

# INTERCEDE

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## Indigenous Church Principles at Work in Missions Today

by M. L. Rogers

*\*El Salvador Missions Convention: A couple responds to the call to missions.*

### Jose's New Map

"Please, come to Kyrgyzstan," the woman urged Jose and his wife, Andrea. Jose, an El Salvadoran who served as a missionary in Guatemala, lacked any internal map that included the nation of Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, God was calling him and his wife to work with Muslims, and the cartographical pieces were beginning to come together.

Jose grew up in a small town in northern El Salvador. Born into a Catholic family, he did not meet any evangelical believers until his teenage years. Due to the civil war in his country, he and his family moved to the capital city when he was sixteen. One day, he ventured into an Assemblies of God church where he met Jesus for the first time and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Not long afterwards, Jose received a vision. In it, he saw himself preaching the gospel and heard God say to him, "I have saved you and I will use you to bring My glory to the nations." Believing that this vision came from the Lord, Jose enrolled in an Assemblies of God Bible college in San Salvador. A month into his studies, he was installed as the pastor of a small village church—just one year after his decision to follow Christ.

During his three-year tenure, Jose saw this church grow

from five congregants to eighty. Additionally, this meager congregation planted another church during this time. Jose's call to the ministry had been confirmed through testing. Little did he know where this call would take him.

The El Salvador Assemblies of God sent Jose, who was still single, to serve as a missionary from El Salvador to the indigenous tribes in Guatemala. He labored for nine years in this context, seeing several churches planted among these unreached tribes. Some of the people he led to the Lord are serving in ministry today.

Upon returning from missionary work in Guatemala, Jose married Andrea in December of 2009. Knowing that most of the world's unreached people groups follow the religion of Islam, Andrea felt a call to the Muslim world and began sharing this burden with her new husband.

Not long after their nuptials, Jose and Andrea attended a Missions Congress in Panama. There, the woman from Kyrgyzstan pleaded with them to come to her country. At first, Jose was unsure. Was God really calling them to work among Muslims?

The next month, two Global Initiative team members held a seminar in El Salvador. There, they taught pastors

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# Until All Have Heard

*How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14*

**Mark Brink**

International Director  
Global Initiative:  
Reaching Muslim Peoples



The Olympic games recently concluded in Paris, France. Over 10,000 athletes from 206 countries took part in thirty-two different sports. The nations of the world watched as their best athletes competed for a podium position. Seeing the joy and pride on the athletes' faces as they stood on the podium to receive their medals was a great spectacle. They had practiced countless hours over many years to represent their countries and be declared the best in the world.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, the Apostle Paul gives us a picture of a successful believer in Jesus Christ. He uses the analogy of a runner and a boxer competing for a prize. He challenges believers to “run in such a way as to get the prize.” As he describes these athletes, Paul gives three marks for one who receives the prize.

First, the competitor must have strict discipline. Christians must set strict routines and boundaries or goals to reach

the prize of pleasing Christ. Paul states that “every athlete exercises self-control in all things.” Second, the competitor must have a clear focus. Christians must lay aside everything that entangles or hinders them from completing the race to which God has called them (Heb. 12:1). We have a different focus than the spectators around us. Third, the Christian must have unwavering perseverance, avoid distraction, and guard against apathy, while persisting for the imperishable crown. As workers to Muslims, we must compete for the prize, the souls of Muslims around the world.

Growing up on a farm, I would help my Dad cut hay. He often said, “We need to get this job done today. Do not leave the field until the job is done.” Our heavenly Father is saying the same to us. We have a task to do, and the fields are ripe unto harvest. We must remain in the field, keep our shoulder to the plow—and get the job done! “Night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4).



*\*Missions Congress in Colombia: Interceding for Muslim nations workshop.*

# Prayer Profile – Muslim Unreached People Group

\*Alawites of Syria – Population: 1,755,000 – 98% Muslim

The Alawites live in the mountain ranges of northwestern Syria that overlook the Mediterranean Sea. Three-quarters of them live in the provinces of Latakia, where they make up almost two-thirds of the population. “Alawi” suggests an adherent of Ali and accentuates the religion’s similarities to Shia Islam. They are a closed society, and see themselves as a persecuted and despised people, who actually are the chosen people of Allah, the only ones to have seen the light in a world of darkness.

The Alawite believe that all people were stars in the world of light but fell from there due to disobedience. They believe they must be reincarnated seven times before they once again return to the stars where Ali is prince. The actual Alawi beliefs and practices are based on their book, the *Kitab al-Majmu*. The common Alawite person will not discuss the particulars of their beliefs because they are so secret that they do not know what they believe. An Alawite would tell a visitor he is a Muslim, since he sees himself as one.

## Prayer Points

1. Pray for signs and wonders among the Alawite.
2. Pray that Syrian Christians will take the necessary steps of faith to reach out to the Alawite community.
3. Pray that they will have access to Arabic Bibles.
4. Pray that Alawites will access Arabic language radio and TV programs.
5. Pray that the Lord of the Harvest will raise up intercessors for the Alawites.

*\*For further information on the Alawite people, see [www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net)*



*\*Global Initiative team member teaching at missions training school in Ethiopia.*

# Indigenous Church Principles

and missionaries about Islamic beliefs and practices, and the need for every Muslim to know the Truth about Jesus. Jose and Andrea were mesmerized. The Fisherman had cast His net, and they felt caught up in the call to reach Muslims. Just a few months after saying “I do” to each other, they said “I will” to the Lord and prepared to move to Kyrgyzstan. In November 2010, they arrived in their country of service where God gave them six years of fruitful ministry. In 2016, they began working with a Muslim unreached people group in Bulgaria because of visa issues that prevented their return to Kyrgyzstan.

Today, Jose serves as the Latin American Coordinator for Global Initiative. In this role, he trains believers to reach Muslims in nations all over his home continent, as well as in Africa and Asia. Growing up in a small village in El Salvador, Jose never envisioned the places he would go, but God’s call gave him a new map, and God’s people walked with him on his missions journey. As he continues in ministry, Jose is seeing God fulfill the vision he received at age seventeen: that he would be used among the nations for God’s glory. But how did churches in his country grasp such a burden to send missionaries as far away as Asia?

## A Vision for Missions-sending Churches

About a decade and a half before Jose’s vision, a missionary serving in El Salvador, by the name of DeLonn Rance, received a similar vision. Awakening one night with a gasp, he saw Latin Americans going to the ends of the earth with tongues of fire on their heads. Still fairly new to the Central American country, DeLonn and his wife, Valerie, discerned that seeing the El Salvadoran Church become a missions-sending church would be the centerpiece of God’s plan for them there. The year was 1984.

That the national church in El Salvador would become a missions-minded church was not a novel idea to DeLonn. In 1973, the Costa Rican Assemblies of God formed its first missions department. DeLonn, a child of missionaries, was present to witness the commissioning of the first Latin American missionary from that nation. This, coupled with an article written in the 1960s by David Kensinger, missionary to Costa Rica, burned a vision for missions in DeLonn’s heart. In this article, Kensinger asserted that Latin American countries should be not only missions-receiving countries, but missions-sending countries. DeLonn desperately wanted to see this happen in El Salvador, but how could his dream be fulfilled in a nation fraught with poverty, gang violence, and civil war?

Despite these realities, DeLonn began preaching and teaching about missions everywhere he went in his country of service. Eventually, the Bible school director invited him to teach a course on missions. Soon, this class expanded to four classes, and they developed an entire curriculum on missions. God was planting the seeds of missions in the fertile soil of a new generation of Latin American pastors. Soon afterward, thanks to the influence of missionary John

Bueno, the General Council of the El Salvador Assemblies of God created a committee to write organizational bylaws for a missions department.

About three years after DeLonn’s vision, the committee was meeting to discuss how missions could move forward in their country. DeLonn left the room to make copies. Upon his return to the board room, he discovered that the committee had appointed him as the first president of the El Salvadoran Assemblies of God missions department.

During DeLonn’s eight-year tenure as president, he saw thirty-six missionaries commissioned from El Salvador to the world. In 1996, he handed the reins of the missions de-



partment to a national pastor, who saw the seeds of missions sprout into a rich yield. Today, there are 181 El Salvadoran missionaries serving in forty-one countries. Seventy percent of El Salvador’s Assemblies of God churches regularly send in offerings for missions and 95 percent of these churches have corporate prayer for missionaries at least once a month.

While DeLonn has seen his vision from the Lord fulfilled, the journey was arduous at times. Early on he realized that trying to convince believers to be missions-minded proved futile. Rather, he created space for Christians to hear from God concerning His heart for the world by challenging churches to host missions conventions. As these missions conventions burgeoned throughout the landscape, believers felt a burden to pray, give, and, in some cases, go.

In the early years of El Salvador’s missions movement, DeLonn developed what he calls the Missionary Disciplines. These practices or processes helped propel the vision of mis-

# at Work in Missions Today

sions forward in local churches. First, churches must have intentional prayer for the world. As believers pray for the nations, God speaks to hearts about His love for the lost. Second, churches must participate in intentional prayer for missionaries. This enhances the partnership in prayer and generosity between the senders and the goers. Third, a system of giving must exist so missionaries can receive financial support to continue their work. Churches in El Salvador use a Faith Promise system in which believers make monthly monetary commitments to be paid as the Lord provides the funds—a system modeled after Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) in the United States. Fourth, missionaries must have an accountability structure that helps them move from home to the foreign field and provides a means

need to follow my example. Let's do this together." In addition to supporting missions from their personal purses, soon after this the General Council of the El Salvador Assemblies of God began giving 3 percent of its income to the missions department, thus freeing local churches from shouldering administrative costs of the missions movement.

The vision that the Lord gave to DeLonn extended beyond the borders of El Salvador. Since the late 1980s, DeLonn has been instrumental in seeing all of Latin America mobilized for missions. He and Valerie continue to be a vital part of the movement in this region, along with missionaries like David and Margot Woodworth, who serve in Colombia. The Woodworths have influenced many Latin Americans who now serve in various parts of Asia and Central Eurasia. In fact, according to a 2018 census conducted by The World Mission Commission, 156 Latin American missionaries serve in Muslim majority countries, not to mention the hundreds of others serving among Buddhist, Hindu, and animistic populations. Among missionaries, like the Rances and the Woodworths serving in Latin America, another voice that is sounding the clarion call for participation in God's Mission from every region of the world stands out.

## All Hands on Deck

"It's my fault we're not missions-minded," began the Latin American pastor, "and from this day forward we're going to be a missions-sending church." For many years, this pastor had resisted the notion of sending missionaries from his congregation. However, an elderly lady in his church began praying for missionaries and talking to her pastor about the need to be involved in missions. Her rhetoric was clear: healthy churches are sending churches. Five years later, he acquiesced. Today, this congregation has sent missionaries to China and Pakistan, as well as other places.

This became a familiar story to Brad and Rhonda Walz, missionaries to Argentina. Many times, they have seen pastors catch a vision for missions and experience the joy of sending workers to the ends of the earth. While the Rance family made their home in El Salvador and the Woodworths in Colombia, Brad and Rhonda moved to Argentina in the late 1980s with the desire to see churches there become sending churches. As in El Salvador, the spark of missions quickly caught fire in the hearts of many young people. The Argentina Assemblies of God was already sending out its 100th missionary before the turn of the millennium.

But God's plans for the Walz family extended beyond Argentina and even Latin America. In 1999, Assemblies of God Area Directors formed a Missions Task Force. This task force, equipped with the fiery vision that David Kensinger elucidated in the 1970s, would seek to promote missions to unreached peoples in every national church under the sun. With his heart to see churches become sending churches, AGWM leaders asked Brad Walz to take part in this task force. The following year, he became the chair of this new



*future missionaries from Ethiopia at a missions training school there.*

to report on their work and their use of funds for ministry. DeLonn saw the need for this early on, as many young people felt called to missions in services or conventions, but the movement lacked a structure to take them from home to unfamiliar soil. Once created, this accountability structure provided the pathway to missions for many Salvadorians—like Jose.

DeLonn tirelessly shared his burden for missions with the executive leadership team of El Salvador's General Council. As primary influencers, having this team on board with missions was paramount. After he took this group of leaders on a trip to visit an El Salvadoran missionary on location, several of these executives felt moved by her sacrificial service in a difficult place. During a meeting after returning home, one of the leaders, who had not previously warmed up to missions, took out a third of his income and laid it on the conference table. "We have to support our missionaries, and we need to do it personally," he began. "You

initiative. After holding multiple meetings with national leaders in every region of the world, this missions task force became the World Missions Commission in 2009, a part of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF), a global movement of over 400,000 churches and 86 million people strong.

With Brad at the helm, the World Missions Commission has shared a vision for missions with myriad national leaders. By providing training and mentoring to leaders wishing to create structures for missions movements, this commission has seen the exponential increase of sending bodies in the WAGF. Today, there are 113 missions sending structures across the national churches of the movement. Many of these sending structures, like those in Latin America, have now existed for decades and support hundreds of missionaries. Others, like the one created by the Ethiopian Assemblies of God, are just a few years in the making.

Not all African church movements are new to missions, however. Thanks to missionaries like John York, the Great Continent has seen and continues to see considerable thrusts in missions sending. The churches of Burkina Faso were sending missionaries in the late 1980s, well before the missional flowers of many Latin American churches had bloomed. And lest Asia suffer neglect, a 2022 World Missions Commission report shows that the churches of India support over 400 missionaries from their ranks, though many of these work among the unreached of their own nation. Sri Lanka has sent sixteen missionaries outside of its border and the Philippines has sent thirty, to cite a few examples.

Additionally, many new sending nations are seeing a dramatic increase in the numbers of missionaries sent. Côte d'Ivoire, for example, went from supporting ten missionaries to 100 in recent years. The stated goal of the World Missions Commission is that every country would send an average of one missionary per ten churches. Currently, churches of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship have sent out approximately 9,000 missionaries. Upon reaching this goal, this number would increase to 40,000 missionaries. Several "new senders" have already reached this missionary-to-churches ratio.

### **Conclusion**

Given the reality of missions movements among new senders today, what are some implications for those from historical or traditional sending nations (U.S., Canada, Western Europe)? First, and most emphatic, these exciting movements do not excuse historical senders from the joy of missions participation. The Great Commission is still compulsory for all believers from every nation.

Second, historical senders would do well to follow the example of new senders in how they create a prodigious amount of space for missions. For example, at a recent six-day missions convention at a church in El Salvador, believers were invited to pray for missionaries and give to missions in every service. Moreover, every service included

a response time for those who felt called to missions. The results spoke for themselves: over eighty people felt called to missions by the end of the last service. How might the missions force of historical sending nations be strengthened if this type of model were employed?

Third, missionaries from historical sending nations must realize that cross-cultural communication will be a part of their missions team dynamics. In an era of multi-national church-planting teams, missionaries from the United States are working hand in hand with Latin Americans, Africans, Asians, and others to reach the lost. Missionaries must expect to encounter cultural differences with those they are called to reach, as well as with their co-laborers in Christ.

Finally, it always behooves believers to look at what God is doing in the world and participate in it. God poured His Spirit out on Azusa Street in the early twentieth century and simultaneously met believers near Pune, India, with a supernatural visitation in what became known as the Mukti Revival. In like manner, God has given His people, spread across continents, visions and dreams for missions that have led to a Holy Spirit-birthed movement. That indigenous church principles have come full circle today bears significance on the timeline of history as believers look for the imminent return of Christ. The eleventh-hour workers are in the fields and evening draws nigh (Matt. 20:1-16).

As God calls believers to missions from new sending nations, the need for training new workers increases. To meet this need, new missions training schools now exist across Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia. One school in India has a vision to send out 10,000 missionaries to various parts of South Asia and beyond. Global Initiative team members teach at many of these missions training schools each year. As a result of this training, numerous believers have sensed a call to Muslim lands. It is not unusual to hear a previous student say, "It was during your training sessions that I heard the call to be a missionary." Having felt such a call, an African student who attended a recent Global Initiative training in his area penned this poem:

Jesus, your call to me is rooted in my heart  
A gentle voice whispering in the heart  
A call of love  
What a holy and wise call...  
I dare to say:  
Who do you think I am?  
A faithful servant!  
Here is your son, Lord, send me now  
I will not refuse your call  
I am ready to go wherever you send me  
I know the path will be tough going,  
The mission you send me on  
May be a dense dark forest that must be walked,  
And many wild animals there may be,  
The test will be a narrow way  
I am ready to be your messenger,  
So, Lord, send me.



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**Friday, September 6, 2024. Please pray for**

*...cessation of the conflict in the Holy Land.* At the time of writing, the violence continues. Pray for all who are suffering terribly—and that peace will come to this conflicted area.

*...success for Global News teams* who will conduct “Reaching Muslims in China” seminars during September in Taiwan. Estimates of Muslims in China range from 30 to 50 million.

*...a strong anointing on Global Initiative team members* who will teach “Folk Islam” and “Women in Islam” classes in Romania—September 9-20.

**Friday, September 13, 2024. Please pray for**

*...encouragement for churches and Christians in Algeria,* where Islam is the state religion. The Evangelical Protestant Church of Algeria has seen the closure of 43 of its 47 church buildings, and in recent years no new building permits have been issued.

*...Holy Spirit conviction to grip the global Muslim community* as they observe *Milad un Nabi* (Birth of the Prophet) on September 15.

*...courage for Muslim converts in Uzbekistan.* Pastor Johan says: “Converts [from Islam] are increasing. Pray that they will grow in their faith and become unmovable, despite the hostility they face. Also pray for more strong leaders for our house churches.”

**Friday, September 20, 2024. Please pray for**

*...Holy Spirit wisdom for Pastor Syeed in India.* As a former Muslim, he reports, “I now oversee ten house churches where former Muslims are growing in Christ.” Syeed’s vision is to start a seminary in his area of India to train former Muslims to be church planters and pastors.

*...courage for Christian students at a university in the Banten Province of Indonesia.* Muslims entered their prayer meeting and shouted, “You cannot remain here.” The students responded: “We have come in the name of Jesus, and we will remain in the name of Jesus.”

*...Holy Spirit enablement for Pastor Karwan in Iraq.* He says, “I was a Muslim, and our church of 100 people are all former Muslims. Officials have closed our church several times, but the people refuse to stay away.”

**Friday, September 27, 2024. Please pray for**

*...former Muslim, Zayna, in a Muslim country in the Middle East.* She says, “I am hosting meetings in my home. I am amazed that my Muslim neighbors are filling my house. Each week new people are coming.”

*...a ministry in North Africa that focuses on reaching Muslims.* Their report states: “We are grateful that not all of the indigenous believers are fleeing for safe havens! Hundreds have chosen to stay and risk their lives for Kingdom purposes.”

*...the Lord’s favor on Ministry to Muslims E-Learning,* an online ministry to train Christians around the globe who wish to reach Muslims with the gospel.



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## **Friday, October 4, 2024. Please pray for**

...*the Lord's blessing on a missionary team* that is scheduled to enter the West African country of Guinea-Conakry. Of Guinea-Conakry's population of 14 million, 90% are Muslim.

...*an evangelical missions organization* that is focusing its church planting efforts on the four largest Muslim populations in the world: Indonesia (241 million Muslims), Pakistan (225 million), India (211 million), and Bangladesh (155 million).

...*church planting teams in Ethiopia*. The goal of one indigenous organization is to plant 1,000 churches in 2024, including Muslim areas. Ethiopia's population of 129 million is 30% Muslim.

## **Friday, October 11, 2024. Please pray for**

...*forty church planters working on the southern Philippine Island of Mindanao*. Mindanao's population of 24 million is 93% Muslim. Team members report "encouraging results."

...*a strong anointing on Global Initiative personnel* as they respond to the growing opportunities to teach online "equipping classes"—especially with Pakistani and Indian ministries.

...*Christian children in Hassakeh, Syria*. Recently, Türkiye indiscriminately bombed a church there, leaving several children dead. Most residents still have no electricity or water.

## **Friday, October 18, 2024. Please pray for**

...*safety for new converts from Islam in Somalia*. A house leader pleads: "Ask the Lord to surround our people with His angels." Somalia's population of 19 million is 99% Muslim.

...*the family of Nasir Masih in Pakistan*. Masih, who was in his 70s, was falsely accused of burning pages from the Quran. On May 25, an angry Muslim mob beat him to death.

...*courage for Christian families in Fawakher, Egypt*. After permission was granted to build a church, Muslims burned several Christian homes, killing several people.

## **Friday, October 25, 2024. Please pray for**

...*finances needed for the ministry of Shining Hope in Lebanon*. They are constructing a ministry center in order to more effectively reach Muslim refugees in the region.

...*protection for children in Tajikistan*. In most areas, children are banned from attending religious activities, except for funerals. Tajikistan's population of 10 million is 98% Muslim.

...*"leadership needs" for seven congregations of former Muslims* in northern India, including a total of 250 families. Of India's population of 1.4 billion, 211 million are Muslim.

*\*All personal names used herein are pseudonyms.*

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