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## Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin

March 2026

Volume 18, Number 3



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Editor: Jim Harries, PhD

*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](mailto:bulletin@vulnerablemission.org)

16<sup>th</sup> April 2026: Deborah Bernhard & Jim Harries



**The Limits of Letting Go**  
Navigating the complexities of  
submitting to local leadership  
in Vulnerable Mission



**Webinar on  
16 April 2026**

**Register now!**

### Upcoming Webinar: The Complexities of Submitting to Local Leadership

How far should Western missionaries and practitioners go in relinquishing control and submitting to local leadership? What are the risks, tensions, and transformative possibilities when ministry is carried out in indigenous languages and with local resources alone?

In this interview-style webinar, **Deborah Bernhard** (former missionary in Thailand and co-editor of *Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners*) and **Jim Harries** (long-term missionary in Kenya and founder of the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission) will explore the paradoxes of “letting go” in cross-cultural ministry.

More information and sign up for this webinar [here](#).

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### What Do You Lose When You Lose Your Language?

Joshua Fishman is considered one of the founding fathers of socio-linguistics. Some of his writings these days might be considered dated – others have built on his theories. Yet, there can be value in going back to the originals. When a people lose the language,” the late Fishman told us, they “lose their direction in life.” “A language long associated with the culture is best able to express most easily, most exactly, most richly, with more appropriate overtones, the concerns, artifacts, values, and interests of that culture,” Fishman wrote. Fishman adds that teaching a language in school will not make that language into a mother tongue. He says many interesting and insightful things [in this short article](#) that can motivate cross-cultural workers to prioritise working in local languages.

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**Impressive Isn't Transferable**

“Discipleship is not meant to be impressive. It’s meant to be transferable,” Jean Johnson tells us in this intriguing post. She goes on to explain: “Most of us didn’t come to the nations to build dependence. We came to serve—to see disciples multiply, churches strengthened, and communities encouraged. But sometimes the very strengths we bring—organization, training skills, theological clarity, systems, resources—can quietly create the opposite result: people begin to rely on us instead of growing in confidence and ownership themselves.”

“It’s not because we’re trying to be the hero. It’s because Western excellence is powerful. And power always shapes outcomes.” Read the whole story [here!](#)



### Bible Translation Forum, Germany

The next Bible Translation Forum in Germany will be on 29–30 May 2026 at the International Conference Center Karimu (Wycliffe Germany).

Contact [Tianji Ma](#) for more information.

- **Language:** This forum occurs primarily in German though some presentations are in English.
- **Costs:** In addition to the Karimu accommodation costs, there is a **conference fee of approximately €30–50 per participant.**
- **Call for Papers:** Email [Tianji Ma](#) with your paper proposals. An annual yearbook is usually published after the Forum.
- **Plenary Speakers:** Each year, the program features around 5–7 speakers covering a wide spectrum of topics. For May 2026, **Dr. Jim Harries** and **Prof. Dr. Gerhard Tauberschmidt**, will be speaking, amongst others.
- **Organization and Intended Audience:** The Forum was originally founded in 2005 by the translator Eberhard Werner. After his passing, Tianji Ma took over the coordination. Tianji serves as a missionary with OMF International and teaches at several Chinese theological seminaries. The Forum takes place annually in Germany and welcomes a broad range of contributions related to Bible translation—exegetical, translational, methodological, linguistic, and more. They especially encourage presentations that are accessible to participants from diverse backgrounds and stimulate discussion. Presentations typically last 50 minutes to one hour, followed by feedback and open dialogue. The intended audience includes anyone interested in Bible translation, both in theory and in practice.



## Evangelical Missiological Society 2026

The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission encourages participation in this event. Various regional events also occur in April.

2026 CONFERENCE THEME:

**Theological Anthropology for Missional Engagement**

October 9-10 2026

In-person and virtual

**Dallas Theological Seminary**

[3909 Swiss Ave, Dallas, TX 75204](#)

<https://www.emsweb.org/conferences/annual/>

This year's theme "**Theological Anthropology for Missional Engagement**" is central to missiological reflection and practice, since acts of gospel witness, service, and cultural engagement all rest on assumptions about human identity, dignity, and destiny. In a rapidly changing world—marked by shifting views of spirituality, ethnicity, gender, technology, and ecology—the church must embrace a biblically faithful and missionally engaged understanding of the imago Dei.

At the heart of this year's theme is the exploration of *Imago Dei* in missional engagement—how human dignity, human rights, and gospel witness flow from being created in God's image. This perspective grounds reflection on the meaning of being human and how the imago Dei shapes evangelism, discipleship, community, and global mission

## 2026 Conference – Theme:

***From “the rest” to the “West:”  
Global justice, de-coloniality,  
and mutuality in Gospel witness***



**asm**  
american society of missiology

June 19-21, 2026

St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, USA

## American Society of Missiology 2026

### American Society of Missiology - Annual Conference Call for Papers

The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission encourages participation in this event.

The theme will be *From "the rest" to the "West:" Global justice, de-coloniality, and mutuality in Gospel witness.*

## Join AVM Webinars in 2026



22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026: George M.

### When the Change Begins in Us

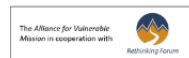
Beyond new skills – a transformation of perspective



16<sup>th</sup> April 2026: Deborah Bernhard & Jim Harries

### The Limits of Letting Go

Navigating the complexities of submitting to local leadership in Vulnerable Mission



9<sup>th</sup> July 2026: Aanand A.

### Following Jesus as Yesu Bhakta in the Hindu context



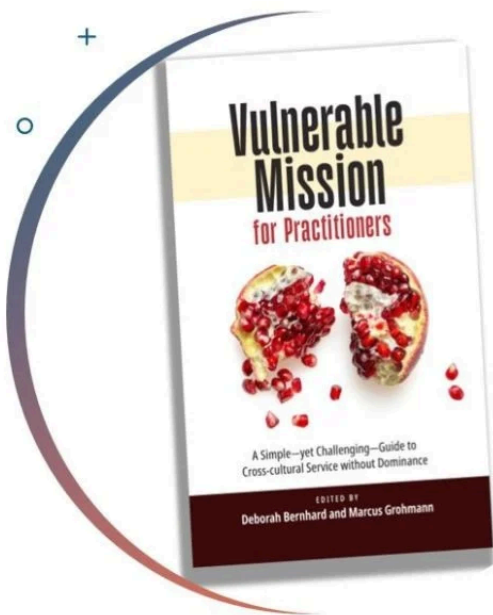
15<sup>th</sup> October 2026: Anna T.

### Serving as alongsiders in the Muslim world



## Join the AVM Webinars in 2026

The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission (AVM) invites you to its **2026 webinar series**, a space for humble dialogue on mission, language, and culture. Themes include *transformation of self, the complexities of submitting to local leadership, and humbly walking with Christ-followers in different cultural-religious contexts*. These online gatherings bring together a range of voices for shared learning and reflection. To join, please register [here](#).



## 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

### Explore *Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners*—A Resource for the Year Ahead

After its publication in 2025, *Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners* remains available to those interested in exploring the principles and practices of vulnerable mission. The book can be ordered through [Amazon](#) or via the [AVM website](#) in both paperback and PDF ebook formats. A 5-minute AI-generated [podcast summary](#) is also available for a quick introduction.

Since the book is offered on a donation basis through our website, it may be a helpful option if you'd like to request multiple copies—for example, for your organisation, missionary colleagues, or ministry partners.

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- *Relating to people through their languages and local resources* -



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**Allianz für Verletzte Mission**

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