

Member Care in Mission/Aid Global Treasures for a Global Field

The Christian mission requires that we meet basic human needs for education, food, water, medicine, justice, and peace. As is evident in the Apostle John's assertion that Jesus was sent to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3: 8), our mission is to continue his earthly mission by undertaking the kind of organized research and enterprises that combat evil in all its forms—violence, injustice, poverty, environmental exploitation, drug trafficking, and disease...In this way, Christians extend God's rule in the world, particularly in the transformation of society, render the Christian gospel believable, and make world evangelization possible. All of this is to the ultimate glory of our good and gracious Creator and Redeemer God. (David Hesselgrave, describing Ralph Winter's "kingdom mission" 2010, p. 196)

This article explores member care "treasures." *Treasures* refer to the crucial directions and resources needed to support the *diversity* of Christian workers and senders around the world, both now and in the future. The focus on treasures is reflected in Christ's conclusion to the Kingdom parables: "Therefore every scribe that has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of the house that brings from his treasure new things and old things" (Matthew 13:52). Doing member care well, as disciples of the kingdom, thus involves the ongoing process of blending fresh, relevant approaches (new treasures) with foundational, relevant approaches (old treasures).

The *global* treasures described in this article are directly relevant for the estimated 417,000 "foreign missionaries" and the over 12 million national workers around the world, along with many more that may not fit into these two broad categories such as "tentmakers" (Johnson, Barrett, and Crossing, 2012). Many of these workers and senders are sacrificially immersed in areas described in the opening quote—settings filled with poverty and pain yet often permeated too with resilience and courage. The need for both old/new treasures also takes into account the significant shifts in demographics among the world's 2.2 billion "affiliated Christians," especially the growing majority of Christians in/from the Global South(s) and the proportional decline in Christians in/from the Global North(s) (Corwin, 2010; Johnson and Kim, 2006). These treasures—directions and resources—must also support the efforts to resolutely and responsibly deal with some of the world's greatest problems such as those targeted by the Millennium Development Goals, such as to eradicate poverty (e.g., over one billion urban slum dwellers), provide universal education, promote gender equality, combat HIV/AIDS, and foster environmental sustainability.

The member care field therefore, while maintaining its core focus on supporting the diversity of mission/aid personnel, must expand into new international and cross-sector areas. Each of us for example, would do well to stay current with at least one related health area and/or international issue that we are particularly passionate about (including organizations, practitioners, resources etc related to the area/issue. We will need courage to face new challenges and a solid theology that sees God at work throughout the variety of human efforts and "treasures" around the world (e.g., Grand Challenges in Global Health, 2011; Johnstone, 2011)

Here are 12 special treasures among many—current and future resources/directions—that I believe are vital for the global member care field. I encourage colleagues in different countries and settings to build on this list as well, using "Treasure 12—Your Input" as a springboard for discussing and developing member care. The final section on "Ethnè to Ethnè Member Care" pulls together all the treasures in this article, directing them on behalf of all peoples, and then enveloping them in what is the foundational practice and the richest treasure of member care—agape.

Exploring the Treasure Trove

The providence of God has led us all into a new world of opportunity, danger, and duty.
World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910

Treasure 1: Sending Churches and Support Teams. The church has a core, Biblical role in both sending and supporting workers. Historically this has often not been the case as often sending agencies (as a missiological structure of the church) have undertaken much of the member care responsibility. Sending churches can and do support workers in the areas of logistics, finances, prayer, communication, reentry, etc. The sending church along with “support teams” need to be trained to send well and to serve their workers well. Neal Pirolo’s book, *Serving as Senders*, is a superb resource which is available in 12 languages (www.eri.org). Note though that some new ways of “going” do not reflect the usual approaches to “sending” (e.g., Asian Christians going to the Middle East for employment; Chinese workers with various levels of training/support heading “West” with the gospel; Christians living in Western countries who minister to neighbors from unreached people groups; Christians working in secular NGOs and United Nations offices/field settings; people creatively providing resources to via the internet). We will thus need to consider additional ways to support these “goers”, including the roles for the sending churches, sending agencies, member care groups, and a variety of support teams working together.

Treasure 2: Leaders. Leaders are usually a tough lot. Yet loneliness and discouragement occur for them as they do for everyone. They, like all mission/aid personnel, need supportive member care. They are also in key places to provide encouragement and care to others as well as to open doors for member care as “gatekeepers” into their organization. One resource for supporting mission leaders is the “LeaderLink” training offered in various locations around the world by Cross Global Link (www.crossglobalink.org). Another example is the India Mission Association’s retreats for CEOs and spouses (www.imaindia.org). In addition to its positive impact on leaders, these retreats have also helped open the doors to member care in India—leaders are gatekeepers, and what they experience can be passed on to staff. K Rajendran’s account about his struggles as a leader in South Asia reflect just some of the many challenges of mission leaders (see chapter eight *Doing Member Care Well* (2002). Some excerpts: “It is 12:45 midnight. I toss in bed, pleading for sleep to overtake me...We are asking many questions....These questions meander through my mind and nearly overtake me...I almost panic. It is now 2:30 am...Many CEOs and other leaders have many similar sleepless nights” (pp.77-79). For some additional reflections on the types of issues that concern mission leaders—and that can keep them awake at night—see Paul McKaughan’s article “Challenges for a Constantly Changing Mission Context (2010).

Treasure 3: Relief/Aid Workers. Psychosocial support is increasingly being recognized as a necessary and ethical organizational resource for workers in relief and development settings. This support includes briefing, stress management, debriefing, and practical help for workers as well as equipping them with trauma/healing skills to help survivors (e.g., see the account in Randy Miller’s interview with a World Vision relief worker, “Staying Sane and Healthy in an Insane Job” (1998) and the many accounts in *Sharing the Front Lines and the Back Hills*, edited by Yael Danieli, 2001). Many disaster scenarios provide opportunities to interact with and help UPGs, leading to ongoing joint programs in community development. It is especially important to consider the reality of “neglected emergencies”—the ones that get overlooked due their chronic, seemingly unsolvable problems and overall lower profile— including “fragile states affected by ongoing conflict, poverty, corruption, and weak infrastructure (Gray, 2008). One timely resource is the radio program and materials created to help survivors and caregivers in both natural and human-made disasters (www.seasonsofcaring.org). See also *Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers* (World health Organization et al, 2011) and the two publications in particular from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: *Managing Stress in the Field* (2001) and *Psychological Support: Best Practices*

(2001). The following quote, from the later publication, highlights the relevance of equipping relief/aid workers with psychological skills. It also reflects some of the emotional consequences that can affect workers themselves.

The distinction between psychological needs and other priorities in relief operations is an artificial one, as psychological needs permeate and affect all other aspects such as shelter, food distribution, and basic health care. Provision of traditional relief aid is, therefore, not sufficient. *Neglecting emotional reactions may result in passive victims rather than active survivors* [italics mine]. Early and adequate psychological support can prevent distress and suffering from developing into something more severe, and will help the people affected cope better and return more rapidly to normal functioning (p. 5).

Treasure 4: The Diaspora of Peoples. There are geographic “movements” of people all over the globe. Our human interconnections are significantly shifting too through globalization and digitalization. Christians would do well to track with such changes, and seriously consider ministry to those who are now much more accessible. Two types of physical “movement” involve people who cross borders for economic reasons or who flee for safety as part of internationally or internally displaced peoples (e.g. see the short accounts throughout the *Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls*, 2008, by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/47cfae612.html>). What an opportunity for the church to connect with these people, many who are in our own physical and/or digital “neighborhoods.” For more updates on the needs of refugees, the poor, etc., visit the web site of World Vision International (www.wvi.org) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees: (www.unhcr.org).

Treasure 5: Persecuted Humans. Tens of thousands of Christians (and those from other religions) are affected by discrimination and human rights violations, including religious liberty violations, as a result of their religious and political beliefs and/or ethnicity. There are major physical, economic, and psychological consequences to violating humans through persecution (e.g., Companjen’s, *Hidden Sorrow, Lasting Joy*, 2000). We must find ways to better support Christians and all people who suffer in this way (see chapters 19 and 45 in *Doing Member Care Well*, 2002 on pressure/persecution and advocacy). John Amstutz commented in *Humanitarianism with a Point*. “...the place of hospitality and kindness toward followers of Jesus Christ is no small matter, particularly those who are being persecuted for their faith in Him... [It is time] to speak clearly and fully of the essential need of intentional humanitarianism—member care— toward those who have chosen to suffer loss for Christ in these nations” (*Doing Member Care Well*, 2002 p. 39). See the materials from the Religious Liberty Commission (www.worlddevangelical.org), Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org), and at the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (www.un.org/rights). Finally, consider Wilfred Wong’s perspective as a human rights advocate regarding persecution and the growth of the church.

There is nothing new about the persecution of Christians. Such actions have taken place since the birth of the church 2000 years ago. More Christians have been imprisoned, tortured and killed for their faith in the 20th Century than at any other time in the Church's history.... But it's not all doom and gloom. One reason why there is persecution in so many different countries today is because the church is expanding its frontiers throughout the world. More than at any other time in the history of Christianity we can truly regard the Church as a global community. It is because the Church is growing in places traditionally hostile to the Gospel that in many of these locations the backlash of persecution occurs. Governments or religious extremists feel threatened by the spread of Christianity and try all sorts of methods to stop its growth, ranging from murder and genocide...to more subtle measures such as the introduction of restrictive laws on church registration... (2002, pp. 477-478).

Treasure 6: Special Support for A4 Workers. There is an increasing number of Christian workers from the *A4 Regions* (Africa, Asia, Arabic-Turkic, and America-Latina). A4 senders/workers desire to provide/develop quality member care approaches that fit their own sending groups, personnel, and cultures. Their experience in member care is also relevant for those from other sending nations (e.g., see the article on the India organization, Missionary Upholder's Trust (*Ethne-Member Care Update* 11/08; www.ethne.net/membercare/updates). The commitment to quality care for A4 workers is clearly stated and modeled for all of us in these excerpts from the *Declaration* by the Philippine Missionary Care Congress of October 2005. You can find the entire *Declaration* in the *Global Member Care Briefing* from February 2006, www.membercare.org.

...we will foster a culture of care among our churches and mission organizations compliant with the model and mandate of Christ to love and serve each other; we will endeavor to raise awareness about Member Care that would catalyze the Filipino church to harness capacities in order to ensure the flow of care towards those who were sent out; ...we will share knowledge, resources, and personnel; cooperate in stewardship of God's resources with each other and with the global member care community so that potentials are maximized and excesses are minimized in serving cross-cultural Christian workers;...we will seek out good practice models of Member Care that are biblically founded, and harness the existing strength of the Filipino culture for missionary care; we endeavor for the cross-cultural Christian workers' personal growth that includes the nurture of each of their family members; ...we will raise more church leaders and ministers particularly focused on Member Care, adequately equipped and tooled to serve the needs of the Filipino missionary including their families and home-based personnel;...we will personally engage in caring for Filipino cross-cultural Christian workers- celebrating their joys, sharing in their sorrows, supporting their needs and supplicating for their victory in seeing the unreached peoples coming to Christ. (*Global Member Care Briefing*, February 2006; www.membercare.org).

Some Member Care Materials for the A4 Regions

Chinese: www.Chinamembercare.com

Arabic: <http://Arabicmembercare.googlepages.com>

Bahasa Indonesia: <http://Indonesiamembercare.googlepages.com>

Spanish: www.cuidadointegralcomibam.blogspot.com

Korean: www.wearesources.org

There is a great need for contextualized resources in the heart language of Christian workers in the least evangelized areas of the world and especially if the member care field is to keep pace and help shape the changing face of global mission/aid (Chandler, 2000; Johnson and Kim, 2006; Johnstone, 2011). Bible studies and devotionals are foundational for discipling people, yet other resources of course are needed for dealing with: relational issues, marriage and family challenges, pornography, traumatic stress and PTSD, grief and loss, persecution and fear, to name a few. Further there needs to be ongoing close collaboration to learn from each other as we share, adapt, and develop resources. Those who live and work in challenging places, including hostile/dangerous environments, especially have so much to share about resiliency, suffering, perseverance, and hope!

Treasure 7: Training and More Training. Member care is not just a “specialist” function—something to be only provided by “professionals”. Rather it is essential to further train and equip various member care workers (MCWs), leaders, senders, and mission personnel themselves with “special” member care skills. These skills help to sustain workers for the long-haul. Training includes such areas as: counseling, crisis care/debriefing, organizational systems/dysfunction, interpersonal skills, personnel development, team building, and family/marriage. One course in particular that continues to make its international rounds is the

one week intensive “Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills” (www.itpartners.org). Another course offered primarily in Africa is based on the book by the same title: *Healing the Wounds of Trauma; How the Church Can Help* (2004), and also translated into some 40 languages spoken in Africa. Offering member care-related courses via the internet (e.g., www.headington-insitute.org) and via workshops at conferences, are also good ways forward. Currently there is no global calendar of training and related events like conferences for the member care community (there was for a few years until mid-2006). A key site however for staying current is maintained by Global Member Care Networks (www.globalmembercare.com).

Treasure 8: Crossing Sectors. There is so much mutual benefit from connecting with the international health, humanitarian, business, human resource, media, and educational sectors. How do they manage/support their staff and how to they help/protect humans in need of aid and developmental resources? How do they maintain “good governance” in light of corruption and dysfunction? One key document dealing with the management and support of aid workers is the *People In Aid Code of Good Practice* (2003, www.peopleinaid.org). Its seven principles and various “key indicators” (criteria for determining the extent to which the principles are being followed) have also served as helpful guides to many organizations in mission/aid. See also the web sites for the Society for Human Resource Management (www.shrm.org), AtHealth (www.athealth.com), the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (www.istss.org), World Health Organization (www.WHO.org), the World Federation for Mental Health (www.wfmh.org), Families in Global Transition (www.figt.org), Humanitarian Policy Group (www.odi.org.uk/hpg), Transparency International (www.transparency.org), and AlertNet (www.alertnet.org). See also *Global Mental Health: A Resource Map for Connecting and Contributing* (O’Donnell, 2011b) and the Global Integration entries (2011) on the CORE Member Care site (www.coremembercare.blogspot.com).

Treasure 9: Coaching. Coaching is just one of many developing areas for further supporting workers (some other areas include spiritual direction, conflict mediation, and leadership development). It focuses on both personal and professional development. Strategy-related coaching has been around for many years (e.g., “Coaching Missionary Teams” by Tim and Becky Lewis, 1992). But coaching as a core component of member care is also rapidly developing. Coaching can occur via face to face and the variety of telecommunications such as skype and webcams. Keith Webb (2008) describes coaching in the mission context:

Coaching is an ongoing conversation that empowers a person or team to fully live out God’s calling in their life and profession. The goal of coaching is to develop a person or team to more effectively reflect, correct, and generate new learning. It includes learning new ways to learn, listening to the heart and the Holy Spirit, and taking action to reshape their lives around that learning...Coaching focuses on learning rather than teaching. Coachees (those who are coached) are in the driver’s seat. They choose their own growth goals, reflect deeply on their current situations, think through their options, and decide their next steps. All the while, the coach actively listens and asks reflective questions, supportively challenging limited beliefs and behaviors. (p. 286)

Gary Collins sends out regular newsletters with many coaching and counseling helps. The newsletters are concise, user-friendly and archived on his web site (www.garycollins.com). See also: International Coach Federation (www.coachfederation.org), Christian Coaches Network (www.christiancoaches.com), and the Institute for Life Coach Training (www.lifecoachtraining.com).

Treasure 10: Good Governance and Management. Most of us have been part of both healthy and dysfunctional work settings. The healthy ones are personally rewarding and we feel we are contributing and growing, and challenged and respected. The dysfunctional ones on the other hand drain us, stealing our time, focus, effectiveness, and even our emotional and physical

health. This is why good governance and good management practices are so important. John Fawcett's comments about organizations in the humanitarian aid sector is also highly relevant for mission organizations (*Stress and Trauma Handbook*, 2003).

...the most stressful events in humanitarian work have to do with the organisational culture, management style and operational objectives of an NGO or agency rather than external security risks or poor environmental factors. Aid workers, basically, have a pretty shrewd idea what they are getting into when they enter this career, and dirty clothes, gunshots at night and lack of electricity do not surprise them. Intra-and inter-agency politics, inconsistent management styles, lack of team work and unclear or conflicting organizational objectives, however, combine to create a background of chronic stress and pressure that over time wears people down and can lead to burnout and even physical collapse (p. 6).

But "sender care" is not only about what organizations provide their workers. Organizations—as human entities, and like their staff—also need intentional, comprehensive care in order to remain healthy/effective. Sender care thus includes the commitment to ongoing organizational health and development and part of this involves the commitment of staff to help support their organization. So healthy organizations produce health staff and vice versa.

Some of the main areas that foster organization health/development include regular feedback from staff, leadership and management training; transparency and accountability for organizational activities including reputable financial auditing; personnel programs and resources; and recognized conflict, grievance, and whistle-blowing guidelines. For more discussion, tools, and links, see the four chapters in part two of *Global Member Care* on "Promoting Health in Mission/Aid" (O'Donnell, 2011a). To reiterate a core message from Charles Handy's *Understanding Voluntary Organisations* (1988): "Virtue does not have to be so painful, *if it is sensibly organized*" (p. 9).

Treasure 11: Resiliency. Member care seeks to develop strong people who balance the need for support/growth with the reality of sacrifice/suffering. Good member care helps develop resiliency—the inner strength, consistent practices, and social supports necessary to successfully deal with and grow through life's challenges. Resiliency is necessary of course to work effectively in mission/aid settings, many of which are very demanding. Both the experiences of "barely surviving and actively thriving" are realities for Christian workers. Resiliency is developed through hard experiences and via the courageous examples we see in the people who receive the services of mission/aid workers. Here is a brief quote from *Stress and Trauma Handbook: Strategies for Flourishing in Demanding Environments* (2003). The quote is from the chapter by Cynthia Eriksson et al. It summarizes research on the adjustment of World Vision aid workers from over 30 countries:

...for each of the mental health risk adjustment measures (depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and burnout) 30-50 percent of staff scored in the moderate to high-risk range. This is a significant number of people who are working and 'surviving' while experiencing considerable emotional distress. These staff may not be incapacitated by these symptoms presently, but we cannot deny the effects that depression, burnout, and PTSD can have on relationships, work, and personal health. An NGO's commitment to people includes the welfare of beneficiaries around the world, but it also includes the well-being of staff who commit their lives to serving and saving others." (p. 95)

This 30-50 percent figure is likely similar for many organizations with staff serving in more volatile areas. I believe it is also important to consider the impact of the emotional distress and behavioral dysfunction that occur leading up to the actual diagnosis/development of the three disorders mentioned in this research. Workers are vulnerable, yet still able to provide effective services in spite of their heavy stress loads. The "disorders" which sometimes do result reflect the realities (consequences) of humans who serve God in difficult places.

Treasure 12: Your Input. This final treasure is reserved for your gems—your input on the directions and resources that are needed for your work in member care as well as what you envision is needed in organizational settings all the way to the global level within mission/aid. This item can be used as a point of departure to discuss with others the treasures identified in this article along with their input. Here are some additional items, for starters: internet-based tools and resources; program evaluation and research on the quality of the member care being offered; self-help materials; prayer and intercession; virtue and character growth; approaches for promoting peace; convening special consultations and forming new member care affiliations; friendships; and working with other sectors on behalf of the serious problems facing humanity (Grand Challenges in Global Health, 2011; Johnstone, 2011). The treasure trove is overflowing with riches.

Ethnê to Ethnê Member Care

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

Ephesians 1:18-19 NASB

I would like to now pull together the previous member care treasures as we consider the future of member care as a global field. Let's consider a preeminent and unifying treasure called *Ethnê to Ethnê Member Care*. (E2MC). Concisely stated, in E2MC we are:

- prioritizing resources/directions
- that are visionary/practical
- to further provide/develop member care
- for/by all people groups.

The Vision: As Christians we believe there is a purpose to human history, and that there will be a conclusion to this age. We see how God is actively involved in history to redeem humans from every nation, people group, and language (Revelation 5: 9,10). It is an “ethnê to ethnê” strategy, in which believers from different people groups reach out to other people groups, until “all of the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.” The vision is thus for all ethnic groups to be involved in *cross-ethnê* mission/aid.

The Commitment: Member care is a service ministry which supports this historical and biblical vision. As an international movement of quality people who provide and develop quality resources, the member care community is committed to helping mission/aid workers grow in the personal character, professional competencies, and life skills necessary to work effectively. This includes workers from *all* ethnê.

The Strategy: Now let's consider an amazing corollary to this commitment: I want to suggest that this also means that we are committed to seeing quality member care workers (MCWs) from *all* ethnê raised up and trained, including those within/from the Unreached People Groups (UPGs) and the A4 regions (Africa, Asia, Arabic-Turkic, and America-Latina). And these MCWs work both within their own cultures *and* cross-culturally. So the focus is twofold: supporting the diversity of people involved in Christian mission/aid; and training others from various cultures to be quality care providers. **Member care, then, is also very much an “ethnê to ethnê” strategy.**

The Directions: E2MC is very challenging. What can help the member care community as it moves in this direction? It will be important to set up opportunities for colleagues from different

cultures to interact with each other (forums, conferences, writing, networks etc.). It will also be important for colleagues with member care training/experience in different cultures/countries, to facilitate learning and practice as “multicultural bridges”. Multi-cultural Southerners/Easterners who have sojourned for extended periods to the North/West and vice versa, will play key roles. Such multi-cultural learning is a core part of providing and developing member care well. And it is a two-way street.

Growing and Going: E2MC requires the best of our conceptual thinking and research skills; extensive practical experience; a commitment to use transcultural principles (concepts common across cultures, especially ethnic and organizational “cultures”); and lots of personal connections and ongoing relationships with colleagues. Said another way, we as a member care community are heading increasingly towards the reality of “boundaries without borders”—that is we are aware of our personal cultural/disciplinary identities and member care competencies (boundaries) as we intentionally work with those having different geographic/ethnic identities and member care concepts (borders). E2MC challenges us to grow *deeply as persons* as we go *broadly as practitioners* to all peoples.

Love: Above all, the core of E2MC involves the trans-ethnê, New Testament practice of fervently loving one another—like encouraging one another each day; bearing one another’s burdens; and forgiving one another from the heart. By this all people will know that we are His disciples (John 13:35). The Great Commission and the Great Commandment are inseparable. Our love is the final apologetic. It is the ultimate measure of the effectiveness of our member care.

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Dr. Kelly O'Donnell is a consulting psychologist and CEO of Member Care Associates, Inc. (MCA), based in Europe. With his wife Michèle, also a psychologist, he has provided member care internationally in mission/aid over the past 25 years in order to foster personal, team, and organizational health/effectiveness. He is also actively involved in the field of global mental health and coordinates the Mental Health and Psychosocial Working Group of the Geneva-based NGO Forum for Health. Kelly holds graduate degrees in clinical/community psychology including a doctorate from Rosemead School of Psychology, Biola University, USA. His publications include over fifty articles and four books in the member care field including *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World* (2002) and volume one in the Global Member Care series, *The Pearls and Perils of Good Practice* (2011). In addition he enjoys providing a steady stream of reflections and resources for good practice via the MCA-related websites. www.membercareassociates.org. Kelly and Michèle have two special, trans-cultural daughters with whom they regularly consult on all kinds of current issues: Erin, aged 22 and Ashling, aged 18.