

EDITORIAL

Mission from the Margins: Reaching the Unreached People Groups in Africa

The theme for this issue, “Mission from the Margins: Reaching the Unreached People Groups in Africa,” highlights a significant shift in missiological perspective in the 21st century. Since the historic Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, which aimed to see a world evangelised within a generation, global Christianity has undergone a profound transformation. That conference, often considered the birth of the modern ecumenical movement, gathered 1,200 delegates from mainly Western mission organisations. Its slogan was “the evangelisation of the world in this generation,” a vision that influenced mission strategies for many years.¹

However, Edinburgh 1910 largely overlooked the voices of the Global South and women, echoing the colonial and paternalistic views of the era. Over a hundred years later, the mission landscape has evolved dramatically.² The Lausanne Movement and subsequent global gatherings have sought to tackle these disparities by emphasising partnership, contextualisation, and the significance of the Majority World churches.³ Yet, despite the growth of Christianity in Africa and Asia, the issue of unreached people groups (UPGs) persists. According to the Joshua Project, approximately 7,120 UPGs remain worldwide, representing about 42% of the global population (3,571,653,530). This serves as a sobering reminder that the Great Commission remains unfinished.⁴

This situation requires a fresh approach to mission that goes beyond conventional models, emphasising mission from the margins, an idea supported by contemporary missiologists like David Bosch. Bosch argues that mission is not fixed but a lively, context-dependent activity influenced by the interaction of the gospel and culture.⁵ Similarly, Escobar, Yeh, and Franklin and Niemandt have emphasised the polycentric nature of

¹ Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

² Emma Wild-Wood and Peniel Rajkumar, “Exploring Foundations for Mission,” in *Foundations for Mission*, ed. Emma Wild-Wood and Peniel Rajkumar (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 3–16; Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, eds., *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010).

³ Lausanne Movement, *Least Reached Peoples Network*, accessed December 5, 2025, <https://lausanne.org/network/least-reached-peoples>; Wild-Wood and Rajkumar, “Exploring Foundations for Mission,” 6–8.

⁴ Joshua Project, *Unreached People Groups Statistics*, 2024, <https://joshuaproject.net/unreached/10>, (accessed December 5, 2025).

⁵ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

mission, in which voices from the Global South and marginalised communities contribute to the future of world Christianity.⁶

Accordingly, the Pentecost Centre for the Study of Unreached People Groups (PCUPG) at Pentecost University, and the Home and Urban Missions (HUM) of the Church of Pentecost (CoP), convened the inaugural International Conference on the theme “Mission from the Margins: Reaching the Unreached People Groups in Africa” at the Pentecost Convention Centre in Ghana from 25–27 June 2024. This historic gathering affirmed that mission today is no longer a one-way movement from the West to the rest; rather, it is a Spirit-led, multidirectional endeavour rooted in local agency and global partnership.

The conference highlighted scholarly contributions organised into four main sub-themes: Foundations of Unreached People Groups in Africa, which provides detailed data and analysis across the continent; Mission Models and Approaches, exploring innovative frameworks and local strategies for effective outreach; Discipleship and Pastoral Care, focusing on spiritual growth and pastoral needs within UPG contexts; and Socio-Cultural Transformation and Community Development, integrating evangelism with holistic social impact. The content of this issue flows directly from the inaugural 1st International Conference, which served as the primary platform for presenting these scholarly insights. The selected papers cover the sub-themes above. Consequently, this issue is more than just a collection of papers; it represents a strategic mobilisation of African Pentecostal theological thought, missiological practice, and interdisciplinary insights to bridge the gap between the Church’s mission and its current implementation.

The first article, *Conversion or Christianisation and Mission from the Margins: Interrogating the Foundations of Mission Thought and Practice* by Joshua D. Settles, critically explores the roots of Christian mission, focusing on conversion and Christianisation. It contends that classic mission methods, mainly from the 19th-century European missionary movement, often equated spreading Christianity with enforcing Western cultural norms, which marginalised non-Western cultures and distorted true conversion. Settles traces these ideas from early Christian interactions with Greco-Roman culture, through the rise of Christendom, to their lasting impact on current mission thinking. He calls for a new approach that recognises shared spiritual foundations across cultures, emphasising that

⁶ Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Allen Yeh, *Polycentric Missiology: 21st Century Mission from Everyone to Everywhere* (IVP Academic, 2016); Kirk Franklin and Nelus Niemandt, “Polycentrism in the missio Dei,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72, no.1 (2016).

real Christian conversion involves engaging deeply with local worldviews rather than enforcing cultural uniformity.

Building on this critique, Solomon Kwasi Kyei's article *Targeted Propositions in Mission: Reaching the Unreached Within the Worlds of World Mission Motif* shifts the focus from geographical considerations to social segmentation. He argues that the church's mission should go beyond traditional geographical boundaries to effectively reach unreached groups by adopting business management concepts, such as market segmentation and value proposition. He maintains that successful mission work involves targeting specific social segments, such as sports, commerce, education, and marginalised populations, rather than focusing solely on nations or linguistic groups. Using the Home and Urban Missions (HUM) of the CoP as a case study, the article demonstrates how strategic, context-aware approaches can address persistent missional gaps, even in regions considered reached. His insights resonate with Settles' plea for cultural sensitivity, showing that effective mission requires not uniformity but adaptability to the diverse "worlds within the world."

This emphasis on contextual engagement finds vivid expression in Frank Ampomah's study of Fulani communities in West Africa. In *The Transformative Power of the Gospel in Fulani Communities: Ecclesial Agency and Mission Praxis*, Ampomah examines how the spread of Christianity has brought about notable spiritual, social, and cultural changes among the Fulani, a traditionally nomadic and Islamic ethnic group in West Africa. Using qualitative research, including interviews and observations, he emphasises the church's role in facilitating conversion, supporting new believers, and promoting education and community development. He shares personal stories of Fulani converts, the challenges they face, such as ostracisation and identity negotiation, and the strategies the church employs to address these issues. Ampomah concludes that while the gospel has inspired profound transformation and empowerment in the Fulani community, it also presents ongoing challenges in cultural adaptation and interfaith relations. This highlights the need for culturally sensitive mission strategies and ongoing support for converts, reflecting Settles' critique of uniformity and Kyei's emphasis on tailored strategies.

S. Ofotsu Ofoe's exploration of the HUM concept within the Church of Pentecost further demonstrates how mission can be re-imagined to address complex realities. His article, *Modelling Urban Mission among Unreached People Groups*, shows HUM as an innovative strategy for urban mission targeting UPGs. Ofoe illustrates how the CoP has shifted from a loosely organised mission structure to a more deliberate and systematic framework crafted to navigate the intricate social realities of both urban and rural areas. HUM's scope encompasses various groups such as expatriates, migrants, the urban poor, and

those involved in social vices, broadening its reach beyond city centres into small towns and villages. He demonstrates that urban social issues are not confined to cities, and the CoP's adaptable, context-aware model has achieved meaningful engagement and conversions among UPGs across Ghana. Ofoe's analysis positions HUM as a dynamic mission model that transcends traditional boundaries, complementing Kyei's segmentation approach and Ampomah's call for contextual sensitivity.

Yet, as Solomon Kwasi Kyei and Mabel Darkwaah Ayisi remind us in *Mission at the Margins: The Role of Financial Resources in Mission Engagement*, vision alone is insufficient without financial capacity. They argue that financial resources influence the effectiveness of mission agencies in reaching UPGs, even in places already considered reached. Their econometric analysis of data from the Church of Pentecost reveals that actual financial capability, measured by net tithes, significantly enhances outreach to certain unreached groups, though the effect varies across targeted groups. Interestingly, they caution that excessive funding can sometimes hinder engagement, recommending that financial stewardship must be as strategic as missional targeting. This insight adds another dimension to the discussion: mission is not solely theological and sociological but also economic, requiring churches to manage resources in line with contextual priorities.

Finally, Emmanuel Foster Asamoah and Ebenezer Tetteh Kpalam's *Comparative Analysis of Βαπτίζοντες in the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) and the Fulbe Bible* brings the discussion full circle by highlighting the linguistic and theological dimensions of contextualisation. Their study of Fulfulde Bible translations shows how poor renderings of "baptising" have caused confusion and reluctance among Fulani Christians to undergo water baptism. They highlight how current Fulfulde Bible translations use terms such as *baptisma*, *baptisima*, *batisima*, and *looton* either lack theological depth or do not resonate with Fulani cultural and religious understanding. By recommending the culturally resonant term *mutineede*, they argue for a translation that bridges theological depth with cultural awareness. This linguistic sensitivity mirrors Ampomah's emphasis on cultural adaptation and reinforces Settles' call for mission that respects local worldviews rather than imposing foreign categories.

Taken together, these articles present a clear editorial direction that contemporary mission must evolve beyond traditional models of uniformity and dominance. Instead, it should embrace contextual sensitivity, interdisciplinary strategies, financial stewardship, and linguistic precision. Whether discussing Settles' critique of Christendom, Kyei's segmentation model, Ampomah's narratives about the Fulani, Ofoe's HUM framework, or the translation insights from Asamoah and Kpalam, one message stands out: mission at the margins is not peripheral but central to the future of global Christianity. By

listening to these voices and engaging with the diverse cultures within our world, the church can embody a truly transformative and inclusive gospel witness.

A Call for Collaboration

A careful consideration of these themes reveals a fundamental truth that no individual church, denomination, or mission agency can accomplish this alone. The challenge of reaching Unreached People Groups (UPGs) in Africa requires collaborative networks that transcend institutional boundaries and promote unity in diversity. African churches must leverage their growing influence and resources to form strategic alliances, such as data sharing, missionary training, and community mobilisation, to support comprehensive missions. Collaboration among local churches, mission organisations, and theological institutions is essential to overcoming linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic barriers that hinder access to the gospel.

By fostering cooperation grounded in mutual respect and a shared vision, we can embody the *missio Dei* and promote the Kingdom of God among those who have not yet heard the Good News. The phrase “Mission from the Margins” serves as a rallying cry for self-reflection and proactive strategy. It calls upon the African church to move beyond its comfort zones and deploy its abundant spiritual and human resources to those on the peripheries of geography, society, and culture. We encourage all readers, scholars, pastors, missionaries, and church leaders to engage deeply with the scholarship presented here. May this volume inspire renewed commitment, innovative thinking, and collaborative action toward fulfilling the Great Commission in Africa and beyond.

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