

The Antioch Partners

*A strategic alliance of Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship and
The Outreach Foundation*

March 2010

Dear Friends of The Antioch Partners (TAP),

As we prepare to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus this Easter, it is an appropriate time to stand back and reflect on what God has accomplished in the world since Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Jesus ascension opened the way for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church at Pentecost. For over two thousand years now, God has been at work through the church fulfilling Jesus' promise, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

The growth of the global church over these two thousand years is a clear testimony to the power of God. Just think ... in the several decades after Jesus death and resurrection God used the handful of women and men Jesus had invested the last three years of his life in to begin a movement that has continued to grow to this day. During these two millennia there have been periods of dramatic growth. Consider this ... by the year AD 100, it is estimated there were about 25,000 Christians in the world, but by the year AD 310 (just before Constantine) that number had grown to approximately 20,000,000 Christians! This growth is even more mind-boggling when we remember the following about these early Christians (The Forgotten Ways, Alan Hirsch, pp. 18-19):

- They were an illegal religion throughout this period
- They didn't have any church buildings as we know them
- They didn't even have the scriptures as we know them
- They didn't have an institution or professional leadership as we know it
- They actually made it hard to join the church

Clearly, the power of God was at work in a mighty way. As Presbyterian missiologist Harold Kurtz was fond of saying, "The Holy Spirit was out of control!"

The "out of control" nature of the Holy Spirit has been clearly evident in growth of the church over the last several hundred years as well. Consider the following table which summarizes the growth of the global church as a percentage spread between Global North and Global South from 1800 – 2010 (this table was presented by William Taylor during his presentation at Urbana 09):

	1800	1900	1950	1985	2010
North	99	92	68	50	25
South	1	8	32	50	75

Specifically, what God has done over the last sixty years is truly amazing! A seismic shift has taken place in the world Christian movement, but few Christians in North America are even aware of this. In just sixty years, the geographic center of Christianity has shifted to the global South. As the Scottish missiologist and church historian Andrew Walls has observed, "Perhaps the most striking single feature of Christianity

today is the fact that the church now looks more like that great multitude whom none can number, drawn from all tribes and kindreds, peoples and tongues, than ever before in its history.” Truly, we are living in exciting times!

Though the growth of the global church has many, many implications for us as we participate in God’s work in the world, one important implication for TAP is we are committed to exploring new ways of partnering with our brothers and sisters in the global South. In fact, one of TAP’s strategic priorities is partnering with majority-world mission structures. God has already opened the way for TAP to partner with a Brazilian mission organization named SEPAL which is facilitating leadership development for Brazilian church leaders, and sending Brazilians as cross-cultural missionaries through the world. Furthermore, TAP is also exploring a partnership with an Ethiopian missionary-sending structure that is committed to sending Ethiopian missionaries to participate in God’s



Leaders of SEPAL with Tim Carriker (PCUSA Mission Co-Worker) and Andrew during meeting exploring partnership possibilities in Sao Paulo

mission in the horn of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. We consider these types of partnerships a tremendous, God-given privilege, and we are grateful to all of you, our TAP Partners, who are helping make all this possible. Through these types of partnerships missionaries serving through TAP are leveraging their impact as they support the growing missionary-sending movement from the non-Western world, and through these relationships we are all learning more about what it means to be faithful to God’s call in our own lives and members of the global body of Christ.

Thank you so much for your continued partnership in ministry with us!

Gratefully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "W. Andrew Adair".

W. Andrew Adair
Executive Director, The Antioch Partners