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ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

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# Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin December 2021 Volume 13, Number 12

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Guest Editor: Dr Nick Henwood, UK Board member of the AVM

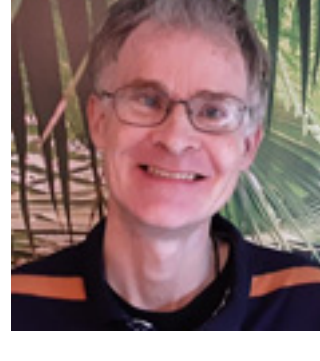


Exec board	UK / Europe board	Advisory Board
Jim Harries	Andy Dipper	Chris Flanders
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The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission encourages some missionaries from the West to engage in their ministries using local languages and resources.



Please suggest contributions to this Bulletin to [info@vulnerablemission.org](mailto:info@vulnerablemission.org)  
 This month's contents:  
 Join goodreads  
 Upcoming AVM Webinar - Gerrit van Dijk  
 Jim Harries' Lecture for the Canadian Institute of Linguistics  
 Raising Up Good Stewards: by Joseph William Black  
 Language confusion in Borneo, Peter Varney



### A note from Nick Henwood, guest editor for the December 2021 Newsletter.

A good start for being vulnerable in whatever sphere of life we walk in is a read of Matthew Ch 5 v. 1-11.  
 The traits I see there are all beautiful, and none of them wear clomping shoes. They speak into my role as a medical doctor in Leicester, UK. I expect they speak into your role - as you seek to live vulnerably where you are.  
 My God bless you in your working that out.  
 This month I am pulling together Vulnerable Mission related items - many sent to me by Jim Harries. Please send in items for the bulletin to share with our AVM family.  
 Nick.

..ooOoo..



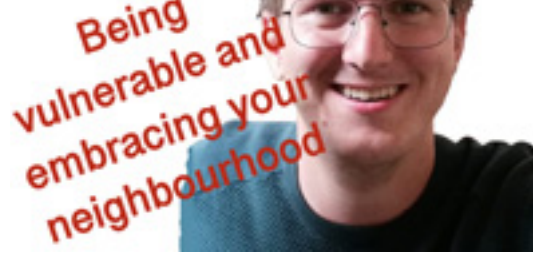
### Can you recommend books about Vulnerable Mission for other fellow travelers to read?

goodreads is a great place to share your suggestions.

Join our brand new VM group here:

<https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/1175542-alliance-for-vulnerable-mission#:~:text=SHARE-THIS-GROUP>

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### New to Vulnerable Mission? Or wanting to link up with others exploring Vulnerable Mission?

Join us at our next quarterly 2-hour **AVM webinar**.

**When:** Thursday 20th Jan 2022

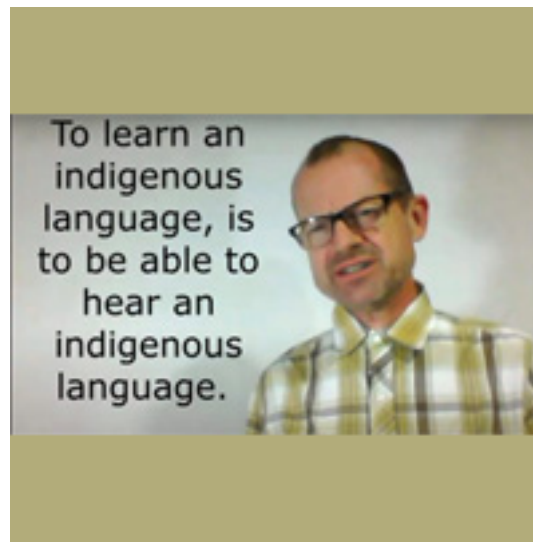
**Time:** 14:00 GMT(London Time).

**Speaker:** Gerrit van Dijk from the Netherlands

**Topic:** Being vulnerable and embracing your neighbourhood: Church planting in a challenging post-socialist, post-modern workers area in North-East Germany

Sign up [here](#) for free: We will send you a Zoom link.

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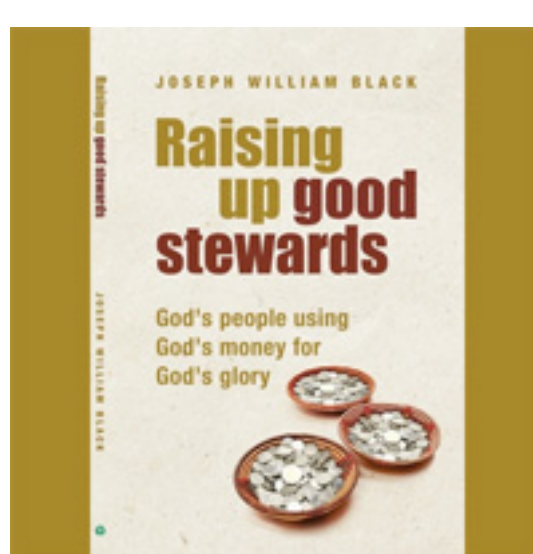
### 'Vulnerable Mission' (use of local languages and resources) in implementation of Bible Translation. Viable?

Lecture by Jim Harries for the Canadian Institute of Linguistics, Vancouver, Canada, 4.11.21.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T909Rw4jo-w>

Q&A - <https://vulnerablemission.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/canil-seminar-4.11.21-Questions-about-vulnerable-mission-1.pdf>

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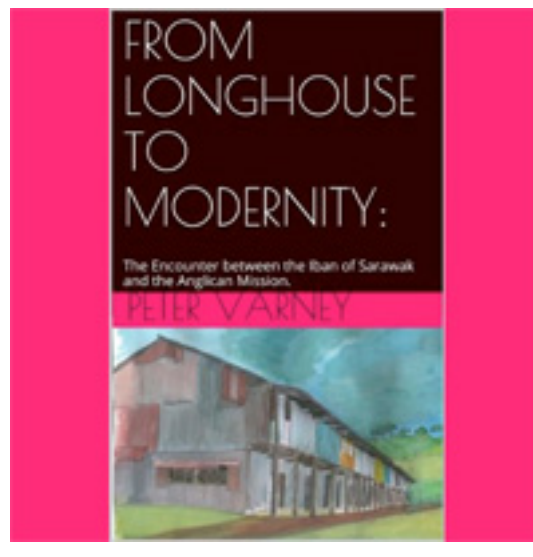


### Raising Up Good Stewards: God's People Using God's Money For God's Glory by Joseph William Black.

Jesus taught about money as an integral part of discipleship, and the early church practiced what he taught. If we took Jesus seriously in asking him how he would like us to handle his resources, we would see a totally transformed church and society.

[https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/58934593-raising-up-good-stewards?from\\_search=true&from\\_srp=true&qid=f5joReQNXp&rank=1](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/58934593-raising-up-good-stewards?from_search=true&from_srp=true&qid=f5joReQNXp&rank=1)

..ooOoo..



### I'm using a word, you're saying the same sound, but we mean quite different things. The understanding of spirit / holy spirit and soul by Bornean Christians has depended on what the missionaries thought the words meant in English, rather than in the local languages.

Peter Varney, AVM member in Norwich, UK forwarded this fascinating article to us.

A note about the understanding of 'spirit' and 'soul' by Iban Christians in Borneo.

Peter Varney, former chair of the Borneo Mission Association.

When the 19th century missionaries to Borneo began to translate the gospels they soon appreciated that the English words spirit, Holy Spirit and soul were important concepts that they needed to convey to their new converts.

Iban, the language of the largest indigenous Dayak people, already used a word with a Semitic/Arabic root, *roh*, which the missionaries used to translate spirit,

The Iban word in Anthony Richard's 'An Iban-English Dictionary' (1981) means 'quickening spirit of life', which would make its use compatible with the Christian meaning. *Alkudus*, the Iban word for holy, was added to translate 'Holy Spirit'.

With some explanation these Iban words could be readily accepted by Iban converts in Christian contexts.

What became more difficult was the translation of soul. This was because the precise difference in meaning of the two words spirit and soul was not clear to the missionaries, although as we will see the Iban words do have distinctly different meanings.

The word for soul, *semengat*, has a much longer entry in Richards, covering all the meanings used in Iban rituals, especially at death. Many of the ways the Iban understand *semengat* are not compatible with Christian teaching. This has rarely if ever been explained to Iban Christians, who largely adhere to the original meanings of *sebayan*, rather than the meanings imposed by Christian missionary and those in ministry today.

Here are some of the meanings, as given by Richards.

Firstly for the Iban all animate and inanimate things have *semengat*. *Semengat* is intangible and exactly like the body it inhabits but it has an identity of its own: it is likened to a shadow.

Objects are put in or on a grave so that their *semengat* can be used by the *semengat* of the dead in the next world.

Things or beings met with in dreams are their *semengat*, as it is the dreamer's *semengat* that meets them; the *semengat* wanders from the body in dreams, illness, or trance.

When the body is unwell or weak it can live for some time while the *semengat* is absent.

The very old often have their *semengat* in the next world before they die. *Semengat* of shaman leave their bodies during rites to go on the journey. In sickness, it is part of the work of a shaman to pursue and find the *semengat* of the sick, to capture and bring it back.

[Something closer to a Christian understanding is that] in death *semengat* goes beyond recall and completes the journey to the next world.

My interviews with Iban Christians over recent years have led to the conclusion that this wide range of Iban understanding of the word that has been translated to mean 'soul' are firmly held by most Iban Christians. We might ask how much is the same situation found in other parts of the world, and further if those in ministry are aware of the discrepancy between the local understanding and the Christian understanding, and how are they dealing with it? Is there a role here for western missionaries to take the initiative with local church leaders and work with them to make things clearer?

I have written more about this in my paper given at the AVM conference of 2013

'Life after Death: Vulnerable mission in the context of the Anglican Mission in Borneo, with special reference to contextualisation in teaching about the afterlife'; and in my eBook 'From Longhouse to Modernity: The Encounter between the Iban of Sarawak and the Anglican Mission':

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/24237690-from-longhouse-to-modernity>

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