

Mission Partnerships – The Harsh Reality

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Dr. Krish Kandiah has a wide experience of strategic leadership and innovation.

Krish was President of London School of Theology the largest interdenominational, evangelical theological college in Europe, LST combines a strong academic reputation with faithfulness to Scripture and commitment to God's mission in the world.

As Executive Director for Churches in Mission a the Evangelical Alliance UK he oversaw national programmes to assist the UK church better serve their communities. He also spearhead a national biblical literacy campaign celebrating the social, cultural and spiritual impact that the Bible has made to the UK on the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible.

Previous to that Krish was the Director of the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics and also Tutor at Wycliffe Hall and a member of the Oxford University Theology faculty.

Krish has worked with students in the UK with UCCF, and in Albania with IFES, before becoming pastor of a multi-cultural church in Harrow. He is a regular speaker at university missions, and has wide experience in evangelism and cross cultural mission. He is a husband, father, adopted dad and foster carer.

Krish has written articles for the US's Christianity Today magazine, Youthwork Magazine, Christianity Magazine, Church Times, Church of England Newspaper, REFORM, Sublime Magazine, Themelios and many more magazines and journals.

Krish's doctoral research under Professor Andrew Walker at King's College London explored Lesslie Newbigin's theology and its implications for the church in a late modern context.

Krish writes engaging and accessible books that span the gap between the academy and the layperson. Writing together with his wife Miriam these books have won awards and helped many people to significant life change.

- *Fresh: Bitesize inspiration for new students (IVP 2008)*
- *Twenty Four: Integrating faith and real life (Authentic 2007)*
- *Destiny: What is life all about? (Monarch 2007)*
- *Life Swap: Finding the life you always wanted (Monarch 2008)*
- *How to Save a Life: Becoming a Christian (Authentic 2009)*
- *Dysciples: Why i fall asleep when I pray… (Authentic 2009)*
- *Just Politics: No spin, no sleaze, no scandal (Authentic 2010)*
- *Final: Bite-sized inspirations for final year students (IVP 2010)*
- *Route66: A crash course to navigating life with the Bible (Monarch 2011)*
- *Bible Fresh Handbook (contributing Editor)*
- *Back to the Source (Monarch 2013)*
- *Home for Good: Making a Difference for Vulnerable Children (Hodder 2013)*

- *Paradoxology: Why Christianity was never meant to be simple (Hodder 2014)*

Krish is passionate about helping vulnerable people and has developed a portfolio of roles that allow him to use his creative, critical and strategic skills to impact a wide range of social challenges.

- *Founder and Director of Home for Good*
- *A Vice President of Tearfund*
- *Chair of Tearfund's Theological Advisory Panel*
- *Lecturer at Regents Park College, Oxford University*
- *Faculty and Dissertation Advisor: George Fox University, Oregon*
- *Visiting Faculty: Regents College, Vancouver*
- *Contributing Editor: Christian Today*
- *Consulting Editor: Christianity Magazine*
- *Media Champion: British Association for Adoption and Fostering*
- *Media Champion: Fostering Network*

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We all know the theory of unity. Christ prays for his church "that we may be one" so that the world may see that God sent Jesus into the world. Reference John 17. We know that unity is what Paul identified as "living a life worthy of the gospel" and that we would make every effort to keep the bond of peace. Reference Ephesians 4:1-4.

And we even know the economics of unity. We know that it is a better use of resources if we work together; that as Christians in minority situations we will have a greater impact when we partner.

We know the ideal of unity but what about the reality?

Here was my experience.

The Albanian Encouragement Project was a global model of unity. At least that was what Jun Vencer, the then president of the World Evangelical Alliance, told us. The AEP made perfect sense: Albania had been one of the most closed countries on the planet; atheistic communism had relentlessly persecuted all religions virtually annihilating the evangelical community. In 1991 after the bloodless revolution, Albania became open to Christian missionaries to enter the country.

We all went.

AEP was managed by some amazing servant-hearted missionaries from Missionary Aviation Fellowship. They provided the infrastructure to support the glut of foreign missionaries that poured into the country.

As the telephone service was virtually nonexistent — AEP provided a Christian radio network that spanned the country. The roads were often impassable — AEP provided a plane service to help Christians get to the far-flung regions of the country. The postal system was challenging — AEP offered a mailbox service and a secure mail delivery mechanism. Accessing information was difficult so AEP provided a radio-based Internet service. Medical resources were scarce so AEP provided a medical centre.

The AEP was provided for missionaries to facilitate unity, partnership and cooperation and it was humbling to receive these incredible services provided in such a generous way. But despite this foundation and framework, genuine partnerships between mission organizations were hard to find. Some towns had several churches, others had none. Some projects were heavily sponsored (like the promotion of material regarding creationism) while others were ignored (like the relief work with the uneducated children of the poorest villages). I incriminate myself in the problem as I was working for one of two student-based missions in Albania at that time, with our competing philosophies of ministry.

My personal experience was so heartbreaking that I decided to study missiology back in the UK. From my experience in Albania, my academic study, my research into the writings of the great ecumenical evangelist Lesslie Newbigin, and my current vantage point from my position at the Evangelical Alliance UK, I am beginning to identify the following as the most significant factors preventing genuine partnership. As this is a blog, I am open to comment, corrections, challenge and conversation.

1. Paternalism

Unfortunately, many mission agencies still have a thinly veiled “West is Best” approach. If you are wealthy, theologically trained and numerically successful in your Western context then it is not long before opportunities to develop an “international ministry” arise. Most conference speakers in any given country are likely to be British or American. I met someone recently who told me he were planning to plant churches in every major global capital. I am a big fan of church planting and actually a fan of this person’s preaching ministry, but I struggle to understand why we would need more Westerners to plant churches in global capitals. It’s hard for indigenous church leaders who have been working away faithfully in those contexts not to feel a slap in the face on their ministry, when someone who knows nothing of the language, culture or contexts of their cities arrives to show them how it’s done.

2. Immaturity

When I was young in my faith, things were very simple and there were only two ways of doing ministry: my way and the wrong way. I had my own theology that said that I was on the side of the angels, and everyone else that thought differently was either heretical or misguided. This doesn't make for great dialogue and cooperation.

3. Franchise models

This model is basically the replication of a simple formulaic approach to ministry that is simply exported from one location to another with no serious attempt at contextualization. I use the business metaphor deliberately as the four key elements of efficiency, predictability, quantifiability and control from the McDonaldisation thesis are very visible in this approach to ministry. This model has been adopted by church planters, evangelistic enquirers courses and student ministries alike. Because the "brand" of the ministry is such a highly prized commodity; partnership only becomes possible on the terms of the franchise holder, which diminishes the possibility of genuine cooperation.

4. Economics

Because mission agencies need to fundraise there needs to be a "Unique Selling Point" of a mission agency's work in any given situation. Explaining to funders that we have decided to partner with another agency (which is doing a similar ministry to ours) might undercut our funding base.

5. Lack of theological reflection

If our grasp of the gospel is weak, then chances are we won't be able to tell the difference between the gospel and culture. This ignorance makes us more likely to confuse our mission's historic way of doing things with the orthodox way of mission—thus partnership will be seen as compromising.

6. Ego

Unfortunately, I have to include this in this section. Whether it is cult of personality, distorted conversion statistics, more money than theology, or simply a desire to build empire or dynasty, the global mission scene is scattered with people whose ego is out of control. These people are notoriously difficult to partner with.

So I pose a challenge: who can you partner with today? I would love to begin a viral trail of stories of small and significant partnerships that, instead of duplicating ministries, begin to multiply fruit.

Let me finish with a prayer spoken by an impassioned elderly missionary to Albania to a crowded room of representatives from different mission organizations at a conference hosted by AEP:

"Lord Jesus. In John 17 you prayed — Let them be one. Lord Jesus — answer your own prayer. Amen."

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