

Global Citizenship

Responsible Citizenship, Ethical Action, Redemptive Service

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Editors

Murl Dirksen and Barbara Curran

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Response to Being Global Citizens in Liberia: “Ebola is Real”

————— Carolyn Dirksen —————

When we stepped off the plane into the thick humidity, the first thing we saw was a huge sign declaring, "Ebola is Real" in red lettering on a large canister. Jet lagged and weary, we lined up behind other travelers to wash our hands in chlorine before entering the terminal. Liberia had been declared Ebola free in March, but a week before our trip in July a new outbreak was reported. Although friends and relatives had suggested that we cancel our visit, the threat of Ebola had seemed exotic and distant. Now, as the sign suggested, it seemed very real. As we bumped over the unpaved road and into the gated compound where we would spend the next ten days, it seemed even closer. The first structure we passed after entering the compound was ELWA 2 Ebola Treatment Center, a ghostly city of tents, billowing in the sea breezes, where the current patients were housed.

So, what was I doing in Liberia in the middle of an Ebola outbreak, living virtually next door to an active treatment center? I was there looking for a practical application of the rather grand notion of Global Citizenship. As the editor of Lee's Quality Enhancement Plan, I had lived with the wording of the core values and their definitions for two years. They struck close to my heart, but I was concerned about how we might communicate such high abstractions to you as students. How could we make these lofty ideas real enough to impact your thinking and orient your goals? I thought we especially needed a hands-on way of learning about "responsible citizenship in the church, the community and the world." While I was sitting in my office pondering this challenge, I received an email from an acquaintance in Liberia asking for assistance with an orphanage, a school, and a Bible institute. That seemed like the perfect answer, so here I was, in this beautiful, tragic country, exploring that possibility along with Rickie Moore and Jimmy Harper.

Liberia seemed especially right as a place where we could demonstrate the value of responsible citizenship because its history is closely intertwined with ours. Liberia was founded as an American colony for freed slaves, and several states--including Tennessee--required them to go there despite the fact that the mortality rate of those early settlers was more than 60%. Liberia became an independent nation in 1847, severing political ties with the U.S., but the language, the flag, the school system, and the constitution still reflect that historical connection. Over the nation's first century, a rigid class system developed with the descendants of the settlers at the top and the indigenous Liberians on the bottom. The social and economic separation grew so exploitive that in 1989 the country erupted in a civil war that lasted sixteen years. During that horrific struggle, most of the infrastructure was destroyed, and millions of people were displaced or killed.

The conflict ended in 1996, and transformational president Ellen Sirleaf Johnson finally had the country on the path to recovery when Ebola struck in 2012. For more than two years, the disease raged across the country, and schools and businesses were forced to close. More than 4000 people died before churches and mosques began distributing chlorine for personal sanitization and slowed the pandemic. When we arrived in the summer of 2015, the country was still staggering from the personal and economic losses of the previous two years.

As we moved through the outskirts of Monrovia, we saw both the extreme poverty and the extreme resilience of the Liberian people. Where we saw wretchedness and loss, they saw only

hope and blessing. Extreme deprivation had made them resourceful and generous rather than cautious and miserly. Their seemingly endless problems had not lessened their faith in God; their nearly miraculous survival had strengthened it. According to our definition, responsible citizenship means, in part, "to love our neighbor as ourselves by using our resources, talents, abilities, skills, passions, and energy to serve God and other people..." We have so much to learn from our Liberian neighbors; and everyday as I walked through the orphanage and met the children, talked with students at the Bible institute and met with the administrators of the K-12 school, I saw the countless ways we could use our resources, talents, abilities, skills, passions and energy to serve God by serving them. In fall 2015, we started by researching how to bring solar power to the orphanage, collecting books for the libraries, creating instructional videos for the teachers, loading laptops with instructional programs for the children and organizing a team of librarians, faculty and students to visit in May 2016. A relationship with these remarkable people can be the perfect way of operationalizing our commitment to responsible citizenship.

Drinking from the Wells of Our Religious Partners in Foreign Lands

————— Edley Moodley —————

In the summer of 1994 I was waiting for my connecting flight to the U.S. from Rome's Leonardo da Vinci International Airport, then one of the busiest airports in Europe. I had a two-hour layover, so I thought I'd redeem the time by catching up on a new issue of *Missionalia*, the missions journal from the South African Missiological Society. No sooner had I begun reading than three Muslim men came over to sit across from me. After we exchanged pleasantries, the conversation moved to our respective professions. When they learned that my field of study was religion and Christian theology, the conversation quickly gravitated to the major stumbling block between Christians and Muslims: the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in history and world religions. My exuberance and enthusiasm for staking out the Christian claim—the claim that Jesus was the only way to God—stemmed from my understanding that despite some broad ethical similarities and some points of convergence between our respective faiths, the fundamental theological differences can never be reconciled. In my sincerity to articulate truth regarding the person and the salvific work of Jesus Christ, I lost sight of the fact that they too possessed their version of truth as it is contained in their sacred text, the Qur'an. Given that, for most cultures around the world, religion is integral to the fabric of a society, my approach to our dialogue on religion appeared to be insensitive, harsh, inhospitable, and not consistent with the Jesus way. I wished at that moment that I could reshape the discussion. I wished there was a way I could begin all over again and listen with empathy and understanding, respecting the claims of these devout men.

Almost as if by divine intervention, one of the three men reminded the others that it was approaching the noon hour and time for their midday prayers. They asked if I would watch their luggage while they went to pray. I consented, and off they went, each tucking his prayer mat under his arm. In this airport concourse with human traffic so dense in confined space, and what with a cacophony of human voices sounding like a drone of bees on a hot summer's day, I wondered if they would ever find a convenient place to pray without distraction. To my utter surprise they went over to the side of a ticketing counter, found their position—facing east—, laid out their prayer mats and began to perform their midday ritual. For these three Islamic men all the criteria for fulfilling one of the Five Pillars of Islam were met in a moment: the sincere desire to pray, to call on Allah at the mandated time, to pray facing Mecca, and to complete the formal ritualistic prayer under any circumstance or situation. Who would have thought that secular or profane space would transform into the sacred by the rolling out of a prayer mat in a very public airport concourse? In Religious Studies we call this symbolic act a hierophany—the breakthrough of the sacred or supernatural into the world. How was it possible that three men could become oblivious to their surroundings, shut out the world for fifteen minutes in one of the busiest terminals in the world, and pray?

Their utter devotion, unfeigned spirituality, and unabashed expression of faith prodded my conscience not only to find ways to initiate dialogue with these men on issues of faith and God, but also to see these men as pious individuals, created in the image and likeness of God, authentically seeking a relationship with Allah through the ritual act of prayer. I searched for what we call in our discipline a redemptive analogy so that I could begin a conversation with these men on a human level as one religious person to another. A redemptive analogy is an element within a culture that anticipates some aspect of the Christian gospel. We believe that a

given culture has some story, ritual, or tradition that can be used to both illustrate and apply the Christian gospel message. Redemptive analogies are attempts to contextualize the gospel and Bible message into forms that are true to scripture and appropriate to the worldview and culture of an indigenous group of people. The redemptive analogy for me at this moment was being enacted before my very eyes. Here were three Muslim men making a public profession of their faith through the very act of prayer. I could now jump-start the discussion on common ground because consistent with the three Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) is the act of prayer.

To my mind one of the best examples of interreligious dialogue in the Bible is the encounter Jesus had with the unnamed Samaritan woman at the well in John chapter 4. A careful reading of the passage will reveal the insurmountable differences between Jesus and the Samaritan woman—cultural, religious, geographical, ethnic and gender. Beyond these differences there was the question of her moral character. Despite these differences, Jesus found common ground by asking the woman for a drink of water. The redemptive analogy for Jesus in this encounter was water. The chapter reveals how skilful a discussant Jesus was. He showed respect for the Samaritan woman—respect that she did not receive from her own community. Jesus displayed tolerance, understanding, and interest regarding her point of view and brand of religion. While Jesus drank from the well of his religious counterpart, he was nonetheless very clear regarding the water of eternal life he offered her—water that would quench her spiritual hunger. From the conclusion of this narrative in John chapter 4, we learn that the Samaritan woman is thoroughly converted and becomes a follower of Christ.

In similar vein, the best known of cross-cultural workers in the New Testament after Jesus is the Apostle Paul. The book of Acts is replete with cross-cultural case studies out of Paul's missionary exploits. A classic example of interreligious interaction is Paul's encounter with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in the Areopagus at Mars Hill (Acts 17). Paul spent some time exploring the city of Athens while he waited for Silas and Timothy to join him there. Athens boasted an impressive array of Greek treasures—art, poetry, drama and lively philosophical and religious conversations. Paul learned all he could about Athenian culture, religion, beliefs and practices, and way of life. He discerned that the Athenians were a deeply religious people, worshipping a variety of gods, and among them he saw an altar with the inscription, "To an Unknown God." Thus, when the occasion presented itself to preach a sermon, Paul was able to tell the gospel story through his redemptive analogy, the altar to the "unknown god" (Acts 17:23). We are told that Paul was invited to return to continue the conversation while some chose to follow him having been convinced by his preaching.

While I was not as successful in convincing these three devout Muslims that Jesus is the only way to God, I firmly believe that we identified some commonalities between our faith traditions—the building blocks for further conversations regarding the Christian faith and the uniqueness of Jesus. In retrospect, I believe that I would have been a more effective cross-cultural worker and advocate for the cause of Christ had I heeded the admonition of the missionary statesman Max Warren: "Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on man's dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival."

Global Citizenship and the Painful Gift of Intercultural Interaction

David Broersma

Among other things, the religions of the world attempt to answer basic questions: what was the original state of the world? What went wrong? And what can make things right again? They come up with vastly different answers to these questions. The biblical perspective is that God in three persons created the world, and it was a spectacular performance. Everything he made was good. Things went wrong when sin entered the world and corrupted everything. It is made right again because a savior, who is God himself, came into the world and redeemed it by sacrificing himself in place of a sinful creation.

We are currently living in an in-between stage where the kingdom of God has been inaugurated, but it has not reached its final conclusion yet. So we can be redeemed by the work of Christ, but we still live in a fallen world, where sin continues to warp, kill, and destroy. This reality leads us to another unique aspect of the Christian perspective: we are called to action. Most religions in the world encourage their followers to accept things as they are, either killing any desire for something better or accepting fate as the hand of God. Christianity says that the world is broken, but every individual is God's work of art created to heal the brokenness in unique ways (Eph. 2:10). We understand that there is sin and injustice in the world, but we are not supposed to be indifferent to it. We are supposed to bring the love of God into the equation and undo the damage.

When we talk about global citizenship at Lee, we are hopeful that as a result of the redeeming work of Christ, students who receive an education will be equipped to go out into the entire world and fully express the image of God by bringing healing and reconciliation. The core of global citizenship is humility. People all over the world deal with the consequences of injustice, poverty, and terror, and they need understanding. We need to learn from them if we are going to have a full appreciation of what it means to be human and how we can help alleviate the suffering of others.

I remember walking down a busy sidewalk in Belo Horizonte, Brazil in 1983. I was working with a dentist who was doing dental work for orphans there, and we had taken a break to go to the center of town. I was talking and not paying careful attention to where I was going, and at the very last second, I realized that I was about to trample someone who was begging on the sidewalk. He had not been visible to me because he had no legs, and he was upright on his torso begging. I managed to avoid stepping on him, but the suddenness of being confronted by someone with such a frightening disability made a powerful impression on me. As I reflected on the incident, I began to be troubled by questions I couldn't answer. I was embarrassed by the realization of how relatively comfortable and trouble-free my life had been up to that point, and I questioned many of the assumptions I had held about life. Why did this man have to suffer such a miserable existence when others did not? I felt guilty about the fact that I had seen this man so unexpectedly that I was not prepared to hand him any money, and because of the crowded sidewalk, I could not get back to him.

The story did not end there. When I returned to the place we were staying, I shared the experience with my hosts, and it turned out that they had spoken with this man on numerous occasions when they were doing evangelism in the city. The man had been a victim of great

cruelty as a child when he was mutilated to make him look more pathetic, but at that moment, he made a good living from his begging and had a large house in a nice neighborhood. He had explained to my hosts that the shock factor of people almost stepping on him increased the amount of money that people gave him.

I mention this episode, even though it is still a somewhat painful memory, because it is an example of the benefit of cross-cultural experience. This cross-cultural experience helped me to understand at a deeper level how rich my life had been both in terms of material comforts and in terms of being part of a loving family. I saw that the experience of most of the rest of the world was much crueler than I knew. This led me to understand that I had done nothing to deserve the blessings in my life, and it stimulated me to want to do something that would lessen the suffering of others. I needed more gratitude and compassion.

It also taught me that the sufferings of others are more complex than I realized. The man begging on the street had been cruelly abused by others. But, he had also used that disability to play on the sympathies of others and become wealthy while pretending to be destitute.

To understand fully the beauty and diversity of God's creation, we need to interact with people who are very different from ourselves, and when we do that, we also discover the deep pain that people have endured. A recognition of the value of human beings created in the image of God and an awareness of the ugly consequences of sin on all of humanity should motivate us to do what we can to bring Christ's love to others. In my case, it resulted in working for 17 years in Christian education projects in Moscow, Russia and now teaching at Lee.

Lessons Learned

————— Patricia McClung —————

Keep the Awe and Wonder - Lesson # 1

I applied for my first passport when I was 16 years old and set off on what was to become a life-long journey to parts unknown.

My first trip was to Sweden with a group from my church. None of us had left the United Kingdom before and the kind of ignorance, that can only be bliss, enveloped us all. We made many cultural faux pas. Yet, what I remember so vividly was the awe and wonder of that trip. It was my first time to eat at a smorgasbord on a large ferry ship, my first time to drink Swedish coffee and eat European pastries, to see the winter sun set across the Baltic Sea, and to hear spiritual songs sung in another language. You can tell, that for me, these are vivid memories. I can still smell the wonderful aromas, taste the delicious food, and see and feel the smiles of people of like faith.

Those first feelings of awe and wonder when in another culture have remained with and are valued, by me, above all else.

Strangers are Friends too - Lesson # 2

I was in my early 20's when for six weeks I visited my sister in the Democratic Republic of Congo. On my way home I flew from the southern city of Lubumbashi to the capital of Kinshasa. The plane was very small and I was the only woman on the flight. There were four scheduled stops along the way. At our first stop, about mid-morning, we landed on the grass airstrip and were told to get off the plane. The plane was to be used by a government minister and we would all have to wait until it returned.

There were no amenities except a bar where men were getting rather drunk. In fact, there were only two rather small buildings in sight. Given the circumstances that surrounded me, I was afraid. I sat on my case in the baking hot sun for about two hours. Then from one of the distant buildings, a tall, beautiful Congolese girl came walking towards me. I spoke no Kiluba and she spoke no English, but she motioned for me to follow. She escorted me into one of the buildings and gave me some water. I smiled at her and she smiled at me. I understood that I was to stay with her until the plane returned. Late that evening the plane came back and everyone boarded. As I climbed the steps I thanked her profusely and I wanted to hug her for her kindness. She did not understand me, but in that moment I realized an unspoken bond between us, and that traveling involves a certain level of trust in people you have never seen before and will never see again – a stranger, but without doubt, a friend.

Goat is not Lamb – Lesson # 3

Traveling to Albania with a group of 8 students from Lee was one of my most unusual experiences. The unexpected was the norm and we never knew what might happen from one day to the next. As is often the case, there was some apprehension, even fear, on the part of some students because of the total differences involved in every situation. We ate in a local café in a remote Muslim mountain village—every day we had a small salad, potatoes, and roast lamb. At

least we thought it was lamb. On leaving the café one day, we saw, sprawled across the top of a car, a large dead goat, tongue hanging out and entrails plopping on to the floor. We realized we had been eating goat all the while—not bad, just different.

But it was in this place we had one of our most unusual opportunities. A local Muslim man invited us to his home for tea. There, lying on a low sofa was a woman in much pain. She was quietly moaning while all eleven of us sat gingerly on the floor drinking tea. My husband asked if we could pray for her and through an interpreter they assented. We all prayed and then quietly left. Outside we all looked at each other in amazement at this God-given event. The very next day we had a message via some form of local telegraph that the woman was much better and would not need to be hospitalized. We do not know the impact of that occasion but my motif tells me that there are other sheep coming into Christ's fold and that on occasions we have the honor to play a small part in that prospect.

Your Life will Forever be Changed - Lesson # 4

Traveling many times to Ukraine with groups of Lee students has changed me forever. It is an affinity with two groups of people that are singular and uncommon. I have been to Ukraine many times but I recount here, an experience from my first visit.

It was just after the fall of Communism and the vestiges of a system that had oppressed people were still very evident: poverty, lack of essential goods, empty shelves, and longing faces. One evening, Lee students were eating with their host families and consequently, my husband, daughter, and I searched for a restaurant to eat our evening meal. We found one and were seated to eat. No one else was in there. No one else came in for the whole two hours we were present, because in all truth, very few people could afford to eat there.

I can hear it now... the haunting strains of the sole violinist who came to entertain us that night. Those old Ukrainian and Russian songs caused tears to well up in my eyes. The pain and pathos of a whole nation that had suffered so much was encapsulated in those melodies.

“I have so much and they have so little,” I thought. Yet, who left the restaurant that night with more gain? We paid our measly, yet almost unheard of sum of fifteen dollars for the food. They were delighted with that money and showed disbelief at the tip. However, it was us who had acquired the most, I think—a new view, a *weltanschauung* of appreciation, forever changed.

To Whom Much is Given Much is Required – Lesson # 5

My university motto was *Noblesse Oblige*. This phrase encompasses the idea that privilege brings responsibility or that if we are given much we owe it to society to pay back. I cannot think of many other privileges that outweigh the benefit of traveling abroad.

This concept was exemplified for me when we took almost 30 Lee students to Egypt. We landed in ancient Cairo and from then on the experience was one of extreme difference and yet, oddly enough, a feeling of unique sameness. We saw the poor and the rich, privilege and deprivation, Islam and Christianity. We went to some of the most notable wonders of the world, the pyramids at Giza, the Great Sphinx, the library at Alexandria, and to so many more ancient places that took our breath away. We caught the train to southern Egypt and sailed lazily back along the River Nile. It does not get much better than that! In addition, we traveled by night through the Sinai

desert. There, by moonlight, we could see the strange shapes of the mountains and rocks reflected against the sand as we journeyed on to St. Catherine's Monastery. The next night we set out to climb or ride a camel up to Mt. Sinai. Joining thousands of pilgrims, we watched the sunrise over that hallowed place. Each person spent a short while praying for friends, family, and the challenges of the world. What a fantastic trip!

On our return, I read everyone's reflective journal about their time in Egypt. Of course, the aspects I have recounted above were included and people's favorite experiences were noted. Nevertheless, the most often and most important incidents mentioned were ones I have not highlighted and these were the visits to schools and orphanages. EVERY journal revealed the impact of the visit to the orphanage at Garbage City. The sentiment of all participants was that this interaction with the small, the weak, and the vulnerable called and still calls us to a life of serving others.

In that orphanage on that day holding a tiny, abandoned, and even runny-nosed baby showed us how much we have been given but most of all how much we should give back.

Homesick, Yet Always Home – Lesson # 6

I have been to many places in the world mostly with students from Lee University. I have loved every country from Egypt to Cambodia and from Paris to St Petersburg, Russia.

The last time I was in the country of my birth, England, we took Lee students to the many places I visited as a child. Students would ask me if I was homesick for those places. I have thought about this question and realize that I am so fortunate to be homesick for many places in the world.

What does it mean for me and for you to travel to parts unknown, to feel homesick at times yet to always be at home? It is a call to see oneself as an "other," to identify with all humanity, and to grasp the possibility of engaging as citizen wherever we go or work.

Re-Learning the Art of Citizenship

Matthew Melton

“Are you Matthew Melton?”

There was something urgently compelling about the slender Latino stranger who had me by the arm.

“Yes, I am,” I responded, mystified. How did this man know me?

“I’ve been looking for you. I need your help with a primary school in Cali, Colombia. Someone mentioned your name. Do you speak Spanish?”

“A little, but...”

“That’s no problem. Can we find a time to talk?”

I was a junior education major. The last thing I wanted was an education degree, but circumstances had dropped me into it and I thought I would just go ahead and finish it out. I needed a place to do my student teaching. And the thought of doing it abroad really intrigued me. The stranger was a pastor from Bolivia who had settled in Cali to complete his life’s work of building a church, a school, a clinic and other benevolent ventures. After several conversations, I ended up with a ticket to Cali, Colombia in South America to begin the fall of that year in their elementary school.

Before that trip I saw myself as a slick, cosmopolitan intellectual. I had taken a couple of six-city tours to the four corners of the continental United States as part of a music ensemble. I had spent two-weeks in the Holy Land, including side trips to Amman, Jordan and Amsterdam, Netherlands. I had taken a one-day missions trip to Torreon, Mexico.

The trip to Torreon in northern Mexico was my first introduction to a culture vastly different from my own. And it shook me. Even though the trip lasted only a few hours (I was in a quartet flown in to sing for a regional evangelical pastors meeting), I came away with a profound sense of confusion, asking my journal, “Why such squalor?” The Salvation Army building where we met was “decrepit.” “Dirty, happy little children played in the dusty little courtyard. A dachshund, with sad, bloodshot eyes, wandered around freely, once or twice popping its head through the curtain that served as a door to the assembly room where we met. The room was lit by the glassless windows through which sunlight streamed, hindered only by a few rags posing as curtains.”

At 21 years of age and a product of red-blooded American capitalism, I couldn’t wrap my mind around the relative happiness of the people, their seeming blindness to their need and the lack of initiative to change—heady stuff for a three-hour tour. From the bastion of my limited experience, I wrote in superior tones, “I pity the Mexicans. My heart reaches out to them. I told God I would share their poverty if I could somehow help them open their eyes to a greater vision.”

Little did I know, writing in early June of that year, that by late August I would be debarking from a plane in Cali, Colombia, going down stairs brought to the side of the aircraft as though I had stepped into a 1960s movie. Cali, the “salsa capital of the world” was a much more cultured and advanced city than Torreon—on the surface. Nearly a third of its 1.5 million people lived (and still live) in destitute conditions (shacks, lean-tos and cardboard housing) in parts of the city controlled largely by criminal gangs. And hundreds of cripples, mentally disadvantaged and homeless roam the streets, begging their bread.

Back to the school: I discovered that it had been slightly overbilled. While it had technically existed for a few years, these had not been successful. To my complete surprise, I was asked to help build a primary school pretty much from scratch. This meant securing lumber, assembling and painting furniture, lining up educational materials, even training the staff of six from my meager storehouse of knowledge!

Those were some of the most intense months of my life. By May, I weighed all of 105 lbs., but what I lost in body mass I gained in the knowledge of an entirely different kind of citizenship. No civics lesson at home had prepared me for life elsewhere. One day, running an errand with a doctor friend, I saw a crowd gathered around a man lying by the side of the road. My notion of citizenship was to feel pity mingled with curiosity but to drive on past. Plenty of people there already, right? My doctor friend slammed the car to a halt and got out to see what was going on. As it turned out, the person on the side of the road was a young, homeless man recently arrived from another city. A car had struck him by accident then sped off, leaving him lying. My friend examined the victim for injuries that proved to be light. Instructing the poor man to stay put, we ran over to the nearest pharmacy, bought some painkillers and returned, giving them to the man, who thanked us without asking for anything else but to be on his way. This very human encounter outside my comfort zone marked the beginning of a big change in me.

Before I came home, my idea of what it means to be a citizen was pretty much dismantled. I learned that as Christians we are not merely citizens of one nation. As proud as many of us are of our nationality, this is not meant to define either our identity or our actions in the world beyond. Christians are citizens without boundaries, without cultural prejudices that prohibit them from being salt, light and, in some cases, painkillers to those in need. In my case, I had no money, not even a few cents to rub together to help. But I had gifts and knowledge granted by my hard-earned college education. They seemed a very small thing to give at the time. But guess what? Decades later, Colegio Ekklesia in Cali, Colombia is still flourishing.

In *Gentle Action*, E. David Peat lays out several helpful points as we approach the notion of citizenship in the borderless context I am talking about. I’d like to leave a few with you¹:

- We all need to take more personal responsibility for what is going on around us.
- We must give more attention to the ethical and moral dimensions of the decisions we make and the public and private actions we take
- We have an obligation to the rest of the world and to a responsibility for the future.

- Even when we focus on our local community, we should never forget we are part of a global community.
- Most importantly – Each person can do something truly significant with only a tiny action.

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¹ F. David Peat. *Gentle Action: Bringing Creative Change to a Turbulent World*. Pari, Italy: Pari Publishing Sas, 2008, pp. 168-169.

Let's Make Music Together

Mark Bailey

Life teaches us many lessons. Each step we make along the path that God leads us on is filled with surprises and unexpected occurrences. In a way, this is how I have come to understand the importance of what can be gained by guiding students into learning through experiencing other cultures.

In 1989, I was asked to come and start the process of building the instrumental music program at Lee College. Instrumental ensembles were not really a part of the culture that, at that time, was Lee. In reality, I was searching for what would work. The band at Lee did not do ministry in churches, so that was where I started. When that was successful, I decided to do what several of the choral ensembles has done the past, which was to go overseas to do the same thing that we did in churches here in the United States. My first trip with the Symphonic Band was more of a vacation trip to the Bahamas, rewarding students for supporting the program. The emphasis of this particular trip was to do a few church services and have a good time. In reflection, I decided that it fell very short of what this type of trip could mean for my students, and more importantly, what it could mean for the people of the different nations that we might visit over the years.

For our next trip, I spent a great deal of time planning with Stephen Mohammed, the national overseer for Trinidad and Tobago. We intentionally spent as much time as we could with the people of Trinidad. Most importantly, a great deal of preparation went into how the music would be presented to the people and “their participation with us” in the musical services. I quickly came to realize that music is an extremely effective way that cultures can communicate with one another; some say that it is a “universal language”. I have come to agree with a leading philosopher on music and education, Bennett Remer, who states that music is a means of “communicating feeling, emotions, and meanings that language cannot begin to express”. As a young associate professor, I began to see that this was a very powerful realization for both my students and those we were attempting to minister to. This experience led me to develop a blueprint for the many missions and Global Perspectives trips we have made over the last 25 years to Guatemala, Brazil, Mexico, the Amazon River Basin, Jordan, Israel, Botswana, South Africa, Cuba, China, Hungary, Croatia, and Serbia. First, I make every attempt to help my students understand that people are important and in order to provide service to them, their churches and institutions of learning, we must understand who they are. Next, we go to understand the music of that culture and how we might learn from them and, most importantly, unite the countries musical styles and idioms with our music. This is a powerful way that different cultures can begin communicating with one another, even when there are difficult language barriers. Finally, we are committed to share the love of Christ with them. When I say this, it is not an attempt for them to understand God’s love through our Western cultures and traditions. We share this love through our showing respect, love and compassion in providing some type of service that will benefit them even after we leave. In this way, we share our talents—our music—in a way that is meaningful to them.

On all of our various trips through the years, we have taken part in many unique experiences and worked with people of very diverse cultures. In Botswana, we taught young students beginning instrumental instruction on various instruments. The first song that they performed was a favorite chorus which they utilized in their worship services. In Jordan, we gave instructions to young

Arab middle and high school students at the largest Christian school in the Middle East and performed concerts with them. In Bethlehem, we ministered with the Bethlehem Bible College Choir as they sang their favorite worship songs in Arabic. Transcribing this music was an interesting challenge, because they read right to left. In Brazil, we had the opportunity of accompanying a large choir singing The Holy City and the Hallelujah Chorus in Portuguese. In the Amazon River Basin, we performed concerts on the shores of the Amazon River that were only accessible by boat. One of Carolyn Dirksen's favorite pictures is of students from Symphonic Band ferrying our instruments on a small fishing boat to where we would be performing. While in Cuba, we were able to bring instruments and supplies to the National Band of Cuba and to young Christian instrumentalists who had no other way to obtain these things. It was amazing to see the tears in the eyes of these musicians, as we were able to make possible for them the thing that they absolutely love to do: make music. In China, we did parade marching. In Central Europe, we performed "flash mob" concerts in city square areas that enabled us to share our musical culture and learn about the Hungarian people's particular love for Classical music. The ministers in Hungary used these opportunities to share Christ with their own local people.

My students have been enriched musically by these experiences. In Cuba, they were humbled by the talents possessed by students and other musicians who performed with great ability on instruments far inferior to our own. We were able to hear possibly the finest a cappella ensemble in the world, *Exulde*, rehearse and perform. In Jordan, we heard outstanding musicians perform at their National Conservatory. Several of our percussion students bought and brought back Arabic *darabuka*'s, a type of Arabic drum, and spent time notating the different rhythms that the musicians in the conservatory played. In turn, the Jordanian students were very interested in our music and the way we went about making it. The sharing of musical styles was very important in Cuba. There we prepared music from the library of the National Band of Cuba for our Spring Concert in 2011, which was conducted by Mosies Hernandez, the National Band of Cuba conductor. Then, the National Band rehearsed several of our pieces in joint rehearsals during our Global Perspectives trip to Cuba in June of 2011. In all of these experiences, music was the basis of communicating across cultures and providing ways for us, as people, to understand one another.

By approaching our trips in this way, doors have been opened that allow us to do "true ministry" to the peoples and cultures we encounter. These people all seem to understand that we want to know who they are and what is important to them. Our approach is not to communicate that we know everything, but to help our new friends understand the compositions and make and appreciate music alongside of them. In my opinion, these have been some of the most powerful experiences that I have been able to offer instrumental students at Lee University. Several have decided to devote their lives as missionaries as a result of these trips. Allison Norton was a part of our trip to Botswana in 2001, and today is completing her doctorate in intercultural studies at Fuller Theological seminary, wanting to devote her life to ministry in Africa. Allison Sherwood is transcribing worship lyrics and helping new Christians compose music that will minister to individuals in the northern regions of Egypt. As an aural culture, the only way to reach the peoples of this area is through authentic music in their own cultural style.

On several of these trips, we have seen people accept Christ as Savior. I believe our success in ministry has been because of the approach to "globally connect with others". The opportunity presented to you as a student at Lee University to "Go Global" can truly transform your life.

Many students from the Symphonic Band have taken part in one of our cross-cultural trips, and they can tell you how impactful these experiences are. Their lives were impacted and changed simply because they dared to step out of their comfort zones and learn about someone from a culture vastly different from their own. They saw the world from a different perspective, but from a perspective that still deeply loved and valued a passion for music. While at Lee, take the plunge: Go Global and become Global Citizens.

“Akwaaba”: Redemptive Service in Northern Ghana

————— Wayne Solomon —————

Probably the most comfortable temperatures in the arid northeast of Ghana occur when the rain falls, and fall it did as I sat on the porch of the guest house awaiting transportation to the airport some two hours away. Northern Ghana is somewhat uncharted territory in terms of Christian witness. Less than two percent of the population has heard of Jesus and His love. Rev. Edward Brome and I had ventured into that region with the names of two contacts and a couple of suitcases. In one of our bags were ten “Talking Bibles”—MP3 devices that contained an audio version of the entire New Testament in the Hausa language. Our mission was to reach the Hausas.

Hausas are a large tribe whose settlements stretch across Ghana, Burkina Faso, Togo, Nigeria and other parts of West Africa. They are agriculturalists and pastoralists. Though numerous Hausas are Muslims, for the most part they are traditionalists. Traditional African religions vary from tribe to tribe, but there are some common threads that form the fabric of the belief system. Traditionalists believe in the High God, the gods and the ancestors. Their devotees engage in sacrifices, feasts, ritual dances, prayers, and the like directed to these supernatural entities. The Hausas also use magic, divination and witchcraft.

Pastor Brome and I had entered a world that was foreign to us, but we immediately fell in love with the people. Their warm, bright smiles lit up their alabaster-colored faces. Their keen interest in what we had to say and their obvious hunger for God caught our attention and fueled our passion to see them converted. Our strategy was simple—show them that we cared and then tell them about Jesus. We hired an SUV and a driver and went to the local markets. We bought lots of rice, beans, canned sardines, mackerel, and used-clothing in bags that needed sorting, and then off we went to Binaba.

Binaba is a rural village in the Bawku West District of the Upper East Region in Northern Ghana. Little round houses with thatched roofs lined the streets of the village. Women with tiny babies in wrap-pouches on their backs scurried from place to place, water buckets and bundles of sticks for firewood in tow to cook the evening’s dinner. It was a different world and we stuck out like sore thumbs.

Our hosts were charming. Their home was simple, with dirt floors and dirt walls, a silo for harvested grain and beans, a small pen for goats to the left of the home’s entrance, and another on the right for sheep and a few chickens that darted off as we walked by. The simplicity with which these people lived fascinated me. They were truly kind and happy; they had so little, but they gave so much. They provided us with a meal of rice and chicken, and we ate. There were no fineries, no chairs or table, no silverware, no napkins... just loving service in a humble setting.

Binaba was so safe; no one would steal from you there. Items left on the ground would be left alone until their owners retrieved them. Very few people spoke English, so we “goofed off” with them, speaking to them in English and observing their facial expressions, listening to their responses in Hausa. The nuances in their body language and words let us know that they had accepted us. In Ghana people say “Akwaaba”, translated “Welcome”, and welcome is what we felt. In fact, the welcoming rituals got to be a little too much when I realized that a Hausa woman

had her eyes on me. “I’m married,” I said in English, but I don’t think she understood me, so she kept on flirting (I guess in Binaba rings on the left hand ring finger do not hold the same meaning that they do in America).

We set up a makeshift medical clinic in Binaba and a physician assistant did medical screening for blood pressure, diabetes, malaria and fungus. He also attended to cuts and wounds and dispensed drugs for worms, etc. The medical team reported that the people were quite healthy. Next we assembled a group of people who sorted clothing, portioned out rice and made up packages containing beans, sardines and the bagged rice. People from the area and surrounding villages showed up and the supplies and services were happily received. Women walked away with their babies on their backs and the packages of food and clothing we supplied on their heads. After a few days of ministering to their physical needs, the Hausas felt comfortable enough to listen to what we had to say. They came out by the hundreds and arrived early each night to hear what we had to say. There were no chairs, so they sat on the ground and we preached the gospel. Hundreds gave their lives to Christ and turned away from the worship of idols and the rituals that their ancestors had practiced for thousands of years. This was truly a defining moment in the history of that village.

Last July I made another visit to Binaba while I was on a trip to Wa in northwest Ghana. The little village was still bustling with human and donkey traffic, now with the addition of the motorcycle and occasional car plodding down the dirt roads. At their Sunday morning worship service, some 1,300 people had assembled, and I was so blessed to learn that all who were present had converted and no longer bowed down to idols. These people now served the True and Living God. My heart was warmed as I recalled my first trip there. In that moment, I breathed a silent prayer for the Waala who are still living in the darkness.

The Waala are a part of a group of some 187,000 people that live in several towns and villages in and around Wa in northwestern Ghana, near the Burkina Faso border. The Waala are Sunni Muslims. They are peaceful and kind-hearted, and are described as an unreached people group. Wa is a busy city with crowded streets and beautiful buildings. In May of this year (2016), Lee University Students will work among the Waala, collecting ethnographic data and distributing food, clothing, and Bibles. These students will present the gospel in the public schools and on the streets of Wa as well as support two doctors and two nurses with medical services. Students in the fields of nursing, music, sociology, education, ministry, information technology, and communications, among others, are expected to travel with us to serve the Waala. Redemptive Service is at the heart of this trip.

When we consider service, we must remember that Christ’s generous and sacrificial love drew the humble people of first-century Palestine into the orbit of God’s redemptive plan. Their hearts were inflamed by His glorious, amazing, unmatched love, and as they listened to His voice around the sunny hillsides of Galilee, they cared about what He knew because they knew that He cared. Today He is still saying to whosoever will listen, “Akwaaba”.