

Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin
October 2009

Dr. Jay Gary I would like to formally accept Dr. Jay Gary's request to move from the executive board to the advisory board of AVM. This change arises from a rise in responsibilities connected with his new position at Regent University. I hope to be able to announce a new executive board member in the next Bulletin. We give thanks to Jay for his innovative, well thought out and prayerful leadership that helped to guide the AVM, amongst other things, through its inaugural conferences earlier this year.

Prayer Requested Howard Foltz, head of AIMS (<http://www.aims.org/>) who attended the Colorado Springs conference January this year would appreciate prayers as he has been in and out of hospital in recent months with various complaints including pneumonia. These details were shared with me by Christina Compton a few days ago:

"Currently, he had gone back into the hospital last Saturday because he had come down with pneumonia. He's been in the hospital since. He is hoping to come home sometime today. He's still very weak due to all the weight he's lost over the past couple months. The biggest prayer request right now is that his appetite will increase. His body really needs for him to eat to replenish lost nutrients and to regain strength so his body can then begin to heal properly from the two major surgeries he's had over the past couple months."

Review of: Grigg, Viv, 2004. *Companion to the Poor: Christ in the urban slums*. (Revised Edition.) Milton Keynes: Authentic Media

Viv Grigg's personal story is here presented in a form that is also a manual for potential missionaries intending to work amongst the poor of the Third World, more specifically urban areas in Asia. Grigg draws on long-term grassroots experience in Manila (the Philippines) to derive principles of Christian mission that are much more widely applicable.

As I read, I rejoiced because many of the insights, that we are attempting to promote under the banner of the AVM, have already been in print under Viv's name since 1984 (the date of the first edition of this book). Much that Grigg describes have also been my own experiences. I agree wholeheartedly with many of Grigg's insights:

"Missionaries of different nationalities need to walk together in forgiving love" (54). Grigg did not agree with a friend who told him that "the inefficiency of a lifestyle of poverty would hinder [his] ministry"! (58).

Grigg advocates that a Western missionary should be bicultural, and should not cut off ties with their own people: "To help the poor, it is reasonable for us to oscillate back into a wealthier lifestyle at times." (62).

He points out that aid programmes should not form our entry points into Third World communities (103).

Regarding discouragement he writes: "the constant failure that is a normal part of my ministry and of culture shock continued" (121).

He conceded that developing written Bible study materials was 'wasting his time', because the local culture was not one of reading and study (145).

The poverty he met became “a drumbeat beating in [his] head day after day” that impelled him into “long hours of discipline and constant work” wrestling with the issues he met (154).

Although he acknowledges a place for ‘projects’, he very clearly sees the danger that such could distract a missionary from the role of expounding the Scriptures; “dreams create work, so it is wise not to have too many” suggests Grigg! (160).

Grigg makes statement such as “living luxuriously in the midst of poverty is a denial of justice” (88), which seem to be condemning of much conventional missionary practice. But he does not follow through and emphasise such sentiments. His writing shows that he is left with some open-ends. He does not claim to have all the answers. Near the end of his book, Grigg talks about his establishing of a new mission movement called “Urban Leadership Foundation”. Many of the requirements he mentions for missionaries to join this would be recommended by AVM. It seems a shame that he confined his vision to the urban poor of Asia, as many of his insights seem to be much more widely applicable. In my view, Grigg would find the material that we have on vulnerable mission principles challenging.

Dambisa Moyo (Zambia) and James Shikwati (Kenya) are both hitting the international headlines by representing those African people who are critical of the aid machine that is feeding Africa. Please look them up through google or some other search engine to find out more of what they have to say, on a topic very closely related to a key AVM theme.

Tim Reeves together with the leaders of NCBC (Norwich Central Baptist Church, UK) are seeking to put together some material that promotes vulnerable mission principles for use in regular church contexts.

It seems that a more fundamental challenge than that of enhancing material conditions (the latter being the default challenge of most missions) is that of at first comprehending a very perplexing culture, a culture almost incommensurable with respect to the standards of own culture. This seems to be the crux of the matter ...

Tim wrote in reference to mission work in Africa in an email on 7th September 2010. Please contact him directly (tvreeves@yahoo.co.uk) or through pearl (go to <http://lists.vulnerablemission.com/listinfo.cgi/pearl-vulnerablemission.com/> to join) to discuss this further.

Jim Harries
Chairman
Alliance for Vulnerable Mission