

FOCUS NEWSLETTER

June 2024 Edition



Home Office Director's Report

Thank you for your ongoing partnership in the Gospel. We had a profitable trip to Texas in April and are looking forward to others in the future! Currently, we're renewing ZEMA's membership with ECFA. Praise God with us for the many ways He continues to lead and provide for ZEMA and the ministry to the amaZioni!

While in Texas, we visited Dallas Theological Seminary. First, we participated in their Table Podcast, an event we've been hoping and praying would happen for almost two years. On this podcast, Greg was interviewed by Dr. Darrell Bock to discuss the amaZioni people in Southern Africa and how ZEMA has been welcomed into amaZioni Churches and is able to share Christ with leaders within this syncretistic movement. We'll let you know when this podcast is made public!

Our second goal for that day was to connect with someone who might help us get invited to DTS's student-led World Evangelization Conference. Learning our way around, by God's providence, we met Dr. Michael Ortiz at the elevator! Dr. Ortiz is DTS's Global Ministries Department's Vice Chair and the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) Executive Director. Dr. Ortiz offered to take us to the Global Ministries Department to submit ZEMA's information. However, on the way, he became very interested in ZEMA's ministries. Following up, last week, Dr. Ortiz offered ways that we might interact with students on campus, apply to be recognized as a resource for DTS internships, and encouraged ZEMA to consider becoming an associate partner with ICETE to build ZEMA's network with like-minded organizations in Africa. Please pray with us about these growing relationships with DTS and ICETE.

Also, Greg has continued communicating with African students at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Moody Bible Institute. These students have a heart for equipping rural pastors who are part of the African Indigenous Church movement, such as the Zionists. New fields of ministry are opening for ZEMA, and we believe God is creating a Bible education network for the formal and informal training of rural African pastors and church leaders. We trust God to direct ZEMA on how to participate further in the global work He is doing to build His Church.

Finally, we are preparing for our trip to attend ZEMA's Annual Missionary Conference at Sunbury in South Africa from June 30th to July 4th. How exciting it has been to watch God work through our years with ZEMA and now to continue that work in our capacity as Home Office Directors. Thank you, once again for your continued support and encouragement.

Serving our King, Jesus. -

Greg and Carlene

Ethnodoxology = Peoples & Praise

Do you look forward to the celebration of Revelation chapter seven as we do?! When I read Revelations 7:9- 10, I imagine how all of us will participate one day. A great multitude that no one can number, people from every nation, tribe, and language, people of every ethnicity will stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in our hands. And together, we'll praise our creator!

"Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!"
Joining ethno (people) and doxology (praise), we prepare for and even now glimpse and experience the excitement and wonder of this day to come!

Thirty years ago, the term ethnodoxology did not exist. Now, it represents a significant paradigm shift in missions.^[i] Ethnodoxology affirms the engagement of all kinds of culturally appropriate, biblically grounded articulation in the mission, worship, and spiritual formation of the church. It's a theological and anthropological framework to guide any culture in the worship of God using its unique artistic expressions.

Ethnodoxology crosses cultures on the grounds of Christ and His incarnation. The basis for this incarnational model is Philipians 2:1-11

1. Be With ~Jesus left His Father (home culture) to join humanity (another culture, NOT His first place of identity). Living with us long enough to identify with our ways, Jesus valued "others first."

2. Learn From (vs. 8) ~Growing up and experiencing what it meant to be human, from infancy, Jesus studied human coping mechanisms, ways of communication, and personal expression. Jesus knew firsthand the goals and values of the human community created by limitations and personal needs.

3. Work Toward~Despite human limitations, Jesus maintained God's Kingdom goals. Depending on His Father's moment-by-moment revelation, Jesus chose to promote God's values of unity, understanding, and the personal value of everyone. Living consistent with God's purpose that is greater than any individual, He ushered in the fulfillment of God's Kingdom. In humility, Jesus experienced the need for self-preservation but emptied Himself to serve others who, though different from Him, are His image bearers and worthy of the Kingdom, nonetheless.

Historically, cross-cultural ministries utilized a Bring It Teach It model where missionaries bring and teach the Gospel using techniques originating in their home culture. Entering a culture grounded in practices originating in one's home culture, people inadvertently teach an artistic language for worship and Christian religious practices foreign to the host culture.

This approach most often fails to reach the heart of the people because it simultaneously communicates the following:

Certain art forms = Sinful

Local = Not special


Worship = Foreign

Different = Bad

My Tradition = The Right Way

Opinions = Truth





These notions become obstacles preventing the assimilation of Biblical truth and augment differences between people groups. Because they are viewed as encouraging movement away from the culture's heritage and identity, Christian ministries are frequently criticized. Increasingly, traditional cultures are resistant to Christianity because its teachings are viewed as denigrating ethnic heritage.

Ethnodoxologists promote a Find It, Encourage It model. This model sets aside personal preferences and methods from one's home culture. Assuming the role of a learner and guest willing to adapt and accommodate preferences of the host culture establishes a more humble posture with the missionary emptying themselves of the right to worship in the most comfortable ways while still worshipping the God who created us both. Learning to value and appreciate the power of local ways of artistic expression while maintaining the power of the Gospel is the essence of ethnodoxology.

Ethnodoxology removes obstacles to worship through the study of God's Word and the study of culture. It creates new pathways for fellowship with the Lord and with each other by valuing local means of expression and arts.

Ethnodoxology makes worshipping God and making Him known exciting.[ii] It encourages people to worship in their heart language and recognizes God's presence and work in the lives of people of every culture. "No people are without God. They may not know Him, and they may not serve Him, but He is still in their midst." (Gavriel Gefen)[iii]

Jesus came to rectify what cultures and people lost because of sin. Reunited in His Kingdom, we become a people, diverse but unified. Ethnodoxology values the uniqueness of a person and culture and the expression of each in a unified community of Image-bearers. Taking on the penalty of brokenness and sin, Jesus brings together people from every ethnicity for the great purpose of His united Kingdom. (John 17, Revelation 5:9, 7:9)

Thirty years ago, the term ethnodoxology didn't exist. Yet even then, ZEMA missionaries Lyle & Sandy Mahon, Tim & Luann Kuehl, and Richard & Geraldine Akers were already meeting amaZioni leaders in their places of worship. They established relationships on the beaches and welcomed invitations to the African services to share the "Zion story" in their time and their own turf. Meeting in rondavels, homesteads, and community halls, ZEMA missionaries still attend all-night services and focus on Jesus.

Watching, waiting, and seeing what God does with the rest, ZEMA missionaries are encouraged not to put down the African way but to lift up Jesus and the authority of Scripture. Encouraging amaZioni to know God and worship Him within the African context, they attend service, dress respectfully, and join in praising God the African way. Greg Akers, a ZEMA missionary since 2022, said, "The question can never be about cultural practices but about submission or rebellion to God. Where there is submission to God, celebrate warmly. Where there is rebellion, warn sincerely.I am very excited to be a part of ZEMA and that there is freedom in this organization to call people to Jesus and nothing more.

[i] Inspiro Arts Alliance, OM. (2021, May 31). What is Ethnodoxology? [Video]. YouTube.

[ii] Global Ethnodoxology Network, GEN. What is Ethnodoxology? Retrieval: May 27, 2024

[iii] Huyser-Honig, 2009. Calling All Peoples to Worship in Their Heart Language, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.



Meet the ZEMA Board



Paul Bradley
Board Secretary

Originally from New England, Paul grew up as a missionary kid in Guam, where his parents ministered primarily to the people from Palau. This experience gave Paul a heart for global engagement and missions. Over the years, Paul has partnered with people and ministries in Micronesia, Mexico, Ecuador, Egypt, Czechia, and South Africa. His work with ZEMA began in 2002 when he led a missions team of university students to South Africa and participated in ZEMA's ministry with Richard and Geraldine Akers in the Eastern Cape. His love for South Africa and the amaZioni led Paul to visit there many times.

Paul received a BA in Biblical Studies from LeTourneau University in Longview, TX, and an MA in Educational Leadership from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN. He worked in student life and student services at two Christian universities for almost 30 years.

Currently, Paul is self-employed and enjoys assisting various non-profit organizations, ministries, and small businesses with their operational and technology needs. As a full-time "RV-er," Paul currently lives in Alaska and snowbirds in Florida. He travels extensively throughout the United States, visiting family and friends. See Paul's full bio at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/pabrad/>