

2016 Annual Report for Eric Belz, Africa Director of Pathways Pastor Training with EFCA/ReachGlobal

1. **Your Ministry:** *Explain your ministry in one sentence for a lay person.*

My ministry is to train African pastors and church leaders to study, obey and teach God's Word well, equipping them to pass this training on to others, and at the same time to equip US pastors to assist in this endeavor.

2. **Strategic Value:** *Tell why your ministry is important or strategic and how it fits into the "big picture."*

This ministry is important and strategic because most pastors in the majority world are uncertain how to best teach their people and grow healthy, effective churches. Over 90% of majority world pastors have received no formal training, so they pass on false teaching such as prosperity theology, syncretism and works righteousness which hurt the cause of Christ. The training we offer grounds them not only in the truths of Scripture, God revelation of Himself and His will for us in Christ, but it also gives them tools so that pastors can study and teach God's Word well and build their churches on this foundation. This will lead to healthy ministries based on the Word, God's kingdom will grow authentically, and disciples will be made of all nations (Matt.28:18-20), which is the "big picture." The series of nine workshops over three years we offer are effective for long-term change on a trajectory for exponential growth, and they are reproducible and sustainable because they are "owned" and driven by nationals. The multiplication of the trainings to other pastors is embedded in the DNA of the training, so hundreds and thousands of pastors can receive much needed training.

3. **Scriptural Basis:** *Give one or two Scripture verses and explain how they undergird your ministry.*

Obviously there are MANY passages I could reference, but a couple which are fundamental for our ministry are Ezra's commitment as he "set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel." (Ezra 7:10) We long for pastors and church leaders to grow strong spiritually by studying God's Word and obeying it. The Bible is our foundation and what we base our actions and beliefs on, "so the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim.3:17) Beyond this, we are raising up movements of leaders who can preach the Word well, for God's Word is our authority and the substance of our message (2 Tim.4:1-5). Finally, we strive to equip leaders who will pass this training on to others, as Paul tells Timothy in 2 Tim.2:2. We desire that solid, expository preaching of the Word would be spread and multiplied for every tongue and tribe and nation, to the glory of Christ by the work of His Spirit.

4. **Motivation:** *Why do you continue to do what you do?*

I cannot imagine a more fulfilling calling than to bring glory to God by equipping leaders to study, obey and teach the Word well, so lives are transformed launching

movements which impact communities, regions and nations for the Gospel. The needs are so profound globally and national leaders are so hungry for our training. God has shaped me in such a way to connect well cross-culturally with pastors and leaders, to develop them so they embrace the truths of Scripture, to empower them to obey His Word, and to release them so they preach His Word with truth and power, and train others to do the same. Pastors and leaders are learning the Gospel, in some cases for the first time, congregations are being transformed, authentic Bible-preaching movements are spreading, and God is being exalted. What could be more rewarding? The work is challenging and eternally significant, and I'm grateful to be a part of what God is doing.

5. **Priorities:** *How do you decide what ministry activities to do and what not to do?*

This is a real challenge. There are so many opportunities globally for us to give this training to leaders, and we want to be strategic and guard against spreading ourselves too thin. For this reason, in addition to training pastors overseas, we also train pastors and church leaders in the US, so they can be mobilized to train leaders globally. In this way, we can reach far more than just our team members could. Also, we work as part of a team (the Global Equipping Division in ReachGlobal / EFCA) to determine where the fields are the "whitest" and leaders are the most ready and in need of our training. Before launching any new network, I work closely with national leaders in each country, carefully selecting the network coordinator and master trainers, and setting a detailed plan for how multiplication of the training will happen. All is brought before the throne of God and we submit to the Spirit's guidance. Personally, I also am accountable to my team leader and make sure that my wife supports the work I'm doing, since I tend to "bite off more than I can chew."

6. **Successes and Challenges (Results):** *What are some of the encouragements you've seen this past year and what are some challenges?*

Successes - I have been encouraged in many areas this year.

- A. Team - I am a part of a very healthy, mature team of like-minded missionaries/pastors who are passionate about God being glorified and His kingdom growing. As our vision statement says, we do this "by equipping reproducing leaders globally for kingdom transformation and expansion." It is a joy to serve along with them, and they completely support my leadership of Pathways Africa.
- B. US pastors - I've also been encouraged to see the receptivity of our Bible training among US pastors, many of whom are motivated to help train overseas. I have brought several pastors with me, and in some cases they are now fully facilitating trainings. Even these US pastors share how the training is helping them in their own weekly preaching, sharpening their skills.
- C. Indigenous church and leader transformation - We occasionally hear from church members of the pastors we train who share about the transformation that has occurred in their pastor's preaching and ministry since beginning our course. However, we regularly hear from the pastors themselves about the growth they

personally and in their ministries are experiencing as a result of implementing training we offer them. Recently, Pastor Vishal from Delhi, India shared with me, *"Before this class, there was no blessing in my ministry. I did so much prayer and visitation, but no Bible study for preaching. I would open a Bible Dictionary to preach my messages. But since beginning to use Pathways, the church began to weep. One man in my church told me that based on my sermon from God's Word, he gathered all the idols in his house and threw them out. I thank God for this training, and through your correcting our mistakes, our preaching has improved much."* For more video testimonies, [CLICK HERE](#).

- D. Reproduction - The deepest encouragement is not what we hear from people, but what we see in their lives. Pastors not only embrace and implement this training, but they are passionately passing it on to others they know. The things we most value, we share with others. So the fact is that nearly every pastor I regularly work with overseas (about 125 pastors in eight locations) is training other groups of pastors and church leaders in their region. In this way, we estimate we may be reaching 2000+ pastors across the continent. Although I continue to assist with funding the first generation trainings, there is a strong sense of ownership by participants as they prepare for trainings, raise funds, and pass trainings on.

Challenges – Some of the difficulties we have faced are:

- A. Growth Pains – There are far more venues waiting to be launched than we are able to follow through to completion, and so we guard against over commitment. While I try to train US pastors to join us, it can be difficult to mobilize them to the point where they are joining us annually.
- B. Tracking Progress – We try to keep track of all those we are training and how they are progressing, but it can be difficult to determine what their perception truly is, not only of the training but also of expository preaching in general. Also, it is difficult to track with any precision what the pastors are doing with the trainings we give them, since we don't attend trainings they offer. I am hoping to probe more into some of these issues as I continue my doctoral studies.
- C. Multiplication – We are finding that in most of the locations where we launch networks, while the master trainers eagerly receive and use the material, the multiplication goals we set with national leadership are not fully meeting expectations. This is oftentimes due to cross-cultural issues (e.g. younger pastors can't train older ones), funding challenges, busy schedules, denominational resistance, and the like. This will be a primary aim for growth in 2017.
- D. Funding – Indigenous pastors have very little money, struggling to feed their families much less pay for first or second generation trainings. While trying to guard against unhealthy dependency upon western funds, we try to guide them to locally-driven solutions and offer subsidies to offset training costs, transportation, translation of material, etc.

7. **Growth:** *How are you growing and what are you learning from God and Scripture?*

As I prepare for and deliver messages from the Word, growth is inevitable. As I frequently tell our pastor trainers, we give to the people of God out of the overflow of what we receive from God through His Word. As I prepare for and give messages and train others to do this, I am finding my own exegetical and homiletical skills are improving as I apply the tools we teach to pastors. I am learning that what we are doing is not just preaching the Word, but we are training an army of faithful preachers of the Word. As this work grows, I am convinced that this ministry is not about me, but it is all about God, His Word, and empowering others to handle His Word well (2 Tim.2:15). His grace is sufficient to do marvelous works through my weakness, which again leads me to praise Him that He is at the center of all we do (2 Cor.12:9). I am finding some of my greatest growth is through the Doctor of Missiology courses I'm in. Right now, I'm taking a course on spiritual warfare and one on intercultural leadership, and in both cases I'm growing significantly. In January I will be taking two more courses on tracing themes in the biblical metanarrative and on transformation in cultures. The workload is heavy, with thousands of pages to read, papers to write, projects to prepare, etc. But the learning curve is worth it as I'm growing in many areas toward becoming **more effective in my work**, and helping our team think through important issues.

8. **Future:** *What ministry goals and plans do you have for the next year?*

In our team, I am directing the trainings and networks for the continent of Africa, and so I am pouring myself into growing our training ministry in all regions of Africa. I am hoping and praying in God's time I will find a colleague who can be my partner in directing this work in Africa, and have a lead on one at present. By God's grace, I have set an ambitious plan to launch new training networks this year in Zambia, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Togo, Liberia and Uganda as well as maintaining present networks. This year we are graduating two networks in Tanzania and Rwanda as well as maintaining several other networks which are progressing through the three year cycle. I will be doing about 10 training trips internationally in 2016, and also several other trainings, mission conferences and meetings in the US. Since I now live in the Pacific Northwest, I am working to train a group of pastors in this area as well as working with other pastors throughout the West. I hope to develop a team of US-based pastor-trainers for Africa allowing me to launch new locations and support our existing ones. I will also continue coaching pastors in each of our international training venues, encouraging them to pass the trainings on to others. I will also be available to our other Pathways team members and Global Equipping Division team members for assistance in their global trainings as well as various team tasks. In addition to all this, I will be continuing my doctoral work, which is quite consuming, taking at least two-three courses during the year.

9. **Finances:** *What are your financial needs to accomplish your ministry?*

We are very thankful for the many partners, both individuals and churches, who give sacrificially so we can continue training pastors internationally. We cherish the partnerships we share, and pray they continue long into the future.

By God's grace and through the faithful, generous partnership of our support team, we have a bit of margin in our ministry account, although this balance is decreasing due to three factors:

- a) As the ministry expands, the number of trips I make and ministry related expenses are increasing.
- b) As the ministry expands, the needs of the African pastors with whom we work also expands, and I must help subsidize their costs to come to the trainings, covering translation costs, etc. We encourage the pastors to take ownership of the trainings, and yet they have very little, so as a team we have decided some subsidizing from our personal ministry accounts is appropriate.
- c) Several of our individual donors have been forced to decrease or stop their giving due to a variety of reasons, such as loss of income, economic hardships, increased health problems, etc.

At present, we need about \$1500/month more support to meet our expenses. As all of you who know me are well aware, I am a very frugal person, so rest assured that I'm seeking every means to cut costs. Please pray that God will provide the funds necessary to meet these needs.

10. **Prayer Requests:** *What are your biggest ongoing prayer requests?*

Personally, we would continue to ask for prayer for complete healing for Holly and Alyssa, both of whom are still struggling with health issues that leave them very low in energy, feeling sick, toxicity and parasites in organs, etc. Alyssa is in an online academy which provides flexibility in her daily schedule. Both Holly and Alyssa are making slow improvement, although Holly had a significant setback for four months this year, but still have a ways to go before they are fully recovered, so we continue to pray. Since I travel quite a bit, please pray that the family will not just survive but will thrive while I'm away and that we will stay connected as a family even though we are apart. At this time, we seem to be fairly balanced.

In ministry, please pray for wisdom in launching new training venues and God's Spirit and energy in continuing with existing ones. Pray for US partners to help us facilitate trainings, and that our African trainers will be faithful to pass the trainings on to other pastors and leaders. Praise God with us for the wonderful work He has been doing, and we eagerly anticipate and depend upon His continued activity.

Submitted with appreciation for our supporters and gratitude to our awesome God.

Erin R. Boly

