

Recommendation of Partnership with Empart in North India

Process of Selection

In the early summer of 2008 Steve Leonard along with a small group of mission-minded individuals at Grace formed a temporary “UPG (Unreached People Group) Formation Team”. The ultimate purpose of the team was to continue the pursuit by Grace Church of the adoption of an unreached people group in the aftermath of the first failed attempt with the “Steelers” of Indonesia. This would be achieved through the formation of a “permanent” team whose mission was captured by the following Mission Statement:

“We are commissioned by the leadership of Grace Church to identify an appropriate, unreached people group to adopt, mobilize our entire congregation to participate in the adoption process, partner with supporting individuals, churches, and mission agencies where applicable, and complete the task of establishing an indigenous, relevant, spiritually-healthy, and growing church among the adopted people.” (Tim Arlen)

On October 9, 2008, this new team was assembled and named the “Adopt-a-People Team (APT)” with the approval of the original six members; Tim Arlen (Chairman), Wayne Peterson (Elder Representative), Paul and Lisa Rutherford, Mike Allhouse, and Travis Hasson. The first official meeting of the APT took place on October 24, where Tim shared the following acronym as a helpful way to communicate the successive steps in the process we proposed to follow in order to IMPART the Gospel to our adopted people:

1. I dentification – research and then select an unreached people
2. M obilization – engage the whole church in support
3. P artnership – with other agencies trying to reach the same people
4. A dvance Teams – send prayer and early evangelism teams
5. R edemptive Relationship Development – leadership development (discipleship)
6. T ask completion: An Established Church – indigenous and reproducing

From the first meeting we agreed to make our decisions by consensus. When encountering an impasse, we would take that as a sign to stop and pray until unity could be reached. In order to foster ongoing unity among us that was centered on God’s heart for the unreached, Tim assigned the following readings:

1. Prayer by O. Hallesby
2. Let the Nations be Glad by John Piper
3. Perspectives (various readings)
4. “Global Prayer Digest” (daily readings and prayers for the unreached)
5. From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya by Ruth Tucker
6. Operation World (a daily prayer guide for the world)

From the outset we operated with the understanding that we were asked to initiate a relationship with a UPG that Grace could responsibly engage with for the long haul, say for some 20 – 25 years. In other words, we committed to deep, thorough, and patient work on the front end to make the “right” adoption with the understanding that Grace would stay the course for whatever time was necessary to reach that people group with the Gospel as evidenced by the planting and establishment of an indigenous, growing church. Having said that, the reality is our team continually wrestled with the tension between a sense of progressing too slowly and the willingness to do the slow, long, hard, unglamorous prep work to “grow the redwood tree”. Three of our team members had many “issues” with Grace leadership and our quality of ministry and grew frustrated with our deliberate pace. They eventually moved on to other churches. We have now added Tammy Arlen to our current team of four.

It soon became apparent that each team member had a very different preference for what kind of UPG to adopt. In order to eventually reach consensus, Tim felt it was important and necessary for the first few months to concentrate much of our time intentionally seeking God’s will in prayer, fasting, and study. He encouraged the reading of our mission resources along with the scriptures as we spent time in our “prayer closets” waiting upon the Lord. Our purpose was to lay our individual desires before God and then “listen” to His unfolding direction and plan as He spoke to us through His Word and our study. (“Not our will, but Thine, O God!”) During our meetings each one shared what he sensed the Lord was saying to his heart and mind. Of course, all of our ideas and developing vision were measured against God’s compassion for and mandate to reach the lost as revealed in His written Word. Our ultimate hope was in the Lord giving each of us a strong, unity of conviction that He had clearly led us to our adopted people.

The second phase of our activities included various efforts to explore widely the 6500+ remaining UPGs in search of a suitable adoption. The following is a list of some of our efforts:

1. Dialoguing with our Grace-supported missionaries to confirm those working with UPGs and explore an “in-house” partnership with them. We also explored partnering with non Grace-supported missionaries through our “outside” missionary contacts.
2. Each one of us also began researching among our favorite mission agencies for adoption options.
3. Our entire team attended the “Impact Indonesia” Conference in February 2009 in an attempt to network with other world Christians seeking adoptions among Indonesia’s 220 UPGs.
4. We spent hours prayerfully researching websites like joshuaproject.net and finishingthetask.com whose mission is to provide the worldwide church with the critical information needed to reach the remaining UPGs.

The outcome of this initial search was the generation of a first list of potential adoptions we covenanted to pray about for at least 10 minutes daily:

1. North American Indian Tribes
2. Atascadero Bible Church and their UPG adoption of the North Coast Javanese
3. Carl Bruns (from Impact Indonesia) in northern CA who has contacts with an agricultural college in Indonesia
4. Other Impact Indonesia contacts
5. Grace Bible Church/Dana Ostby (no adoption yet, most likely Indonesia)
6. Jim Overton and his contacts with UPGs through Pioneers
7. Joe and Ann Wright in Yemen with Reach Across
8. Deron and Jessica Bauer in Bosnia with Intervarsity
9. Dan and Dina Krull in Azerbaijan
10. North African tribal peoples (the least reached of the most unreached)
11. Ethiopia – potential partnership with orphanage adoption effort and UPG adoption
12. Michael Grainger and Discipling for Development in various African countries with Navigators
13. Raj Kumar Rai from Nepal – a Nepalese pastor Tim knows
14. Lloyd Goss and his connections with Wycliffe
15. Rona Lee and her connections with WEC
16. Ned Steffens and his connections with TEAM
17. Jo Ann Ray and her connections with Reach Ministries International

The length and breadth of this list is in direct correlation with the continuing diversity of preferences for an adoption represented on our team. After countless hours of prayer and generalized research and discussion, it became clear that our current plan was too broad and, therefore, stuck in neutral. We needed to give focus to our search. We borrowed an idea we heard about at the “Impact” Conference developed by a church in Katy, TX. With the use of a world map we decided to engage our congregation in our search by surveying their preferences for where in the world to look for a UPG to adopt. We did this in an interactive way with the use of 3 questions, the most important of which was, “Thinking beyond SLO, which one or two places in the world would you support Grace Church in reaching those who have no opportunity to hear the Gospel?” India and Indonesia emerged clearly as the top 2 countries of preference, with India favored almost twice as much over Indonesia.

Having prayed for months over the process and results of our poll, we took it as a leading from the Lord to focus our research in these two countries. We divided our team into two halves, one to look for an adoption in India, and the other in Indonesia. Since India has approximately 2200 UPGs and Indonesia has about 220, we once again sensed the need to narrow our focus in two ways:

1. From the somewhat conflicting literature on the subject we developed our own working definition of a UPG; “Any people group in the world (and for us

- that meant in India or Indonesia) with less than 2% evangelical Christians and no reproducing church.”
2. We also developed the following preferences/criteria for selecting an appropriate UPG for Grace adoption:
 - a. We wanted hands-on involvement with the people we adopted.
 - b. We desired a long-term missionary placement (though not necessarily from Grace).
 - c. We wanted to be able to send short-term teams.
 - d. We preferred a UPG where we already had connections.
 - e. We favored partnerships with other churches, agencies, etc.
 - f. We preferred a people easily accessible by air travel (<2 days).
 - g. The larger the people group, the better.
 - h. We wanted to be sensitive to the security of the country we would work in – We preferred a “safe” environment.
 - i. We wanted to be sensitive to the religious culture of the people – We preferred those peoples least likely to find the “Christian God”.

At our February 2, 2010, APT meeting Travis H. reported a conversation he had with Ron Smith, Missions Pastor at ABC. He informed us there were opportunities to partner with ABC in both India and Indonesia. However, support for Indonesia was minimal as ABC had made a major shift in their mission support to North India and was aggressively seeking partners for that field with the mission agency, EMPART. ABC had already made major contributions to promote support for Empart by allocating half of Ron’s job description to running the Empart USA office and by significant financial contributions.

In the meantime, Tim had already had independent conversations with both Tim Theule and Steve Leonard who both were aware of ABC’s involvement in North India and had expressed excitement for and openness to partnership with ABC. Tim A. met with Tom Ferrell, Senior Pastor of ABC, who detailed the disposition of Empart’s ministry in North India and ABC’s relationship with it. Tim and the Missions Team were sufficiently impressed with the quality (both spiritual and strategic) of Empart’s ministry in India and its potential to yield a suitable adoption for Grace that the Team agreed to support his “Vision Trip” to India with Tom Ferrell and the ABC team.

Before leaving for India, the APT and Missions Team generated a list of specific questions to be answered about Empart and founder and president, Jossy Chacko. The following points are answers given by Jossy in a personal interview with Tim:

- Jossy would call himself a charismatic evangelical
- He comes from a Brethren Church background
- He lives in a nice home in Australia that is comparable in quality and value to Tom Ferrell’s
- His lifestyle is no different than Tom’s
- He does not take a salary from Empart

- Empart Australia is part of a financial accountability organization in Australia similar to ECFA. Empart USA has recently applied for membership in ECFA
- His family (wife and kids) attends an Assembly of God church in Australia (which is not Pentecostal in Australia)
- He subscribes to the Lausanne Statement of Faith
- He does not accept the “prosperity gospel” as it has come from the West. He does not believe in the divine right of the believer to be either financially prosperous or physically healed.
- He is disappointed with the current condition of Gospel for Asia in India. Several of Empart’s top leaders have come from GFA. K. P. Yohannon has created a hierarchical, “catholic style” church in order to maintain tight control of the ministry.
- Empart is a flat organization. Four or five main Regions are subdivided into numerous Areas overseeing the work of the church planters. Problems of heresy and church discipline are dealt with by the local church. For unresolved matters the chain of accountability is as follows: Local Church Planter > Area Coordinator > “Super” Area Coordinator > Regional Coordinator > Jossy Chacko > International Board
- Jossy believes Empart does a good job training church planters in evangelism. Their one-year program is a hybrid of on-the-job training in an established, local church and classroom instruction. They are taught basic survival skills to prepare for life in a primitive village. The average age of church planters is about 28 years old.
- For the most part, opportunities for long-term workers are limited and not desirable. If some really want a long-term relationship in country, Jossy will help make it happen. Most of these opportunities would involve a “business as mission” model where the focus is on starting businesses in India that are eventually turned over to Indians.
- Empart strongly encourages short-term trips. Short-termers can assist in orphanage work in Empart’s Children’s Homes, Training Center construction projects, teaching in a variety of men’s and women’s ministry conferences, instruction in Sewing Schools, etc.
- Empart has (at that time) 17 men’s training centers with plans underway to open 5 more.
- Additionally there are 2 women’s training centers. These centers develop “key women” (not pastors). These women are trained to begin networking among villagers targeted for church planting prior to the arrival of the church planter. 2 new centers are planned for this year
- Empart defines a church as 12 baptized believers
- There are currently (as of April, 2010) 3,200 churches and 3,000 fellowships waiting to be established as churches
- Empart defines a Christian as a believer in Christ who has expressed his obedience in baptism. Believers are almost always active in the local church.
- Tim was encouraged to consider partnering in the Lucknow area. The Regional Coordinator is Pastor Samuel. The trip is a direct, 15-hour flight to Delhi, and then a 1-hour flight to Lucknow.

After returning from India Tim shared these findings and his many experiences of Empart in India vis-à-vis the pictures and videos he'd taken. At the May 5 meeting of the APT the following statement was approved:

“Our team felt fairly convinced that the Lord was leading us to partner with Empart to reach the unreached before Tim’s trip to India. We viewed Tim’s trip to India as a vision trip to confirm that conviction among us. After Tim returned and shared with the team all that he had experienced we feel confident that partnering with Empart is the way the Lord is directing Grace Church.”

The following month Tim shared his presentation with the Missions Team which also voted unanimously to support this recommendation of the APT.

Reasons for Empart Partnership

1. God brought unity of heart and mind to the APT in the selection of the adoption in North India from a starting point quite literally “all over the map”.
2. India was the #1 country indicated by our map survey where members of our congregation would support Grace Church in reaching UPGs.
3. Adoption partnership with Empart offers the highest level of consistency with our preferences/criteria for the adoption as stated on p. 3,4.
4. Adoption of a UPG through Empart is surprising and unpredictable, because it does not fulfill the original goal the APT set of adopting 1 UPG; in fact, it exponentially supersedes that goal by offering the potential for multiple scores of UPG adoptions throughout a vast “unreached region”. And we believe this is just like our God who “...is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us,...” (Eph. 4:20)
5. God had been working “behind the scenes” in both Pastor Tim and Pastor Steve’s (at the time) hearts preparing them with the information for and example of a partnership relationship with Empart (through P. Tom at ABC) so that they have each looked favorably upon the idea. The APT has sought diligently to have the support of all our leaders for the adoption in accordance with the truth of Heb. 13:17, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.”
6. We believe that Jossy Chacko is a man of godly character and biblical integrity who has been appointed by God to lead Empart. (See his book, Madness and Tim’s interview, p. 4,5)
7. We believe Empart is executing a God-given, God-sized vision of church planting (100,000 churches by the year 2030) utilizing the most efficient, cost-effective strategy of indigenous church planters. (See “The Power of Global Synergy Through Empart”)
8. We appreciate the freedom and flexibility of financial support options ranging from the partial support of 1 church planter (\$50/month) to the full

- support of an entire training center (\$15,300 + \$3,400/month). (See “Church Planting Proposal Partnership: Transforming Communities” and “Empart Training Center Proposal”)
9. This kind of partnership also promotes opportunities for **everyone** in our church to play a role in fulfilling the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) by either “going” himself or sending others to go.
 10. Leadership of both Empart and BEE World has agreed in principle to long-term, systematic biblical and theological training for key Indian church leaders that may begin as early as February 2011.
 11. Empart leadership has already agreed in concept to the business-as-mission model of Lisa Leonard Design implemented through local churches in North India.
 12. Currently this is a unique time of spiritual opportunity where the wave of the Holy Spirit is breaking mightily across North India in saving the perishing and planting churches. We don’t know how long this opportunity will last. We desire to “catch this wave” and “enjoy the ride” with our Lord. What could be more fun than partnering with the living God in advancing a massive people movement to Christ!
 13. We agree with Jossy’s broader vision to not only plant churches but also engage the political and social power structures of Indian society to bring about Gospel transformation through Kingdom principles (like the truth that all men are made in the image of God).
 14. We see partnership with Empart adding great value to Grace Church in challenging us to turn away from pleasing ourselves to seek after God for the faith and power to achieve God-sized goals in His plan of redemption both in the ends of the earth and right here in SLO.

Potential Objections to Partnership with Empart

This section is my attempt to anticipate some of your objections so we can discuss them together:

1. It costs too much money to travel to North India and takes too long to get there.
2. Jossy identifies himself as a “charismatic” evangelical. Does this fit with our own theological identity?
3. Are we comfortable with the fact that stories of “signs and wonders” often accompany breakthroughs in church growth?
4. Do we trust the accountability structure in place to handle the fallout if either Jossy or the agency goes sideways? (Empart in each country is managed by a Board, each of which is accountable to the International Board in Australia. Tom Ferrell of ABC sits on the International Board, and Ron Smith, Missions Pastor at ABC, is the Director of Empart USA.)
5. Will people from our church have any real involvement in ministry in India, or does Empart just want our money?

6. Is it safe for teams of American Christians to travel in India when there have been several instances of Hindu violence against Indian Christians?
7. Won't a major emphasis on funding for North Indian ministries divert much-needed funds for ministry right here in SLO?

Finally, if you are agreeable, I recommend a prayerful, thorough reading of all the materials that have been provided in this presentation over the next month. This will give our church leadership time to digest this information and do some independent research, if desired. Perhaps new questions or concerns will surface. I believe each of you needs to be persuaded by the Lord that this is the right adoption for Grace. We could meet one more time at an Elder Meeting in November to resolve any final issues and, hopefully, bring closure to this recommendation. Of course, if you believe you are ready to approve the recommendation now, that would be acceptable as well! If, or when, final approval is given, it will be necessary to develop a plan for our funding of Empart's ministries and to establish our targeted levels of support going into the future. This would be done in conjunction with the Missions Team's new goals, priorities of support, and reallocation of existing funds. Perhaps a rough draft of this plan can be presented when we reconvene at the November Elder Meeting. (See email "Subject: Reevaluation of Grace Missions Funding" and "Worker Questionnaire")

On a personal note, I want to say to you that I have been humbly praying most all of my adult life that God would see fit to give me the unspeakable privilege of participating with Him in advancing a massive people movement to Christ. Partnership with Empart affords each one of us that blessing! Let's not forget this far-reaching evangelistic explosion taking place in North India today means thousands of precious, desperate souls each month are given the gift of eternal life bringing love, joy, and peace into their oppressive lives both now and forever. I can only imagine the unparalleled celebration this sets off in Heaven! And best of all, for me, is the knowledge that each newly created worshipper of our Lord and King hastens the day of His return and brings greater glory to His worthy Name!

Thanks to all for your prayerful and thoughtful consideration of this partnership.

Respectfully Submitted by Tim Arlen, October 21, 2010