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Guest editor: Fredrik Berge, Norwegian Lutheran Mission.



Table with 3 columns: Exec board, UK / Europe board, Advisory Board. Rows include Jim Harries, Andy Dipper, Chris Flanders, John Macdonald, Nick Henwood, Stan Chu Ilo, Frank Paul, Peter Stagg, Jay Gary, Daniel Albert, Deborah Bernhard, Jean Johnson.

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 mm@vulnerablemission.org. This month's contents: Fredrik Berge Editorial, Upcoming AVM Webinar, Rendering the Invisible Opaque to Save the Poor, A vulnerable epistemology in anthropology?, Evangelical Missiological Society Call for Papers



A note from Fredrik Berge, guest editor for the January 2022 Newsletter.

I do not have a career in vulnerability in mission, but I came across AVM in connection with research I did for an article on witchcraft. Jim Harries has written about the topic, and so I discovered the AVM conference and participated. What I have learned through the conference, and the contact with the AVM community in the time since, has brought to light concerns I have had about the way to do missions. After having ended seminary training and university in 2013, I was ordained and started working in a local parish in Oslo, doing mostly youth ministry. I also worked with the international organisation called Young Life, where I learned an "incarnational" model of ministry. The whole point was to make yourself vulnerable by leaving your "safe" space, like the church, and go out into the streets, stores, and football fields to engage young people at their home ground. The point was not to invite people to come to you, but to meet them where they were already at.

When I was preparing for missions in Africa I started thinking: What does incarnational ministry look like in Africa? And while working in Africa, this thought has from time to time resurged; how do we become more like the people amongst whom we live; how do we engage with them on their own terms?

In some ways we have, as with trying to learn the local languages spoken, and in other ways we have not. For instance, I am starting to see how money and other types of resources to a large extent are reasons for many of the difficulties we are facing in ministry, and how we as a mission are responsible for these problems that we are facing. Put money aside for a moment and think about how we encourage the local church to participate in our mission. If I say to the local Christians that they should participate in evangelism in the surrounding villages, and I do that by car, what I am saying is that "you need a car to do evangelism in the local villages", because that is what I am modelling. If on the other hand I use my feet, a bike or a motorbike, I use the local way of transportation and so give a viable alternative and model for evangelism.

Most of us western missionaries are not able to live vulnerably in a radical way in Africa, and are not sufficiently enough aware of the downsides with the way we are present as missionaries. I think this might be tied in with the role and absolute primacy of the preached word in protestant tradition: As long as the word is preached, the way we do or say things are secondary. Jesus on the other hand was (and is) the Word incarnate, and this we have once again been reminded in the celebration of Christmas. St. Paul says:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross! (Philippians 2)

So, Jesus fleshed out the good news in His own person, in His work, speech and actions. We as Christians and missionaries are not the good news ourselves, but we are people engaged in the spreading of good news. That means that Jesus is the model we must engage with when thinking about how we go about "doing" our ministries. This is why vulnerable ministry is so compelling, and at the same time so difficult, because it tries to take the person of Jesus and the incarnation seriously as a model for ministry.

I wish you all a blessed 2022 grappling with Jesus and the incarnation as a model for ministry! Fredrik.

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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).

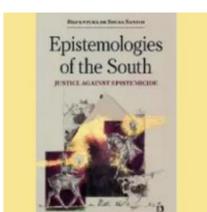
Speaker: Gerrit van Dijk from the Netherlands

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

Forward this invite you your contacts and sign up using this form for free. We will send you a Zoom link.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd5RGlpwN1Yh_LLb2KYraBxxh7l_mB6BQRQaR-7Ff8Bwxk6JQ/viewform

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Book Review: Rendering the Invisible Opaque to Save the Poor: how to think-with the majority world.

Discussion thread in academia . edu:

https://www.academia.edu/s/5d56b2e39f?source=link

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A vulnerable epistemology in anthropology?

Receiving the Eucharist, Writing the Gift: Anglo-Catholic Epistemology for Secular Anthropology, by Carolyn Dreyer.

https://okhjournal.org/index.php/okhj/article/view/132/0

I would like to suggest a refreshing article by Carolyn Dreyer. She challenges the secular epistemology of anthropology with an epistemological model based on Anglo-Catholic theological epistemology. The author questions basic principles in the discipline's self-understanding where the researcher must be detached, distant and neutral in the face of the "other" which is an "object" being studied, and where knowledge is gained through a process of comparison and categorical differentiation of the perceived world. Rather, knowledge must be understood as a relational process of gift exchange, the paramount of which is the sacraments. There God gives himself to us, and so by entering in the eucharist we come to know God, and God transforms us. With this epistemological framework in anthropology the researcher is open to having a relation to the other, receiving the other as gift. That means the possibility of being changed and transformed by that other being studied. To me that sounds like a challenge to practise a vulnerable ethnography/ anthropology!

Here is a beautiful quote from the article:

"As the hau seeks to return to its source, I offer the Eucharist to the academy as epistemological ressourcement, honoring the gift-giving relationship between Anglo-Catholicism and anthropology's secular grounding, and with hope for a new consideration of theological knowledge within ethnographic analysis."

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Call For Papers

The EMS (Evangelical Missiological Society) is putting out a call for papers, for its 2022 conference. The 2022 theme is to be Reconciliation: God's Mission through Missions for All. We encourage vulnerable mission folks to contribute papers. For more details:

https://www.emsweb.org/conferences/canada/

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