

The 18.26 Network

A New Wave of Missions



November 2021 — focused on a Church-centered strategy

By Jud Lamos, 18.26 Network CEO

I think of the Great Commission in terms of the unchurched, the poorly churched and the churched. There really are only these three groups in relation to our global mission.

We know that church buildings are not the real church. We were brought up, most of us, in a faith system that teaches us that the members of Christ's body are the Church. Full stop!

Most of the world does not enjoy that precious knowledge. Our problem in missions is how we not only introduce men and women to Christ, but also how we introduce them to His body — the Church. How do we, the churched, reach the unchurched and the poorly churched so that as one of my Turkish pastor friends has said, “We don’t leave them as abandoned orphans on the church doorstep!”



St. Michael's is one of three large churches in the center of Gent. It is highly unlikely that this young man on his bicycle will ever pass through its massive, ornate doors.

A Wikipedia article on Belgium states this:

... in the beginning of 2020, people of foreign background and their descendants were estimated to have formed 32.1% of the total population. 54.3% of people below age 18 have foreign roots. Since the relaxation of the Belgian nationality law more than 1.3 million migrants have acquired Belgian citizenship and are now considered “new Belgians.”



89.2% of inhabitants of Turkish origin have been naturalized, as have 88.4% of people of Moroccan background, 75.4% of Italians, 56.2% of the French and 47.8% of Dutch people. In 2007, there were 1.38 million foreign-born residents in Belgium, 12.9% of the total population.

What this tells us is that a large segment of the present population of Belgium is young and searching for identity. We realize that a large segment of the Belgian population today is open to new ideas and that should fill us with hope! It should motivate us to ask the Lord of the Harvest to send workers into the harvest field!



Returning for a moment to our idea of the unchurched, the poorly churched and the churched – what an opportunity Belgium is for the spread of the gospel. Especially since there are local churches that are well positioned to reach out to a young, diverse and open population.

But what kind of mission is needed? We need people, young professionals, who love Christ, who love His body, the Church, and can express their faith in the normal, everyday activities of work and play. We need normal people who can enjoy a variety of cultural venues and share Christ's love and truth in a way that draws their co-workers, their neighbors and their new friends to come and see what the body of Christ is like locally.



We know that there was diversity in the early Church: men and women from different races, language groups, ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic strata. There was also great unity. Herman Bavinck, a Dutch theologian in the late 1800s and early 1900s, wrote:

Difference in sex and age, in character and disposition, in mind and heart, in gifts and goods, in time and place is to the advantage also of the truth that is in Christ. He takes all these differences into his service and adorns his church with them. Indeed, though the division of humanity into peoples and languages was occasioned by sin, it has something good in it, which is brought into the church and thus preserved for eternity. From many races and languages and peoples and nations Christ gathers his church on earth. (Bavinck, Herman. Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 4: 04. Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. Location 6407)



We long to see local churches like this that model the Kingdom for unbelievers who live and work nearby. The International Community Church of Gent is doing that in Belgium. Our members belong to churches in other countries that are similar in terms of the multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-lingual congregations that glorify our Heavenly Father in Holy Spirit-filled unity.

Pray that we will be able to forge key partnerships, in the future, with these churches and others like them. Pray that we would be able to recruit many more members who will be able to secure work in the cities where these churches are located and become *leavening agents* in their communities.



Young professionals from 15 different countries worship together in Gent, Belgium in a display of diversity and unity that clearly proclaims the gospel to all.

"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour."

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