseas” missions was used, even though many denominations now refer to their activities as “international” rather than “overseas,” to facilitate the degree of parallelism between the referenced figures reported to the *Mission Handbook* series and the empty tomb research survey form questions.

The goal of the empty tomb, inc. research survey form was to discern how much of Overseas Missions Income came from living member giving. “Overseas Missions Income” was used in the title of the survey form, and “overseas ministries income” was used in the text of the questions on the survey form. In this volume, the two terms, “overseas missions” and “overseas ministry,” are used interchangeably. The following questions were asked on the denominational Overseas Missions Income survey form.

1. What was the amount of income raised in the U.S. during calendar or fiscal year 2003 for overseas ministries?
2. How many dollars of the total amount on Line 1. came from endowment, foundation, and other investment income?
3. Of the total amount on Line 1., what is the dollar value of government grants, either in dollars or in-kind goods for distribution?
4. Balance of overseas ministries income: Line 1 minus Lines 2. and 3.

Of the thirty-two communions contacted, 30 provided information. The data for 28, including Overseas Missions Income and Total Contributions for 2003, is presented in Table 17.<sup>2</sup>

The following observations have been drawn from Table 17 data.

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<sup>1</sup> As of August 2005, the most recent edition was: Dotsey Welliver and Minnette Northcutt, eds., *Mission Handbook, 2004-2006* (Wheaton, IL: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Although the Friends United Meeting provided 2003 Overseas Missions Income of \$1,161,225, and the Mennonite Church USA provided 2003 Overseas Missions Income of \$4,205,596, these two communions were not able to provide a Total Contributions figure for 2003, and thus are not included in the discussion of Overseas Missions as a percent of Total Contributions.

**Table 17: Denominational Overseas Missions Income, Excluding Any Investment or Government Income, as a Percent of Total Contributions to Congregations, 28 Denominations, 2003**

Denomination	Overseas Missions Income (Line 4)	Total Contributions	Overseas Missions Income as % of Total Contributions	Cents of Each Dollar to Denom. Overseas Ministries	NAE or NCC
American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.	\$8,513,838	\$452,422,019	1.9%	2¢	NCC
Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (General Synod)	\$3,332,992	\$44,279,992	7.5%	8¢	—
Brethren in Christ Church	\$983,500	\$36,309,353	2.7%	3¢	NAE
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) <sup>3</sup>	\$4,079,019	\$503,410,382	0.8%	1¢	NCC
Church of God General Conference (Oregon, Ill. and Morrow, GA)	\$67,193	\$4,297,394	1.6%	2¢	—
Church of the Brethren <sup>4</sup>	\$1,563,623	\$93,876,819	1.7%	2¢	NCC
Church of the Nazarene	\$45,640,480	\$728,931,987	6.3%	6¢	NAE
Conservative Congregational Christian Conference <sup>5</sup>	\$147,805	\$52,572,753	0.3%	0.3¢	NAE
Cumberland Presbyterian Church	\$290,764	\$49,168,885	0.6%	1¢	—
The Episcopal Church <sup>6</sup>	\$13,193,855	\$2,133,772,253	0.6%	1¢	NCC
Evangelical Congregational Church	\$1,045,237	\$19,628,647	5.3%	5¢	NAE
Evangelical Covenant Church	\$7,913,682	\$247,440,270	3.2%	3¢	—
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	\$19,637,381	\$2,518,612,907	0.8%	1¢	NCC
Evangelical Lutheran Synod	\$246,587	\$13,013,890	1.9%	2¢	—
Fellowship of Evangelical Churches	\$1,288,064	\$14,138,539	9.1%	9¢	NAE
Free Methodist Church of North America	\$5,246,433	\$137,005,736	3.8%	4¢	NAE
General Association of General Baptists	\$1,858,866	\$35,428,127	5.2%	5¢	NAE
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod <sup>7</sup>	\$13,079,041	\$1,256,382,217	1.0%	1¢	—
Moravian Church in America, Northern Province <sup>8</sup>	\$467,570	\$17,864,570	2.6%	3¢	NCC
North American Baptist Conference	\$4,092,633	\$65,169,025	6.3%	6¢	—
The Orthodox Presbyterian Church	\$1,214,449	\$36,644,100	3.3%	3¢	—
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	\$14,927,067	\$2,743,637,755	0.5%	1¢	NCC
Reformed Church in America <sup>9</sup>	\$7,852,464	\$275,354,238	2.9%	3¢	NCC
Seventh-day Adventist Church, North American Division <sup>10</sup>	\$50,659,400	\$1,088,682,947	4.7%	5¢	—
Southern Baptist Convention	\$239,663,000	\$9,648,530,640	2.5%	2¢	—
United Church of Christ	\$8,373,084	\$878,974,911	1.0%	1¢	NCC
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	\$10,779,164	\$279,600,740	3.9%	4¢	—
The United Methodist Church	\$56,700,000	\$5,376,057,236	1.1%	1¢	NCC
<b>Total / Weighted Average</b>	<b>\$522,857,190</b>	<b>\$28,751,208,332</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>2¢</b>	

Key: NAE = National Association of Evangelicals  
 NCC = National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.  
 — = Unaffiliated with either NAE or NCC

See footnotes to Table 17 on the next page.

The overall weighted average of Overseas Missions Income as a percent of Total Contributions to the denominations in 2003 was 1.8%. That is, for each dollar of Total contributions donated to a congregation, the denomination used about 2¢ for overseas missions.

Seven denominations that provided 2003 data were affiliated with the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).

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Footnotes to Table 17

<sup>3</sup> Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Survey note: “Please note that this does not include overseas disaster and emergency relief funding.” In discussions, the Division of Overseas Ministries and Common Global Ministries representative noted that it was not possible to separate the overseas disaster and emergency relief funding from that spent in the U.S. The additional funds “would be a little more but not a significant amount.” Also, some activities are conducted jointly with the United Church of Christ.

<sup>4</sup> Church of the Brethren Survey note: “This amount is national denominational mission and service, i.e., direct staffing and mission support, and does not include other projects funded directly by congregations or districts, or independent missionaries sponsored by congregations and individuals that would not be a part of the denominational effort.”

<sup>5</sup> Conservative Congregational Christian Conference Survey note: The structure of this communion limits the national office coordination of overseas ministries activity. By design, congregations are to conduct missions directly, through agencies of their choice. The national office does not survey congregations about these activities. The one common emphasis of affiliated congregations is a focus on Micronesia, represented by the reported numbers.

<sup>6</sup> The Episcopal Church Survey note: “The Episcopal Church USA Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society does not specifically raise money to support our non-domestic ministries. Many of the activities included in our budget are, however, involved, directly or indirectly with providing worldwide mission...Many other expenditures (e.g., for ecumenical and interfaith relations; for military chaplaincies; for management’s participation in activities of the worldwide Anglican Communion) contain an overseas component; but we do not separately track or report domestic vs. overseas expenses in those categories.”

<sup>7</sup> Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Survey note: “Since 1968, many of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) 35 geographic districts now sponsor mission fields directly. The money does not flow through LCMS World Mission and LCMS World Relief, but through various mission societies. In 1996, the LCMS also established the Association of Lutheran Mission Agencies which includes ‘recognized service agencies’ of LCMS World Mission. They work in places where LCMS World Mission used to work (or might work today), but they direct and fund the work on their own. Millions of dollars of support from LCMS members is raised and spent by these 75+ mission societies. The Congregation Statistics Reports do not include information about missions spending other than that sent to LCMS World Mission and LCMS World Relief. The dollars that support the mission societies and the Lutheran Mission Agencies would not be included in the Congregation Statistics Reports. Nothing outside of the money that flows through the mission accounting department is verifiable, and no central accounting is made of mission societies spending. District support is only a small portion of the World Mission Support figure, with most of the budget coming from direct gifts from individuals.”

<sup>8</sup> Moravian Church Survey note: The Overseas Missions Income figure was estimated for the Northern Province by the Board of World Mission of the Moravian Church. The Northern Province is the one of the three Moravian Provinces that reports Total Contributions to the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* series.

<sup>9</sup> Reformed Church in America Survey note: “We do not know how much money was given to missions outside the RCA structure.”

<sup>10</sup> Seventh-day Adventist, North American Division Survey note: This estimate, prepared by the General Conference Treasury Department, is for the U.S. portion of the total donated by congregations in both Canada and the U.S.

Two other large conservative denominations included in the data set, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the Southern Baptist Convention, were not affiliated with the National Association of Evangelicals. When the data for these two denominations was added to that of the seven NAE-affiliated communions, the nine denominations' weighted average for Overseas Missions Income as a percent of Total Contributions was 2.6%, rounding to 3¢ on the dollar.

The weighted average figure of Overseas Missions Income to Total Contributions for the subset of seven NAE communions only was 5.5%, rounding to 6¢ on the dollar.

Ten denominations affiliated with the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (NCC) provided 2003 data. For this subset, the weighted average figure for Overseas Missions Income to Total Contributions was 0.9%, rounding to 1¢ on the dollar.

Information in the footnotes to Table 17 indicates that several of the denominations noted in survey correspondence that the dollar figure for international mission activity provided was only for activities funded through the national denominational office, and did not include overseas missions funded directly by the congregations. That is, some of the national denominational offices were of the opinion that congregations may be doing international mission activity in addition to any contributions sent to their office. In at least two instances, dialogue with the denominational offices resulted in the finding that the national office sends a congregation statistics survey to affiliated congregations, and that this survey does not ask the congregation to distinguish that portion of Benevolences that was spent for international mission activity other than through the national denominational office.

**Denominational Overseas Missions Income, 1916-1927.** As noted in chapter 8 of this volume, the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* series began with the 1916 *Federal Council Year Book*. The second edition, published in 1917, and continuing through the 1927 edition, presented detailed denominational "foreign missions" information. Income as well as geographical placement and type of missionaries were presented on multi-page tables.

By 1928, there was concern among church leaders about the level of "foreign missions" support:

In January 1928, at the annual meeting of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, held at Atlantic City, it was voted to ask the Institute of Social and Religious Research to make a study of foreign missionary giving by the Protestant churches of the United States for the period since 1900. A reconnaissance study of the subject was approved by the Directors of the Institute in September, 1928, with the proviso that giving to foreign missions should be studied against the wider background of the trends in the total benevolent giving through the Protestant churches in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

The conclusion of the study, published in 1929, was that support for Benevolences decreased, and Congregational Finances, increased during the 1920s. Post-World War I global concern became less of an imperative, while church building efforts that had been put off because of the war and its aftermath were pursued.

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<sup>11</sup> Charles H. Fahs, *Trends in Protestant Giving* (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1929), p. 5.

It will be noted that in general there was a peak in benevolent giving after the close of the World War, this peak being followed by marked decrease; further, that in the matter of congregational expenditures, increases began to appear almost coincidentally with the increase in benevolent giving about 1919 or 1920, but that, unlike the benevolences, these increases have continued fairly consistently ...<sup>12</sup>

Those who commissioned the study wondered, prior to the study, if groups other than denominations, for example the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, had been receiving increased donations, perhaps at the expense of denominational missions. The 1929 study did not find that groups outside the denomination would have impacted denominational Benevolences significantly: "Probably a large part of the income for foreign work of the two Associations would not easily have been accessible to the denominational foreign boards under any circumstances, because of the unusually specialized interests of the giving constituencies of these Associations. In any case the total amount involved is one relatively inconsequential as a factor for solicitude on the part of denominational groups."<sup>13</sup>

Another possibility that denominational leaders wanted the 1929 study to explore was whether, "...during a period when installment buying was markedly and generally on the increase..." increased debt had a major impact on a decrease in Benevolences support from congregations. The study notes that debt on church buildings and parsonages increased for 11 denominations that were studied during the period 1916 to 1926. Commenting on the total debt of the 11 denominations, the study observed, "Annual interest on this sum at 6 per cent. would amount to \$7,219,411, or almost exactly 50 per cent. of the amount (\$14,401,861) which these eleven denominations gave for benevolences in 1927 *less* than they gave in the peak year of 1920...The possibility, therefore, of these debts having been a factor in decreasing receipts for benevolences seems evident" [italics in the original].<sup>14</sup> The study goes on to quote the 1926 Southern Baptist *Handbook*: "Southern Baptists are now paying over \$2,600,000.00 interest on their total indebtedness every year—which is as much as they gave to home missions, foreign missions and state missions in 1926."<sup>15</sup>

As found in Table 18, the concern in these denominations was over the fact that, in terms of per capita giving, denominational foreign missions had decreased from 7.22% of Total Contributions in 1916 to 6.54% in 1927, having peaked at 10.09% in 1920. The 1929 study provided per capita giving to Foreign Missions, Benevolences, and Total Contributions for 11 denominations.<sup>16</sup> With this information, it was possible to calculate per capita Foreign Missions as a percent of per capita Benevolences, and per capita Foreign Missions as a percent of per capita Total Contributions.

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<sup>12</sup> Fahs, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Fahs, p. 56.

<sup>14</sup> Fahs, p. 59-60.

<sup>15</sup> Fahs, p. 61-62.

<sup>16</sup> Fahs, pp. 26, 29, 53. The eleven denominations included in the 1929 figures are: Congregational; Methodist Episcopal; Methodist Episcopal, South; Northern Baptist Convention; Presbyterian Church in the U.S.; Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.; Reformed Church in the United States; Reformed Church in America; Southern Baptist Convention; United Brethren; and United Presbyterian.



**Table 18: Foreign Missions, Benevolences, and Total Contributions, 11 Denominations, 1916-1927, Current Dollars**

Year	Per Capita Foreign Missions Income from Living Donors	Per Capita Benevolences	Per Capita Foreign Missions as a Percent of Per Capita Benevolences (Calculated)	Per Capita Total Contributions	Per Capita Foreign Missions as a Percent of Per Capita Total Contributions (Calculated)
1916	\$0.73	\$2.24	32.59%	\$10.11	7.22%
1917	\$0.74	\$2.52	29.37%	\$10.75	6.88%
1918	\$0.86	\$2.89	29.76%	\$11.44	7.52%
1919	\$1.18	\$3.89	30.33%	\$12.90	9.15%
1920	\$1.66	\$5.75	28.87%	\$16.45	10.09%
1921	\$1.70	\$5.51	30.85%	\$17.20	9.88%
1922	\$1.46	\$5.18	28.19%	\$17.19	8.49%
1923	\$1.44	\$5.12	28.13%	\$17.69	8.14%
1924	\$1.32	\$4.97	26.56%	\$18.44	7.16%
1925	\$1.27	\$4.59	27.67%	\$18.74	6.78%
1926	\$1.32	\$4.49	29.40%	\$18.94	6.97%
1927	\$1.24	\$4.17	29.74%	\$18.95	6.54%

Source: empty tomb analysis; *Trends in Protestant Giving*, Tables XVIII and XXIX.

During the 1916-1927 period, for a group of 11 denominations, Foreign Missions Income represented about 30% of all Benevolences. The 1929 study was commissioned in response to the concern of members of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America that giving to foreign missions was declining. As seen in Table 18 above, per capita Foreign Missions Income had decreased to 6.54% of Total Contributions in 1927.

As previously noted in Table 17, in 2003 per capita Foreign Missions Income had decreased further, to 1.8% of Total Contributions for a set of 28 Protestant denominations.

The overall average of per capita Foreign Missions Income as a percent of Total Contributions for the 1916 through 1927 period was 7.9%, compared to 1.8% in 2003. The average U.S. per capita Disposable Personal Income during the 1916-1927 period was \$5,614, in inflation-adjusted 2000 dollars. That average income figure compares to the inflation-adjusted U.S. per capita DPI figure of \$26,449 in 2003, indicating Americans had 371% more after-tax income in 2003 than in 1927.

**Denominational Overseas Missions Income, 1924-25 and 2003.** Nine denominations and communion groups that provided data for the 1926-1927 edition of *The Handbook of the Churches*,<sup>17</sup> were also included in successor denominations that provided 2003 data as well. It should be noted that the denominations that existed in 2003 were often the result of mergers among denominations that existed in 1925. For this comparison, the initial goal was to present comparative, historical, missions giving data for the eleven denominations discussed in chapter 4 of this volume. However, the denominational merger history was such that it was beyond the scope of this exploratory effort to provide a thorough

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin S. Winchester, ed., *The Handbook of the Churches* (New York: J.E. Stohlmann for the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1927), pp. 372, 376-378.

denominational equivalency match for all of the available data. As a result, Lutheran and Brethren denominational data was not included. Although United Methodist data was included, the Evangelical United Brethren strand for the 1920s data was not included. A review of all denominational equivalency matching would be warranted for a more refined analysis.

It should also be noted that, in the 1926-1927 *Handbook* edition, giving to Foreign Missions was provided for the year 1924, while figures for Benevolences and Total Contributions were for 1925. Therefore, the percentages provided in this analysis are approximate due to the limits of data readily available.

Because of the denominational definitions and the data year factors, the comparison between the 1924-25 and 2003 Overseas Missions data may serve as a first approximation. Having said that, the comparison yields some interesting findings.

For the 1924-25 data, per capita giving to Foreign Missions represented 35% of Benevolences. In 2003, the figure was 12%. Of Total Contributions, giving to Foreign Missions was 7% in 1924-25, and less than 2% in 2003.

The Southern Baptist Convention posted a slightly higher percentage of Foreign Missions as a percent of Benevolences in 2003 than in 1924-25, but a smaller percentage of Total Contributions. In both the 1924-25 and 2003 data sets, the Moravian Church support for Foreign Missions was about half of Benevolences, but again, as a portion of Total Contributions, the figure was smaller in 2003 than in 1924. For the other seven denominations, Foreign Missions as a portion of Benevolences, and as a portion of Total Contributions, was smaller in 2003 than in the 1924-25 data.

The comparison of the 1924-25 and 2003 data makes it clear that international missions was a smaller portion of Total Contributions in 2003, and for the majority of the nine denominations, a smaller portion of Benevolences. These facts suggest that other priorities had displaced international missions in 2003 compared to 1924.

Table 19 and Table 20 present the information for per capita giving in nine denominations to Foreign Missions as a percent of Benevolences and Total Contributions in the 1920s and 2003. Because each table considers data for a single year, the information is presented in current dollars. While the dollar figures in the two tables cannot be meaningfully compared across years, the percentages presented in the two tables are comparable.

**Changes in Denominational Priorities.** In survey communication, both written and verbal, several denominations indicated that the total amount of congregational international mission activity for their related congregations was unknown, given that affiliated congregations may be doing additional overseas outreach directly. This fact suggests that national denominational offices are not making it a priority to obtain this information, as was done in the 1920s when detailed numbers for each denomination were published in the *Yearbook* series.

Congregational surveys, sent by denominations to their congregations to obtain annual reports, could, but apparently do not, include details of congregational global missions expenditures that are not conducted through the denomination. The denominational

**Table 19: Foreign Missions Giving, 1924, as Percent of Benevolences, and of Total Contributions, 1925, Nine Denominations, Per Capita Giving, Current Dollars**

	Denomination	Per Capita Foreign Missions Income from Living Donors 1924	Per Capita Benevolences 1925	Per Capita Foreign Missions as a Percent of Per Capita Benevolences	Per Capita Total Contributions 1925	Per Capita Foreign Missions as a Percent of Per Capita Total Contributions
1	Baptist, North	\$1.45	\$3.56	41%	\$23.25	6%
2	Disciples of Christ	\$0.76	\$3.37	22%	\$14.21	5%
3	Protestant Episcopal	\$1.12	\$4.82	23%	\$28.80	4%
4	Moravian	\$4.26	\$8.05	53%	\$22.79	19%
5	Presbyterian <sup>18</sup>	\$3.01	\$6.58	46%	\$32.04	9%
6	Reformed Church in America	\$3.75	\$7.37	51%	\$36.52	10%
7	Baptist, South	\$0.54	\$2.76	19%	\$10.45	5%
8	Congregational + Reformed Ch. In U.S. <sup>19</sup>	\$2.00	\$3.58	56%	\$27.01	7%
9	Methodist Episcopal <sup>20</sup>	\$1.34	\$3.92	34%	\$21.01	6%
	Weighted Average	\$1.42	\$4.04	35%	\$21.07	7%

Source: empty tomb analysis; *The Handbook of the Churches* (1927).

**Table 20: Foreign Missions Giving, as Percent of Benevolences, and of Total Contributions, 2003, Nine Denominations, Per Capita Giving, Current Dollars<sup>21</sup>**

	Denomination	Per Capita Foreign Missions Income from Living Donors	Per Capita Benevolences	Per Capita Foreign Missions as a Percent of Per Capita Benevolences	Per Capita Total Contributions	Per Capita Foreign Missions as a Percent of Per Capita Total Contributions
1	Am. Baptist Churches in the USA	\$5.94	\$42.54	14%	\$315.70	2%
2	Christian Ch. (Disciples of Christ)	\$8.28	\$92.33	9%	\$1,021.76	1%
3	Episcopal Church	\$7.07	\$151.42	5%	\$1,143.40	1%
4	Moravian Church, North. Province	\$24.03	\$47.56	51%	\$918.20	3%
5	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	\$6.21	\$158.69	4%	\$1,140.66	1%
6	Reformed Church in America	\$46.52	\$236.56	20%	\$1,631.24	3%
7	Southern Baptist Convention	\$14.79	\$68.03	22%	\$595.40	2%
8	United Church of Christ	\$6.46	\$59.11	11%	\$677.88	1%
9	The United Methodist Church	\$6.93	\$127.84	5%	\$656.72	1%
	Weighted Average	\$11.27	\$91.19	12%	\$658.66	2%

Source: empty tomb analysis; empty tomb survey data; adjusted YACC series.

structures presumably monitor any payments for pastor health and pension, and the general assessments requested from the congregations. In contrast, information is often incomplete about the overseas missions activities funded directly by the congregations, suggesting a

<sup>18</sup> Includes United Presbyterian; Presbyterian, U.S. (S.); Presbyterian, U.S.A. (N.).

<sup>19</sup> These two denominations were later included in the United Church of Christ.

<sup>20</sup> Includes: Methodist Episcopal (S.); Methodist Episcopal (N.); Methodist Episcopal.

<sup>21</sup> See footnotes associated with Table 17 on page 54 in reference to the 2003 data.

lower degree of interest by the community of faith's national office in this area of congregational life.

Chapter 8 presents further discussion on the priorities set by church leaders at all levels, and the impact those priorities have on church member giving patterns.

**Potential for Overseas Missions Giving.** Any analysis of church member giving can be pursued from at least two perspectives. One approach is to consider what the giving levels actually were at a given time. The other approach is to consider what the potential giving level could have been, based on a defined external standard. Giving in 2003 can be compared with giving in 1968, for example, the first year in the present study's data set. The question can be asked how much money would have been available, if giving levels in 2003 had been at the 1968 level. If there was an increase, that increase could have been applied to increase international missions. Thus, comparing 1968 and 2003 giving levels might yield a figure for how international missions could have been increased.

Among the composite denominations, 25 communions were able to provide Total Contributions, Benevolences, and Overseas Mission Income for 2003. This data could be compared with 1968 data already available. Four communions in the data set could not provide 2003 data for one or more of the three categories being considered, that is, Total Contributions, Benevolences, or Overseas Missions Income.

Two other large communions provided 2003 data. The United Methodist Church resulted from the merger of other denominations in April 1968. Denominational data was not reported for 1968. Thus 1969 and 2003 data was available for The United Methodist Church.

The Episcopal Church provided data for 1968 and 2003, resulting in the finding that Total Contributions and Benevolences giving as a percentage of income were each higher in 2003 than in 1968. As a result, the data does not lend itself to the present discussion about potential increased giving in 2003 compared to 1968. A closer review of Episcopal data may be merited in light of some volatility in giving levels on a year-to-year basis, which may be due in part to a change in reporting definitions. For purposes of the present review, since giving as a percent of income measured higher in 2003 than in 1968, the Episcopal Church was not included in the comparison of 1968 and 2003 giving levels that was designed to yield a potential increased giving figure.

For each of the 27 communions considered in this section, a potential additional Overseas Mission giving figure was calculated, based on an analysis of reported giving in the late 1960s and 2003. Table 21 provides the data described in this section, by denomination.

The following assumptions were made in the calculations. Per member giving as a percentage of income could have been at the same level in 2003 as in the late 1960s, if the members had chosen to donate that amount. Total Contributions was the category of choice for the analysis, because the difference between the 1968 and 2003 giving levels for this category was generally greater. However, if Total Contributions as a portion of income was actually higher in the latest year than it was in 1968, then the category of Benevolences was used to calculate potential additional overseas missions giving, on the assumption that members could have, if they had chosen to do so, given at least the same portion of income to Benevolences in the latest year as was given in 1968.

The Potential of the Church

The result of the foregoing analysis was that another \$5 billion could have been available for international missions if members of these communions had kept giving levels in 2003 at the same level as in the late 1960s. To place this amount of \$5 billion of potential additional

**Table 21: Calculation of Potential Additional Overseas Missions Giving, 27 Communions, Based on Percent of Income Given in 1968 and the Latest Year, Utilizing Total or Benevolences Giving to Congregations**

Denomination	Total Contrib. For Benevol.	Start Year	Start % Given	Latest % Given	Latest Year	Calculated Potential	Latest Year Actual	Difference: Additional Overseas Missions Giving Potential
American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.	Total	1968	3.2%	2.8%	2003	\$513,258,721	\$452,422,019	\$60,836,702
Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (General Synod)	Benvl.	1968	1.0%	0.8%	2003	\$10,118,222	\$7,615,661	\$2,502,561
Brethren in Christ Church	Total	1968	8.2%	6.0%	2003	\$49,339,573	\$36,309,353	\$13,030,220
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	Total	1968	4.1%	3.6%	2003	\$568,579,239	\$503,410,382	\$65,168,857
Church of God Gen. Conf. (Oregon, Ill & Morrow, GA.)	Total	1968	4.4%	4.1%	2003	\$4,575,149	\$4,297,394	\$277,755
Church of the Brethren	Total	1968	3.1%	2.5%	2003	\$113,364,765	\$93,876,819	\$19,487,946
Church of the Nazarene	Total	1968	6.5%	4.2%	2003	\$1,126,720,796	\$728,931,987	\$397,788,809
Conservative Congregational Christian Conference	Total	1968	5.6%	4.5%	2003	\$65,579,898	\$52,572,753	\$13,007,145
Cumberland Presbyterian Church	Total	1968	2.6%	2.1%	2003	\$61,921,550	\$49,168,885	\$12,752,665
Evangelical Congregational Church	Total	1968	4.3%	3.4%	2003	\$25,231,838	\$19,628,647	\$5,603,191
Evangelical Covenant Church	Total	1968	8.5%	8.1%	2003	\$258,351,628	\$247,440,270	\$10,911,358
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	Total	1968	3.0%	2.4%	2003	\$3,118,732,344	\$2,518,612,907	\$600,119,437
Evangelical Lutheran Synod	Total	1968	3.2%	2.8%	2003	\$14,977,569	\$13,013,890	\$1,963,679
Fellowship of Evangelical Churches	Benvl.	1968	2.6%	1.4%	2003	\$4,212,303	\$2,275,726	\$1,936,577
Free Methodist Church of North America	Total	1968	9.6%	7.6%	2003	\$174,230,114	\$137,005,736	\$37,224,378
General Association of General Baptists	Total	1968	2.3%	2.0%	2003	\$39,508,329	\$35,428,127	\$4,080,202
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod	Total	1968	3.9%	2.4%	2003	\$2,048,106,371	\$1,256,382,217	\$791,724,154
Moravian Church in America, Northern Province	Total	1968	3.5%	3.3%	2003	\$19,098,823	\$17,864,570	\$1,234,253
North American Baptist Conference	Total	1968	5.0%	4.9%	2003	\$66,646,969	\$65,169,025	\$1,477,944
The Orthodox Presbyterian Church	Total	1968	7.2%	6.6%	2003	\$39,707,655	\$36,644,100	\$3,063,555
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	Benvl.	1968	0.8%	0.6%	2003	\$531,611,213	\$381,693,067	\$149,918,146
Reformed Church in America	Benvl.	1968	1.3%	0.8%	2003	\$61,622,391	\$39,932,078	\$21,690,313
Seventh-day Adventists, North Am. Division	Total	1968	10.7%	4.2%	2003	\$2,816,354,259	\$1,088,682,947	\$1,727,671,312
Southern Baptist Convention	Total	1968	2.3%	2.1%	2003	\$10,233,874,317	\$9,648,530,640	\$585,343,677
United Church of Christ	Total	1968	2.7%	2.4%	2003	\$983,008,048	\$878,974,911	\$104,033,137
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	Benvl.	1968	0.8%	0.6%	2003	\$71,681,966	\$50,962,660	\$20,719,306
The United Methodist Church	Benvl.	1969	0.4%	0.3%	2003	\$909,421,551	\$602,328,428	\$307,093,123
Total Additional Potential Overseas Missions Giving					2003			\$4,960,660,402

Source: empty tomb analysis; empty tomb survey data; adjusted YACC series.

overseas missions giving in perspective, \$5 billion has been estimated as the amount needed to stop more than half of the approximately twenty-nine thousand daily deaths from poverty conditions that occur among children under five around the globe.<sup>22</sup>

Apparently there are life-and-death implications inherent in whether or not church members choose to increase giving for global need.

***Potential Giving at 10% of Income in 2003.*** Americans, including church members, had more resources in 2003 than in 1968. People chose to spend these dollars in different ways. For example, per person spending on recreation increased from 5 percent of income in 1968 to 8 percent in 2002 (the last year with available, comparable data). That was a 50% increase in the portion of income spent on recreation. Per capita spending on recreation, in inflation-adjusted dollars, went from \$671.42 in 1968, to \$2,113.13 in 2002.<sup>23</sup>

People chose to spend the real increase in their resources between 1968 and 2003 in a variety of ways, from purchasing previously unavailable conveniences like microwave ovens and air conditioning in cars, to increasing the square footage per person in housing units.

What if church members had chosen to use more of their expanding resources to increase their giving to their churches? Suppose historically Christian church members in 2003 had chosen to give an average of ten percent to their congregations, *and* made sure that the increased giving was allocated primarily to international missions, and also to domestic missions. Would this increase have been a significant amount? Could it have accomplished anything of consequence?

If members of historically Christian churches had chosen to give 10% to their congregations in 2003, rather than the 2.59% given that year, there would have been an additional \$156 billion dollars available for work through the church.

Further, if those members had specified that 60% of their additional giving were to be given to international missions, there would have been an additional \$94 billion available for the international work of the church. That would have left an additional \$31 billion for domestic missions, and an equal amount for costs related to the increased missions activity.

This level of giving could have made a major impact on global need. One estimate is that an additional \$70 to \$80 billion a year could provide the basic needs of every person on the globe.<sup>24</sup> Basic primary education for all children around the globe would cost \$7 billion

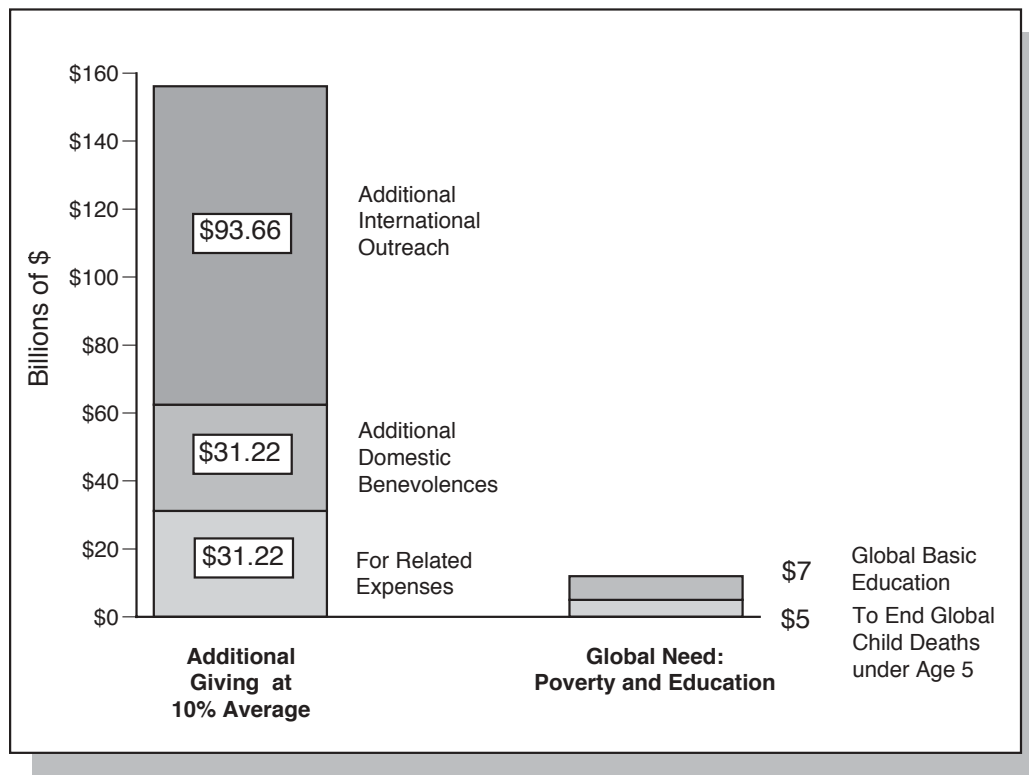
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<sup>22</sup> James Grant, *The State of the World's Children 1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 16, estimated that \$2.5 billion a year would be needed by the late 1990s to stop preventable child deaths. The authors doubled that figure to \$5 billion. The cost may be higher. See The Bellagio Study Group on Child Survival, "Knowledge into Action for Child Survival," *The Lancet*, vol. 362, July 26, 2003, p. 325 of pdf document downloaded 9/5/2004. The numbers in that article indicated the following additional money is needed: \$1.0 billion for vaccinations, \$4.0 billion for treatment of childhood illnesses, and an additional \$2.5 billion for malaria prevention and treatment for all age groups, for a total of \$7.5 billion compared to the \$5 billion noted above.

<sup>23</sup> 1968 data: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1970* (91<sup>st</sup> edition) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), p 204. 2002 data: <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/04statab/arts.pdf>>; p. 5 of 8/23/05 download. For U.S. population and income, see Appendixes.

<sup>24</sup> Carol Bellamy, *The State of the World's Children 2000* (New York: UNICEF, 2000), p. 37.

**Figure 15: Potential Additional Church Giving at a 2003 Average of 10%, and Illustrations of Global Need That Could Be Addressed**



Sources: empty tomb analysis; UNICEF

empty tomb, inc., 2005

a year.<sup>25</sup> Of the estimated 10.6 million children under five dying around the globe each year, about two-thirds are dying from causes that could be addressed through lost-cost solutions, according to one international study. The report stated: “Our findings show that about two-thirds of child deaths could be prevented by interventions that are available today and are feasible for implementation in low-income countries at high levels of population coverage.”<sup>26</sup> The cost for these interventions might be about \$5 billion a year for the portion focused specifically on the children.<sup>27</sup>

Figure 15 displays the potential giving levels, and issues of global need that could be addressed by the increased giving.

***Positive Consequences of Increased Overseas Missions Giving.*** When asked to give more, church members often look at the costs to themselves. Perhaps the approach is influenced by the Season of Lent in the church calendar, when many traditions focus on giving up something as a means of reflection and preparation for the Easter season.

<sup>25</sup> Carol Bellamy, *The State of the World's Children 1999* (New York: UNICEF, 1999), p. 85.

<sup>26</sup> Gareth Jones, et al.; “How Many Child Deaths Can We Prevent This Year?”; *The Lancet*; <[http://www.thelancet.com/journal/vol1362/iss9377/full/llan.362.9377.child\\_survival.26292.1](http://www.thelancet.com/journal/vol1362/iss9377/full/llan.362.9377.child_survival.26292.1)>; p. 6 of 7/7/03 2:06 PM printout.

<sup>27</sup> See note 22 above.

There may also be positive consequences associated with the specific behavior of giving more to support overseas missions, for the donors as well as the recipients.

For example, in an earlier analysis, the authors proposed a Unified Theory of Giving and Membership. In brief, giving and membership data for five denominations was reviewed. In two denominations, both giving to overseas missions and membership increased between 1972 and 1991. For three other denominations, both giving to overseas missions and membership declined. As noted in that earlier analysis, "Given the small number of denominations in this initial analysis, this pattern should not be taken as firmly established. Even so, this correlation points to the need for further examination of the relationship between current members' willingness to support a cause beyond local congregational expenses and increase in membership."<sup>28</sup>

With additional data from the empty tomb survey, in which 28 denominations provided Overseas Missions Income for 2003, this theory can be further tested. The resulting analysis appeared to support the earlier finding.

That is, of the 28 denominations, 14 increased in membership between 1968 and 2003,<sup>29</sup> while 14 declined in membership.<sup>30</sup>

The 14 communions that increased grew from 14,461,499 in 1968 to 20,328,508 members in 2003, an increase of 41%. These 14 denominations had a combined weighted average of 2.82% of Overseas Ministries Income as a percent of Total Contributions.

The 14 communions that decreased in membership declined from 26,463,444 in the late 1960s, to 19,895,754 in 2003, a decline of 25%. These 14 denominations had a combined weighted average of 0.92% of Overseas Ministries Income as a percent of Total Contributions.

It may be noted that two of the 14 communions, the Evangelical Congregational Church and the General Association of General Baptists, each had a ratio of above 5% of Overseas Missions Giving as a percent of Total Contributions, and yet lost members between 1968 and 2003. Also the Moravian Church in America, Northern Province, and the Reformed

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<sup>28</sup> John Ronsvalle and Sylvia Ronsvalle, "Basic Trends in Religions Giving, 1921-1995," in Mark Chaves and Sharon L. Miller, eds., *Financing American Religion* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1999), p. 18. A copy of the full report is also available at <<http://www.emptytomb.org/UnifiedTheory.pdf>>.

<sup>29</sup> The 14 denominations that increased in membership from 1968 to 2003 were: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (General Synod); Brethren in Christ Church; Church of the Nazarene; Conservative Congregational Christian Conference; Evangelical Covenant Church; Evangelical Lutheran Synod; Fellowship of Evangelical Churches; Free Methodist Church of North America; Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; North American Baptist Conference; The Orthodox Presbyterian Church; Seventh-day Adventists, North American Division; Southern Baptist Convention; Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church.

<sup>30</sup> The 14 denominations that decreased in membership from 1968 to 2003 were: American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.; Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); Church of God General Conference (Oregon, IL, and Morrow, GA); Church of the Brethren; Cumberland Presbyterian Church; Episcopal Church; Evangelical Congregational Church; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; General Association of General Baptists; Moravian Church in America, Northern Province; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); Reformed Church in America; United Church of Christ; United Methodist Church (1969 membership).



**Table 22: Overseas Missions Income as a Percent of Total Contributions, and Membership, 28 Denominations, 1968 and 2003<sup>31</sup>**

Number of Communion in Category	2003 Overseas Missions Income	2003 Total Contributions	Overseas Missions Income as a % of Total Contrib.	1968 Membership	2003 Membership	% Change in Membership 1968-2003
14 Communion with Increased Membership 1968-2003	\$384,287,230	\$13,648,702,189	2.82%	14,461,499	20,328,508	41%
14 Communion with Decreased Membership 1968-2003	\$138,569,961	\$15,102,456,143	0.92%	26,463,444	19,895,754	-25%

Source: empty tomb analysis; empty tomb survey data; adjusted YACC series.

Church in America, had an Overseas Missions Giving to Total Contributions ratio of 2.6% and 2.9%, respectively, and yet lost members between 1968 and 2003. It may be that other factors, such as the change from 1968 to 2003 in Overseas Missions as a percent of Total Contributions, would be useful information.

Nevertheless, these preliminary results suggest that further exploration of the relationship between congregational support for denominational Overseas Missions and growth in membership may produce useful insights for denominations concerned about membership trends.

Table 22 presents the results in summary form.

In addition to the apparent relationship between membership growth and international missions support levels, there are moral and even self-interest issues that may encourage increased missions giving.

A news report of a 2005 speech by Nelson Mandela, Nobel Peace Prize winner and former president of South Africa, summarized his statements as calling for “trade justice, an end to rising debts for the poorest countries, and more and higher-quality aid.”<sup>32</sup>

The justice theme voiced by Nelson Mandela has a Biblical precedent that ought to resonate with church members. Christians could afford to respond to their global neighbors’ needs and provide, in Jesus’ name, the higher-quality aid called for by Nelson Mandela. Through the global denominational service networks already delivering front-lines assistance through church channels, members could fully fund critical outreach.

However, other world leaders appeal to less high-minded reasons for caring about global need. The president of Brazil, in a meeting of global leaders in the fall of 2004, was quoted as pointing to the connection between “overwhelming hunger and unemployment in

<sup>31</sup> Data for The United Methodist Church is for 1969 and 2003.

<sup>32</sup> “Mandela: Rich Must Feed the Poor”; <<http://edition.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/02/03/mandela.london>>; p. 1 of 2/3/2005 10:58 AM printout.

developing nations” and “international violence.”<sup>33</sup> This analysis is consistent with conclusions drawn soon after the September 11, 2001 tragedy. As President George W. Bush observed then, “We fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terrorism.”<sup>34</sup>

The response to crises such as hurricane relief, or the 9/11 tragedy show that church members will give additional money when they are moved by a crisis. However, most of the 10.6 million under-five children dying each year, many from preventable poverty conditions, are not victims of a cataclysmic event that captures the evening news headlines. The late James Grant, when executive director of UNICEF, referred to their situation as “the silent emergency.”

The children do not have a voice—except for the teachings of the Bible that so many church members in the U.S. profess to believe. The prophets and writers of that Book talk again and again about the poor, the lonely, and those in need.

It is clear, from the outpouring of donations in response to emergencies, that church members can be shocked into expansive acts of justice that are consistent with their faith. The question is whether church members will choose to increase such acts of mercy not out of fear or horror, but out of the love for God and neighbor that Jesus Christ has commanded.

***Can Congregations Allocate More to Missions?*** Table 17 above shows average overseas missions income for a variety of denominations. Six of the communions allocate five cents or more of every dollar donated to the congregation for international ministry, with the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches allocating nine cents. These figures are much higher than the overall average of just under two cents of each dollar.

Yet, the potential is so much more. Current activities of congregations and denominations are being conducted on 2.6% of income donated to the church. If church members were to increase to ten percent giving, current operations could continue at the same level without tapping into these increased donations. That is not to say that both congregations and denominational operations could not swell in size to absorb those new dollars. That fact may be the very reason those potential additional dollars are not given. Without a large vision, beyond maintenance, church member giving has not reached the potential of ten percent giving in this age of affluence.

Church members might be challenged to give more if church leaders set a firm limit on administrative growth, and committed all additional money to missions. In the discussion of potential giving at the 10% level above, the additional money was allocated as sixty percent to international missions, twenty percent to domestic missions, and the additional twenty percent for expenses related to these expanded outreaches.

Is it possible for a congregation to give as much as fifty or sixty percent to missions?

**Two Maryland Congregations Focus on Africa.** Two examples of congregations in the U.S. that have emphasized global outreach were cited in *World* magazine articles in the summer of 2005.

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<sup>33</sup> Kim Gamel (AP); “Poverty Breeds Violence, Brazil Cautions”; <<http://www.suntimes.com/output/news/cst.new-un21.html>>; p. 1 of 9/21/04 8:35 AM printout.

<sup>34</sup> Sandra Sobierag, “Bush Vows to Help Globe’s Poor,” the Associated Press AP-NY-03-22-03 14:59EST, printed from AOL News on March 22, 2002.

The Damascus (Maryland) Wesleyan Church opted to purchase a lease on land in Zambia rather than build a needed sanctuary. As of 2005, the church continues to support an elementary school, and an agricultural/Bible program that assists families to establish farms. “Never got a new sanctuary” was the observation of the former pastor of the Maryland congregation who now oversees the African project.<sup>35</sup>

A second church, Mount Zion United Methodist Church near Baltimore, Maryland, gave 47% of its budget to missions in a recent year, and helped to found the Children of Zion Village for orphans in Namibia. The pastor in Maryland had announced that air conditioning would not be installed in their Maryland building until after the congregation built a church in Africa, which encouraged a warm response to the idea of the orphanage.

Craig McLaughlin, pastor of Mount Zion, stressed that his church did not instantly spend 47 percent of its budget on missions, but started at 10 percent, then moved to 20, then 30 percent. He said the church made hard choices: “It’s a big chunk of money that would be used to increase the size of the staff,” but the message sent to the world is, “Here’s a church that’s proclaiming the gospel and trying to reach out to the lost and lowly.” Those who wanted air conditioning got it—after the church funded the Namibian children’s home.

Meanwhile, Mount Zion United Methodist Church has expanded to three crowded worship services each week.<sup>36</sup>

These two congregations are all too exceptional. It would be a different world if they were more typical.

**Antioch Presbyterian Church, Chonju, South Korea.** Yet the gold standard continues to be a congregation in Chonju, South Korea, south of Seoul. The Antioch Presbyterian Church did not grow into greater missions giving. The founding pastor, Rev. Donghwee Lee, began the congregation in the mid-1980s with the principle that 60% of all money donated to the congregation would be spent on overseas missions. By 2005, the congregation had grown to about 4,000 members.

When contacted for an update of the mission support information presented in *The State of Church Giving through 2002*, Rev. Lee was responsive, but a little reluctant. Wouldn’t it be good, he wondered, to offer another congregation as an example of a missions giving church this year, rather than again point to the Antioch Presbyterian Church? Given that the authors knew of no other congregation that put such an emphasis on missions, he kindly agreed to provide information for 2003.

This church, located in a suburb of Seoul, continued to make a priority of international mission in 2003. That year, they spent 3,400,000,000 WON (Korean \$ Unit) on international missions (outside of South Korea). Using a 2003 exchange rate of 1,000 WON equaled \$0.845 U.S., the dollar value was \$2.9 million. The entire income of the congregation was approximately 4,850,000,000 WON in 2003 (\$4.1 million U.S.). Therefore, the international mission outreach of this congregation was about 70% of its entire budget. Virtually all of the money spent on international mission by this congregation was from member giving, with only 100,000,000 (\$84,500 U.S.) raised through an annual bazaar put on by the

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<sup>35</sup> Marvin and Susan Olasky, “The Other Venue,” *World* magazine, July 16, 2005, p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> Marvin and Susan Olasky, “One Church, One Orphanage,” *World* magazine, July 23, 2005, pp. 25, 27.

congregation. In a telephone interview, Pastor Lee stated that the congregation receives no funds from the government or denominational headquarters for their international mission outreach, and that the congregation does not operate any business that would fund these activities. These funds are donated by the approximately 4,000 members of the church who want to support the international mission activity of the congregation. This is all the more worthy of note, given that a World Bank “Key Indicators of Development” table provided a 2003 per capita “Purchasing Power Parity” Gross National Income figure for South Korea of \$17,930, compared to that for the U.S. of \$37,500.<sup>37</sup>

Through an agency called the Paul Mission (<[http://www.bauri.org/tpm/e\\_ministry.htm](http://www.bauri.org/tpm/e_ministry.htm)>), the Antioch Presbyterian Church joins with other churches to distribute the missions money that is raised. As of 2004, the Paul Mission had sent 248 missionaries to 70 countries. Through the Paul Mission, the congregation promotes evangelism, church planting, theological education, prison ministry, mercy ministries, missionary training, children and youth programs, and family counseling, as well as an evangelistic radio program in Thailand.

**Re-Imagining Missions.** In each of the congregations noted above, pastoral leadership at the local level was strongly evident. A pastor cannot lead a completely unwilling congregation to increase missions, but it is not likely that a congregation will make the hard choices without a visionary pastor. As one pastor described the dynamic, “A pastor cannot do anything single-handedly in a congregation, but a pastor can stop anything single-handedly in a congregation.”<sup>38</sup>

Yet even a committed pastor must have a picture of where to lead the people in their journey of faith. In each of the three examples cited of extraordinary giving, the vision was congregationally based. To move beyond the occasional extraordinary pastor, denominations must provide clear, effective leadership to free international missions from within the binding limits of serving general administration. In order to approach the levels of potential giving described in this chapter, fresh thinking will be the order of the day.

One area that could benefit from a revitalized approach is the area of word missions. Consider that there are few estimates of how much it would cost to help provide access to the Gospel for areas of the world where people have no such option. Thankfully, there are starting to be estimates of how much money it would take to provide basic education, or malaria protection, or vitamins for the world’s children. As these numbers are developed, the information can serve as a point to organize to meet the goals.

It would be good to have a similar estimate of the support costs for sharing the Gospel in word as well. Since no numbers are readily available, information from one group that has a focus on Asia might be of assistance in developing a support cost figure.

As noted at the Gospel for Asia Web site ([www.gfa.org](http://www.gfa.org)), there are 500,000 villages in India without a Gospel witness. While the organization sometimes offers schools, medical

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<sup>37</sup> The World Bank, *World Bank Atlas*, 36<sup>th</sup> Edition (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2004), pp. 54-55.

<sup>38</sup> John and Sylvia Ronswalle, *Behind the Stained Glass Windows: Money Dynamics in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), p. 56.

and food programs as part of their work, the focus is on training national missionaries as church planters in areas with no church. The GFA Web site notes that “ninety-seven percent of the world’s unreached people lives in the 10/40 Window” (referring to the latitude degrees), with “more unreached people groups in northern India than in any other part of the world.”<sup>39</sup> The organization lists 11 Asian countries in which it is active. The plan is to equip what they term native missionaries with “a definite call upon their lives to go to the most unreached areas for evangelism and church planting.”<sup>40</sup>

It has been observed that it is a basic issue of justice that all people have a valid presentation of the Gospel. Consider the following from a World Council of Churches document:

There is also a tragic coincidence that most of the world’s poor have not heard the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; or they could not receive it, because it was not recognized as Good News in the way in which it was brought. This is a double injustice: they are victims of oppression of an unjust economic order or an unjust political distribution of power, and at the same time they are deprived of the knowledge of God’s special care for them. To announce the Good News to the poor is to begin to render the justice due to them.<sup>41</sup>

This injustice is aggravated by the allocation of missionaries. One estimate suggested that, as of the early 1990s, more than 90% of missionaries were active in areas where the church had already been planted.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, a group like Gospel for Asia, which is supporting native missionaries to reach out to communities where no church has been planted, is tipping the balance in the direction of those with no church, and thus no voice to lobby church members in the U.S. Currently 14,000 such missionaries are being supported through Gospel for Asia at a cost of \$90 to \$150 a month per missionary.

The large-scale vision is the GFA goal that 100,000 such missionaries would be trained and supported in order to serve various unreached people groups. Were this to happen, the additional support cost, extrapolated from numbers on the GFA Web site and calculated by empty tomb, inc., would be \$93 million a year if each missionary were supported at \$90 a month, and \$155 million a year, if each missionary were supported at \$150 a month.

Considering that Christians in the U.S. could have an additional \$156 billion a year to spend on the work of the church, if they were giving an average of 10% of their incomes, a price tag of \$155 million a year to support native missionaries to reach out to their local

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<sup>39</sup> Gospel for Asia, “F.A.Q.’s”; <<http://www.gfa.org/gfa/faqs>>; p. 2 of 8/23/05 8:48 AM printout.

<sup>40</sup> Gospel for Asia, “F.A.Q.’s”; p.1.

<sup>41</sup> Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, “Mission and Evangelism—An Ecumenical Affirmation, *International Review of Mission*, vol. LXXI, no. 284 (October, 1982), p. 440.

<sup>42</sup> “The Manila Manifesto”; <<http://lausanne.gospelcom.net/statements/manila.html>>; p. 9 of 8/23/05 8:57 PM printout. The Manila Manifesto “is an elaboration of The Lausanne Covenant fifteen years later. The participants in Lausanne II, the Second International Congress on World Evangelization, in Manila in the Philippines in July 1989 deliberated on the prospects for the fulfillment of the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ” (p.1).

neighbors should not be an intimidating figure. This needed amount leaves billions of dollars available for the necessarily more expensive costs associated with deed mission such as medical clinics, primary education, food programs, and meeting other basic physical needs in Jesus' name.

The Gospel for Asia Web site includes the following observation: "An old proverb says that no cow in a picture book is going to go out and eat any grass. There has been a tremendous amount of talk and tons of information pumped out regarding the 10/40 Window and the 2.7 billion people waiting to hear the Gospel. We need to move on from information to implementation if we want to see these people reached with the Gospel."<sup>43</sup>

***Will the Potential Be Realized?*** The numbers quoted above demonstrate that church members in the U.S. have great potential for impacting both spiritual and physical need. It is also clear that said church members have the Bible to guide their choices, information about world need to touch their hearts, and structures in place through denominational agencies that provide the opportunity for service.

Yet, to date, church members in the U.S. have not been inspired to act on the potential and the responsibility that have resulted from over fifty years of unprecedented affluence.

Will these church members ever act on their potential for loving God and neighbor?

Chapter 8 explores some of the dynamics that define the priorities of church leaders and the related impact on giving levels.

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<sup>43</sup> Gospel for Asia, "F.A.Q.'s"; p. 2.