



CENTRE FOR GLOBAL WITNESS AND HUMAN MIGRATION

CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY AND MISSIO AFRICANUS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

World Christianity and Mission in the Age of Migration

We are living in a time of a unique opportunity. Human migration is on a sharp rise around the world. We are in the *age of migration*. With more than 300 million international migrants in the world today, one in thirty of us is a migrant. Such a mass dispersion of people is unprecedented. In addition, the Christian faith is exploding in many parts of the world. Christian communities are growing in many countries on all continents. We are living in the *era of world Christianity*. Today, we are witnessing the dispersion of peoples—Christians and people of other faiths—back and forth among the nations of the world. They migrate with their religions. Historically, migrations have been central to the spread of religions. For many people around the world, migration itself is a religious adventure. Many migrants are Christians, but many others are people of other faiths. As potential missionaries, Christian migrants carry with them the missional gift of rich stories about God’s work among their peoples. Migrants of other faiths bring with them the gift of their humanity, allowing us to understand better how to engage other faiths in mission in the twenty-first century. They also have the possibility of engaging Christian communities and hearing the gospel wherever they migrate. Some will take the gospel back to their homelands.

Given this opportunity, it is very necessary for Christian congregations, parachurch organisations, and mission agencies to think afresh about witnessing for Christ in the age of migration. We ought to find innovative ways to reflect on the powerful connection between mission and migration.



Mission and Migration

The connection between mission and migration is not new. Two thousand years of church history offer numerous records of Christian migrants establishing communities of faith in their process of migration. Indeed, Christian migrants have been the most common and effective bearers of the witness. The current context of global migrations of Christians continues that long journey. As followers of Christ migrate, they ought to bear witness for Christ. In addition, it is also true that migrants of other faiths tend to be open to hearing the good news of Christ. Either way, migration is good for mission.

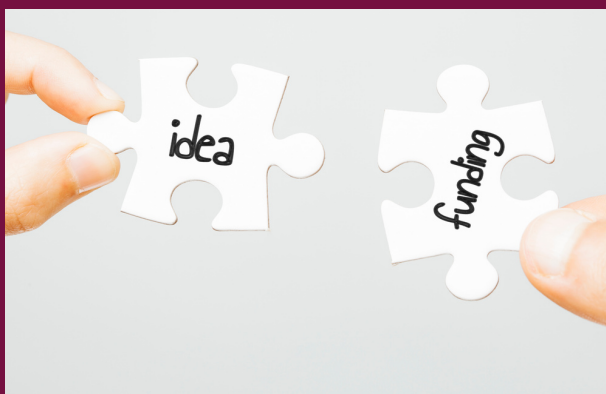
The Centre

We will gather people and share resources to equip and empower the Body of Christ to effectively bear witness for His name in the age of migration. We are committed to help Christian communities share the Good News with the migrants who come to their neighbourhoods, to empowering Christian migrants to engage in disciple-

making in their new host societies (and, some of them, in their home communities), and to the praxis of intentional disciple-making among the world's scattered communities wherever they are located. Migrants are often at the edges of society, we believe they come bearing God with them.



Funding



We are currently looking for partners to work with us. The Church Mission Society (CMS) has provided some initial funding to launch and develop the centre. We are actively exploring possible funding partnerships with other organisations and individuals who may find the vision of the Centre exciting and feel called to support us.

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Analysis

The first-of-a-kind Centre will serve Christian communities, mission agencies, and academic institutions exploring faithful missional witness in the context of unprecedented human migration in the world. It is an international, multicultural and multidisciplinary learning community, and our primary focus is the interplay between the Christian witness of the gospel and migration. It comes together as a joint project of Church Mission Society, Missio Africanus. We are looking for further partnerships. Persuaded that we live in the age of migration, and informed by the story of migration and mission in the Book of Acts, especially Acts 11, the Centre will provide resources (theological, missiological and otherwise) for Christian reflection on the day-to-day experience of human migration in the world.

The Centre has **five** key objectives:

1. To help Christian communities imagine hospitable ministry to strangers in a world where migration is on the rise.
2. To equip and empower Christian migrants for effective witness wherever they migrate.
3. To help create and curate resources for Christian communities, mission agencies, and academic institutions interested in reaching migrants around the world.
4. To research opportunities and challenges that emerge for followers of Christ in the current context of global migration.
5. To help create "Acts 11 Communities" of Christian leaders in gateway cities and migration hubs committed to the release of God's migrant people in mission.



Justification

Mission and migration belong together as two sides of a coin. Yet, they are rarely studied together. Mission studies (as a Christian subject that focuses on the expansion of the Kingdom of God) hardly converse with migration studies (which is generally taken as a secular subject exploring movements of human populations in the world). In the current era of global Christianity, with the changing dynamics in mission (e.g., the rise of non-Western missionary movements), and shifting (and intensifying) patterns of migration, it is both an opportunity and a necessity that we start new conversations that make clear connections between mission and migration, and to discuss what the current trends mean for the work of witness around the world. Understanding the link between global witness and human migration will help democratise and decolonise mission and, therefore, release the whole Body of Christ to take part in God's salvific plan for humanity.

We are, without a doubt, living in the age of migration. There is an abundance of scholarship suggesting that there are more migrants in the world today than at any other time in history. The United Nations reported that there were almost 300 million international migrants in the world in 2020. As a human phenomenon, the subject of migration has received scholarly attention, especially since the collapse of European colonialism in the mid-20th century. Hein de Haas' book entitled, *The Age of Migration* (MacMillan, 2020), among many others on the subject of migration, details how the movements of people shape the world today and will do so in many generations to come.

We recognise that migration has a religious aspect to it. Indeed, for many people around the world, migration itself is a religious experience. Yet, from Christian perspectives, this connection is still to be fully appreciated and explored.

In the discipline of missiology, we are also only beginning to realise that the global expansion of the witness of Christ depends, to a great extent, on migration. The works of such scholars as Jehu Hanciles have shown that mission history is largely a collection of stories of migrants who took their Christian faith to their new host communities (*Migration and the Making of Global Christianity*, Eerdmans, 2021). Hanciles argues, rather compellingly, that migration has been a major driving force of world Christianity, confirming his proposal that "every Christian migrant is a potential missionary."

Since the turn of the century, millions of migrants have arrived in Europe and North America from different parts of the world. Many more millions of migrants have moved within and among all the other continents. If current trends hold, many more millions will migrate in the next few decades. Some migrate as refugees seeking asylum, while others come as skilled workers or international students. Many more will migrate because of adverse climate changes. Migrants bring with them their religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and Hinduism. Those who are Christians are potential missionaries, while migrants of other faiths may actually be more receptive to the gospel. In addition, the presence among us of people of other cultures and races is a gift to us from God that helps us understand intercultural and inter-religious relations better.

The Centre will be located in the UK. For a start, the Centre will operate as a virtual space, with a physical address at Church Mission Society (CMS) in Oxford, where participants will take advantage of the Samuel Ajayi Crowther Mission Learning Library. It will offer research and practice seminars, courses, and conferences on global witness and human migration. Facing the academy, it will host the Master of Arts in Theology, Ministry, and Mission with a focus on World Christianity that CMS runs with Durham University validation. Working with congregations and mission agencies and serving the community at large, the Centre will focus on resourcing the Christian faith, discipleship and communal multicultural existence in society.

Initially, the Centre will seek to:

- be a space where the missiological implications of the emergence of world Christianity in the era of global migrations can be reflected upon by drawing together both scholarly and practitioner voices of missional leaders from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and those of the West.
- gather scholars and practitioners to articulate a theology of mission and inter-religious engagement that looks at global migration as a powerful movement of missionary Christians around the world and learns from non-Christian migrants about faithful missional engagement with other religions.
- map out key current migration patterns affecting Europe and North America and facilitate a nuanced conversation about the implications of these on our Christian faith and sense of mission.
- develop theological tools and resources for Christian engagement with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the United States, the UK, Europe, and beyond.

- carry out missiological research and reflection on diaspora ministry for migrant Christians around the world.
- be a community of learning and practice for diaspora church leaders in the UK and beyond.

Who Needs This Centre?

- Christian communities whose socio-demographic locations have been impacted by migration. Many congregations have been affected by demographic changes going on in their neighbourhoods. They realise that their ministry skills and offerings are often geared to a population that has moved on, and they have to relearn what service to their new neighbours looks like.
- Congregations that are located in high-migration areas, often uniquely gifted to share the gospel with migrants as they pass through and, therefore, need resources to help them position themselves well and understand their ministry.
- Migrant Christians and congregations seeking to find their place in the Christian landscape of their new homes. Many of them also look for ways to bear witness for Christ in their new neighbourhoods. In addition, they are often concerned about the faith of their children, second-generation migrants who live in multiple cultures.
- Mission agencies beginning to realise that mission in the context of world Christianity must involve all followers of Christ from any part of the world to any other part. These often struggle with the structural changes needed to reshape them for service when they must work with Christians from other cultures and different parts of the world.
- Mission training organisations and theological institutions exploring the subject of mission and migration.

Leadership



HARVEY KWIYANI PHD CENTRE LEADER

Dr Harvey Kwiyani is a Malawian mission theologian. He has worked in mission in Europe and North America for more than 20 years. He has taught missions, theology, and leadership courses in four continents. In his most recent role, he served as Chief Executive Officer at Global Connections in the UK (also known as the Evangelical Mission Association) while also developing and running a masters programme exploring diaspora Christianity at Church Mission Society in Oxford. Before this, he taught theology at Liverpool Hope University in Liverpool, England.

He acquired his PhD in 2012 at Luther Seminary in St Paul, Minnesota, after research aspects of the theological and missiological implications of the migration of African Christians to the United States. In 2014, he founded *Missio Africanus* as a cross-cultural mission initiative to help enable the growing numbers of migrant Christian in the West to engage in mission. He has published extensively on the subject of migration and mission. His books, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West* (Orbis, 2014), *Multicultural Kingdom* (SCM, 2020) and *Africa Bears Witness* (Langham, 2023) are among the leading resources exploring the future of mission. He blogs at harveykwiyani.substack.com where he encourages mission-minded Christians to imagine mission in a postcolonial world.