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Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin

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Editor: Jim Harries, PhD, Chairman of the AVM.



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 jim@vulnerablemission.org

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23rd January 2025: Dr. Debbie Kramlich



Learning Over Power

Moving Beyond Cross-cultural Competency to Cultural Humility



Advance notice of webinar!

Dr. Debbie Kramlich will speak about the essentials for transformative learning in ministry and mission.

For further details and to register go to this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/avm-webinar-learning-over-power-tickets-1056454557019?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

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International Churches Aren't the Silver Bullet of Missions Strategy
October 9, 2024 | By Eric White and Dean Polk *The Gospel Coalition*

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/international-churches-missions/>

This brief article challenges 'internationals' who simply gravitate to international churches using regional or more often 'global' languages, to think a little out of the box. International churches may be located in key places where evangelism and church planting ought to be happening. But adherents to an international church quite likely do not have linguistic or cultural skills that can help them to connect profoundly with nationals.

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Embracing Vulnerability

[Embracing Vulnerability](#)

In *The Big Picture*, a publication of the Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology, Dr. Marcus Grohmann engages “one of our defining socio-political challenges” today: how to navigate togetherness in increasingly pluralist, fractured, multicultural societies. He illustrates the unsettling nature of different viewpoints by drawing on several examples from intercultural theological encounters and perspectives on Scripture. He concludes:

“While I may have good reasons for my own convictions, others may have such, too. Reminding ourselves that *all people* were created in God’s image can help us to grow in grace. It can also strengthen our trust in the working of God’s Spirit in other people, so that we become free to relate to them where they are, on their terms. Living in this way entails a healthy measure of vulnerability, and the potential that others would make themselves vulnerable to us as well. That they would show us grace and patience where we may come across as narrow-minded, domineering or ignorant. In such encounters of mutual frailty, we may find not just that our vision of self and others is expanded, but our vision of God too.”

Read the full article here for free: <https://kirbylaingcentre.co.uk/embracing-vulnerability/>

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_30 Mission: Vollzeit in die Mission – Wie erkenne ich Gottes Ruf? mit Dr. Marcus Grohmann und Julia Henrich

<https://blickwechsel-smd.podigee.io/30-new-episode>

What does it mean "to become a missionary" in the 21st century? What personal costs are involved, apart from finding a support structure? How do people actually hear God's call - and do we have to wait for it to take part in God's mission in this world?

These and other questions are discussed in this podcast hosted by the German branch "SMD" of IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. AVM Board member Dr. Marcus Grohmann is one of two dialogue partners, the conversation is held in German.

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The Potential contribution of the writings of Abba Matta, an Egyptian Monk, to missionaries and to African Church leaders and theologians.

<http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/2902/7296>

Jim Harries has reviewed a set of the writings of Father Matthew the Poor (Abba Matta), an Egyptian Coptic monk. These have been published in

globalmissiology.org. Abba Matta, who passed on in 2006, is well known amongst Egyptian Christians for his radical advocacy of profound devotion to Jesus. His own life of dedicated devotion came to fruition as Abba Matta revived one of Egypt's most ancient monasteries in the desert. He was its spiritual leader up to his death. Jim outlines something of the breadth and depth of Abba Matta's writings. He reflects on the impact his writings have had on his own life. He asks whether some of Abba Matta's materials may be particularly suitable for translation into African languages.

A comment from a monk in the monastery in which Abba Matta served until his death: "Thank you for your article about Father Matthew the Poor. I loved it! Your insights truly captured his essence, the impact of his writings, and it turned on the light on another side of his writings that I do not think that anyone ever thought about before."

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Vulnerable Mission and Temptation

Report on a presentation given by Dr. Jim Harries at the EMS (Evangelical Missiological Society) conference held in Dallas, Texas, 4th to 5th October 2024.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/ems-2024-james-alongi-jxv8c/?trackingId=offdY5G3QqKKL5COPUI83q%3D%3D>

As part of the EMS (Evangelical Missiological Society) conference in Dallas, Texas, USA, Jim Harries presented via live-stream on the topic entitled 'Bridging the Culture Gap between Africa and the West in the Light of the Contextuality of Knowledge'...After the presentation, a discussion took place between attendees that may be stated as a question: Does Vulnerable Mission imply that African people are unable to resist the temptation to accept funds, or other advantages that come with the use of English and the presence of Westerners, to their own detriment, or dependence upon the West?

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Marcus' reports on conference trip to Europe (7-17 October 2024)

9-10 Oct 2024: Network of Intercultural Theology (NIT), Loccum/Germany

The NIT is the young scholars branch of the DGMW (see below). One central discussion point was the shift from mission studies to intercultural theology, particularly in the German-speaking academy. For all the value of 'intercultural theology', particularly African participants expressed their fear that moving forward, mission would only be regarded as a historical event instead of a contemporary fact and even a calling of the Church. Marcus presented a paper on Jim Harries' concept of Vulnerable Mission that grappled with some of the critique Jim had received over the years.

10-12 Oct 2024: Annual conference of the German Society for Mission Studies / Deutsche Gesellschaft für Missionswissenschaft (DGMW), Loccum/Germany

Invited speakers presented on the topic why 'Restitution matters': Mission scholars, anthropologists, activists, museum and church representatives from the Global North and South discussed the complexity of meting out justice in the context of colonial theft, deception and violence, filling museums in the west with 'sacred' and other 'objects'. The complicity of historical missions was distressing. Unfortunately, no room had been made to draw contemporary evangelical mission societies into the conversation. Also, feeble attempts at pointing out epistemological differences in even talking about *what* is to be returned, received little attention. The earnestness and urgency in the debates was impressive. Intriguing was the diversity of perspectives: one participant from Africa argued that not just human remains but

sacred objects must be returned to the communities of origin in order ‘to enable us to understand who we are’. Another rejected this position saying that returning objects of worship to communities who have long ago adopted Christianity would be ‘confusing’. Marcus had several opportunities for in-depth conversations about vulnerable mission and made out areas where the AVM could contribute to missiological discourse in the future.

14-16 Oct 2024: Ecumenical conference organised by Protestant and Orthodox Christians, Cluj-Napoca/Romania


Marcus had been invited to lead a seminar on ‘Relating in the spirit of vulnerability’ at this conference on ‘Dealing with conflicts within and between churches”. Around 40 people from around the world gathered in person at the large Orthodox faculty (600 students). The World Council of Churches’ (WCC) experiences were equally engaged with as were the case studies of the Anglican Communion, the Lutheran World Federation and the Orthodox church in multi-ethnic and multi-denominational Romania. What stood out was mainline churches’ perspective on cross-cultural mission as (mainly) belonging to the past and the tendency of trying to live ‘true partnerships’ with ‘independent’ churches in former colonies. On the one hand, a spirit of empathy and openness towards the difference of ‘the other’ was palpable. On the other hand, Marcus perceived a tension between desire for ‘unity’ (embodied by former missionary-sending churches in the West) and the caution against ongoing or *neo*-colonialism (by those who had been receivers of Western mission).


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23rd January 2025: Dr. Debbie Kramlich

Learning Over Power

Moving Beyond Cross-cultural Competency to Cultural Humility






WEBINAR


ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

24th April 2025: Dr. Chris Sadowitz

Serving in an affluent Japanese context

Vulnerable Mission beyond indigenous languages and local resources?






WEBINAR


ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

24th July 2025: Claire Chong

Is Religion a Western idea?

Some Emerging Ideas on the Khmer Notion of Sasna ('Religion')






WEBINAR

ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

23rd October 2025: Mark Smith

Doing Research in 21st century Africa as a European

A decolonial approach



WEBINAR

ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

Future Webinars (2025)

For more information on these webinars, and to register in advance, go to:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/alliance-for-vulnerable-mission-avm-65593048623>

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