



ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

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Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin

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Editor: Jim Harries, PhD, Chairman of the AVM



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The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission encourages some missionaries from the West to engage in their ministries using local languages and resources.

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- UK conference planned for December 2019, title:

Title: **Missionaries: aliens, providers, or fellow travellers?**

Strapline: Should the majority world be the target of patronage from rich missionaries?

Any potential speakers please write to me at jim@vulnerablemission.org



- To be held at All Nations Christian College, Ware, Herts, UK. Sunday 8th December 2019 5 pm, to Wednesday 11th December 2019, 1 pm. (*see call for papers below*).

- Jim’s recent article, published in Global Missiology, is entitled: [‘Africa’s Metaphors are Essential to its Functioning and Identity: ignore them at your peril.’](#) (*Globalmissiology*, April 2019, 4570 words).

Here’s a taster: “Secular, Western development interventions in Africa have largely failed to change Africa much for the better because they have, first, failed to engage the metaphors by which Africans perceive life; and, second, not supplied alternative metaphors which Africans find compelling. Outside interventions have failed to engage African metaphors because of a bias against their “unscientific” (spiritual, theological) nature. The bias is not against the metaphors themselves but against watered-down translations of them, which are straw men easily demolished. That bias prevents the West from taking the metaphors seriously enough to engage them in their own languages, process them in dialogue with biblical metaphors, and collaborate with Africa for the compelling, reformulated, genuinely African metaphors that can not only help lead Africa toward understanding itself, but free the West from its biased secularism toward a more Christ-centred, way of life.”



- [The Inside Edge \(May 2019\)](#)

“As I reflect on 20 years of living in Asia, attempting to engage deeply there while also embracing my roots and myriad connections in the West, the Easter story helps me make sense of the world ...” shares Cathy.

- The first of our articles from the 2018 UK conference has just gone to press, in a peer review journal. Jim Harries' article is entitled: '[Essential Alternative to Contemporary Missionary Training: for the sake of vulnerability to the majority world \(Africa\).](#)' *Transformation*, 00(0), 1-14. (OnlineFirst).

Abstract: "When the only advice on offer is unhelpful, a potential missionary might need to be advised to seek for an alternative. Jesus, we take it, was not building a worldly-empire (John 18:36). Christian mission has become associated with colonialism. Dominant advice often pushes Western missionaries to positions of strength. In order to be vulnerable, one needs an alternative to such advice. Economic domination of Africa by the West makes it hard to know when Africa's people, long engrossed in patron / client relationships, are not talking for power. Use of English to describe Africa leads to massive false imputing of Western histories onto African societies. A little linguistic wisdom exposes the naivety of many contemporary understandings of the acumen of translation."

(For a copy of the accepted version of the article, for free, see [here](#).)



- **Towards a North American AVM Network**

The AVM (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission) is 12 years old. To date, it operates as a 'global' alliance. Some of us want to strengthen the specifically American-component. The AVM advocates that some Western missionaries should carry out their ministries in the majority world using local languages and resources.



The NAMS (North American Missions Ship) is off course. To change the course of NAMS – to reconceive and reconfigure NAMS as something other than an old-style ocean liner that won't turn at a hurricane never mind on a sixpence – will take a lot of work, beginning and continuing with a lot of prayer. A few of us since mid-2018 have been talking about creating a website as a place for AVM-minded people in North America to interact with. Then we need to act. We've made some preliminary decisions, written a few things for the website, reserved a

domain name. Our first need is prayer. We also need more AVM-minded people who will contribute their knowledge, energy and vision to changing the course of NAMS. If you are one of those American people, please write to me at the email address below.

Fred Lewis

Member of the AVM (global) Executive Board

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Call for papers

2019 Conference: Missionaries: aliens, providers, or fellow travellers?

Submit abstracts asap to

jms@vulnerablemission.org

Location: All Nations Christian College, Ware, Herts, UK.

Dates / times Sunday 8th December 5 pm to Wednesday 11th December 1 pm.

Should the majority world be the target of patronage from rich missionaries?

Outline paragraph: Outside Christian workers who build on foreign presuppositions in work amongst indigenous communities can, especially when foreign funded and using outside languages, be interpreted as riding roughshod over indigenous sensibilities. True empowerment of local people requires getting alongside them. This necessitates vulnerability to their position and context. Such vulnerability can best be achieved if one shares the Gospel using indigenous languages utilising local resources.

We will be discussing issues such as:

Practicalities and ramifications of use of indigenous languages by Western missionaries.

How does translation into an indigenous language (and from an indigenous language) affect the fronting of the gospel and of missionary work in general?

While finances are needed for mission work, how can one ensure that finances do not dominate one's mission work?

What are the good practices that ensure a missionary's vulnerability to local context(s)?

How to engage in mission without exuding (excessive) power.

Organisation structures that enable vulnerability on the side of Western missionaries on the ground.

Helping Churches who want to engage directly in mission cross culturally to avoid pitfalls of power.

Tentmaking and business as mission models that leave the Westerner vulnerable: How can the commercial world be used to engage in mission without promoting 'evils' of capitalism?

When the uneven spread of wealth is itself an injustice, how can one use one's surplus to enact global justice.

How do we utilise all global media channels to promote vulnerability in our missionary endeavour?

Is vulnerability the key to contextualisation?

Theology traditionally draws strongly on metaphor. In the majority world, local metaphors are unfamiliar to the West. How can one then engage theology interculturally?

When politics and 'religion' are not separate categories, missionaries need to be careful not to get bogged down in unanticipated conflicts. Is miracle a post-enlightenment category? Is 'magic' simply a normal prerequisite of human social existence. What does this imply for cross cultural missionary engagement?

Is introduction of outside technology implicitly exploitative and enslaving? Or is it liberating? How does technology impact vulnerable

mission: positive, negative, releasing, enslaving?

How can Global-localisation be a springboard for liberable mission?

When short-term mission has become poverty-tourism intended to adorn facebook with images of charity – what is the way forward?

Can Westerners relate to non-Western missionaries without dominating them?

While the bible is God's inspired book, are Western curriculum?

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