



TEN YEARS OF VISTA

When Vista began ten years ago we believed there was a need for solid research-based information on mission in Europe. Europe is such a diverse and dynamic context for mission. Each European situation is unique yet, at the same time, subject to influences and changes that are common across the continent. Where can busy pastors, mission leaders and practitioners find reliable information to help them to think about the key issues that are affecting mission in Europe today?

Our dream was that Vista might meet that need.

When we considered what Vista's brief should be, we quickly agreed on its key features. Each edition would focus on a single topic with articles from multiple perspectives and authors. The authors would be chosen to reflect different evangelical perspectives and, where possible, we would seek to give voice to authors whose points of view were rarely heard. The content would be robust, driven by solid research and analysis, but written in easy prose and free of in-text academic referencing. And the articles themselves should be brief, illustrated with graphics and charts where possible. For ten years we have remained true to those guiding principles.

“Our vision for Vista has always been to make solid research-based information on mission in Europe available to everyone who needs it.”

Looking back to 2010, we were already wrestling with topics which have gone on to define the decade. Issue 1 in April 2010 dealt with Migration and Nationalism. Issue 2 was on Islam. Issue 3 tackled Secularisation. Unsurprisingly, we have revisited these topics a number of times over the last ten years.

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EDITORIAL: 21st CENTURY DISCIPLESHIP

When Jesus said, ‘Follow me’, he wasn't the first person to do so. But the act of being a disciple, and engaging in the practice of discipleship has been associated with the Christian faith ever since.

This issue of Vista is the first of three which will reflect discussion themes of the Lausanne Europe 2020 Gathering to be held later this year. Each article focuses on a different aspect of how we encourage discipleship in 21st Century Europe.

Olof Edsinger asks how can we ensure our relationship with Jesus is our priority and focus when we are surrounded by 21st Century idols of individualism, materialism and hedonism. The media may be accused of promoting these idols, but rather than rejecting technology outright, Margunn Serigstad Dahle asks how can we be more strategic in using media to promote the Gospel and enable more effective discipleship.

Mike Betts explores some of the ways we can intentionally create a sustainable culture of discipleship, and Manfred Kohl challenges us to look first at ourselves, highlighting the importance of living lives of integrity as we follow Christ.

Our lead article is a bit different though. Vista is celebrating 10 years of publication and Jim Memory writes about the values that have shaped Vista's focus over the decade, while looking forward to its future. And while we celebrate all that Vista has meant over the years, our prayer is that you will continue to find it a useful tool in your life and ministry as a disciple of Christ in Europe today.

Jo Appleton

TEN YEARS OF VISTA (CTD).

Jim Memory

Monographic issues have marked milestones like the 25th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall or Brexit. And we have also explored more practical topics like church planting and multicultural church.

The Danger of Generalisation

We have often said there are three dangers when thinking about mission in Europe. The first is over-generalisation; treating Europe as a more-or-less uniform context for mission. So we think that what is true for one part of Europe will be true everywhere and what works in one part of Europe will work everywhere. We ignore regional differences. We apply urban solutions to rural problems. And we take literature, courses, and methodologies that have been effective in one part of Europe, translate them into other European languages, and consider that is sufficient for these ideas to be contextualised.

Yes, globalisation has homogenised culture across the world. And yes, the European Union has created political and cultural bridges between countries. But every single European country and region is unique with its own distinctive missiological context and particular spiritual history.. There is no book that can tell you how to reach your town or city with the gospel in 2020. You will have to write that book for yourself!

The Danger of Hyper-localisation

Another equal and opposite danger is that of hyper-localisation. In business, this means the marketing of selected products because of their particular local relevance or customer preferences. A similar thing can happen when engaging in mission in a city, town or district. We know, or we think we know, what is happening in our locality. We are suspicious of any ideas, materials or insights that come from outside. “Oh, that would never work here”, we say. “That might be true in your part of the country, but not in this town”. “You don’t understand. You weren’t born here”. We have heard all of those from Christian leaders at some point or another.

All mission is local mission. It is about real people in real communities. And its primary manifestation is the local church. But the days when local communities could exist in glorious isolation are long gone. Today, news and ideas are communicated in an instant to every household from London to Lesbos, Lapland to Lisbon. The issues of Migration, Nationalism, Islam, Secularisation and others are issues across all of Europe. There may be associated local challenges but all of Europe needs to wrestle with these issues. We cannot afford to be short-sighted.

The Danger of Parallax

From its inception, Vista has tried to balance global and local visions of Europe. Both are vitally important. But when getting a proper view of Europe, a third danger we must avoid is that of parallax,

In a Vista editorial from 2013, I explained this challenge in the following way:

“Such is the diversity of today’s Europe as a context for mission that any individual viewpoint necessarily suffers from a certain degree of parallax. Parallax is defined as the apparent displacement of an object caused by a change in the position from which it is viewed. Even the letters of this page of Vista appear in a different place when viewed through one eye than they do through the other. Fortunately, most of us have two eyes enabling us to enjoy stereoscopic vision which gives us not only greater acuity and depth but the ability to precisely locate the object under observation.

In an analogous way, when researchers are seeking to understand a reality they often engage in triangulation, where data derived from many different sources is used to integrate, verify, and interpret the subject under consideration. That is what we have sought to achieve since our very first edition of Vista, to gather considered perspectives on mission from around Europe which might enable us to achieve greater acuity, depth and positional understanding: “where we are”.”

2020 Vision

As we enter a new decade, the editors of Vista are more convinced than ever of the need to hold continental and local perspectives in tension, and to include articles by authors whose perspectives on a given topic are different so that we see something of the complexity and depth of the issues across Europe.

For the next twelve months, Vista will be partnering with Lausanne Europe to support the Conversation around the Lausanne Europe 2020 Gathering in Poland in October 2020 <https://www.lausanneeurope.org/>. Vistas 35, 36 and 37 are planned to contain articles on different issues, each written by key speakers from the October 2020 Gathering.

Each month, delegates to the gathering will come together with ten or twelve others from within their networks to reflect on the crucial issues for mission in Europe today, to engage with Scripture, to consider aspect of discipleship and mobilisation for mission, and to pray. The key tool for missiological reflection will be articles from Vista. If you are interested in joining one of these groups do let us know and we will try and link you up with a delegate from your country.

To celebrate this ten-year milestone, the editors decided it was time to give Vista a fresh look and a redesigned website.

As before, every issue is freely available for download. But now, all the articles are accessible and searchable independently, not just as part of a single issue. There is a wealth of knowledge and valuable insights on many different themes so we would really encourage you to check it out: <https://www.europeanmission.redcliffe.ac.uk/> If you find something of interest, please do share it on social media, or forward it to your colleagues.

Our vision for Vista has always been to make solid research-based information on mission in Europe available to everyone who needs it. Darrell Jackson, Jo Appleton and Jim Memory have been with Vista from the beginning. Chris Ducker ably assisted us for a number of years, and more recently Evert van de Poll has brought a much-needed alternative view. Ten years on, the editors of Vista give thanks to God for the little miracle that is every edition, and to the dozens of contributors whose insights have made Vista what it is. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Jim Memory, on behalf of the Vista editorial team



OVERCOMING THE GODS OF EUROPE

Olaf Edsinger

The topic of this article may seem a bit odd. Not least since, to a large extent, today’s Europe is perceived as a “godless continent”.

As an example, data from the European Social Survey 2014–16 showed that in twelve of the European countries a majority of 16- to 29-years-olds confessed to no religion at all – meaning they did not self-identify as religious, never prayed to God, and hardly ever attended a religious ceremony.

Obviously, this is not the whole picture. While countries like the Czech Republic, Estonia and my own country Sweden qualify as some of the most secularized in the world, countries like Poland, Lithuania and Ireland still stand strong when it comes to Christian faith.

However, one of the foundational truths of both the Old and the New Testaments is that the real question is not whether we worship – but what we worship. No matter how “secularized” you are, you will ultimately direct your worship and trust in one direction or the other.

Also, as all readers of Scripture should know: the struggle between competing gods does not end with us confessing

Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. There will always be gods and powers and trends and ideologies that command our worship.

The Bible speaks of these things as idols, where idols take the shape of physical entities. Paul speaks of “images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles” (Rom 1:23). In Europe, however, the ordinary “gods” are of another kind. We don’t visit temples with golden statues to give our offerings or burn our incense. Instead, our gods tend to be of a more subtle, and often more ideological, kind.

The most obvious candidate should probably be the worship of the self, that goes back all the way to the garden of Eden, but is more prominent than ever in the postmodern European culture. More often than not we tend to put ourselves and our feelings at the centre of our worldview. Everyone has his or her own truth, and the customer is always right. And ultimately it is the question of power: do I surrender to God, or do I myself want to be a god? Is it probably impossible to follow Jesus today without seriously challenging the idol of self-centredness.

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OVERCOMING THE GODS OF EUROPE (CTD)

Olaf Edsinger

And then we have the eternal issue of money, wealth and consumerism. In his parable of the Sower, Jesus speaks about how “the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful” (Mark 4:19). Not least in the wealthy parts of our continent, this is a devastating spiritual truth. And it is even more poignantly underscored in the Sermon on the Mount: “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (Matt 6:24).

To complete the classic triad, we also need to say something also about sex. As often as the New Testament warns us about greed, it also warns us about adultery and fornication. And to everyone with eyes to see, it is obvious that our culture is obsessed with sex. Free sexuality has become a central self-expression value of our time, and the pressure to be sexually active is strong already in the early teens – often triggered by the all-too-accessible internet porn.

Knowing all this, our focus ought to be the realization that the biblical call to holiness is also a call to denounce the idols. As the apostle puts it in another famous passage: “Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:11–12)

If we want to survive – and thrive – in today’s Europe, we actively need to challenge the gods of our time. For, as Jesus himself put it: “You cannot serve both God and ...” If we actively serve the gods of Europe, we may in the end find ourselves not worshipping the God of the Universe.

Interestingly, this is also the basic conclusion in last year’s report from the Barna Institute in America. In their book *Faith For Exiles*, subtitled “5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon”, David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock present interesting findings from the Institute’s research.

In Kinnaman’s earlier studies *unChristian* and *You Lost Me*, the focus was on youth and young adults who had left the Christian community. But in *Faith For Exiles* the focus is shifted to look into the lives and attitudes of those who remain. Five specific traits are singled out. But before we look into them these it is worth looking at the description Kinnaman and Matlock give of the present Western culture.

“Christians whose understanding of the world is framed by the Bible can think about our experience as living in a shift from Jerusalem to digital Babylon. These are two of the ways human society is depicted in the Bible, and they endure today as helpful archetypes of civilization. ... Through screens’ ubiquitous presence, Babylon’s pride, power, prestige, and pleasure colonize our hearts and minds. Pop culture is a reality filter. Websites, apps, movies, TV, video games, music, social media, YouTube channels, and so on increasingly provide the grid against which we test what is true and what is real. ... Screens demand our attention. Screens disciple.”

And later on: “We believe many parents, educators, pastors, and other leaders are trying to prepare young Christians for Jerusalem, to keep them safe and well protected for a world they no longer live in. Cultivating faith for exiles means, by contrast, that we—young and adults alike—trust that Jesus is Lord even in chaotic, pixelated, no-rules digital Babylon. A Christian identity and a rarely engaged church community are not enough to make someone resistant to the Babylon virus.”

The point is simply this: If we are to survive – and thrive – as disciples in digital Babylon, we need to actively challenge the gods of our culture. Not doing so, means we will be severely infected by the “Babylon virus”, and in many cases lose our Christian faith.



Photo by Daniels Joffe on Unsplash

So, what are the five traits of those “resilient exiles” that David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock have singled out in their research? In a summarized form, they can be described as follows:

1) They have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. This trait corresponds with today’s focus on identity and identity issues: To be a resilient exile in Babylon, we need to find our identity in Christ, not reducing our faith to a “cool brand” to attach our own identity to.

2) They build the muscles of cultural discernment. In an age marked by complexity, stress and anxiety, where most people look to their smart phones (i.e. Google, and YouTube and various chat forums) for answers to life’s questions, resilient exiles go straight to the Source for finding answers: The Scriptures.

3) They forge meaningful, intergenerational relationships. In an age where individualism, loneliness and mistrust abounds, resilient exiles thrive in churches that can truly be labelled intergenerational. I.e. communities where people actually like to form intergenerational relationships.

4) They are trained for vocational discipleship. They don’t accept the “sacred–secular divide”, but find their calling on different arenas in society – not as a way of departing from church, but “being church” where they are.

5) They curb entitlement and self-centered tendencies by engaging in countercultural mission. No matter what arena

they find themselves on, they actively identify with the kingdom of God and challenge cultural norms.

My belief is that we, as Christians in today’s culture, need to have an awareness of the competing gods of digital Babylon. We need to realize that behind the trends and ideologies and mindsets that we face, there are spiritual realities—and if we don’t challenge these, we will find ourselves sucked into worshipping other gods than our Saviour Jesus Christ.

“If we want to survive – and thrive – in today’s Europe, we actively need to challenge the gods of our time.”

Therefore, we need to foster spiritual practices that make us less vulnerable to the pressure of these gods. We need to actively

- foster a mindset that challenges the idol of individualism and self-centeredness.
- find ways of stewardship that challenge the idol of money, wealth and consumerism.
- create habits that help us to stand firm in the pressure from hedonism, pornography and illicit sex.

Without this awareness, and the spiritual practices that accompany it, it will be very hard to overcome the gods of Europe either on a personal or an institutional level.

Olof Edsinger,

Olaf is General Secretary of the Swedish Evangelical Alliance



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CREATING A DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE

and why it is so important for mission in Europe today

Mike Betts

Creating a discipleship culture is key for mission in Europe today. Creating a discipleship culture is to create a biblical culture that shines a bright light against ungodly aspects of society.

I would argue that discipleship is not fully achieved through separate discipleship ministries in the church, or classes / activities, but rather by creating a culture of discipleship across the whole church family.

There are many opinions, thoughts and voices speaking about discipleship with valid points to make. Mine is just one voice of many.

What is a disciple?

In discussing the idea of a discipleship culture within church life, we need to be clear about what we mean by a 'disciple' of Jesus Christ? First of all, a disciple of Christ is a follower. Jesus said, 'Follow me!' When we receive Christ as Saviour and Lord, we follow.

Secondly a disciple of Christ is a learner. Breen suggests, 'The Greek word for disciples: mathetes. When directly translated it means learner...becoming lifelong learners of Jesus'. We learn truth and apply it to our lifestyle and beliefs.

Thirdly a disciple of Christ is a servant, following the example of Christ who 'came not to be served but to serve' We adopt a posture of humility and servant-heartedness in all we do for Christ, for His glory, His cause and His people. This is a lifelong journey of transformation from 'one degree of glory to another'.

"First of all, a disciple of Christ is a follower. Jesus said, 'Follow me!'"

There are a number of areas we can focus our attention on in order to create a biblical culture of discipleship.

An intentional and long-term process

There is perhaps one over-riding difference between society and a discipleship culture namely that society is becoming increasingly instant, clamouring for instant success and instant knowledge. By contrast discipleship is an intentional and longer-term process. Following, learning and serving require intentional, sustained, ongoing and progressive work to make us 'mature in Christ'. Not only would society push for the instant, it can also lead us into confusing discipleship with

simply acquiring information – to know only with our minds. Discipleship would have us know and learn with our minds, hearts and souls. There is the incorrect assumption that increased information acquisition equates to maturity within people, which if it were true would render the discipleship process largely obsolete. True Christian discipleship is not instant. It is a long-term process. We cannot hurry the development of a disciple or indeed a discipleship culture.

Developing a devotion to Christ

Developing the idea that discipleship is a long-term process, it is also about developing a long-term devotion. It is about creating an environment to develop a hunger and passion for Christ. Jeff Vanderstelt describes discipleship as: 'the ongoing process of submitting all of life to Jesus and seeing him saturate your entire life and world with his presence and power...' Devotion is not an instantaneous thing. Devotion is giving yourself to something for the long-term.

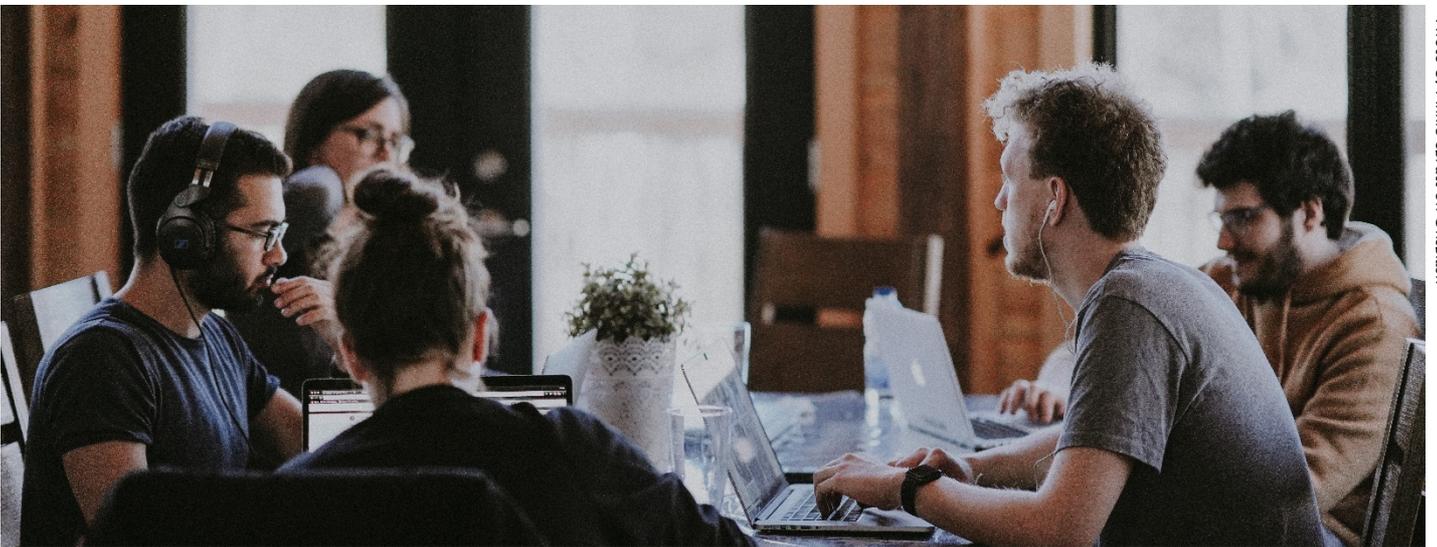
I enjoy live music; especially jazz. I have often marveled at the skill of a gifted musician, fingers gliding seemingly effortlessly across keys or fret board. How did they become so free on their instrument? How can they produce exquisite sounds and rhythms almost without thinking? The answer; They are devoted to that which they love. Luciano Pavarotti said, 'People think I'm disciplined. It is not discipline. It is devotion. There is a great difference'.

It's all about legacy

Discipleship is equally long-term when it comes to its outcomes. Discipleship works for the good of others and generations to come.

'...even the greatest cannot live to see the fulfilment of their dreams. For each of us there is a Jordan we will not cross. Once we know this, one thing becomes important above all others. Leave guidance to those who follow you for it is they who will continue the work.'

This speaks of legacy of understanding that discipleship extends far beyond our own reach and lifetime. I have often used the phrase 'becoming a two eyed leader', where one eye is on our own development and calling and the other is trained on the development of others. We can set an example by our words and our lives, but this is so others can see and so we will inspire others, for them to do the same. Paul was able to say, 'whatever you have...heard from me or seen in me, put it



into practice'. They admired him and wanted a role model to help them navigate what following Jesus looks like. This involves everything from household chores to handling finance and relationships to preaching and counselling. Flourishing in life-long following, learning and serving is inspiring to others. We are to be both the sheep and the shepherd; the disciple and the discipler.

“In order to see disciples mature - to see them grow in knowledge, character and skills - we expend ourselves so they become all that God has called them to be”

In order to see disciples mature - to see them grow in knowledge, character and skills - we expend ourselves so they become all that God has called them to be. Perhaps they will be better than us, maybe getting the glory for hard work we largely did, or perhaps like the laborers in the parable who at the eleventh hour got the same wages! Having a perspective like that of John the Baptist is helpful. As Jesus ministry emerged and grew before John's eyes, John was able to gladly say 'he must increase, but I must decrease'. Over-focusing on ourselves and our ministry is not healthy. There needs to be balance where we create a context of shade and safety for believers to feel believed in, loved, nurtured, cherished and valued.

Family not organisation

Finally, a discipleship culture is long-term and intentional about its relationships. Western society in particular, would tell us it is all about the individual, whereas Jesus teaches and demonstrates family. God's family. God's call to Abraham was to be a 'Father' of many nations. Proverbs 1:8 says, 'Hear my son, your father's instruction'. Likewise, Paul refers to Timothy as 'my beloved and faithful child in the Lord'.

Western culture, where self-determination, self-authority and self-sufficiency have thrived, puts pressure on the community of the local church. 'If we are to be disciples of Jesus who are being re-formed and restored to become more like Him, we

need to have people in our lives, up close and personal.' This is the biblical reality.

We were made for community and as Christians the community / family of God is fundamental to our spiritual health, development and well-being. Healthy parenting helps children grow and flourish in taking on the responsibility of life for themselves and is not controlling or domineering rather giving in nature. So, in spiritual family dynamics, the less mature, each need the input, wisdom, and guidance of those more experienced, and those more mature should give themselves to this.

Creating a discipleship culture.

The commission in Matthew 28 is to 'go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them...teaching them to observe all I have commanded you'. We are called to make disciples not converts. This is so key to our understanding of mission. There is a process described here which cannot be done quickly nor in isolation. It cannot ultimately be achieved by 'doing discipleship' through programmes and activities, though such things can be useful tools.

Our culture may seek out 'quick wins' and high-profile 'success' stories. By contrast a discipleship culture will involve us in an ongoing process in everyday life with those around us. It will require patience through the ups and downs, through the challenges and the breakthroughs; a discipleship culture will create an environment that fosters devotion to God and which prizes relationship and family, displaying a community of believers to the world around it. Creating a discipleship culture will ultimately mean a commitment to discipleship as a long-term and intentional investment within the local church and wider family of God, where we can ensure that we are being invested in ourselves, but that we are also investing in others.

Mike Betts

Mike Betts leads Relational Mission, a network of churches which is part of the global Newfrontiers family and is the author of From the Inside Out, Relational Mission: A Way of Life

BEING A DISCIPLE IN EUROPE IN A MEDIA AGE

Margunn Serigstad Dahle

Photo by Mattias Abulu on Unsplash



Wherever we live in today's world, media technologies and messages increasingly influence our everyday lives, our Christian witness, and our Christian ministries. The missional issues related to media engagement are therefore of real significance for the evangelical church in Europe.

The central issues are real and down-to-earth, including the need to explore the following questions: How to relate to the news media, the entertainment media, and the social media as individuals, families, and fellowships? How are Christians being portrayed and represented in mainstream news and entertainment media? How can the whole church be mobilized to utilize appropriate media platforms to share the Gospel? How can Christians be equipped to engage in integral mission through the media?

Contemporary Europe is an ambiguous and complex reality. It is a post-Christendom context, where representatives for the Christian heritage, influential secular ideas, and various religious worldviews compete for our attention and allegiance, often within and through various media.

This article introduces key concepts and approaches developed in the Lausanne Media Engagement Network. These ideas are already under discussion in various evangelical contexts, both within and beyond Europe.

A threefold, missional approach to media engagement

Media is the primary means by which news, ideas, and stories spread. It affects every part of society in every part of the world, including our own secular and pluralistic continent. Therefore, if we are to bear witness to Jesus Christ and all his teaching in every European nation, in every sphere of European society, and in the realm of European ideas, we cannot neglect the fascinating and complex world of media technologies and messages.

The Cape Town Commitment included "Truth and the globalized media" in the section, "Bearing witness to the truth of Christ in a pluralistic, globalized world", with an equal emphasis on three major areas of concern. These three key areas are media awareness, media presence, and media ministries.

Media awareness is the urgent need for more faithful discipleship, including both personal holiness and disciplinarianism, when encountering media technologies and messages. Media presence is the insistent call to enter mainstream news and entertainment media with professionalism and Christian integrity. Media ministries is the strategic use of all types of media platforms to communicate the gospel of Christ in the context of a holistic biblical worldview.

"How can we as evangelicals together in Europe be more strategic in our creative and effective use of various media technologies, platforms, and genres?"

Media awareness: An opportunity to practice 'double listening'

In our day-to-day life as individuals, families, churches, and ministries, we are all media users and consumers. This means relating, consciously and unconsciously, to a whole spectrum of media technologies and media messages. The emerging digital world provides us with many new and exciting possibilities for communication, fellowship, and learning, whether professionally, in our churches and ministries, or personally.

However, in terms of media technologies, our increasing use of screens (such as smartphones, tablets, and games) and online services (such as banking, shopping, and streaming), also make us vulnerable in so many ways. Furthermore, factual and fictional media messages are influenced by various secular and religious worldview perspectives, whether in terms of ethical values, views of humanity and reality, or fundamental faith-commitments.

Equipping individuals, families, youth ministries, and churches to engage with media technologies and messages at these deeper worldview levels is largely a forgotten dimension of holistic mission, both in the Global North and the Global South. We need to change that together – and to do it quickly and appropriately. Such equipping includes research, resources, and practical training in ethical assessment of media

technologies and in worldview analysis of media messages. It also includes showing the credibility and relevance of a holistic biblical worldview over against alternative worldview perspectives.

“There is a wide variety of legitimate and strategic media roles to be explored within the general media world for talented Christians in Europe.”

In the European context, we need to learn from our long history of engaging with media technologies and message. A key to learning from the past, engaging in the present, and preparing for the future, will be our application of double listening to the Word and the world. This is an essential everyday practice, as well as a significant analytic approach

Media presence: An opportunity to be salt and light in mainstream media

There is a wide variety of legitimate and strategic media roles to be explored within the general media world for talented Christians in Europe.

Journalism and documentary work reveal neglected facts, stories, and angles, which enables a more balanced public and private debate. Creative and entertainment media can present new and fresh ways of imagining Christian truths, which may generate genuine interest in significant moral and spiritual issues. Through the presence of skillful Christian commentators and apologists in mainstream media, the credibility and plausibility of the gospel and of a holistic biblical worldview may be commended to sceptics, seekers, and to Christians.

This calling to public witness and integrity through engaging in mainstream media needs to be communicated clearly in our evangelical churches and youth ministries in Europe. We need to be talent-spotting for emerging younger evangelical voices who could take on various roles and tasks with creativity, integrity, and energy.

Media ministries: An opportunity to be strategic together in integral mission

Effective use of every kind of media technology, format, and genre is crucial for discipleship, faith education, evangelism, and social engagement.

Specialist media ministries in Europe still have legitimate and strategic roles to play, but digital platforms are transforming every single European mission organization, youth ministry, and local church into media outlets. This creates an increasing need for strategic evangelistic and discipleship partnerships in the whole area of media engagement. At the same time, we need to explore the way that social media creates increasing

possibilities for a unique media ministry for every single believer.

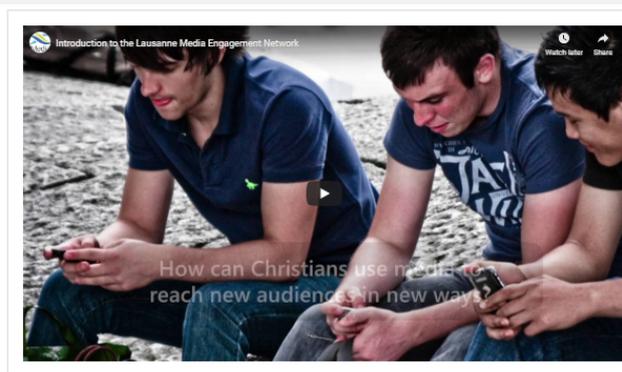
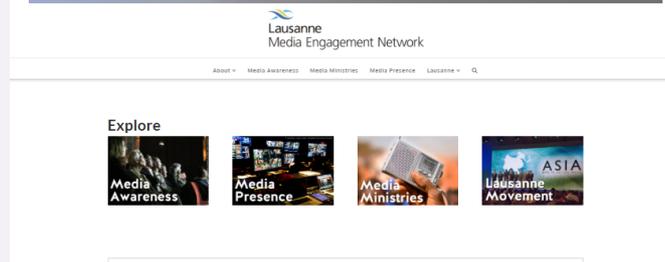
How can we as evangelicals together in Europe be more strategic in our creative and effective use of various media technologies, platforms, and genres? Could we model generous cooperation and collaboration to the wider Christian world?

An open invitation to missional reflection and action

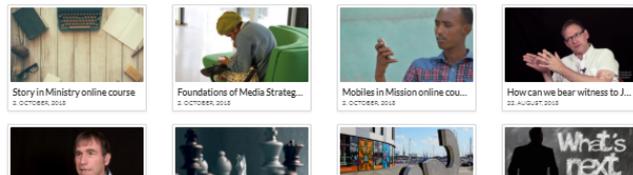
As evangelicals in Europe, we need intentionally to integrate media engagement in our discipleship and mission strategies and practices for Europe and beyond in the 21st century. This is an open invitation to share our reflections and best practices, and to engage in collaborative missional action.

Margunn Serigstad Dahle

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NO DISCREPANCY BETWEEN TALK AND WALK

Integrity and anti-corruption are foundational for character

Manfred Kohl

The early Church (in the countries around the Mediterranean) experienced violent persecution. Countless sisters and brothers were martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ.

It began at the first Church in Jerusalem with a deacon Stephen who, according to Acts 7, was stoned to death for his faith in Christ his Savior. However, Stephen was not the first person of the Church of Jerusalem to die. The first were Ananias and Sapphira, members of the Jerusalem Church. They did not tell the truth about their contribution to the Church, and because they lied – because they lacked integrity they were punished with death.

Martin Allaby, a member of the Micah Anti-Corruption Group, writes “It has been estimated that US\$50 billion per annum may be stolen from money that Christians give to churches, para-church organizations, and secular organizations around the world.” Where are the individuals, the Christians, who demonstrate integrity?

“Integrity ... is one of those terms we use often but without realizing its implications”

Integrity: this is one of those terms we use often but without realizing its implications. “Integrity” is defined as: “honesty,” “uprightness,” “soundness,” “completeness,” “wholeness,” “incorruptible.” Evangelist Billy Graham, co-founder of the Lausanne Movement in 1974, said “When we speak of integrity as a moral value, it means that a person is the same on the outside as he is inside. There is no discrepancy between what he says and what he acts, between his talk and his walk.” Chris Wright, in his Cape Town presentation, said:

The overwhelming witness of the Bible is that the greatest problem for God in his redemptive mission for the world is his own people. What hurts God most, it seems, is not just the sin of the world, but the failure, disobedience and rebellion of those God has redeemed and called to be his people, his holy distinctive people... We have to deal with:

- *The idols of power and pride*
- *The idols of popularity and success*
- *The idols of wealth and greed*

Jesus himself was tempted in all three areas and resisted the temptation (Mt 4:1-11). With the help of our Lord Jesus Christ

we can distance ourselves from all of these idols that tempt us, often on a daily basis.

For Jerald Daffee, integrity is the integrating element that unifies character, conduct, and one’s composite lifestyle. For him a simple working definition is:

- Integrity is playing by the rules
- Integrity is playing by the rules when no one else does
- Integrity is playing by the rules when one is playing alone

The best examples are Job (Job 6:29; 27:5), Joseph (Gen 39), and David (Ps 25:21; 41:12).

Everyone can list numerous examples of a lack of integrity in individuals. Consider these, which I have personally encountered:

1. A good friend of mine in Kiev, Ukraine shared with me after a worship service that he had just landed his dream job, due to the efforts of a wealthy and influential family member, although there were many others applicants with better qualifications.
2. A businessman turned down a lucrative government contract because he was unwilling to pay a large bribe. Another businessman, a member and elder of a church, received the contract because for him paying a bribe is part of doing business.
3. A women’s group in my home church in Pforzheim, Germany spoke out vehemently against abortion. However, not one of the ladies distributes information about the realities of abortion or exposes politicians or organizations supporting abortion.

INTEGRITY



4. More than once I have discovered that excellence is confused with success at any cost. Cheating, telling half-truths, and even stealing are accepted as normal as long as I am successful
5. internationally, one constantly finds “culture” cited as an excuse for the practice of corruption, even from committed Christians. John Stott, United Kingdom, wrote, “For a Christian the Word of God must be above culture.”
6. My nephew Derrick is a policeman. I am tempted to tell him that he should overlook my traffic violations!
7. To be very honest, we hear what we want to hear, see what we want to see, do what we want to do, even if it is contrary to Scripture or if we hear God’s voice in our conscience. We need help.

To seriously address integrity one must begin with the condition of one’s own life. Do I strive to practice integrity, to be open to re-formation by God, to become more holy? It is not enough to condemn big bribery scandals or power-seeking individuals. We also have to examine ourselves.

“We, as followers of Christ, must not simply accept the reality of corruption in the world. We need to be concerned.”

Often we use expressions or terms without having a clear understanding of their meaning or implications. In recent days I have asked more than a dozen individuals for their definition of the term “corruption.” I received a great variety of answers. The term is defined by the Webster dictionary as: “to bribe,” “to spoil,” “morally unsound,” “perverted,” “wicked,” “evil.” Disturbing terms. Yet we have become immune to such reports because we hear almost daily in the media of scandals and financial scams involving government officials, businesses, and individuals. Our tendency is to say “So what?”

We still accept this terrible situation as being wrong but consider it beyond our control. We do nothing, and accept the situation – unfortunate, but reality. There are, however, some who have invested time, energy, finances in doing something about the situation.

1. In India, a few businessmen confronted the leadership of churches involved in major corruption and challenged them to change.
2. Leaders of the main denominations were invited to a conference on “Truth and Honesty.” They were shocked to hear the speaker say, “Dear

Presidents, Bishops, Archbishops, Patriarchs, the evil is with you! You are involved in corruption, bribery, personal enrichment, evil!” The Holy Spirit touched several of those present, and public confession and radical corrections took place. Arpit Waghmare, a friend of our Lausanne team, leads “Operation Nehemiah,” the movement that grew out of this conference.

3. In Germany, a father and son team did research on corruption in government, businesses, churches, and by individuals. They were shocked beyond belief by what they discovered. Thomas Schirmacher, a senior theologian, and his son David, a young businessman, published their findings in a 110 page book.
4. In Tanzania, a theological student selected for his dissertation the theme “Corruption Mocking at Justice.” Alfred Sebahene investigated the Anglican Church in his own country. Gershon Mwiti also deals with corruption in Africa and how dignity with integrity can replace corruption.
5. “The “Micah Challenge,” a global organization. Initiated a few years ago by a group of individuals, deals with corruption and how to introduce transparency and honesty. The Micah Challenge is also represented in Europe, having conducted a major meeting in Oxford in 2019. Other similar organizations include “Transparency International”, “Faith and Public Integrity Network,” “Fides – equipping Christian leaders and churches in the fight against corruption.”
6. When I established a Christian humanitarian agency in Austria and Switzerland I had to refuse several offers from advertising agencies who offered help only if I would pay secretly some money to the manager. Publishing houses wanted to make the same deal: free advertising for kick-backs.

Bishop Hwa Yung (Malaysia) describes similar situations in Asia.

7. The faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary developed a 140 page workshop study guide on integrity, “Examining How I Live.” This book can be used by any group of academics, pastors, students, or laypeople desiring to examine their own lives.
8. The leadership of the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization held in Cape Town in 2010



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Manfred Kohl

recognized the need to pay special attention to the issue of corruption and integrity. To this end, Chris Wright spoke on “Calling the Church of Christ Back to Humility, Integrity, and Simplicity,” and Chapter IIE of the Cape Town Commitment deals with the issue.

A global network on “Integrity & Anti-Corruption” has also been established. This is a joint effort of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and Lausanne and is led by Efraim Tendero, Philippines, and Manfred Kohl, Canada. Membership is open to anyone interested in this important topic.

The next conference on Integrity will be held in Sofia, Bulgaria on May 01 and 02, 2020.

We, as followers of Christ, must not simply accept the reality of corruption in the world. We need to be concerned. We are called to be the light of the world (Mt 5:14), and there are many ways in which we can fight corruption.

However, there is another side of this issue, the need to examine ourselves. Corruption is simply the reflection of a lack of integrity.

Questions for reflection:

- **Am I a Person of Integrity?**
- **What Can I / We Do to Tame the Beast of Bribes, Corruption, Extortion, etc...**

Dr. Manfred Kohl

Manfred has served as pastor, professor, founder of World Vision West Africa and Central Europe, and Vice-President and Ambassador of Overseas Council International. He has been with the Lausanne Movement since its beginning in 1974

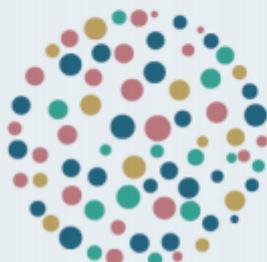
DYNAMIC GOSPEL: NEW EUROPE

Lausanne Europe are planning a gathering with the theme of *Dynamic Gospel: New Europe* in October 2020 for some 800 representative leaders “drawn from national denominations and Evangelical Alliances in every nation of Europe, from mission organisations and those whose professional work is their mission frontier, including diaspora church leaders, local church leaders, women and men, the young and the not-so-young”. But the gathering itself is just part of a broader conversation that will seek to engage 10,000 leaders around the event “so that, for every person who attends at least 12 others can participate in the thinking, connecting sharing and implementation of the initiatives that will come out of it.”

Vista are partnering with Lausanne Europe 2020 by being one of the key resources to facilitate that broader conversation.

For more information see the Lausanne website:

www.lausanneeurope.org



LAUSANNE
EUROPE 2020

CONVERSATION
& GATHERING

dynamic gospel | new europe



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