

# Familial Relationships (Mutualism) of Frontier Missiology of Asia's House Church Networks

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We have come to the end of the first quarter of the Third Millennium, which is almost 2,000 years since our Lord Jesus gave His Great Commission to “make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:19-20). With his full authority over heaven and earth (v.18), and with his promise to build His church without hindrance from the powers of hell (16:18), why has his church failed to finish the job? Why is more than one-third of the world's population still largely unreached?<sup>1</sup> May I humbly suggest that to be effective and strategic, Evangelical mission need to do His mission according to His simple plan for world evangelization and transformation in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This article highlights how the familial relationships (mutualism) of “Frontier Missiology” (FM)<sup>2</sup> has been propagated by the mission movements of the house church networks (HCNs) in Asia, as they sought to realize God's kingdom in contexts of religious pluralism. This has been implemented usually as underground communities and networks and on the fringes of Christendom (denominational Christianity) since the “gospel explosion” of the HCNs in China in the late 1970s.

The first conference of Asia's HCN leaders from seven countries (including China, India, Japan, Singapore and the Philippines) was convened in Manila in 2006. This was followed with annual conferences which grew to 23 Asian countries in 2009 when they convened the first global HCN leaders conference in New Delhi. Two more global conferences were held in Bangkok in 2015 and in Bali in 2018. Since then they have decided to simply convene local gatherings as needed, with no plans to gather globally again. They felt that they have already consolidated as a global family of families; what is needed is to just continue focusing on multiplying familial HCNs that will manifest God's kingdom on earth globally.<sup>3</sup>

We estimate that in Asia, the number of Jesus-followers<sup>4</sup> in HCNs have become more than church-goers in the denominations since 2018. Thus, we believe we can continue to multiply by just following God's simple plan to use familial relationships (mutualism), which means attaining full trust and love (agape) among a group (big or small) of people that are akin to “friends who are closer than one's brother” (Prov. 17:13; 18:24; 27:10) and “love one another as I loved you,” by which all can identify the true followers of Jesus (Jn. 13:34-35).<sup>5</sup> Can we apply this effectively in the rapidly growing global use of social media and artificial intelligence (AI) in our digital age? This essay describes this divine mutualism plan in its six dimensions: outcome, strategy, methodology, spirituality, structure, and ecosystem from FM perspective.

## SIMPLE OUTCOME: DISCIPLED OR TRANSFORMED NATIONS

The FM of Asia's HCNs adopts the holistic vision and mission of Transformation Missiology, which is based on Jesus' mission: to proclaim good news to the poor, realizing the year of God's favor (Jubilee) starting from his hometown Nazareth (Luke 4:18-21; 7:20-23).<sup>6</sup> His followers were taught to pray “Thy kingdom come” so that his will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven, and to do his mission which was to transform communities through sanctifying each city (polis) they reside in. World peace (shalom) can be attained through discipling all nations to implement mutualism.

God desires all people to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:3-5) and live as disciplined communities where they enjoy abundant life on earth (Jn. 10:10) as they obey Him as their Creator through their faith in Jesus Christ. This can only be attained through “discipling nations,” where individuals, families, communities and institutions are called to repent and be converted to trust and follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior to realize his reign on earth. This means transforming people, communities and institutions into Christ-centeredness,<sup>7</sup> growing towards righteousness marked

4. HCNs prefer to use “Jesus-followers” rather than “Christians,” because the latter connotes “church-goers” and usually have negative connotations in most contexts today.

5. Cf. Kevin Caldwell, “Mutualism Experienced: The World's Religious Heritages, and Ancient Wells of Wisdom,” *Asian Society of Frontier Missions (ASFM) Bulletin*, No. 20 (October 2024),

6. On Transformation Missiology (or integral mission), see Vinay Samuel and C. Sugden, eds., *Mission as Transformation* (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), and Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999).

7. Conversion “implies the use of existing structures, the

1. In February 2024, Joshua Project reported that percentage-wise Christ-followers are growing faster than general population (1.7% vs .87%), but the absolute number of non-believers is increasing; there are more people alive today that do not know Christ than at any other time in history; and India has over half of the global population of frontier unreached people groups yet receives less than 3% of the world's full-time missionaries. In <https://joshuaproject.net/assets/media/handouts/status-of-world-evangelization.pdf>.

2. On Frontier Missiology, see David Lim, “Catalyzing ‘Insider Movements’ Among the Unreached,” *Journal of Asian Mission* 10.1-2 (March-September 2008), 125-145, and Kevin Higgins, “The Key to Insider Movements: The ‘Devoted’s’ of Acts,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 21.4 (Winter 2004), 156-160.

3. On the HCNs in Asia, see David Lim, “The House Church Movements in Asia,” *Asian Missions Advance*, vol. 35 (January 2013), 3-7; “Asia's House Church Movements Today,” *Asian Missions Advance*, vol. 52 (July 2016), 7-12; and “Vision and Strategies of House Church Leaders in Asia,” *Asia Missions Advance*, vol. 71 (April 2021), 17-20.

by self-giving love (agape), where every family will be blessed (cf. Gen 12:1-3).

God's kingdom on earth is best depicted in Isaiah 65:17-25 which envisions a "new heaven and new earth" (called the New Jerusalem in Rev 21-22) where death, marriage and child-bearing still prevail, yet blessedness is passed on for generations (v. 23). Humanity will reach their full potential of "being human" (created in the image of God) through four righteous relationships: political governance (with fellow humans, vv. 17-20 and 25b), economic justice (with the physical world, vv. 21-22 and 25a), cultural indigeneity (with ancestral wisdom, v. 23) and spiritual maturity (with God, v. 24). All these transformations are attainable (not perfectly but substantially), so that "kings" will lead their nations with their earthly achievements into the eternal city (Rev. 21:24-27).

### **SIMPLE STRATEGY: DISCIPLE MAKING THROUGH FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS**

In FM, missions happen "naturally" through all believers (so-called "lay-people") making disciples as they migrate, work or study among the unreached as "tentmakers." They just use their vocations to go among the unreached to be models and witnesses for Christ where they live and work. Like the Apostle Paul, these "bi-vocationals" would not only be supporting themselves, but also subsidizing their co-workers and even helping the poor (Acts 20:33-35).

To transform the world, Jesus just modeled and trained his disciples to evangelize the villages of Galilee (eventually to all nations) by simply sending them two by two without bringing outside resources into the community (Luke 10:4). They just had to find a local "person of peace" (vv. 5-6) and disciple that person to disciple their relatives, friends and neighbors (vv. 4b-9), transforming them from "wolves" into "lambs" (cf. v. 3) from house to house (not by the outsider, but by the insider, v. 7). If there is no such person in a community, they can just go to another one (vv. 10-16).

And that's how the apostles and the early church extended God's kingdom, through forming house (oikos) church networks (HCNs) in each place, across the Roman Empire and beyond. Each oikos or "household" was composed of the family, tenants and slaves, as seen in the instructions given in Eph. 5:22-6:9 & Col. 3:18-4:1.<sup>8</sup> Missions were done by all believers (Acts 8:1,4; 11:19-21). Simple believers who scattered

<sup>8</sup>turning of these structures to new directions, the application of new material and standards to a system of thought and conduct already in place and functioning. It is not about substitution, the replacement of something old with something new, but about transformation, the turning of the already existing to new account" in Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 28. The process of transformation is from the heart or the "inside out," hence Christward.

8. David Lim, "God's Kingdom as Oikos Church Networks: A Biblical Theology," *International Journal of Frontier Mission* 34.1-4 (Jan-Dec 2017), 25-35. Each oikos church crossed many cultural barriers, particularly gender, age, class and ethnicity (Gal. 3:28, cf. Acts 2:17-18).

due to persecution in Jerusalem just extended the familial love in their homes to love their neighbors and disciple them for Christ.

The formation of disciples through house-based networks has been the practical outworking of the "priesthood of all believers," as all Jesus-followers were empowered to use their homes to bless their neighbors. It's simply discipling every believer to serve as God's minister in and through their extended family to their circles of influence. "Life is relationships. The rest are just details."<sup>9</sup>

**Friendship Evangelism.** "Making disciples" requires converting people to follow Jesus by pledging full loyalty to him as Lord of lords and King of kings, through both repentance from sin and faith ("worship") expressed in "loving God and loving neighbors" (Matt 22:37-39; 7:12), instead of doing religious rituals and ceremonies (Matt. 15:1-20; Col. 2:16-23, cf. Amos 5:21-24) in religious temples (Acts 7:48; 17:24).<sup>10</sup> The proof of faith is "love and good works" (Heb. 10:24; Eph. 2:8-10; Jas. 2:14-26). Jesus declared that he had come so that people could experience "Jubilee everyday" (Luke 4:20), and showed such good works as proof of his messianic identity to John the Baptist and his disciples (7:20-23) and the people (Acts 7:38).

Hence, we disciple and empower each believer to do "friendship evangelism" by simply sharing their faith through first loving with their neighbors, relatives, and friends – as they do ministry in their neighborhoods, workplaces and/or affinity groups (based on common interests, needs or causes). Then they disciple their new disciples in small groups called disciple-making groups,<sup>11</sup> like what Paul did with his disciples: teaching faithful people who will be able to disciple others also (2 Tim. 2:2). Behold, a new HCN is born!

**Simple Religiosity.** Isaiah 65:24 hints at a mature form of faith in the generous God whose blessings do not need to be earned or pleaded for, religiously or otherwise (cf. Matt. 6:5-8). New Jesus-followers with or without religious affiliation can mature spiritually to trust in God and love him above all. Their faith will start by adapting to the majority religion or ideology in their community (1 Cor 7:18-20), but ultimately develop into simple religiosity, each living a "love God and love everyone" lifestyle for God's glory.

Jesus taught his disciples to practice only three secret disciplines, in Matthew 6:1-18: (a) Almsgiving for friendship evangelism - sharing what they have with the poor; (b) Praying for personal devotion - hearing God through prayerful meditation ("Quiet Time"

<sup>9</sup>Gary Smalley, *The DNA of Relationships* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), 37.

<sup>10</sup>On "conversions to Christ," see Rupen Das, "Becoming a Follower of Christ: Exploring Conversion through Historical and Missiological Lenses," *Perichoresis* 16.1 (2018), 21-40.

<sup>11</sup>On disciple-making groups, see David Lim, "Optimizing Discipleship Groups for Fulfilling the Great Commission." *Asian Missions Advance* 85 (Fall 2024): 6-11.

= *lectio divina*) to turn His Word (*logos*) into a word (*rhema*) to be obeyed; and (c) Fasting for prolonged devotion - spending prolonged time to commune with God and His word, while also enjoying its health benefits for long life.

Interestingly, these three habits of holiness are also taught and practiced in almost all religions, so they just need to be made Jesus-centered and Christward, without becoming ritualistic (vv. 7-8) and legalistic in doing them.<sup>12</sup> Maintaining these disciplines is enough to sustain the faith of Jesus-followers for their entire life. Yet as they practice these three habits, almsgiving will naturally expose them to their neighbors and involve them in doing community services naturally, which automatically becomes their social identity (and credibility). They simply become God's salt and light in the world (Matt. 5:13-16), without having to act religious or do anything religious (John 4:21-24; Luke 10:25-37; Matt. 25:31-46).

Asia's HCNs highlight "every-moment worship/spirituality" as the way of life in our communities, even if we know most people start their faith journey from their particular religious tradition. This grew from our belief that "following Jesus" is not a religion, but a way of life (Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 10:31). Each Jesus-follower views their whole life as worship (Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:23-24). Each believer's house is an embassy of God's kingdom, thus it should be offered to God for His use to make disciples through incarnation and transformation, so that all buildings (including temples, monasteries and schools) in the world will be consecrated for God's use (cf. 1 Cor. 3:21-23).

### **SIMPLE METHODOLOGY: DISCIPLE MULTIPLICATION MOVEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION**

God's plan for speedy world transformation is simply through relational "disciple multiplication movements (DMMs)" by converts in their local contexts. Jesus just trained his first twelve disciples to replicate what he did by pairs (Luke 9:1-6), which produced a second batch of 72 (10:1-17). They were sent out in pairs to do the same strategy (disciple 12 each) in the villages of Galilee, thereby producing more than 500 disciples (1 Cor. 15:6). At Pentecost, the 3,000 converts were baptized immediately, and discipled "from house to house" by these 500 Galileans, with each pair simply leading a group of 12 (Acts 2:41-47).<sup>13</sup>

Historically all "gospel explosions" and spiritual revivals were high-touch and hardly high-tech. Effective missions can be done simply through sending ordinary disciples to make disciples near the major unreached peoples to do this "natural" house church multiplication strategy. They just need

to disciple their person of peace just disciple a few (perhaps up to a dozen, like what our Lord Jesus did in his earthly ministry)<sup>14</sup> "faithful people who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim.2:2).

To go cross-cultural, disciplemaker, just have to focus on making friends with a few contacts who are bi-lingual or bi-cultural; and these persons of peace will be able, usually almost immediately, to make new disciples among their compatriots through the "natural" webs of relationships (esp. relatives and friends) - almost always with greater effectivity, cultural sensitivity and "multiplier effect."

Thus, we just need to keep it simple and focus on "gossiping" the essentials (prayer and the Word) relationally face-to-face or online through the media (print, radio, TV and internet) for spiritual formation and transformation. Online ministry can work when friendship and trust have been established first. High touch "friendship" and "disciple making" can happen in Facebook or any social media. It's possible through personal and group chats, just like what we did during the lockdowns of the recent pandemic.

The main DMM model used by the HCN-Philippines and Filipino tentmakers mobilization movement is the formation of "Company 3," where Jesus-followers are trained to simply make two disciples who will each be empowered to make two disciples also, in a binary system akin to "network marketing." CMI-Philippines uses the "Effective Tentmaking Made Simple" webinar to train tentmakers to do "friendship evangelism" and "disciple multiplication" (in groups of 2-6) without extracting their disciples to leave their religious or atheist affiliation.<sup>15</sup> Anything more is a diversion from God's simple plan to disciple the world speedily. We need to simplify to multiply.

Actually we are only following the DMMs that resulted in the "gospel explosion" by the HCNs in China in the late 1970s to mid-1990s. They were building believers' "spiritual fellowships" in their homes, which led them to send out teenagers in pairs to evangelize whole villages through underground DMMs, as they advanced what eventually revived their "Back to Jerusalem Movement". They viewed their itinerant tentmakers as an army composed of "ants, caterpillars and termites," who can go anywhere, including temples, mosques, and even kings' palaces.<sup>16</sup>

### **SIMPLE SPIRITUALITY: INCARNATIONAL MINISTRY FOR CONTEXTUAL COMMUNITIES**

The most effective Asian HCNs follow the cultural sensitivity of the "Insider Movement" (IM)

12. Faith is a matter of the heart, not rituals (Rom. 2:29) nor festivals (Col. 2:16-17); cf. Mk. 7:1-23.

13. On DMM, see "Developing Transformational Leaders for Church Multiplication Movements in the Buddhist World." In Paul de Neui (ed.), *Developing Indigenous Leaders: Lessons in Mission from Buddhist Asia*. Pasadena: William Carey Library: 83-110.

14. Interestingly, Paul also started with only 12 disciples to reach the whole Asia Minor in two years (Acts 19:1-10).

15. Since 2001, my handout "Effective Tentmaking Made Simple" in *Blessing OFWs to Bless the Nations*, ed. Ana Gamez (Makati: Church Strengthening Ministries, 2012), 108-113.

16. Paul Hattaway et al, *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House Church Leaders Share Their Vision to Complete the Great Commission* (Carlisle: Piquant, 2003), 90-91.



mission strategy of FM consistently.<sup>17</sup> IM has been promoted and implemented as forming contextual Jesus-following communities (JFCs) – usually as underground communities and networks and on the fringes of Christendom (denominational Christianity) since the “gospel explosion” of the HCNs in China in the late 1970s. The endorsement of IM in the Lausanne Movement’s Cape Town Commitment (2010) has been an encouragement for them.<sup>18</sup>

God intended his Kingdom to be composed of every human disciplined to have eternal personal relationship with himself as they walk humbly with him (cf. Mic. 6:8) through simple faith in Jesus – liberated from sin and the idolatrous and superstitious complexities of both primitive/animistic/folk religions and major/great organized religions, as well as from sin’s effects on the poor bound to their poverty and on the rich bound to their prosperity. No need to develop elaborate religiosity with elaborate theologies, liturgies, temples or clergies. His kingdom mission is to bring forth a spiritual (read: moral) transformation rather than just a religious reformation.

**Incarnational Ministry.** The rich harvest that Jesus expected from his disciples are being reaped contextually nowadays through the simple incarnational approach by HCNs. By just following the instructions of Jesus in his “zero-budget missions” (Lk.10:4a), every disciple just leads a “person of peace” (POP) to obey King Jesus effectively through love and good works vv. 5-17). As the POP’s family serve one another and their neighbors, the people (esp. community leaders) around them will soon notice and ask for their help. They then naturally rise to become leaders in the community.

The early church multiplied across the empire rapidly with big impact (Acts 17:6), because they used Jesus’ incarnational approach. Paul made himself a slave (*doulos*) to become “all things to all men” (1 Cor. 9:19-23 = the local hosts were his masters), and instructed his converts to remain in the vocational, sociocultural and economic status that they had at the time of their conversion (7:11-24). They can aspire to convert entire villages by winning the community leaders to Christ, who will then persuade their religious leaders to worship the Creator in Jesus’ name. These leaders will then transform their religious buildings into multi-purpose centers for good governance there, without constructing another new religious Jesus-following structure in the community.

The existing religion will be gradually (sometimes

immediately) transformed – rejecting unbiblical (sinful and demonic) beliefs and practices, while retaining biblical ones (1 Tim. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 7:17-24). The POP begin their faith journey by contextually adapting to the religion (or non-religion) in their family and community. They simply develop their faith with a simple religiosity, with each one learning how to obey the Great Commandment to “love God and love everyone” (Mt. 22:37-39; Rom.12:1-2) in their society. Jesus did not try nor trained his disciples to establish any religious structure separate from the contexts wherever they lived and worked.

**Contextual Communities.** What will happen to the religio-cultural forms, esp. religious rituals and festivals of their families and communities? Jesus-followers should be allowed to develop contextualized religious practices, retaining most of them and redefining them as Christ-centered and Christ-ward customs (cf. 1 Cor.7:18-20), while finding “functional substitutes” for those beliefs and values that are idolatrous and occultic. When they are confronted and asked about their motivation, they can explain and witness to Christ, even if it may result in persecution. Preferably, they should have been trained to make contextual disciples before such conflict arises.

Their JFCs may even become more biblical and Christ-centered than the tradition-laden and liturgy-oriented denominations in today’s uncontextualized and Westernized Christendom. They will gradually learn how to get rid of anything that is sinful: idolatry, individualism, immorality and injustice. Not all at once, as all of us have not been totally rid of such sins ourselves, and as Elisha permitted Naaman to do ceremonial worship to pagan gods (2 Ki. 5:17-19). Almost all of our present Christian practices (in liturgies, weddings, Christmas, Easter, Halloween, etc) were adapted from pagan customs of pre-Christian European tribes anyway.<sup>19</sup>

Kingdomization is an occupation plan, not an evacuation plan (1 Cor. 15:24-25; Rev. 11:15), because Christ is ruler over all things (Col.1:16-17). Jesus-followers sanctify the non-believers (1 Cor. 7:14) and food offered to idols (10:20-26), because all things can be sanctified (Tit.1:15) by prayer and the Word (1 Tim.4:4-5). Jesus Christ entered European pagan cosmologies and transformed them Christward. New Jesus-followers can continue to join in the activities and festivities of their community with clear conscience.<sup>20</sup>

Hence contextuality should mark the JFCs, as they develop their communal spirituality according to the needs and gifts of the members. Following the 1

17. On IMs of Frontier Missiology, see Harley Talman and J. J. Travis, eds., *Understanding Insider Movements: Disciples of Jesus Within Diverse Religious Communities* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2015), cf. Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Cultures* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979).

18. *The Cape Town Commitment*, Part II.C, Sec. 4, 47-48, entitled “Love respects diversity of discipleship” defines: “So called ‘insider movements’ are to be found within several religions. These are groups of people who are now following Jesus as their God and Saviour...while continuing to live socially and culturally within their birth communities, including some elements of its religious observance.”

19. Cf. Walls 1996, 15-54.

20. On IMs among Buddhists, see David Lim, “Appreciating Rituals and Festivals from within Buddhist Christward Movements,” *Sacred Moments: Reflections on Buddhist Rites and Christian Rituals*, ed. Paul de Neui (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2019), 105-121; and Fukuda, Mitsuo, “A New Family Model for Japanese Families,” in *Family and Faith in Asia: The Missional Impact of Social Networks*, ed. Paul H. De Neui (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2010), 217-227.

Cor.14:26(-40) pattern of meeting, all members come for mutual edification “to love and good works” (Heb.10:24) in their body-life together. In literate cultures, Christ-followers can go through any biblical text according to the interests of people present. In oral cultures, they can learn about Jesus and his teachings through story-telling, singing and drama. Today they can also download the Jesus movie and film clips from [www.jesusfilminternational.org](http://www.jesusfilminternational.org) and [www.indigitube.tv](http://www.indigitube.tv), with translations available in over 1,600 languages.

Thus, we just multiply POPs who can multiply contextual disciples effectively, so as to transform their communities and workplaces Christward – with indigenous JFCs that are truly replicable: self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating and self-theologizing. Our first-fruits will be copied by future generations of HCNs, so we should avoid transplanting denominational churches (= complex Christendom) which are often decontextualized (= foreign-looking, if not actually foreign), hence have almost always produced marginalized believers who have been extracted from their communities – despised and rejected by their family and friends, not because of the Gospel but because of their extra-biblical forms.

We can take advantage of the deconstruction of institutionalism that’s going to overwhelm our future through automated and augmented information technology. In our postmodern world, we just need to be clear about two absolutes: God who loves all His creation and all humankind (Heb.11:6), and his revelation in Jesus who came to provide his redemption to restore fallen creation and humanity to his kingdom, so that his will (commandments) will be obeyed on earth. Our mission is simply to share these two absolutes in the most relational/friendly way possible – incarnationally, contextually, servantly – in every community by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, as we continue to “incarnate Jesus” in existing sociocultural structures and avoid creating another system parallel or counter to that of the religious or ideological tradition in their contexts, our DMM can expedite societal transformation in JFCs. We can lobby for this contextual spirituality as we participate in the Parliament of the World’s Religions<sup>21</sup> and any regional or global organization for inter-faith and inter-cultural world peace, like the United Nations and its related agencies.

### **SIMPLE STRUCTURE: FAMILY OF FAMILIES (NETWORK OF NETWORKS)**

How will the earthly New Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:41-47) be organized globally as it is implanted as small JFCs and HCNs in society? Jesus did not form a formal structure, but introduced a cellular system that subsists in the constant reproduction of “new

wineskins” (Mk.2:22) embedded in the existing structures of society. Each JFC forms a part of any organization, where authority rests on the lowest units – facilitated by “leaders of tens (10 families)” – which are consulted and assisted (but not controlled) by the “higher” coordinating units, as they become leaders of their local community. In the early church, these local leaders were simply called “elders,” who serve as “first among equals.”

Following the doctrine of “the priesthood of all believers,” we can affirm the church-hood of every cell and the fellowship (*koinonia*) of all cells as JSCs (*ekklesia*) of God’s citizens who advocate for justice, peace and integrity of creation – in their neighborhoods, workplaces and online in social media – like in the zero-budget structure given by Jethro (religious leader of the nomadic Midianites) to Moses in Exodus 18:21-25. This structure is achieved from the bottom up as each Jesus-follower lives in *koinonia* with a few others in each of their circles of influence.

It is simply to multiply disciples in small groups and fellowships incarnationally in all societal structures – hence indigenous and fully decentralized with polycentric leadership. Jesus-followers will lead in the paradigm shift of all societal systems from “hierarchical and centralized” to “flat and decentralized.” The Roman Catholic Church has determined to become “church of the poor” and develop “a new way of being church” in the form of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs). For Protestants, this has been implemented by the Radical Reformers (Anabaptists) to form JFCs (called “societies of friends”), which may be called “cell groups,” like “house churches” in the early church. These JFCs thus become a global family of families, or a network of networks.

These JFCs are autonomous and localized – hence decentralized with a polycentric structure. They seek to transform and democratize all structures (religious or secular) from “hierarchical and centralized” to “flat and decentralized.” Each JFC can be empowered with the principle of “subsidiarity,” which gives authority for decision-making to the lowest unit. Each JFC can self-theologize, to develop their own understanding and practices on how to love God and serve their neighbors. Introducing theological formulations and religious practices from the outside is usually syncretistic for they can be easily misunderstood and often become superstitious. Their faith must grow out of their reflection on God’s Word inductively and contextually.

This bottom-up approach to sociopolitical engagement and transformation of communities is important for good governance to prevail so that flourishing societies can be built sustainably for generations. In today’s democracies, our JFCs are trying to install servant-leaders for inter-generational blessedness of families, communities and nations. These gifted leaders can form the “righteous elite,” like William Wilberforce’s Clapham Sect and Abraham

<sup>21</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament\\_of\\_the\\_World%27s\\_Religions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_the_World%27s_Religions).

Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party. Winning electoral campaigns (or gaining access to political power) is a sacred calling.

Evangelizing and discipling incumbent leaders to transform their communities and nations are also being done nowadays. We can now raise servant-leaders to constitute the righteous elite faster. It is now easier to multiply influencers who can produce materials for YouTube and Tiktok, and with AI. Hope we are ready for decentralized and personalized governance, as the wind of the Spirit blows us forward to make Jesus Lord of all.

## **SIMPLE ECOSYSTEM: MUTUALISM THROUGH COOPERATIVISM**

And what will be the socioeconomic outcome of fulfilling Jesus' IM to realize "Jubilee everyday"? Asia's HCNs are also seeking to help their JFCs to introduce their mutualism (koinonia) into their world. "Loving one another" as members of one big family as Christ loves us (Jn. 13:34; 1 Jn. 3:16-18) was shown in the "common purse" of Jesus (Jn. 12:6; 13:29) and Paul (Acts 20:33-35), and in the early church's "caring and sharing economy" (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; 6:1-7; cf. 2 Cor. 8-9), for socioeconomic development (cf. 1 Cor. 7:21-24), where no one is left behind.

Hence the JFCs will be known for their compassion and generosity. This is developed through their small group meetings, where they help one another to grow into mature spirituality marked by intimacy and mutuality that spur one another to grow unto Christlikeness (Col. 1:28-29) in the form of self-giving love (agape) that extends to their neighbors (including enemies), especially the poor (Lk. 10:25-37; Matt. 25:31-46).

Asia's HCNs are discipling their JFCs to express their communal sharing through managing a "common fund," like what the earliest church in Jerusalem with 3,000 converts practiced. Paul taught that sharing with one another for equality manifests Christ's love fully (2 Cor. 8:7-15). Those blessed with intelligence, health, talents & wealth should share their possessions with those with less (Lk. 3:10-14; 2 Cor. 8:9-15) - because everything we have are God's blessings meant for the common good and not for private use only. Freely we receive, freely we share. We are created in the image of the Triune God who are eternally sharing generously as equals.

Each JFC can do community development through social entrepreneurship ("communal almsgiving") in the form of cooperatives. They are the solution to poverty and inequality in our world today. JFCs can work to improve and transform democracies to be led by righteous leaders who will legislate and implement economic koinonia in their communities and nations. This legislation exists today in the form of social democracy or welfare state, which aims for each citizen to enjoy flourishing "from the cradle to the grave."

Gladly, last April 18th 2023, the United Nations' General Assembly resolved to build the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) to achieve their 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. SSE consists of equipping and empowering the poor through social entrepreneurship and fair trade, so each person can have their own land (Lev. 25) and their own "vine and fig tree" (Mic.4:4), passed on to the next generations (Isa. 65:21-23).

The SSE would solve the global crisis of populism (both of the right and the left) that afflict even the established democracies today. The rich have become much richer while the poor remain poor if not become poorer. The God-given solution is to develop mutual love and cooperation from the bottom up, so that poverty is eradicated, as every family enjoys abundant life together in a peaceful and grace-full ecosystem.

SSE is built on cooperativism, which is coordinated globally by the International Cooperative Alliance founded since 1895, which presently consists of a billion members (that's 12.5% of the world's population) in three million co-ops which contribute to economic growth as well as quality employment worldwide. If we double every two years, we'll be 25% by 2026, 50% by 2028 and 100% by 2030.

Asia's HCNs are encouraging their JFCs to practice mutualism through cooperatives and similar community organizations and their partners. HCN-Philippines is promoting "Cooperatives as Mission" where IM is combined with cooperative development by mentoring HCNs and churches to form "savings groups," which will eventually become "faith-based cooperatives." As they save, invest and share profits together, they will become blessed and use their surplus to multiply JFCs. We are also encouraging JFCs to join a co-op nearby them, and learn how to become cooperativism experts on-the-go, and to join Rotary Clubs or similar civic organizations so they can challenge their partners to do the same in their community engagements.

## **CONCLUSION: MULTIPLYING CONTEXTUAL JFCS THROUGH DMMS**

We have shown that JFCs can be realized and multiplied contextually through promoting the simple spirituality in the different religious traditions. Every Jesus-follower can be identified clearly and can be disciplined to evangelize other nationalities cross-culturally. They can be disciplined to multiply disciples and build JFCs wherever they live and work. It is possible to plant and program the right DNA into new Jesus-followers, so that they can reproduce disciplinators to form JFCs anywhere by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As our globalized world has become digital with laptops and smartphones, we can propagate FM even faster and wider to more networks of friends and partners worldwide online by just working from home. We are now accelerating into artificial and



augmented realities. Such online relationships are genuine for there is a human being behind every anonymous blogger or metaverse avatar. This makes the possibility of fulfilling Matthew 24:14 more diversified and also more likely in our generation.

With this effective FM way to multiply JFCs for world transformation, let us convince more mission leaders that familial relationship approach (mutualism) of HCNs is the way forward, as the “default mode” of the simple “original normal” that God designed to actualize his redemption plan for fallen humanity and creation to be reconciled to himself through faith in Jesus Christ. “Our Father, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” – not perfectly but substantially – in and through the exponential replication of contextual and cooperativized JFCs until all families on earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3).

Composed of some Asian HCN leaders and mission agencies together with their friends in the International Society of Frontier Missiology (publishers of the International Journal of Frontier Missiology), the Asian Society of Frontier Missions has changed its name last year to Asian Society of Frontier Mutualism (ASFM), and just launched the inaugural issue of their journal Mutualism. May their advocacy for the holistic Insider Movements multiply organically to make Jesus preeminent mutually and cooperatively among the unreached. After all, usually new movements are started by movements.

Finally, we have also learned that this paradigm of effective missions seems to be so radically different for those used in traditional missions. So may I just plead for patience and understanding that we avoid debate over this issue, and allow both approaches to grow – at least for the next eight years, until AD2033, the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus’ resurrection. Let us bless each other’s efforts to maximize whatever we believe God has called us to do. May God find us effective in filling the earth with the knowledge of the glory of God as waters cover the sea.



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