

The Story of Strategic Sending

Chris Maynard, January 2026

George prayed ...

At the end of the 20th century George Verwer wrote, “It is no wonder that the widespread complexity faced by Western missionaries, has created the illusion that there is no longer a need for them. In Operation Mobilization we now have 2,800 workers in 80 different nations. There are huge complexities and problems and I have to admit that mistakes are frequent. People are not always deployed in the most strategic way. I am in no position to set myself up as a judge of other people’s methods, but as I cast myself on God, the Holy Spirit has moved me to plead for a more strategically thoughtful approach to the deployment of missions personnel”ⁱ.

... and God answered

Not long after George was moved to pray in such a passionate way, God opened my mind to just such a “strategically thoughtful approach”. I was then a part-time Global Data Architect with an international corporation while serving part-time as a pastor with a small local church in the UK. I had no direct experience of global missions. I knew of George Verwer. In fact, as a young Christian in the 1970s, he had spoken at my church, which was pastored by Stanley Voke. Stanley was one of George’s heroes in the faith and he was my pastor and mentor during the first years of my discipleship. But I did not meet George until much later. By then I was already well on the way to “Strategic Sending”.

Jesus was sent ...

In the late 1990s, I was re-reading the gospels to meditate on the ways of my Lord and Master, Jesus. This time, I noticed how important it was to Jesus that he had been sentⁱⁱ. He even said, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me”. For over 20 years, from the time I became a disciple, I was open to God sending me anywhere. But he hadn’t. Now I saw just how important it was to Jesus. My Master had been sent. I wanted to be sent.

... “so send me!”

So, as a mature disciple, encouraged by Jesus’ example in the Bible, I found myself calling on God again. With the Bible as my guide, and with my wife Judy’s agreement, I began to ask him to send me. I prayed often. But, because of God’s training over those 20 years, I didn’t just pray. I also thought about it and did some simple research.

Assessing the information

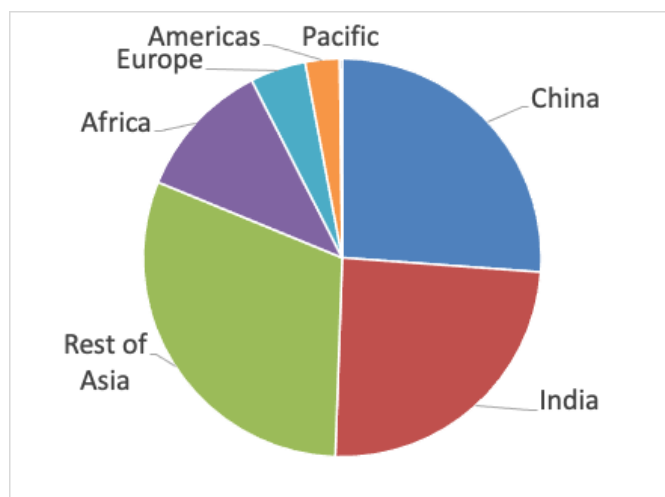
I read my copy of “Operation World” asking, “What makes a place suitable for us to be sent?” It was important to me that there were very few Christians there. I looked for phrases like, “one of the least evangelised states of India.” I narrowed down my search and focused my prayers. Then at some point during these years of prayer and research a sudden question came to mind.

“Where are all the non-Christians in the world?”

The question was simple: “Where are all the non-Christians in the world?” I now believe that it was from God, but at the time it really seemed to come out of nowhere. I opened “Operation World” to find the chart that would give me the answer. To my surprise, I didn’t find one. So I copied the figures for each nation from the book into a spreadsheet and pressed the button to get a simple pie chart.

Shocked by a simple truth

I was shocked. I was stunned. I was amazed. I had been a Christian for 20 years. I had been interested in mission. Why had no one ever told me this? In my secular career I was a “Global Data Architect”. Why had I not discovered this for myself? I had been reading Operation World intensively for months. How did I not know that one quarter of the non-Christians were in China, another quarter in India, and most of the rest were in other parts of Asia? This means that, for Christian mission, Asia is not just one of six equal continents. It must be pre-eminent in any global thinking about discipling all nations.



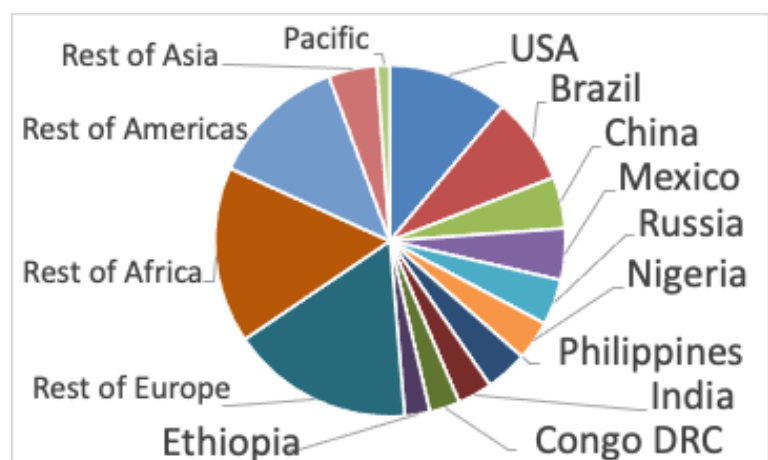
Meditating on the data

For months I stayed with this chart. I meditated on it, as you would meditate on the Bible. I had it in a place where I could see it every day and I kept wondering and asking God what it meant. At first, I was asking, “What does this mean for me?”. I hoped it would give me more clarity about where God would send me. But my question was too small, and this “big” chart didn’t help directly. Then I found that I was beginning to

ask God, “What does this mean for the global church?” I knew I had no authority to ask that question, but I felt compelled to continue.

A glorious church

After several more months, I decided to ask the related question, “Where are all the *Christians* in the world?” It wasn’t hard, so I prepared another simple pie chart. This one was less of a shock. This one caused me to worship God. How beautiful is the church of God! How wonderful that the Bride of Christ is getting ready for her bridegroom. One evidence is her progress from relative geographic isolation to become a truly global body. Thank you God that you are working out your purposes on Earth! I



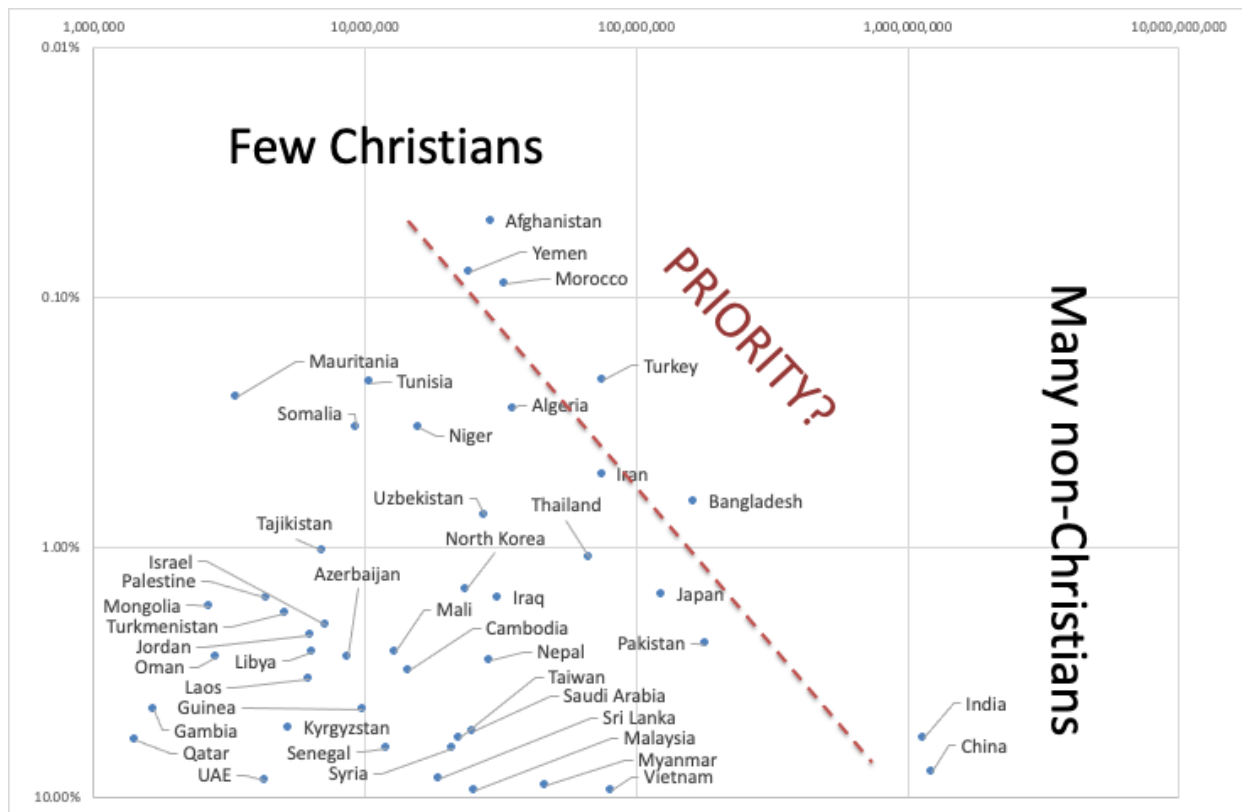
praised God for many days as I meditated on this chart. There are just two countries that can make up 50% of all non-Christians, but with Christians we need more than ten countries to do the same. And these countries are in every major continent – North America, South America, Asia, Europe and Africa. “You shall be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.” The promise has been fulfilled. How wonderful too, that India and China, with the highest numbers of non-Christians are *also* among the top countries for Christian numbers.

Who should we send where?

Now I meditated for more months on the two charts side by side. I started doing little experiments in my mind or on paper. What did it mean that India and China were significant nations on both charts? There were more Christians in the USA than in any other country. There were more non-Christians in China than in any other country. So what if we could fully mobilize the Christians in the USA to reach the non-Christians of China? Surely that would do some good! I imagined that by some extraordinary effort of giving and going, we might mobilize 10% of US-American Christians, teach them Mandarin Chinese, train them in Chinese culture and send them to China. I knew that it was not going to happen, but this was a “thought experiment”. What if it did happen? What would that be like? I worked out that our US-Americans in China would be seriously outnumbered by the Chinese Christians who were already there. So that didn’t seem such a good contribution to the evangelisation of the world as I had hoped! Undeterred, I wondered how to explore more of the relationship between the locations of Christians and the locations of non-Christians.

The harvest is plentiful and the workers are few – but where?

So, I drew a “scatter chart”. It enabled me to compare countries of the world in both ways in the same image. Where are the most non-Christians? And where are the lowest



percentages of Christians? I asked the question, “What are the priority countries for the global church?” You could say that I was arranging countries by where the harvest was most plentiful and where the workers were fewest. Later, years later, I linked this directly to those words of Jesus, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Luke 10:2). For now, I was just using my experience of data to think about things. This chart went through many versions. In this example, countries with the lowest percentage of Christians are at the top, like Afghanistan, Yemen and Morocco. In those countries the workers are very few. Countries with the greatest number of non-Christians are at right, so that is where we find China and India. In those countries the harvest is plentiful.

What are the *really* priority countries for us?

Now, I thought, I could begin to identify the priority countries for the global church. Obviously, that must include China and India, but I thought that Afghanistan, Yemen and Morocco must need some attention. So, I drew something like the red line across the chart and meditated and prayed about it for a few days. Typically, I was unhappy that Algeria, Iran, Japan and Pakistan were not included in the priority. It seemed to me that they had a certain priority too. So, I would rub out the previous line and draw another one. At different times I tilted the line in different directions to include Mauritania where the workers were few or Vietnam where the harvest was plentiful. The new line might indicate that more or fewer countries were priority.

I was always uncomfortable

I drew and redrew that line for months, and I was never satisfied. Why not? Wherever I drew the line, my eyes were drawn in compassion to the names of the countries just below the line. Surely those countries needed help too! But if I keep moving the line down, then the “priority” will be no priority at all, because it would include *too many* countries. That didn’t make sense. Eventually, I formulated yet another question to express my concern, “Who will go to the second-rank countries?” If we encourage everyone to go to the “priority” countries, who is going to go to the next ones down the list? I realised that wherever I drew the line, that question would still be nagging at me.

It was the wrong question!

For some years now, I had been asking “What is the priority for the global church?” and drawing different charts. Now, in a single day I knew that it was completely the wrong question. In that same day God gave me the basic plan for Strategic Sending. In a single day I knew that there can be no single global priority but there must be different priorities for different countries. Some indeed must “go to the second rank”. But how to decide? Who goes to the first rank? Who goes to the second rank? A simple data model of resources, needs and affinities could guide us. We need to resolve three questions at the same time: “Where are the resources for the gospel?” “Where are the needs for the gospel?” and “What are the affinities between different countries?” I could see that it would be easy! In fact, as steeped in data as I was, I didn’t even have to try it out. I just knew that it could work. Exactly how it would work – that would take longer – but I knew it could work.

Sent into global church information work

Gradually, for this and for other reasons, I began to understand that God was sending me personally, not to a geographical place as such, but into global church information. I had to validate that. I had to learn more of mainstream mission thinking. I had to test the call. That all took time. I read Bosch’s “Transforming Mission”. I read Wright’s “The Mission of God” (twice). I re-read Carey’s “Enquiry”. I took a Perspectives course. I linked up with Bill Dickson of GMI. In 2005, in two minutes at the back of our High Wycombe church, I told Rick Love how I believed God was sending me. He recruited me into the Global Trends team where I worked 8 hours a week for 18 months with Patrick Johnstone, Jim Haney, Jeff Liverman and Jeff Neely, while still in a full-time secular job.

I got started

In 2007, now convinced of my calling, I left full-time secular work. Since then, I have funded myself through God’s blessings of family, career and a prudent wife. In 2008 and 2009 I made a two-part tour of the US visiting the US Center for World Mission and Ralph Winter, VisionSynegy, IMB, Joshua Project and various notable individuals including Todd Johnson. I worked for Sas Conradie in WEAMC’s Joint Information Management Initiative (JIMI). When JIMI closed, I joined Larry and Stephanie Kraft to help them establish the Community of Mission Information Workers. I have had assignments with several global networks usually helping them with decisions about sending.

Serving others, I never forgot the vision

Why has it taken 20 years for Strategic Sending to come to fruition? I tried several ways to get it going. I had *lots of* encouragement from people. But I have never wanted to do this on my own, and, although individuals walked beside me for a time, I never had a team and I never found a sponsor who would make it happen. Nevertheless, God has honed my ideas. I tried things out. I embedded elements of Strategic Sending into work that I have done such as “To Fill the Earth with Faith” (referenced in Murray Moerman’s book “Mobilizing Movements”) and the “Mobilization Index” that I helped to develop for CMM (now Via). These have proved useful in themselves. But they are not as powerful as Strategic Sending.

Lausanne gave the opportunity to form a team

In the run up to their Fourth Congress in Seoul, the Lausanne Movement published a series of three articlesⁱⁱⁱ in which I laid out the missiological groundwork for Strategic Sending. These are foundational for the whole project. In March 2024 two Lausanne Issue Networks (Ministry Collaboration and Research & Strategic Information) saw the potential and sponsored a workshop. From that workshop the “Strategic Sending Team” was formed.

Developed and Published

Our goal is to develop, publish and promote a set of sending messages to encourage the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. After 15 months development, we published the Strategic Sending messages to churches 2025 on our website – strategicsending.com. Now we move into a phase of promotion. Can you help us? Email StrategicSending@gmail.com to make contact.

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ⁱ Out of the Comfort Zone, George Verwer, OM Publishing, 2000 in the chapter called “Future Missionaries – From Where?”

ⁱⁱ E.g Matthew 10:40, 15:24, Mark 9:37, Luke 4:18, 4:43, 9:48, John 3:34, 4:34, 5:30.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://lausanne.org/about/blog/gods-mission-still-needs-missionaries>

<https://lausanne.org/about/blog/gods-mission-needs-the-right-message>

<https://lausanne.org/about/blog/gods-mission-needs-to-go-to-the-whole-world>