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Editor: Jim Harries, PhD, Founder, 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 bulletin@vulnerablemission.org

This month's contents:

When the Change Begins in Us (AVM webinar on 22 January 2026)

- **Review: Paul Planted, Apollos Watered, but God**
- **Gospel Workers as Vulnerable Vessels**
- **Mission as Accompaniment: A Path to a Post-Colonial, Alternative Missionary Practice**
- **Shared Commitment, Shared Impact**
- **Walking Together in Mission: Facing Global Challenges for a Sustainable World**
- **Rethinking Generosity - Missio Nexus**
- **Buchhinweis auf Deutsch (see for English below)**
- **Two Sports as a Model for Intercultural Mission and Theological Education**
- **Report by Mark Smith on CMS Conversation Day**
- **Now available on Amazon: Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners**

The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission in cooperation with



22nd January 2026: George M.



When the Change Begins in Us

Beyond new skills – a transformation of perspective



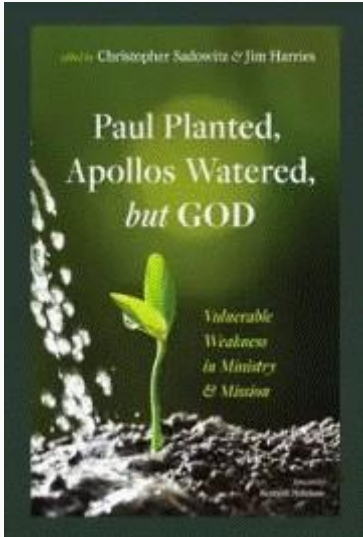
When the Change Begins in Us (AVM webinar on 22 January 2026)

George will take us along on his journey of how he was changed through his many years in Thailand. He will show us how a paradigm shift in what and how we think is so much more important than just augmenting our thinking or learning new skills.

Sign-up [here](#).

Meet the Speaker:

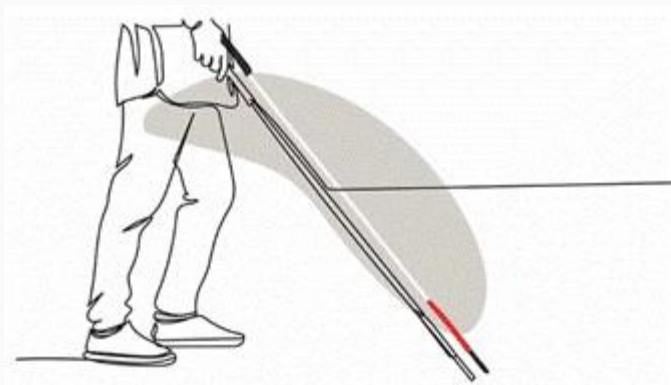
George M. has been living and working in Asia since 1991. He is professionally employed in IT. Father of 3, grandfather of 10, he is bonded to his local community through hardship. His first wife battled and succumbed to cancer after a 9-year struggle. The support of their local community in Asia both humbled and transformed his engagement in advancing the Kingdom.



Review: Paul Planted, Apollos Watered, but God

<https://bobonbooks.com/2025/09/03/review-paul-planted-apollos-watered-but-god/>

See this review by Robert C. Trube (Bob on Books) of the book produced by the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission: *Paul Planted, Apollos Watered, but God*.



Gospel Workers as Vulnerable Vessels

[Gospel Workers as Vulnerable Vessels - Missio Nexus](#)

This EMQ article, by Andrew Opie, is summarised as follows: What happens when disability comes into the picture? It often results in some being left out of gospel work due to not measuring up as sufficient. In contrast to current success-driven notions of productivity and efficiency, God’s repeated pattern of working through vulnerable, weak, and fragile people calls the church to reorient how gospel workers are selected.



New Article on Vulnerable Mission practice in the Argentinian Chaco

by Frank Paul, AVM Advisory Board

Mission as Accompaniment: A Path to a Post-Colonial, Alternative Missionary Practice. In: Evangelical Missions Quarterly (EMQ), Vol. 61:3 (Jul – Sept 2025)

Mission as Accompaniment: A Path to a Post-Colonial, Alternative Missionary Practice

<https://missionexus.org/mission-as-accompaniment-a-path-to-a-post-colonial-alternative-missionary-practice/>

This was published in the Evangelical Missions Quarterly (EMQ), Vol. 61:3 (Jul – Sept 2025). The author is Frank Paul, Advisory Board member of the AVM (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission). The article is now available for viewing and free download to people who do not have an EMQ subscription. The article discusses the transformation of Mennonite missionary practices from imposition to a more respectful, non-paternalistic approach. It highlights the importance of listening, empowering indigenous people, and fostering mutual respect. The shift towards intercultural dialogue and fraternal accompaniment has led to a more respectful and effective missionary presence in the Argentine Chaco.



Shared Commitment, Shared Impact

Vulnerable mission is not sustained by large budgets or institutional power—it grows through shared commitment. So far, the AVM doesn’t employ anyone but increasingly has expenses in terms of admin and particularly travel costs. In all of that we are

blessed to see people who are willing to invest themselves to share the vision of Christian witness in weakness and vulnerability.

This month, we're working on several strategic engagements, including follow-up conversations from the EMS conference, an evangelical missiological conference in Germany in January 2026 and an AVM presence at the global conference of the International Association for Mission Studies in South Africa in 2026 (see below).

These opportunities require travel, preparation, and in-person attendance. If you'd like to **help us fund and extend this work**, we invite you to contribute.

Also, can you think of **two people who might be interested in supporting the ministry of the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission**? We kindly ask that you put us in touch with them ([email Marcus Grohmann](#)).

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Please click [here](#) for once-off or regular donations to the AVM.



Walking Together in Mission: Facing Global Challenges for a Sustainable World

16th General Assembly of the International Alliance for Mission Studies (IAMS) in Pretoria, 17-21 July 2026.

[Call-for-Papers-IAMS-2026 1.pdf](#)

For this major international mission studies conference, AVM Director Dr. Marcus Grohmann proposed a panel with the title '[Mission After Empire: A Self-Critical Reconsideration of Western Engagement](#)'. Several AVM affiliated people are planning to present at this panel and conference. If you consider contributing a paper to the panel (virtual attendance is possible), please contact Marcus via marcus.grohmann@vulnerablemission.org. Abstract submissions by 30 November 2025.



Rethinking Generosity - Missio Nexus

<https://missionexus.org/rethinking-generosity/>

By Jim Harries, Non-exec. Chair of the Governing Board of the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission.

(The above link will only work for people who receive the Evangelical Missions' Quarterly. This article will be freely available to others in addition after three months.)

Sometimes, as missionaries, we are not aware of the ways our generosity unintentionally causes problems. Often, providing material resources is associated with power. This disrupts local relationships, even when nothing is said. Sacred power is an alternative to the power associated with material generosity. Giving that focuses on emptying oneself rather than the gain of another reflects Jesus' generosity. This sacrificial generosity equalizes missionary and local. Its cost is far greater than money and material resources.

Erich Schnepel (1939):

Jesus im frühen Mittelalter

Der Weg des Evangeliums unter den Germanen



Erich Schnepel (1939):

Jesus in the Early Middle Ages

The Path of the Gospel among the Germanic Peoples

Buchhinweis auf Deutsch (see for English below)

Von Mark Smith:

In diesem Buch entdecke ich Gedanken, die Richtung "Vulnerable Mission" führen. Schnepels These ist, dass da, wo das Evangelium den Germanen ohne Macht und Geld gepredigt wurde, es gut Eingang finden und sich weiterpflanzen konnte. Ohne das Wort "vulnerable" zu verwenden, beschreibt er eine "vulnerable Mission" unter vielen Germanenstämmen in den ersten Jahrhunderten der Germanenmission. Die Anzahl der Konvertiten entscheidet dabei nicht über die Qualität der Arbeit. Gleichzeitig geschieht dies nach Gottes Zeitplan. Ich schließe daraus, dass wir durch unsere Methoden und Mittel nicht Gottes Zeitplan beschleunigen können. Ein Zitat:

„Obwohl [für die kriegsgefangenen Christen aus dem römischen Reich] alles das wegfiel, was uns heute bei einem Dienst für Christus notwendig erscheint, blieb nicht nur ihr eigenes Leben mit Jesus erhalten, sie gewannen sogar ihre gotischen Herren für Christus.“

Schon kurz nach dem Erscheinen im Jahr 1939 durfte dieses Buch nicht neu aufgelegt werden. Es hatte zu viel Sprengkraft. Für uns, die wir über verletzte Mission nachdenken, kann dieses Buch Anstöße liefern. Der Herr ist der Herr der Gemeinde!

Schnepel, Erich. 1978 [1939]. Jesus im frühen Mittelalter: Der Weg des Evangeliums unter den Germanen. Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission.

English translation (based on Chat GPT)

By Mark Smith:

In this book, I discover ideas that point toward the concept of "Vulnerable Mission." Schnepel's thesis is that wherever the Gospel was preached to the Germanic peoples without power or money, it was able to take root and spread effectively. Without using the word "vulnerable," he describes a form of vulnerable mission among many Germanic tribes during the early centuries of the Germanic mission. The number of converts does not determine the quality of the work. At the same time, all of this unfolds according to God's timeline. From this, I conclude that our methods and means cannot accelerate God's timing. A quote from the book:

“Although [for the Christian prisoners of war from the Roman Empire] everything that we today consider necessary for serving Christ was taken away, not only were they able to continue their life with Jesus—they even won their Gothic masters for Christ.”

Shortly after its publication in 1939, the book was no longer permitted to be reprinted. It was too explosive. For those of us reflecting on vulnerable mission, this book can offer valuable impulses. The Lord is the Lord of the Church!

Schnepel, Erich. 1978 [1939]. Jesus im frühen Mittelalter: Der Weg des Evangeliums unter den Germanen. Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission.



Two Sports as a Model for Intercultural Mission and Theological Education

<https://www.asiamissions.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/JimHarries.pdf>

Trying to explain a sport such as soccer or tennis to someone who only knows about the other of those sports can provide a model to help understand the difficulties involved in communication between cultures. What are the implications of using this model for facilitating intercultural communication in the realm of theology and mission, especially between the West and Africa? Africans do not have the same cultural and historical background as Westerners, yet they are required to use

a Western language when they talk about theological and other issues. Just as soccer players using tennis language may not comprehend what tennis terms actually refer to, Africans do not understand Western concepts and language in the same ways as Westerners do. To compensate—and please their Western teachers and financial supporters—Africans may well imitate what Western missionaries and teachers coach them to speak or think, as a result of which they don’t learn to think for themselves. Many non-Westerners are unable to come to their own culturally appropriate conclusions using Western languages and educational means. This leaves them dependent on Westerners to figure out how to live in a way Westerners will approve. It is hard to accurately describe a soccer match (African ways of life) using only tennis terminology (cf. English). Africans are encouraged to continue with this dysfunctional way of living—imitating Western ways using a Western language—as a result of the incentive of outside finance, better jobs, etc.



Report by Mark Smith on CMS Conversation Day

On 21 October 2025 Marcus G, Deborah B and I attended the hybrid CMS Conversation Day on “God, Mammon and Empire”. I am thankful for the open atmosphere that was visible throughout the webinar. Participants felt free to ask critical questions even about their own organisations, not to undermine, but to improve them. The webinar was based on two books, in order of presentation:

Smith, David. 2025. God or Mammon: The Critical Issue Confronting World Christianity. Langham.

David Smith is a British missiologist who already 25 years ago proposed to change mission work, as the missionary’s task is not to reconstruct Christendom. All his books have been of great benefit to me. Their contents are reflected in the way I work.

Kwiyani, Harvey C. 2025. Decolonising Mission. SCM Press.

As a background to the book title, Kwiyani from Malawi told the story of the Malawian pastor John Chilembwe (1871-1925). He started a rebellion against descendants of the missionary David Livingstone (1813-1873), the latter’s approach to mission work had expressly included ‘civilisation’ of the ‘natives’ and Western-oriented economic development. However, Livingstone’s descendants in their capitalist economic endeavours feared the emancipation of locals through churches and schools and would not allow these in the vicinity of their vast tracts of land.

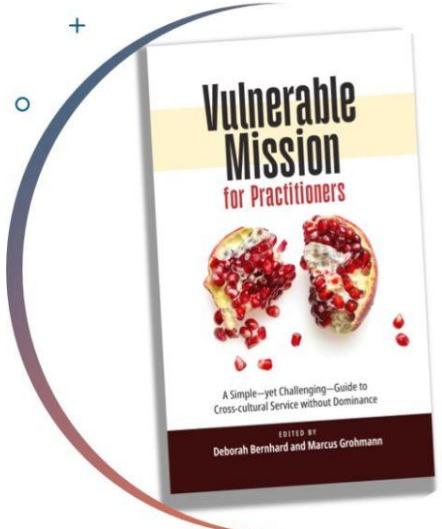
A basic thesis put forward at the Conversation Day was that Western mission work is still too intertwined with western capitalism (or “Mammon” in the words of David Smith), and hinders the achievement of its spiritual goals.

The presentations were followed by a panel of four missionaries from Western and non-Western background. One lady from the Netherlands asked some questions and proposed answers which I consider important also for a vulnerable approach:

1. Are missionaries still needed? — Yes, if their work is transactional/based on reciprocity.
2. Is money part of mission work? — One Pakistani friend told her: It is right that we have to write accountability reports for the finances we receive. However, why do you not write accountability reports for the relationships we provide for you? Is money more important than relationships?
3. What if migration becomes central to our understanding of missions? — The person who migrates becomes dependent on the relationship of others.

In conclusion: While not explicitly mentioned, the approach of Vulnerable Missions would enrich many aspects discussed during the webinar. Reducing the influence of Western finances would cause Western economic means to become less prominent in mission work, increase the need for strong local relationships and avoid colonial-style Christian empire building. Expressed in the words of the book titles, Mammon would not become God and decolonisation would be furthered.

I am looking forward to reading both books that were presented and gain more insights into possible improvements of my own work in God’s kingdom, focusing more on Jesus.



A compact book for practitioners that explains ...

- what vulnerable mission is
- what it can look like in a variety of cultural contexts
- how vulnerable mission differs from other mission approaches
- why vulnerable mission is so important
- what serving according to the principles of vulnerable mission may require

Now available: Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners

The recently published book ‘Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners’ is available on [Amazon](#) as well as on the [AVM website](#) as paperback and PDF ebook. Listen to a brief summary in form of a 5-minute AI-generated podcast [here](#).

Since the book is available on a donation basis through our website, this could be a great option if you’d like to request multiple copies—for example, for members of your organisation, missionary colleagues, or ministry partners.

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- Relating to people through their languages and local resources -



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