

Shalom Champions

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Urban and Global

I get asked the question often. "Why does a small urban ministry like Shalom Ministries invest its time and resources in 'overseas' mission?"

OK. Fair enough question. There are really two simple answers. First, the witness of scripture commands it. Acts 1.8 is clear and compelling: "...you will be my witness in Jerusalem, **and** in all Judea and Samaria, **and** to the ends of the earth (emphasis mine)." The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost unleashed God's Mission of all peoples everywhere in covenant fellowship with God, practicing the values of Shalom and Jubilee. Second, practical considerations fuel a linkage between urban mission and global mission. The world has become too small (globalization) and the city has become too big (urbanization) to do anything else. Urban mission today must pay attention to the globe. Global mission today must pay attention to the city. There is no way anymore to do one without spending time and resources on the other.

In the environment where Shalom Ministries does most of its work, the forces of urbanization and globalization are twin engines driving a context unlike anything the world has seen before. Globalization increases the flow of the communication of information and transportation of goods, services, and people across the globe. It is now reasonably easy, somewhat painless, and often relatively inexpensive to travel almost anywhere on the surface of the earth, and remain in touch with home through technologies like eMail and global cell phones. People across our primary constituency in the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference fly "home" to Indonesia, Nigeria, and Guatemala, sometimes with more frequency than I drive "home" to Oklahoma (much to the chagrin of my mother – but that is another story). But if globalization increases that flow of communication and transportation, then urbanization may be slowing it down. As an example, I can drive from my home in Riverside, and catch a flight at Ontario International Airport, and be in San Francisco, or Phoenix, more quickly than I can drive from my home in Riverside to Family Mennonite Church in South Los Angeles. And with the ever-increasing and ever-faster barrage of eMail, 500 channels, cell phones, IM, text messages, etc..., it takes something special to cut through the clutter (We hope Shalom Champion cuts through your communications clutter!).

The push and pull of globalization and urbanization, then, means there is something each has to offer the other in forming a holistic approach to fulfilling God's Mission. Globalization is causing many of constituents to be tethered more to the community of which they used to be a part. It is not uncommon for Nigerian churches to have missional relations and connections with local ministries in Plateau State that our larger Churchwide institutions do not know. It is not uncommon for our Indonesian congregations to be engaged in missional support and services to other Indonesian Christians across the globe. But urbanization presents clear and compelling need, right here and now. It is likely that you will find a new immigrant Anabaptist congregation in Southern California feeding the hungry and homeless; starting after-school programs for children in the community; and, sharing the story of Jesus and his love with others in their workplace, or neighborhood.

So, Shalom Ministries has tried in recent years to pay attention to the globalization of our cities. In 2003, we began to form a relationship with urban Anabaptists in the United Kingdom, who seem to be in a position to teach us the most about the blend of urbanization and globalization in the context of postmodernism and post-Christendom. And we were right to do so – this partnership has taught our team much about how to follow Jesus in the city with bold humility. We are grateful for these friendships (and to our friends in the UK, if you are up for it, we hope to have another go at it in January or February 2008...).

Beyond the learning community we have established with UK urban Anabaptists, Shalom Ministries has also created a number of additional global connections. Through Amahoro International, Shalom Ministries now has a more global expression to match the Center for Anabaptist Leadership and its more urban expression. Together, we have forged several missional partnerships:

- Shalom Ministries provides a platform for a group of scattered Anabaptists across California to support the work

of a young Asian woman who uses urban gardening as a means to launch new expressions of the Christian Way.

- Shalom Ministries provides a cluster of Southern California Brethren in Christ churches and individuals an opportunity to support the international educational ministry of Ron Freeman.
- Shalom Ministries provides the catalyst for bringing people together to support Rugaba's orphanage in Burundi.

To help us grow and learn how to better navigate this global urban environment, Shalom Ministries has worked alongside and been mentored by Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Mission Network, and Mennonite Central Committee. We have joined the North American Mission Fellowship, a regional body of the Global Mission Fellowship, made up of missional agencies from the various Mennonite World Conference denominations.

What a great challenge and privilege it is to work at discerning, aligning with, and fulfilling God's Mission that is at once global and urban. Now, more than ever, Shalom Ministries needs your prayers and encouragement to continue to see mission as both urban, and global.

Jeff Wright

President/Chief Operating Officer Shalom Ministries

We Must Be Born Again

Gang violence has once again ripped through Pasadena, this historic and iconic Crown City of the San Gabriel Valley. There have been nine murders in nine months and 20 or more assaults and stabbings, one that left the victim paralyzed. In this city of Rose Parades and beautiful craftsman homes, nestled at the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, the violent underside has reemerged. Just when we thought that gentrification had priced that element out of town, the bullets began flying and the helicopters started circling, disturbing not only our peace and quiet but also our shopping; the gangs have taken their feuds even to the upscale Paseo Colorado mall.

You'd think that all of the trendy shops and eateries, all of the latest shiny electronic gadgets, all the current fashions in clothing, would distract them from their fighting, make them think about assimilating into the rest of society so they can live the good life like the rest of us. But apparently our way of life doesn't appeal to them; they already have phat clothes and ipods, and they're doing very well in the drug business, thank you.

Meanwhile, voices throughout the city call for better parenting, community policing and more programs for youth, which, when viewed from the perspective of the larger forces at play in our society, appear as mere bandaids that we've applied before and to little effect since the malady runs much deeper than the surface. Historic and systemic causes of this mayhem go largely unexamined partly because we're tired of talking about racism and partly because the moral and spiritual harvest of a free market, capitalist empire gets virtually no play in mainstream media and culture.

We seem to be aware that consumerism and materialism daily undermine the more authentic human values that we wish our young people would somehow absorb from us. Reports often warn us of the ever greater and greater disparities of wealth and power in our society. Occasionally we are reminded of the incredible and unprecedented power that has been accumulated by the large corporations who now seem to mold just about every aspect of American life. We have even come slowly and painstakingly to the conclusion that our nation is once again mired down in a completely insane and unwinnable war for no good reason. But seldom is any of this put together to explain why disaffected young people in our beautiful city might want to gun each other down in the streets. We seem to think that our plunder of the world's resources and the wars we wage against civilian populations elsewhere should have no moral repercussions here at home.

We can play off these larger societal concerns as impractical for us to address given the very local problems right in front of us, but we will find ourselves returning over and over again to the same community forums to discuss the latest wave of violence. And there are things that we *can* do to confront the larger forces arrayed against us while also putting the necessary local programs in place. We could, for example, severely limit corporate advertising in Pasadena - on billboards, cable and elsewhere. We could ban from Pasadena corporations that profit from exploited labor or war. We could stand continuously and unequivocally against imperial war, not just with a city council resolution (and our council has refused to do even that), but also with constant parades, marches and public statements and making ourselves a sanctuary city for soldiers who refuse to deploy. We could get rid of the military recruiting centers that are positioned right across the street from our community college, beckoning the young adults from low income families to

leave their education and go kill even poorer people somewhere else. Then our real commitment to justice and peace would eventually reshape the soul of our city, and our messages of nonviolence to our young people would not ring so hollow. One city *can* do things to transform its moral core. The question is whether we have the moral and spiritual determination to make the sacrifices necessary – we would have to forgo the kind of economic prosperity that we are used to.

A society that promotes overconsumption of the earth's resources on the backs of the world's poor and then makes war against anyone who gets in the way should expect to find moral decay and violence among its youth. And a city that participates in or colludes with such behavior should not expect to be spared the same spiritual consequences. The road to spiritual transformation will not be quick and easy, but neither did our society, begun with slavery and genocide, get to this place overnight. Spiritual and moral transformation is our only hope for real and lasting change.

Jesus warned us about the boomerang effects of our choices when he declared that "the one who takes up the sword will die by the sword." He also called us to be spiritually transformed, "born again," into a society, not of violence, patriarchy and nationalism, but of love, justice and mercy. May we soon acquire the honesty to repent of our sinful collusion with the powers of evil and hear once again the Gospel of Peace that can transform our souls.

Bert Newton

Director of the Peace Center @ CAL Shalom Ministries

Upcoming Events

Shalom Ministries Board Meeting and Annual Meeting of the Corporation December 1, 2007
Concert for the Nations February 2, 2008

School for Urban Mission 2008 course offering

CAL 130

The Kingdom of God in the City seeks to engage urban practitioners in their role as God's agent for missional transformation in the city by exploring human relationships from multifaceted experiences. Special consideration will be given to the ethics of the Kingdom of God, exploring Christian responses to urban problems and tools for confronting the powers of the city. Drawing on Biblical, historical, and applied sources, students who complete the course should be able:

To clearly articulate an ethic of the Kingdom of God for the city.

To critically reflect on what a Christian response to urban problems might look like in the city.

Be better equipped to confront the powers in the city.

Instructor Valentina Satvedi

Class will meet on

January 19, 2008

February 9, 2008

March 1, 2008

March 29, 2008

April 12, 2008

Course Sessions will take place from 9 am to 5 pm on the campus of William Carey International University located at 1539 East Howard Street, Pasadena CA 91104.

Qualifying students can take these courses for credit through an arrangement with Hesston College and its Pastoral Ministries Program. Courses are taught using lectures, classroom discussion, and writing projects. **Attendance in all course sessions and completion of writing assignments in a timely manner are necessary to obtain credit.** If you wish to register for either of the courses please contact our office at (626)720-8100 or urban_anabaptist@yahoo.com

Cost for each course

Prepaid Tuition \$245.00* per course

(Prepaid tuition must be received 5 business days before the first class session)

Tuition at the door \$290.00* per course

*Includes a Hesston Transfer fee of \$45.00 per 3 unit course.

The above fees do not include the one time fee of \$50.00 charged by Hesston.

What's In a Name?

Submitted by Dr. Ron Freeman

Work locally, think globally and name universally! This statement sums up much of what naming and branding gurus have to say about choosing a name for an organization.

Since returning to the United States in June 2007, I have had many opportunities to share the story of our five year journey to Nigeria then on to Australia and the vast need that exists to facilitate synergistic mentoring and training alliances to strengthen global theological and ministry education. Each conversation provides an opportunity to outline the steps taken to create alliances between institutions and individuals with a focus on ten strategic emphases. Generally toward the end of each conversation, the question arises, "so what do you call yourself?" It is then I realize again that our name is truly important.

So what's in our name, **Synseis Alliance International**? The first word is the combination of two words. **Syn-er-gy** (sɪnˈɜr-jɪ) *n.* The interaction of two or more agents or forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects, and **Sen-sei** (sɛnˈseɪ, sɛn-sɛɪ) *n.* - *pl.* **sen-seis** Teacher(s) or mentor(s). Coupled together, these words describe the concept of synergistic mentoring that is so vital to this process.

The second word is **Al-li-ance** (ə-ˈlɪ əns) *n.* A close association of . . . groups, formed to advance common interests or causes. Strong alliances insure that the task is a shared effort, maximizing all available resources.

The final word is **In-ter-na-tion-al** (ɪnˈtɜr-nəʃ ə-nəl, -nəʃ nəl) *adj.* Of, relating to, or involving two or more nations. The trust of the work is bringing resources of theological education in the developed world to bear on the work of theological and ministry education in the developing world. *Source: The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.*

Questions or inquiries concerning the name, purpose, ten strategic emphases or your personal involvement in **SAI** should be directed to Dr. Ron Freeman at synseis@aol.com, 6654 Markley Way, Carmichael, CA 95608 or (916) 243-8852.

Tax-deductible gifts can be sent to Shalom Ministries, c/o Jeff Wright, Box CAL 1539 East Howard Street, Pasadena, CA 91104-2635 USA. Please designate your gift for "International Theological Education".

The Soil determines the Harvest

Family Mennonite Church of Los Angeles invites you to their annual Harvest service on October 28th, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. to be held at 6520 S. Normandie Avenue, Los Angeles California.

The theme this year "The soil determines the Harvest" is based on Matthew 13:3-9. All are invited to come and celebrate as they give thanks to God for all provisions and blessings.

Members of Family Mennonite would feel honored if you could participate in the service by marching up or sing-

ing in the choir. Children (ages 5-12) are invited to march up with a basket of fruits or vegetables. Youth, young adults and adults are requested to march up with a monetary offering. The dress code for sisters is full white, and for brothers is black and white with black tie.

If you wish to participate in the service do participate in the rehearsals scheduled for the next few Saturdays at 5:00 p.m.

Please RSVP Elder Frank Sutherland at (323)252-7444 by October 5th 2007.

Peace Out: The Shalom Ministries Champion Signs Off.

The Shalom Ministries Champion is a monthly venue for sharing the good news about Shalom Ministries. You are invited to submit articles for consideration to Jeff Wright. Articles should be sent no later than the 10th of the month for possible publication in the next month's newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you and wish you and yours peace. Send your submissions via email to urban_anabaptist@yahoo.com.

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