



# GLOBAL TRENDS RESEARCH ANALYSIS 2009

# Global Trends Analysis

Every ten years, First Fruit makes a careful analysis of major global trends and their impact on our world, to give context to our future grantmaking. After interviewing over 100 leaders in academia, policy, business, NGOs and Christian ministry, we have selected ten trends and five undercurrents which we think will most significantly influence the coming years. We have defined **trends** as important global shifts that will endure for a number of years. **Undercurrents** underlie all of the trends and, in fact, are what drive them. They are long-term, wide-ranging and largely empirically provable.

## TEN TRENDS FOR THE COMING YEARS

### 1. **Growth in Islam and Christianity**

Both Islam and Christianity will continue to see rapid but uneven growth. Islam's growth will be fueled by high birth rates in some traditionally Muslim countries, coupled with immigration to Europe and aggressive expansion in other regions. Christianity will grow in the Global South, primarily driven by Pentecostalism and indigenous missions movements. Conflicts will intensify between these two major religions in many parts of the world.

*Implications for the Global Church:* The Church's challenge can be summed up as learning how to love one's Muslim neighbor in the name of Christ while seeking respect and reciprocity. Both Islam and Christianity will face challenges from the tendency to see the other as a monolith. Both will have trouble offsetting extremism and theological shallowness from within. Conflict management and peacemaking initiatives will be needed, as will increased levels of advocacy and dialogue on the issue of religious freedom. Wisdom will need to be exercised when attempting to relate to Islamic communities that aspire to political power. Ultimately, the eternal mandate of presenting the gospel and making disciples cannot be lost, even if entailing great risk and cost, but it should be done in loving and culturally appropriate ways. An ecclesiology that recaptures the concept of brotherhood can have great appeal, especially to younger, disenfranchised Muslims. Miracles, visions and dreams are common experiences among Muslims whom God is calling to become followers of Jesus; hence, the Church should be prepared to address these phenomena with openness, sensitivity and Biblical grounding.

### 2. **Prominence of the Global South Church**

The West no longer will be the territorial center of Christianity. The rapidly-growing Global South Church will increasingly critique Western approaches, develop its own theologies based on issues such as persecution, poverty and suffering, and in turn will reinvigorate the global Church towards a return to orthodoxy. Indigenous mission movements will use new and creative ways to build structures and raise funds from non-Western sources as the middle class grows within its largely Pentecostal churches. There will be some shifting from Western models in leadership development. More emphasis will be placed on practical, hands-on, and competency-based training and less emphasis on formal theological and graduate-level programs.

*Implications for the Global Church:* Local institutions, organizations, and initiatives need to be strengthened. Centers of excellence should be established which analyze and empower local, holistic models of leadership, management, discipleship and community engagement. Theological institutions should be encouraged to remain consistent with their cultural contexts to enable truly indigenous thinking and produce orthodox, original theologians. Funders have the opportunity to encourage the dissemination of Global South writings to bring out the richness of the whole Church. The spread of the "prosperity gospel" remains a serious concern.

### 3. **Destabilizing Youth Cohorts**

In parts of the developing world, a high proportion of young people relative to the population can be destabilizing, particularly where this generation will be faced with a lack of educational and

employment opportunities, high-density urban communities, gender imbalance, overwhelmed governments and communal tensions. Many will be disenchanted with traditional institutions and religious practice and will be susceptible to ideologies, militias, radicalization and crime. Mass communication will further fuel disillusionment, licentious sexual practices, and a “tyranny-of-the-now” global youth culture, as young people become more aware of what is happening around the world and are able to connect with one another with ease. Many will seek out new opportunities through immigration to areas of better prosperity and openness – a potentially troubling trend to ageing populations in the West and Japan.

*Implications for the Global Church:* There is a crying need for role models for youth, from elders and peers. Traditional structures, often bound by the culture of an older generation, are seldom appealing to younger generations. By dealing with institutionalized issues of hierarchy, the Church could empower youth to get involved, take initiative at a much younger age, and offer fresh thinking to aging organizations. This can lead to forms of worship and practice that are relevant and engaging across generations. The Church can equip youth to become prepared for all spheres of society by providing discipleship and leadership training, recognizing the practical need for employment and livelihood, and developing and practicing an “integral theology” through education and skills training. It will take an openness to significant change while not losing a biblical center.

#### **4. Increase in Women and Children At-Risk**

Poverty, war, ethnic conflict, massive migrations and environmental strains will contribute to a significant rise in and increased awareness of women and children at-risk of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced labor, and displacement. Globalization, inexpensive travel, porous borders, and high rates of corruption will contribute to an ease of trafficking women and children across countries and regions. At-risk women and children will continue to experience a greater hazard of HIV, malaria, tuberculosis, and other global pandemics, causing many deaths and major social and economic disruption. The number of children orphaned by AIDS, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, will continue to swell.

*Implications for the Global Church:* This is an issue of social justice and mercy – legitimate expressions of the Church’s mission. The Church should be a strong advocate for the vulnerable and the powerless, as it has so often in history. Educational disparities between girls and boys lead to women becoming trapped in dependency and therefore more vulnerable and should be rectified. Poor theologies regarding the role of women have left them susceptible to cultural or systemic expressions of power and control. Churches, which are frequently comprised mostly of women, should consider whether they are doing enough to prepare, equip, and provide opportunities for women and treat them as having equal biblical value to men. Economic empowerment of women through tools such as microfinance can be furthered. Sharing best practices on how best to engage children at-risk can increase the effectiveness of programs and lead to better child-oriented discipleship materials. The consequences of 20 years of AIDS orphans will need to be carefully considered, requiring funders to aggressively look for creative, positive models for caring for orphans.

#### **5. Renewed Vision for Societal Relevance by Evangelicals and Pentecostals<sup>1</sup>**

A rediscovery is in process of both a more integrated theology and a trend toward social ministry in two of the largest and fastest growing blocks of global Christianity – Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism. They will progressively see themselves as a part of civil society and be willing to work in partnerships with government and secular development initiatives. Church networks will provide infrastructure for disseminating knowledge, resources, and services. Pragmatists within international development circles may increasingly see the religious community as allies or sources of help on many issues. Christian higher education will be reshaped by practical demands for societal relevance. The “Christian agenda” will broaden to include social justice, environmental concerns, and help for those less fortunate.

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions vary on the terms “Evangelical” and “Pentecostal.” Many actually consider Pentecostalism to be a subset of Evangelicalism. For the purposes of this document, we have chosen to acknowledge both terms in order to be comprehensive.

*Implications for the Global Church:* A renewed energy can emerge from the Church as it immerses itself in the realities of its surrounding communities and environment. This should lead to effective models for engagement, as well as to widespread sharing of best practices. In the process new ways will develop for reflecting a more holistic theology and discipling believers into community and public service. Commonalities, unity and partnership can be discovered between different faith traditions as well as with secular organizations and governments, and this could lead to the Church becoming more attractive to its surrounding communities and better perceived by secular society. The Church, however, will need to guard against syncretism by humbly and carefully maintaining the primacy of evangelism and sound doctrine.

#### 6. **Rise of Radicalism and Grassroots Religious Persecution**

A continuing rise in radicalism, especially in failed states, will be a consequence of disillusionment and anger over lack of economic opportunities and of ideologies that emphasize ethnic, tribal and religious differences. Religious persecution in predominantly Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim areas will be more grassroots, localized, and at times, government-tolerated. Radical Islam will intensify, become more lethal, be challenging to control, and remain a security threat that spans a generation. Meanwhile, some parts of the Muslim world will liberalize, modernize, and secularize, creating tensions within Muslim circles. Over time, Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups may face declining support due to a lack of compelling vision.

*Implications for the Global Church:* Christ's call is higher than mere tolerance – it is to show love and respect in a logic and language that is understood. Following Christ's teaching to be peacemakers would call for appealing to common values and reducing antagonistic rhetoric. The Church has the opportunity to set an example in respect-based diplomacy. It can advocate to governments to allow for a plurality of ideas and create legislation that expands the "center". It can promote local protection and enforcement of religious freedom while fighting against the passage of laws that restrict it. Global South missionaries, especially those of a proximate culture, can be empowered to go where radicalism prevails, while conducting missions in a way that seeks to understand and respect the local cultures. Those suffering religious persecution will also need solidarity, aid, advocacy, prayer, and the dissemination of accurate information about their plight.

#### 7. **Changing Philanthropy**

Private channels of giving to the developing world come in the form of philanthropy, investments, and remittances sent home by migrants working abroad. In the coming years these sources of funds will outpace government aid even further than today. They will increasingly bypass the conventional institutional aid architecture, and will move more toward direct engagement with indigenous talent and institutions. Lines of communication with Global South partners will shorten, but the vetting and evaluating of these partnerships will prove challenging to the donor. Monetary aid will be accompanied by an increase in donated labor, creative energy and social capital. Additional innovative uses of technology such as with social networking will be developed to mobilize and engage donors and volunteers. Western philanthropy will be results-oriented to a greater extent, often pragmatically focusing on evidence-based methods and outcomes.

*Implications for the Global Church:* Generosity is a basic Christian value, despite economic ebbs and flows or potential changes in tax laws in the West. Striking a balance between seeking results versus relationship and valuing the tangible and the intangible – i.e., treating giving as more than a transaction – will lessen the divide between the Global South and North. The language and categories of accountancy or the ambiguously spiritual are not adequate for philanthropy, nor are timeframes for evaluation that do not allow for long-term processes of change. Both openness and caution are merited when engaging in cooperative efforts with government and secular development agencies. New emerging models that are effective should be continuously researched and shared.

#### 8. **Technology Moves Power to the "Edges"**

The Web is the great equalizer, allowing power to move from the center to the edges, which will lead to a melting down of centralized institutions and traditional bonds. Communication and social

networking tools that are progressively less costly, more mobile, and constantly enhanced will allow people movements to emerge that can threaten centralized authority. Lack of accessibility to technology remains an issue in some places.

*Implications for the Global Church:* God created us as relational beings and technology notwithstanding, fostering meaningful and supportive relationships in community has never been more important. The Church has unprecedented opportunities to enhance social connectivity, influence right social action, and extend its evangelism and discipleship efforts by utilizing these rapidly emerging technologies. New possibilities will exist to employ aggressive strategies to reach people broadly or in a pinpointed way through technology. This will allow continued and expanded communication into difficult to access countries or people groups. It will be important that new models are researched, vetted for effectiveness, and best practices are shared broadly. More than ever, Global South partners can and should participate in these wide-reaching conversations as equals.

#### 9. **Cultural Hybridization, Trend toward Religious Nominalism**

There will be multiple modernities. Each region will adapt through their own cultural expressions ideas of what it means to be modern. Globalization will be counterbalanced by a localization of identity and community. Modernity will be expressed differently across generational lines. One common face, however, will be materialism and a move towards religious nominalism. Traditional religious institutions will be eroded. Developed nations will see a growing worldliness in their religious congregations. Some developing nations will follow the same trend, as modernization leads people to lose a living sense of the supernatural.

*Implications for the Global Church:* The Church's greatest challenge in this area may well be to interpret culture in light of the Gospel rather than reading the Gospel in light of culture. Diversity not secularization is to be celebrated. Our Christian distinctives should remain unambiguous. We are to be relevant but not relativistic, proclaim absolute truth, and provide a contrast for people who are hungry for a Kingdom reality. The need for investments in leadership development has never been clearer.

#### 10. **Non-Readers on the Rise**

Populations of predominantly illiterate, semi-literate and traditionally oral learning peoples will increase due to high birth rates in many communities. Continued challenges in providing universal access to basic education for the poor, socially marginalized, and women, will dictate that oral-based methods be the primary means of disseminating information to many people. Modern communication itself is contributing to a growing population of inattentive- and non-readers – undermining words, books and reading. The internet generation will approach learning in vastly different ways and will challenge conventional methods of education.

*Implications for the Global Church:* The Bible is replete with the most extraordinary collection of stories to help communicate its message. The Church should rediscover how to make better use of story-based communication – whether spoken, in images, or in text. Reaching oral communities with the gospel will require media-based approaches and grassroots training for repeatable storytelling. The use of broadcast media will grow more pervasive, making the task of evangelism easier, but the work of discipleship more challenging. With less expertise behind an increasing flow of information, people will become increasingly inattentive to any single source. The Church has the opportunity to provide a vital filter for the overload of information by offering relevant theological critique and communicating with substance, truth, and clarity.

# Five Undercurrents

1. **Shifts in Identity.** Mass immigration, global communication, regionalism, and the fragmentation, and even failure, of states are bringing about a pluralization of identities and communities within states. There is a resurgence of tribalism and identification with religious factions. Identity conflicts are, and will remain, the most important source of international violence and war in the world.
2. **Increases in Connectivity and Interconnectedness.** Fueled by breathtaking technological advancement, previously disparate pockets of the world are more linked and related to one another – politically, economically, and socially – than ever before. The cost of technological tools of connection is declining – making them largely accessible even in the developing world – while functionality expands. Many people though will remain locally disconnected. They may be more or less aware of being left out of the benefits of globalization while still being affected by some of its hazards.
3. **Changes in Population.** The scale and pace of urbanization promises to continue at a spectacularly rapid rate. For example, in 20 years, China's cities will have added 350 million people and hit the one billion urban mark by 2030. The number of people living in megacities will double to 400 million from 2005 to 2015. Global population is growing, but will level off within a few decades; depopulation is already proceeding in many of the developed nations. "Youth bulges" will persist in many developing countries.
4. **Move Away from Single-State Dominance.** The US hegemony is increasingly being challenged, along with the principles of free trade and democracy associated with it. China has emerged as a global superpower and the world's third-largest economy. India, China, Brazil, Russia and other rapidly developing economies are leading an accelerated realignment of global trade, although the global economic crisis has put some of their development at risk. Oil producing states still wield staggering amounts of capital, giving them increased influence on the global stage. Non-state actors – businesses, tribes, religious organizations and even criminal networks – will influence decisions on a widening range of social, economic and political issues. There is no single vision for a "better future."
5. **Strains to Natural Resources and the Environment.** By 2015 nearly half the world's population will live in countries that are "water-stressed" – mostly in Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and northern China. Despite the overall adequacy of food, problems of distribution, availability and price will remain. Large-scale migrations and conflicts will be among the consequences. The depletion of basic resources will reach crisis levels among the poor in areas where population is dense, growth rates are rapid, food security is threatened, and/or water supply is stressed. Increasingly intense land use will cause significant degradation of arable land and loss of tropical forests. Global economic growth and population increases, particularly in developing countries, will drive a 35 – 45 percent increase in demand for energy by 2030. Air quality will continue to deteriorate in burgeoning urban areas, which, along with other forms of pollution, will exacerbate community health issues. Calls to the international community to take action against a warming climate will mount.

## Additional Resources

*Century of the City: No Time to Lose.* Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson with Farley Peters. The Rockefeller Foundation. 2009.

"World Energy Outlook 2008," International Energy Agency.

"The Outlook for Energy: A View to 2030," ExxonMobil.

*The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable Concept.* Nassim Nicholas Taleb. Random House. 2007.

*Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World.* U.S. National Intelligence Council. US Government Printing Office. November 2008.

*The World Is Flat.* Thomas Friedman, Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 2005.

*Preparing for China's Urban Billion.* McKinsey Global Institute, February 2009.

*Fewer.* Ben Wattenberg. Ivan R. Dee. 2004.

"Daily Brief" and Global Stress Point Matrix™. [Oxford Analytica](#), 2009.

*The Millennium Development Goals Report.* United Nations, 2008.

# Background and Methods

*"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

Matthew 22:36-40

First Fruit has attempted every decade to characterize the most significant global trends that give context and shape to the future strategies of our foundation. The process of gathering input has entailed formal and informal interviews as well as referencing key secondary sources of information. This is our third time conducting this exercise – first in the late '80s, then in the late '90s, and now.

## **Theological Introduction: How Does Our Faith Inform This Process?**<sup>i</sup>

God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to save those who believe in Him. He is the King who has introduced and will ultimately fully establish His Kingdom. In this time of "already but not yet," we are faced with the effects of the structures of sin. We want to bring the best analysis we have to offer to discern and characterize what we are observing in this fallen world and what we anticipate for the medium-term future.

We acknowledge our finite understanding. The world is full of paradoxes. Only God knows His full plan, but His word reveals that part of His plan is to have His Church be evangelists – agents of blessing, positive change and transformation for our world. Observable trends may change over time, but God's clear pattern is to demonstrate His sovereignty over the whole world through the work of the Holy Spirit in order to glorify Himself. In humility and submission to God's purposes, we aspire to have this trends analysis help us intelligently and wisely steward our resources in order to love our neighbors and our world.

## **What Purposes Does This Process Serve?**

We see a three-fold purpose in researching global trends:

1. The process of listening to myriad trusted and knowledgeable sources becomes a dynamic educational opportunity for First Fruit staff and Board, which helps to shape our future work.
2. Not everyone sees the world the same. We are all influenced (even if unwittingly) by who we choose to listen to, what ideological biases we might have, and even our personal sense of optimism or pessimism. Much like a "statement of faith" helps external audiences identify alignment or lack of alignment with us, our Top Trends become a type of position statement.
3. These trends represent a synthesis of some of the best understanding of future directions by a host of global thinkers. The process entails a large investment of time. We don't want it to only serve us. We want to make it widely available to others to the extent that others find it useful for their own work and ministries.

## **Is This Process Offering Anything Distinctive?**

There is no shortage of publications in circulation that offer some version of a megatrends analysis. Much of it derives from extensive research and scholarship. The forms vary from sophisticated risk analysis to scenario planning to educated prognostication. We are not attempting to reinvent the wheel. What we feel is unique is:

- A *breadth and diversity* of sources
  - Over the course of our thirty-three year history, First Fruit has made over 2,000 grants in more than 100 countries. We selected 104 individuals to interview who represent a very broad cross-section of the world
  - We actively sought to hear from leaders of the Majority World, women, and the younger generation
  - Input was gathered from both secular perspectives as well as the vast global network of Evangelicals and Pentecostals, from both scholars and field practitioners, cutting across multiple disciplines
- An emphasis on *first-hand interviews*, seeking the view of a multiplicity of counselors, capturing the "voice" of the experts



- A *pragmatic orientation*, which we hope will help us change directions where called for, and will lead us to innovation and increased relevance in our granting
- An analytic frame that is inclusive of *theological critique* and which regards *religious and social developments* as significant
- Theses that should remain *accurate, relevant and durable for an extended period*

#### Acknowledged Risks

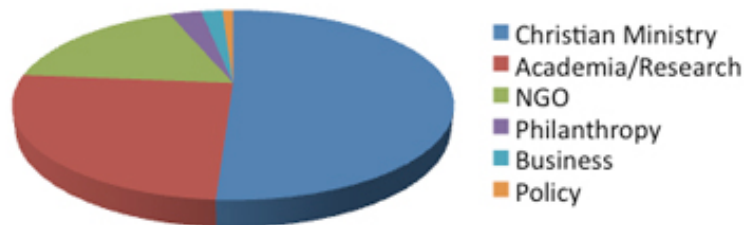
- The vast majority of the interviews were conducted in the first three quarters of 2008, before two major world events occurred – the global financial crisis and the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States.
- Large-impact, hard-to-predict and rare events of the future (something akin to, say, the 9/11 terrorist attacks) could have massive impact in shaping the future course of our world.
- Our interviewee pool and secondary sources were confined almost exclusively to English speakers.
- The rapid pace of global change may cause some of the trends to have a shorter durable lifespan than we had anticipated.

#### Profile of Interviewee Pool

The **Global Trends** research and analysis gave us the great enrichment of interacting with godly, committed men and women from around the world who had deep experience and knowledge from which we could learn. During the last year, we interacted with over a hundred leaders through formal interviews, as well as informal discussions during staff travel and meetings. These interviews were the primary source for our trends research.

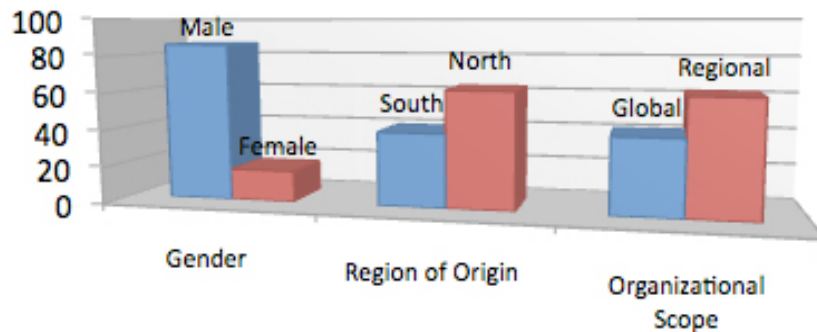
From the start we recognized that quality research on Global Trends required a diverse pool of contributors; thus we intentionally sought counselors that represented varied fields, cultures, and thought. In the end, all of our primary sources were people of Christian faith although the range of backgrounds included Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, and Pentecostals. The sectors from which the interviewees came also represented a broad range, with about half of them being from Christian ministries and another quarter coming from research/academic settings.

**Figure 1: By Sector**



Global South leaders represented about 40% of our interviewees. We desired to hear from a substantial number of female leaders; since most evangelical leaders at the global and regional level are men, however, we found it challenging to achieve a better female representation (17 of 104). Over 40% of those interviewed were involved in leadership at global organizations vs. 60% regional leaders.

**Figure 2: Other Characteristics**



Another possible shortcoming was a relatively small proportion of younger leaders, i.e., leaders in their 20's and 30's (only 4 of 104). We also did not track the age of the organizations represented by our interviewers to assess whether a bias existed between more established or newer perspectives. Roughly 10% of those interviewed held an official position in a global network like WEA or Lausanne.

### **Advisory Group**

On January 11-13, 2009, we gathered a small group of trusted, thoughtful and globally-minded advisors to help us:

- Review the main theses that have emerged from the body of research
- Test these theses for relevance, accuracy, sharpness of wording, and nuancing
- Discuss the implications of these theses, both in general as well as specific to the Church worldwide
- Consider audiences to whom these Trends could be disseminated and shared as well as the best methods for doing so

The participants were:

- Daniel Bourdanne, General Secretary of the [International Fellowship of Evangelical Students](#) (IFES)
- Richard Howell, General Secretary of the [Evangelical Fellowship of India](#) (EFI)
- Doug McConnell, Dean of the [School of Intercultural Studies](#) at Fuller Theological Seminary
- Jane Overstreet, President/CEO of [Development Associates International](#) (DAI)
- Paul Park, Executive Director of [First Fruit](#)
- Chris Seiple, President of the [Institute of Global Engagement](#) (IGE)
- David Young, founder of [Oxford Analytica](#) (via teleconference)

### **First Fruit Board**

Throughout the process, the members of the First Fruit Board provided ongoing advisory, vetting and editorial input. They were the final arbiters of what trends made the list.

<sup>1</sup> Additional Bible references: John 3:16; Genesis 12; Luke 4:16-21; 7:18-23; 9:1-2; 10:1-9; Matthew 6:33; 25:31 – 46; 28:18 – 20; Acts 1:1-8; 4:32-35; Ephesians 4:10-13; 5:23-30; 1 Peter 2:9; Proverbs 14:31; 19:17; James 2:15 – 16; 1 John 3:17 – 18; Mark 10:45; 2 Peter 3:12, Revelation 7:9; Genesis 2:15, Romans 8:19