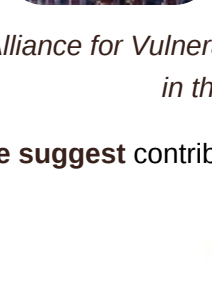




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Editor: Jim Harries, PhD

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



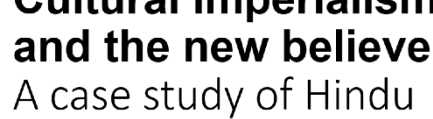
Global Gathering of the International Association for Mission Studies in Pretoria

Report by Marcus Grohmann

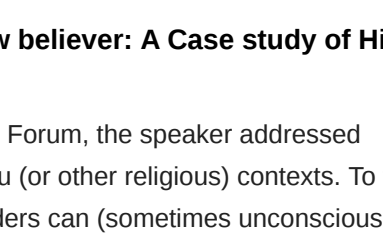
From 17-21 July 2026, the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) had its quadriennial global gathering at UNISA in Pretoria/South Africa. Around 240 participants in person plus more online met to reflect on and discuss contemporary issues in world mission today. Although South America as well as Francophone countries were underrepresented, diversity was also experienced on the level of denominations. What felt (mostly) like evangelical in vision, the gathering was indeed made up of people from Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal and various other backgrounds as well.

Jim Harries and Marcus Grohmann (both Alliance for Vulnerable Mission) attended in person and with several others offered a thematic Panel on "Mission after Empire: A Self-Critical Reconsideration of Western Engagement". The picture above shows the two together with Danny Hunter of Frontier Ventures. We are currently looking for a possibility to have the five papers published in a special issue of a peer-reviewed academic journal.

Dominant themes at the conference included mission in times of ecological crises, mission in the age of AI as well as mission at the margins of society and the requirement to continually reflect on us as messengers along with the message. Many people Jim encountered knew him from his writings which was an encouragement – his tireless work of the last 2-3 decades resulted at least in awareness of Vulnerable Mission.



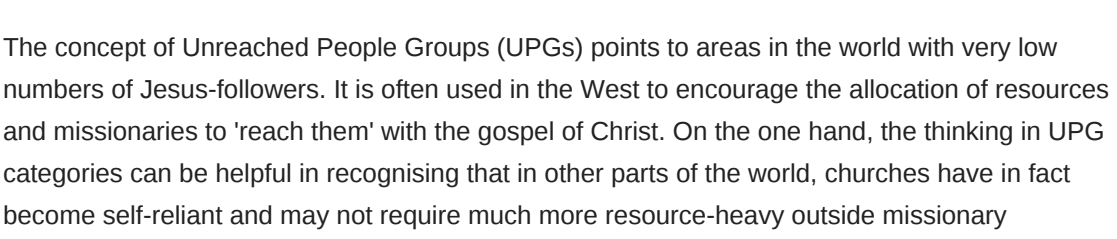
9th July 2026



Webinar report: "Cultural imperialism and the new believer: A Case study of Hindu devotees of Yeshu in South Asia"

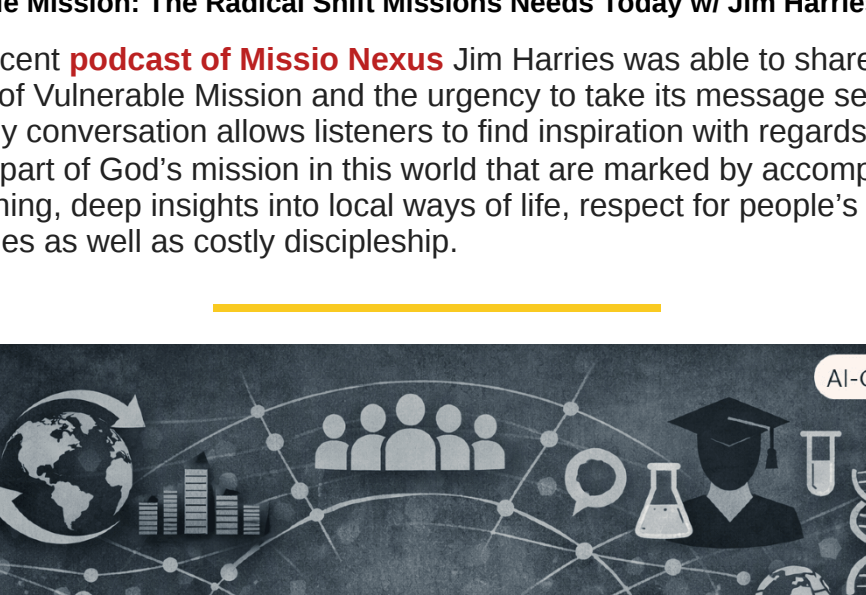
In this webinar, co-hosted by the AVM and the Rethinking Forum, the speaker addressed challenges of communicating the gospel of Jesus in Hindu (or other religious) contexts. To the several dozen participants he spoke of the risk that outsiders can (sometimes unconsciously) communicate their own cultural expressions of faith as if they are part of the gospel itself. The speaker passionately shared his vision of seeing people come to Christ while remaining in their communities and traditions. One way of enabling that is to infuse existing customs with a focus on Jesus and the in-breaking kingdom of God. An example of this that was shared was the Diwali festival, which some local believers reinterpret as pointing to Christ the saviour. Break-out groups according to major world or cultural-religious regions allowed for discussing how to balance scriptural teaching with cultural sensitivity in respect of different contexts. The theme of embracing vulnerability, letting go of outside control and needing to trust the leading of the Holy Spirit pervaded this rich and insightful webinar.

Unreached People Groups



Unreached People Groups (UPGs) - Critical Reflections on the unhelpful usage of a well-known mission paradigm

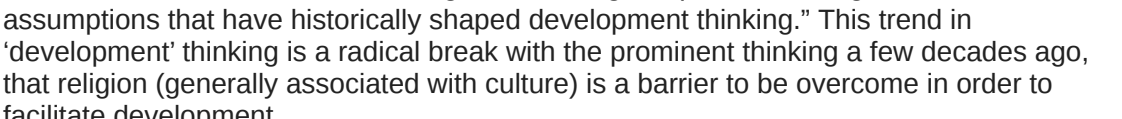
The concept of Unreached People Groups (UPGs) points to areas in the world with very low numbers of Jesus-followers. It is often used in the West to encourage the allocation of resources and missionaries to 'reach them' with the gospel of Christ. On the one hand, the thinking in UPG categories can be helpful in recognising that in other parts of the world, churches have in fact become self-reliant and may not require much more resource-heavy outside missionary involvement. On the other hand, the concept of UPGs is sometimes infused by a theology that regards mission as a task to be 'completed' or 'fulfilled' by Christians - which could possibly speed up Christ's return. Dietmar Schulze, a German Professor of Missiology, critically reflects in this [post](#) on his own journey with UPG thinking and provides reasons why it should not be used to confuse obedience and being a witness to Christ with a fixation on numbers.



Vulnerable Mission: The Radical Shift Missions Needs Today w/ Jim Harries

In this recent [podcast of Missio Nexus](#) Jim Harries was able to share on the concept of Vulnerable Mission and the urgency to take its message seriously. This lively conversation allows listeners to find inspiration with regards to ways of being part of God's mission in this world that are marked by accompaniment and learning, deep insights into local ways of life, respect for people's own capabilities as well as costly discipleship.

CULTURE



Why culture is the missing dimension of development

[This article](#), from *University World News* is of interest to us in so far as it asks the question: "why have some societies transformed dramatically despite limited external assistance, while others have received substantial aid for decades yet failed to achieve comparable results?" The article goes on to address the question: "If culture is to be treated as a developmental pillar, a stronger conceptual and practical understanding is needed of how cultural values, narratives, identities and creative capacities influence social transformation. Understanding this challenge requires revisiting some of the assumptions that have historically shaped development thinking." This trend in 'development' thinking is a radical break with the prominent thinking a few decades ago, that religion (generally associated with culture) is a barrier to be overcome in order to facilitate development.

Evangelical Missiological Society

Facilitating scholarly support of the Great Commission

2026 Conference: 9-10 October 2026

Theological Anthropology for Missional Engagement

In-person and virtual

Evangelical Missiological Society 2026

The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission encourages participation in this event.

2026 CONFERENCE THEME:

Theological Anthropology for Missional Engagement

October 9-10 2026

In-person and virtual

Dallas Theological Seminary

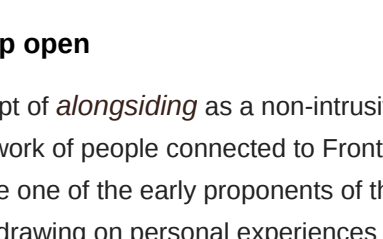
[3909 Swiss Ave., Dallas, TX 75204](#)

<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.

15th October 2026: Anna T.



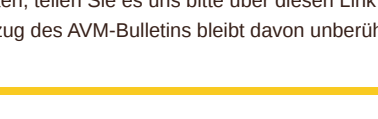
Upcoming Webinar on 15th October 2026 - sign-up open

"Serving as alongsiders in the Muslim world" - The concept of *alongsiding* as a non-intrusive, non-domineering form of mission has emerged from the work of people connected to Frontier Ventures in Pasadena, California. The webinar will feature one of the early proponents of this approach in which will share how it is filled with life in praxis, drawing on personal experiences of 'alongsiding' with Jesus-followers from Muslim contexts. We will also explore links and differences with the Vulnerable Mission paradigm.

Sign up [here](#) for free.

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- Relating to people through their languages and local resources -



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