



## **Proposal – Second Career Ministry Plan Boomer “Urbana”-like Conference**

### **Abstract:**

With the leading edge of the boomer population reaching early retirement years beginning about 2000, the church faces an unprecedented opportunity to harness the pool of dedicated, experienced and life-qualified personnel in pursuit of the Great Commission. Will churches and more particularly the present mission agency community be equipped to meet the challenge?

This is a proposal to meet the biblical challenge to “send forth laborers” with a concerted effort targeted to capitalize on a unique opportunity in the first decade of the new century. The immediate proposal is to host an Urbana-like conference for those interested in a full- or part-time second career in Christian service. This investigation suggests a high-tech and high-touch follow-up approach is required. A major cultural shift in mission agency thinking is indicated.

Discussion is from the perspective of an evangelical early boomer having served in local churches and American industry for a career. It focuses on the opportunity to harness the coming bulge of well-educated people, many of whom will retire earlier than their predecessors. This is a relatively wealthy group expecting credit for life-experience. Many are well traveled with a willingness to serve either directly in or in support of cross-cultural missions.

### **Objective:**

To facilitate the establishment of an infrastructure designed to ease the way for mature, talented, accomplished, second-career people to quickly find an effective place of service in the cause of Jesus Christ in order to bring as many people as possible to Heaven.

### **Discussion:**

#### **Introduction**

With children through college and many years of good health ahead, there will be a swell of people with the skill set and financial means to serve the vision of traditional mission organizations.

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*... let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us. Heb 12:1*

With the effectiveness of high integrity organizations limited only by finances and people, the opportunity is now for mission agencies, parachurch organizations, and churches to harness a pool of workers with talent and means. These workers are attracted by non-traditional recruitment techniques — why non-traditional? Baby boomers have 30 to 35 years of maturity over the conventional missionary candidate. With financial independence they seek out opportunities and be highly selective. With time precious and well-developed life-skills, a whole new pattern to attract and effectively use this talent pool is required. In what ways might this be accomplished?

## **Background**

Volumes have been written about the preference styles of boomers. No attempt to expand on that will be made here. However, one summary that is useful comes from the text book of the Leadership Training Network (LTN) founded by Bob Buford:

“Boomers (born 1946-1964): Fully one-third of the population, boomers are facing midlife decisions including how to make a significant impact on their community in the second half of their life. Many are considering ways to transition from a focus on material success to spiritual significance. They usually want many options for service with freedom to choose; tend to be individualistic; like short term projects; and feel severe time pressure.”

An important demographic shift is pending. In fact, it is beginning as those 55 to 65 and retiring now are making their way into the service of the church and missions. But the time is coming when the boomer bulge in the population will be available and actively in search of opportunities to serve. In 2001, the leading edge of the boomer generation will be turned 55. Many will have wealth that heretofore the population at that age has never had including mature retirement packages and 401(k)s that will allow financial independence. Many ordinary people will have a liquid net worth approaching or in seven figures (i.e., not including their home). This category will be the most educated and healthiest retired class in human history.

## **Size of Potential Evangelical Volunteer Force**

A recent Wall Street Journal article asked the question, “Do you feel more time or money pressure? Of the entire population, the survey found that 33 percent are financially satisfied and self-assured enough to say they are pressed more for time than money. Of these, the same study finds 54 percent regularly attend religious services, and 17 percent are evangelical, that is, 13 million total. Since one-third of these are boomers, that would mean, secular sources project 1.8 percent of the U.S. population are evangelical boomers in this category, that is 4.6 million people.

A USA Today “Snapshot” projects that of those turning 50 in 1996 nearly 90 percent plan to work after their first retirement, 13 percent full-time and 76 percent part-time. This simply reflects what we learn from Genesis: we are made to work. Of the 90 percent of that plan to work after marketplace retirement, assume about one tenth of one percent of the 4.6 million evangelical boomers are willing to serve as missionaries. This means over the years from about 2000 to 2020, there will be about 12,000 people

available for mission organizations to assimilate and assign (i.e., an average of 600 per year in that 20-year span). According to Patrick Johnstone, in the 2001 edition of Operation World the number of US missionaries is about 64,000. With this assumption, this initiative could add about 10% to the total missionary force.

Late 2001 the Finishers Project initiative has added 600 missionaries, half from denominational programs that re-branded the Finishers Project to their constituency.) This the initial impact is to add 1% to the total US missionary force in three years since the first conference in October of 1998.

### **More on Retirement Trends**

The boomer generation can expect an increased life expectancy. There is new conventional wisdom, expecting less support from government programs and new trends on when and how often to stop working.

A recent retirement newsletter postulated, "Perhaps we'd be better off using such terms as 'first retirement' and 'second retirement' ... to describe professional punctuation points. With 28 extra years added to life expectancy during the past century, we now have a choice, between growing old as we always have ... or taking those precious years and cycling them through every part of life."

In the same publication, the concept of "down-aging" is described: 30 now is what used to be 40, 40 is now what used to be 50, 65 is now happening at 55 and is now the beginning of the second half of adult life – not the beginning of the end. Forget about the lines separating work from retirement. They will be blurred in the 21st century. Christians are far more motivated to keep working.

### **High-Touch Infrastructure**

Why is it important to have a high-touch approach to cater to this emerging volunteer work force? In Buford's book Halftime, which is recommended for good insight into boomer thinking, he notes

"The mistake most people make in their second half is to rely on good intentions. If you become discouraged by lack of progress in your life mission it is possible that you simply may not have gained the knowledge and information necessary to support your dream."

Buford articulates the importance of timely information for a productive second-career when he warns, "Many times a good second half depends on what is done during halftime." Halftime is the brief window of time when plans are set for second half activities. This proposal addresses the "halftime" dialogue.

## **Simple and Convenient**

An important trend to take note of among boomers is the urgency to simplify. A pastor is quoted as remarking, "The point is not to get people to work, but to help them connect to the assignments of Jesus Christ. ... Our job is to develop a system of meaning and recognition that leads to a personal legacy." This pastor observed boomers are looking for significance – an eternal legacy. Over the years messages on living sacrifice have had an impact. Speaking for the class of boomers we note, for example, from Ezekiel: the more you know the more will be required; from Jesus: lay up treasures in heaven, seek ye first the kingdom – trust me for your needs, and Paul: make yourself useful and finish well.

If knowledge and information are necessary to support boomers as they change careers, it is incumbent on current mission agencies to provide it in a simple and convenient format. This trend is reflected, for example, in an April 15, 1996 newspaper article on car shopping. A new generation of dealers must make car shopping more convenient, more fun and with more choice. Customer convenience is the trend for all business – industrial, wholesale, retail and service industries. By fun, the article goes on to explain the sale must be accompanied by interesting information – packaged in ways that communicate useful features in clear, concise and creative ways. As to variety, the article suggests buyers want ancillary services beyond financial, such as cleaning, installation of special after market items, food and fax services.

Transposing this to the arena of mission agencies, boomers will want a full range of information and services. This will mean communicating clearly, articulating opportunity and expectations without "salesmanship." This will be in mature terms, people taking on assignments that they are comfortable will fit their skill set – assignments that are significant and worthy of the investment of their remaining time and self-supporting resources. They expect straightforward, uncomplicated, concise information on basic areas of ministry, medical and money. This communication infrastructure can be staffed by a cast of other self-supporting boomer volunteers. Agencies will still, of course, be properly burdened with intrinsic accountability before the Lord for meeting vision goals and quality control.

## **Ministry, Mental, Medical, and Money**

Ministry, mental, medical and money issues must be addressed in a frontal way. The second-career missionary will expect this information specifically tailored to his and her situation. Some of the consensus wisdom as it deals with the subject age bracket has yet to be developed. Slides on each of these three subject areas are attached.

## **Old Pros: Can They Make It in Missions?**

This is the title of an article written by a second-career missionary. The article assures us the answer is affirmative. It is likely that every mission agency with experience sending second-career people will affirm this conclusion. The byline of the article is, "Second-career missionaries find satisfying ministries and make strong contributions, despite the obstacles." The article goes on to explain how many of the obstacles to overcome were those imposed by the sending agency. Some obstacles presented themselves by lack of attention to details the second halfer reasonably expected the agency to anticipate.

If mission agencies cannot adapt to the needs of the thousands of boomers to become increasingly available, the very stones will cry out – new structures will emerge. Needs and opportunities are too great.

### **Proposal:**

Marge Aupperle is Volunteer Staff Coordinator, a paid position at Willow Creek Community Church which has 16,000 attendees. As a result of this effort 10,000, over 60 percent, are actively involved in the ministry of the church, including 3,000 youth. This is well beyond the 20 percent normally working for the 80 percent spectators. She has 150 volunteers assisting her personnel effort — the size of a small mission agency. At Willow Creek, they have undertaken to develop volunteer ministries to the next level: Not people assisting staff, but staff assisting people for ministry.

In that church, it is very easy to sit and soak. No one will solicit involvement until the attender indicates in some way he or she is interested in participating. Then, the assimilation team moves into aggressive action with a high touch program to involve the initiator in a way he or she feels fits their talents. Computers track the assimilation effort serving each ministry area independently. Each person is followed up personally to ascertain if the church can in some way assist to make their effort more effective – high touch. The church is installing a centralized ministry tracking computer to keep up with networking information needs. They wish to be sure people leaving one ministry are not dropping out unnoticed, but are involved elsewhere – high-tech.

The immediate proposal is to develop a high-tech, high-touch infrastructure to meet the challenge to assimilate second-career boomers into missions. The focal point of the proposal is to assemble an Urbana-like conference for second-career opportunity seekers for people, say, over 40. However, such a conference, while a useful rallying point, will need to have behind it an assembly of mission agencies and parachurch organizations prepared to follow up with a high-tech / high-touch infrastructure to meet the information and follow-up needs of the boomer class of second-halfers. Some of the lessons gleaned from the poor second-half candidate and assimilation experience, as Topazian articulates, will need to be assimilated into the fabric of mission agency policy.

How might it take shape? The idea as proposed is likely well beyond the reach of any one mission agency alone. An inter-agency effort will be better suited to meet the need for options. Each mission must necessarily continue to focus on the task(s) for which they are best suited. With high caliber participation from an assembly of mutually respected agencies, the proposed effort will have high credibility and yield a better result.

With a high energy effort, the proposed Urbana-like conference will pay for itself. This demographic group can afford it. Of course, the conference will have to be of outstanding quality. However, front money will, of necessity, be required to pull it off. Lessons from IVCF's Urbana organization, such as discounts for early registration, could assist in mitigating the cash flow challenge.

To toss out one scenario, assume 15 mutually respected agencies agree to participate in the project. Further, say, 600 attended such a conference and 15 percent follow through, accept an assignment. The participating agencies will average 6 new seasoned adults to put their shoulder to the plow. On the demand side, if the current missionary community in each agency were polled with the question, "Could you use an assistant, cost is not a problem?" how many requests would be generated?

People attending the suggested conference will be highly interested in missions as a second-career. Many will have been involved in churches as founders, elders and leaders that are looking for a different challenge. Churches will not be able to absorb all those willing to volunteer. The numbers and diversity will be too great. The worldwide missions effort will be the beneficiary.

If done well, such a conference could be held, biannually, for example. This would assure a steady flow of early retirees into the mission effort.

### **Is the Vision too Bold?**

Most of the current effort to connect second-career aspirants amounts to match-making services. These are being done by organizations like Inter-Christo, Intent, and the IFMA to name a few. These low touch efforts, relatively unknown, are having limited impact. In November 1995 the Christian Medical and Dental Society held a second-career conference in a hotel in Phoenix, AZ. They expected 40 to 50 would attend. Catering to this narrowly focused target group, they were surprised to have 140 attend from across the US. Each paid \$320 to attend a 2 day conference, not including travel expenses. To expect 600 at a conference not targeted at a specific profession, is not too great a stretch.

## **Action – Follow up:**

### **How can the job be done? How to start?**

This written presentation, originally prepared July 1996, cannot communicate comprehensively the opportunity involved, nor can it consider all the facets of the indicated task. In business, if we take on a special challenge, people are assigned to focus on it, partially or fully freeing them up to do so.

Preliminary presentations were initially made April 1996 to representatives of TEAM and Wycliffe. The initial reaction was, "How can we make this work?" Following extensive networking within the missions community, a first meeting to evaluate the idea was held Oct 1996 at TEAM headquarters, Wheaton, IL. More than 50 people attended, including representatives from 16 mission agencies and 7 other interested organizations. Further, a follow-up and open consultation was held February 1997 at Wheaton College Graduate School in the Billy Graham Center. Subsequently the project was launched with an extensive research study, over 10 conferences and a sophisticated web site. Call, e-mail or write the author to receive a paper describing results of each session describing the consensus strategy that launched the movement.

### **About the author:**

Nelson Malwitz, born in 1946, was raised in a Christian family attending a local CM&A church. He holds a Master's degree in Chemical Engineering. While at college he was an IVCF chapter president and attended the 1967 Urbana conference. He and his family attended EVFree and SBC churches in various places he lived and was instrumental in founding Walnut Hill Community Church (WHCC) in 1982 (formerly Grace Community Church) in the Danbury, CT area and served as an elder there for two 4 year terms. He is now devoting full time to directing the Finishers Project in the United States. His wife, Marge, is an accomplished Christian quilt artist. He has two sons. Both are Bible school graduates and have pursued technical careers.

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# **Ministries**

**Motivation**

**Finding God's will**

**Understanding and using gifts**

**Assignment opportunities that fit your gifts**

**3 month**

**6 month**

**1 year**

**multi-year**

**Intercultural expectations**

**General perspective**

**Country specific**

**Emotional strains**

**Working for a mission – with Christians in positions of power**

**Language**

**Part of the adventure**

**What you can / cannot do without language acquisition?**

**What will fit?**

**What you can do without leaving home?**

## **Mental**

**Transferring life-skills into missions**

**Personality style vs missions assignment**

**Servant attitude, self - measurement**

## **Medical**

**How healthy do you have to be?**

**Medical care**

**Locally**

**Internat'l Assoc for Medical Attention**

**Mission agency assistance**

**Medical insurance**

**If your own**

**If pooled with mission**

**Special plans for boomer missionary**

**Medical insurance**

**Elder care responsibilities**

# Money

## Financial planning

Investing

Making money last

Managing portfolio

Self-directed trusts

Living Trusts

Other services you can rely on

How to survive with \$1mm savings

Can make it on \$250,000 (?) savings

How are assets managed while out of the country?

## Cost

Is deputation needed?

Developing a “Barnabus” home team

The self-supporting missionary

The self-supporting couple

What about infrastructure costs

Assignment cost scenarios

3 month

6 month

1 year

multi-year