



## **“Correct Me If I’m Wrong”** *The quarterly bulletin of the Global Community of Mission Information Workers*

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### **Global Harvest Map**

*by Marten Visser*

Since about 2010 Thailand has had a national church database that might be the most widely used available. Because of its comprehensiveness, maps, online availability ([www.thaichurches.org](http://www.thaichurches.org)), and the many standard and custom reports available to back-end users, it has had a deep influence on developing a greater vision for church planting and reaching unreached areas in the Thai church.

Christians from surrounding countries saw how the national database clarified the remaining task and expressed interest in having a similar system. Church Cloud Solutions became the company offering the Harvest software to make this happen. Harvest systems were brought online for Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Ethiopia. Most of them are not (yet) openly accessible on the web.



Harvest continues to add features and reports relevant to users. These include a distinction between membership and attendance, generations of churches to make it relevant to church planting movements, historic growth, custom mapping and mailing labels, which have all been added since the initial launch.

However, in many cases the starting costs (upwards of €15,000) proved prohibitive. For this reason, Church Cloud Solutions decided to launch a worldwide system: the Global Harvest Map. Clients interested in using the capabilities of Harvest can now enter churches in any country in the world. Once most churches in a country have been entered, a national church database can be split off from the Global Harvest Map, so that the customisations that make the map relevant for national Christians can be made. In the future, automated syncing between the national and global databases will be developed.

Dwight Martin, who is still responsible for updating the Thai database, and I head up the effort to make the Harvest system available for all countries. We hope many parties will join the Global Harvest Map. Global partnerships are available for \$15,000 a year, giving rights to have unlimited users and an unlimited number of churches in the database. National partnerships, limited to one per country are available for \$7,000 a year, or just \$2,000 if fewer than 10,000 churches are entered.

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### **GMI’s Mapping Legacy**

*by Jon Hirst*

“Every Christian should live life with an open Bible and an open map.” – William Carey

I had the great privilege of leading GMI (Global Mapping International) for its final 5 years before we closed its doors. During that time, I sat at the feet of the missionary pioneers that blazed new trails using the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’s emerging technologies. One of those technologies was GIS (geographic information systems).

GMI, alongside collaborating organizations and individuals, helped the Church to visualize the Great Commission digitally. While maps were not new, as we know from the many missionary pioneers who used hand-drawn maps to guide their efforts, the power to harness ever-increasing amounts of data with amazing precision onto digital maps was a turning point in global mission.



Jon Hirst

What did I learn from these selfless pioneers and their tireless efforts? Here are a few of my insights:

1. Everyone's data was important: As the technology to map the world digitally exploded onto the scene, the computer was hungry for data. What used to take months to create by hand was now generated in hours, then minutes and now seconds. In that whirlwind, missionary mappers could have made the bar to entry very high. They could have created many rules about who could collaborate, who's data was worth mapping, etc. But I saw over and over a servant's heart focused on valuing the leaders from each country, movement and church. In their eyes, any data that would shine a light on what God was doing in the world was worthy of their time and effort to visualize.

2. Collaboration was now within reach: The technologists who lead the charge on missions mapping saw something that few others recognized. They realized that when a map of the need or common effort was spread out on a table at a meeting of leaders, it catalyzed action! They shared about time after time when the visualization of the mission allowed leaders to overcome barriers, set aside ego and agree to work together. What is it about a map that does this? I'm not sure, but they recognized it and harnessed it for the Kingdom.

3. Solutions required integration of approaches: If you have ever seen a good missions map, one thing that is almost always true is that it overlays multiple sets of information. That isn't simply because it can. The GIS practitioners realized that most people tend to look at life through a single perspective. But if you can help them to see multiple perspectives, you can usually create deeper meaning and greater insight. So instead of simply looking at a map of countries shaded by percent Christian, what would happen if you also looked at factors like urbanization, migration, pollution, gender, age and on and on? Missions mappers popularized this integrated analysis and helped Kingdom workers to develop the discipline of their use for their mission work.

We owe a great deal to the pioneering GIS practitioners of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century; many of them are still hard at work today bringing insight through the visualization of mission data and training up the next generation. Some of them have either passed away or retired from daily ministry work; and those of us who knew them feel the loss of their tireless work.

I won't try and list them all because that would take too many pages. But I will make one request of you the reader. Next time you see a map of mission data that moves, informs, or guides you, look for the source. Take a moment to thank that faithful practitioner who wielded the tools of technology and the insight from the field at the Spirit's direction to help guide you in your ministry efforts.

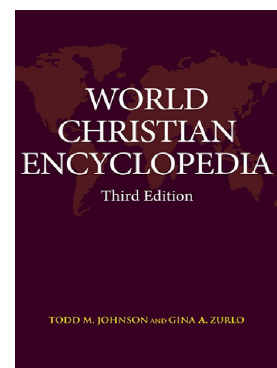
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## World Christian Encyclopedia, 3rd Edition

by J. Nelson Jennings

The *World Christian Encyclopedia* (WCE) has been the statistical benchmark for worldwide Christianity, as well as for international religious demography in general, over the last four decades. The figures showing changes over time, as well as broken down into various traditions and countries, along with per-country summaries have become indispensable and authoritative for researchers and many practitioners alike.

After David Barrett completed the arduous compilation and publication of the 1,000-page first edition in 1982, it would have been perfectly understandable if he had pledged, "Never again." Even so, dramatic demographic changes in Christianity worldwide over the closing years of the twentieth century persuaded Barrett, with additional editors George Kurian and Todd Johnson, to produce a second edition. The result in 2001 was an even larger, 1,700-page two-volume set (with a third more interpretive and evaluative volume, *World Christian Trends*, published separately).



In 2014, the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC), located at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, bravely launched a five-year project to produce a WCE third edition. With Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo of CSGC serving as co-authors, the just-published result is once again a single-volume (1,100-page) country-by-country demographic description of Christianity and other religions worldwide, with several other features and enhanced graphics as well. After the first two editions were published by Oxford University Press, this new WCE3 is published by Edinburgh University Press (EUP) - with just as hefty a price tag as before for a hardback copy, such that only libraries can be expected to acquire that format of this standard-setting reference work. New to this edition is the availability of the entire *World Christian Encyclopedia* as an ebook and PDF; users will be able to purchase individual countries or groups of countries if desired. An added bonus of the electronic versions is that they are full-color, unlike the black-and-white hard copy.

Here is the online EUP description of WCE3 highlights:

- A 32-page full-colour global and continental overview of Christianity and religions (including Catholics),
  - Historical and demographic profiles of Christianity in 234 countries, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, vetted by in-country experts
  - 24 full-colour maps plus hundreds of additional graphs, charts and tables
  - Photos of Christians in every country of the world, both historic and contemporary
  - Detailed explanation of the methodology and sources supporting the estimates
  - Features quick-reference tables, including country-by-country statistics, that provide detail on religious affiliation and Christian activities
- (<https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/book-world-christian-encyclopedia-hb.html>)

Particularly noteworthy are the new colored graphics and varied types of country-by-country photos. Because of users' inevitable questions about the compilation of various figures, the extra effort to explain methodology and supporting sources will no doubt draw much attention (and catalyze fresh discussion). Evangelical users will need to work through again WCE3's use of "self-definition" for determining Christian figures - including percentages, absolute numbers, and growth patterns - to be used for disseminating information relative to missions strategizing and prayer. How the major blocs and particular categories of Christianity have been determined in WCE3 will likely generate further discussion as well.

Thankfully, David Barrett and his successors - in this latest instance Todd Johnson, Gina Zurlo, and their many collaborators - have tirelessly and diligently labored to provide reliable, extensive, and accessible statistical information in the *World Christian Encyclopedia*. Those involved directly in Christian missions, along with such indirectly connected groups as government agencies and educational institutions, will be grateful for WCE3's updated encyclopedic overview of Christianity across the generations and around the world.

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## Who's Who in Missions Information

*Special Profile: Marten Visser*

### 1) [CMIW] Please tell us about yourself.

My name is Marten Visser. I am a Dutch Reformed minister who was a church planter with OMF International in Thailand for 15 years. My Ph.D. thesis was a statistical study into conversion growth of the Thai church. I am married to Esther, and have two children who are in university.



*Marten Visser*

### 2) [CMIW] What is your current ministry?

I am CEO of GlobalRize, an internet mission I founded in 2015 and now has 400 volunteers. It grew from a Facebook page Biblword that became the most engaging Bible page in the world with a monthly reach of 50 million people. We are now ministering in 20 languages. GlobalRize continues to reach millions on social media every day. But the real impact is on a personal level. Last year we were in touch with 150,000 people on the chat, and 35,000 students enrolled in an online Bible course and got a personal mentor.

As a sideline, I am involved in launching the Global Harvest Map, which hopefully in the next few years will make the comprehensive national church databases that we have built for several countries in South-east Asia available in all countries of the world. Until recently, I also led a research effort into church growth for East and South-east Asia for OMF International and IMB.

**3) [CMIW] What are the contributions you have made to world missions that have brought you the greatest satisfaction?**

Before going to Thailand, I founded a mission among asylum seekers in The Netherlands that is still going strong, which I am very grateful for. But nothing beats the satisfaction of being used by the Lord to plant a church and help it grow to the point that it has elders and can stand on its own feet. I've been privileged to do this four times during my time in Thailand.

**4) [CMIW] What dreams do you have for your next ten years of ministry?**

I envision a world where everybody online can:

- Hear the gospel clearly and truthfully communicated.
- Hear the Gospel in a language they can understand and fits in with their cultural background.
- Find biblical answers to spiritual life questions.
- Get in personal contact with a Christian who will help them to find Christ and to grow into His image.
- Find the way to a local Christian church.
- If a believer, be encouraged, equipped and motivated to share the Gospel with others.

A comprehensive global database of churches is part of that, as an important tool to help people from screen to church.

**5) [CMIW] Is there some way you'd be willing to help the CMIW community?**

Through the Global Harvest Map I am helping interested parties (mainly national church umbrellas and international mission organisations) build church databases and maps that are not just a PR tool to raise mission awareness, but are granular enough to inform the strategy of national churches. I invite anybody interested in that to contact me.

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## Information from the Word

In Revelation 21, John observes the New Jerusalem. He describes it by using terms of measurement and categorization. An angel uses a measuring rod and reports terms like 'stadia' and 'cubit'. There is an emphasis on a plan for this celestial city. It is obvious that the One in charge values order. But notice that organization is not the end. It is the means toward the city's purpose: the glory of God (vv. 22-26). Her gates "will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations." May that be true of all our measuring!

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### Final Details:

- With the help of God this bulletin is now produced quarterly in English, Portuguese and Spanish.
- The Editorial Team is comprised of Stephanie Kraft, Chris Maynard, Nelson Jennings, Rodrigo Tinoco, Duane Frasier, and Larry Kraft.
- Please send any comments, suggestions or ideas to us at [info@globalcmiw.org](mailto:info@globalcmiw.org).
- Back issues can be found at [www.globalcmiw.org](http://www.globalcmiw.org).