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### **Barriers and Solutions for Indigenous Leadership Development: An Outline for Equipping a New Generation for Dynamic Mission among the Poor**

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# Barriers and Solutions for Indigenous Leadership Development: An Outline for Equipping a New Generation for Dynamic Mission Among the Poor

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By Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis and Rev. Bob Engel

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Samuel Morris Publications publishes texts in service to the evangelical church's life together and its ongoing pursuit of a deeper conformity to Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:19).

### **The Sacred Roots Project**

Taylor University's Sacred Roots Thriving in Ministry Project formally launched in 2018. Several hundred academics, congregational leaders, and undergraduate students have worked together to explore how spiritual friendships and spiritual classics can help congregational leaders thrive in challenging ministry contexts. Those interested in learning more about the Sacred Roots Project are invited to explore the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics, published articles and white papers, and additional resources available at [www.sacredrootsministry.org](http://www.sacredrootsministry.org).

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## Introduction

The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI) is the training arm of World Impact, an interdenominational missions organization committed to facilitating church-planting movements by evangelizing, equipping, and empowering the unchurched urban poor. TUMI's role in that vision is to equip leaders for the urban church, especially among the poor, in order to advance the Kingdom of God.

For more than forty years, World Impact has been dedicated to honoring and glorifying God and delighting in him among the unchurched urban poor by knowing him and making him known.

Our vision is to empower urban leaders and partner with local churches to reach their cities with the Gospel, to the end that the Gospel of the Kingdom is proclaimed by the empowered urban poor to every people group through indigenous churches and movements.

Currently, we support 288 satellite sites in nineteen countries, with opportunities for many others in the recent months. Our sites utilize our *Capstone Curriculum*, a sixteen-module seminary-level program for mature and emerging leaders for church and ministry. Our discipleship curriculum, *Fight the Good Fight of Faith*, has now been translated into eleven languages, and we have twenty-one translations now in process. As of this month, we have 1,125 graduates, and generally boast about 3,500–4,000 students per semester worldwide. We also sponsor leadership training satellites in seventy prison and correctional facilities today.

In addition to our satellite ministries, we also sponsor church planting training and resources, now in our 18th year. Recently, we hosted our fourth *Evangel Dean School of Urban Church Planting* (August 2018), training movements, denominations, and ministries to host their own church planting schools for church planters in their own locale. This past school could possibly have been our most strategic school ever. Thirty-seven Deans, representing thirteen different “dean teams” were certified and commissioned for the glory of God to equip and charter church planters from and for the urban poor using our *Ripe for Harvest: A Guidebook for Planting Healthy Churches in the City*.

We had key leaders present from a number of major communions, denominations, and ministries including Vineyard U.S.A., Assemblies of God, conservative Baptist, Presbyterian, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, the Southern Baptist Convention, Christ the Victor churches, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Reformed Church of America, the United Forum of Churches in Bangladesh, the International Communion of Charismatic Episcopal Church (Tanzania Diocese), and the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.

This remarkable collection of folks was aggressive in their desired projected outcomes for the next three years of equipping their church planters to reach into poor, unengaged communities with the Gospel. Here is the combined goal list from the Class of 2018 Evangel Dean School:

- To host forty-five Evangel Schools of Urban Church Planting.
- To charter and launch 350+ church plant teams to establish new churches among the poor.

- To equip all 350+ new church plants with TUMI curricula, resources, and training opportunities.
- To join The Evangel Network (an urban church planting resource community associated with the Evangel School) for mutual edification and growth.

**The Problem: The Emerging City Poor  
and the Benign Leadership Educational Neglect  
of the Church toward the Forgotten**

TUMI exists because World Impact is convinced that God has made the poor rich in faith and chosen them to be heirs of the in-breaking Kingdom of God. The world is exploding in its population, now with over seven billion inhabitants, with prospects to become nine billion in a little more than a decade.

At a recent Global Proclamation Congress meeting in Bangkok where I presented, it was declared by the organizers that less than 5 percent of the world global pastoral population has had any kind of formal biblical and theological training. It was stated that if we filled up all the ATS and other accredited evangelical bachelor's and master's programs and filled them to capacity, that number would only grow from 5 percent to 6 percent!

In 1900 the global population was only about 1.6 billion, and as recently as 1970, only 3.7 billion. Almost four times as many people were alive in 2000 as 1900. In order of most populous, Asia boasts 3.683 billion, Africa has 784 million, Europe is home to 729 million, Latin America contains 519 million, North America has 310 million, and Oceania comprises 30 million people. Together Asia, Africa, and Latin America comprise 82 percent of the world's population!

Complex, ethnic diversity makes up America's urban church communities. Well over 160 distinct languages are spoken, numbering well over sixty million people, drawn to urban areas for economic, social reasons, the vast majority of which never attend any kind of religious service, let alone a Christian one.

There are at least five critical barriers to indigenous leadership training, and five important responses which can address these for equipping quality leaders for the urban church:

**1. The Barrier of Wealth-as-Requisite for Leadership Training.**

The first barrier deals with the issue of class in evangelical leadership development. First, we have come to see that our traditional approaches to ministry training has overlooked and neglected the poor in the city (domestically, internationally and those in prison) in direct violation and unbelief of the most basic tenets of Scripture.

TUMI displays in its programming and enterprise our deepest conviction that God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom of God to come.

**Theological Tenet: God's Commitment to the Poor**

1. Jesus inaugurated his messianic ministry by affirming God's prophetic call to the poor (Luke 4:16–21).

2. Jesus authenticated his Messiahship to John through his healings of the broken and despised, and preaching the gospel to the poor (Luke 7:18–23).
3. Jesus elected as his inner company of disciples men and women who largely came from working poor backgrounds, the ordinary and overlooked of his day (Mark 3:1–15).
4. Jesus validated claims of salvation based on justice and compassion done to the poor, as in the case of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–9).
5. Jesus identified himself without qualification to the stranger, the sick, the naked, the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, and the prisoner (Matt 25).

**TUMI’s Commitment: Making and Keeping All Our Resources Available to the Poor Whom God Has Chosen for His Heavenly Kingdom**

1. We do not believe you should be rich or know someone who is in order to be trained to serve the humble Carpenter of Nazareth.
2. Our classes, taught by faculty with terminal degrees, cost as little as \$10 a credit hour, compared to \$400 per credit hour in most places.

For example, the Doctor of Ministry Seminar I teach at Houston Graduate School of Theology, which costs the students somewhere around \$1500–1700, can be taken at TUMI for \$20 even.

3. For those who cannot afford textbooks, we lease them by the semester.
4. We have no admissions standards that will disqualify a person based on academic problems or no money alone.
5. We provide oral exams to students whose language and or literacy skills may not presently be adequate.
6. Our entire Certificate in Theological Studies, representing thirty-two hours of seminary level teaching, is offered for less than the expense of two separate seminary courses total (roughly \$1,000)!

**TUMI’s Ministry Implication**

1. Simply because you are poor should never disqualify you from being equipped to minister and serve as an urban disciple.
2. Creating a system which relies on expensive, professional, and culturally-distant C3 models and norms of education will never make Christ available to the poorest of the poor.

**TUMI’s Burden**

1. Provide the finest evangelical and biblical resources anywhere.

2. Make them available to the poor at a price, a time, and in a manner that is conducive to their cultural experience, and respectful of their spiritual desire.

Do not misunderstand our motives here. We do nothing shabbily or poorly, and we host nothing remedial or preparatory. We would put our students up against any class of believers anywhere, not just here at home but anywhere in the world!

## **2. The Barrier of the Invisible Middle-Class Cultural Hegemony**

The second barrier addresses the issue of cultural hegemony of mainstream western culture as the baseline for acceptable leadership training. We must admit that we have willingly yet unfruitfully relied upon cultural forms and content of education which are bloated, overly abstract, expensive, and filled with culturally-distant C3 models which are too cumbersome to raise up a dynamic class of urban missionaries and ministers from among city folk.

TUMI deliberately and directly seeks to make all its course and training conducive to the lifestyle, context, and worldview of the poor and marginalized in the context of their life journeys, churches, and ministries.

### **Theological Tenet: Jesus Ministered in the Presence of Those to Whom He Was Called**

1. The incarnational principle of the faith.
2. The ubiquity of the Holy Spirit (John 1:14–18).

### **The Problem**

1. Our current theological training centers are not urban in culture.
2. Our current theological training centers are not preparing people to serve in the needy communities making up our modern urban harvest.
3. Our traditional schools, programs, and resources are simply unavailable to city people.

### **What TUMI Is Doing**

1. We make theological education affordable
2. We focus on being culturally conducive
3. We bring the training resources and materials to those where they are, we are in the city
4. Our faculty are urban missionaries and pastors with many years in urban communities
5. We orient our system around the needs of the urban church, concentrating all our efforts in empowering urban churches to minister in their own neighborhoods



6. We seek to make all our leadership development efforts affordable, meaningful, and grounded in the locale in which the Spirit has both called and resourced his leaders to function

### **TUMI's Ministry Implication**

1. We seek to provide excellent, affordable, and culturally sensitive training for under-resourced church leaders in the context of their lives.
2. We seek to equip under-resourced church leaders to live and minister with integrity wherever God has called them.

### **3. The Barrier of Church-in-Absentia**

The third barrier addresses the eclipsing of church life and spiritual formation among the forgotten in much traditional leadership development. We have replaced the church contexts of the poor as the locus for leadership training and given it over to professionals and their institutions (whether they Bible Colleges, Bible Institutes, seminaries, Christian Liberal Arts Colleges, missions agencies, or para-church organizations.)

TUMI believes wholeheartedly that we must restore the local church assembly as the primary context for equipping saints and leaders for ministry and mission.

#### **Theological Tenet: The Centrality of the Church:**

The Holy Spirit working in the Church is the key to dynamism, maturity, and fruitfulness in ministry.

#### **The Problem**

We are overly dependent on external organizational, parachurch structures, and mission agencies to resource many poor leaders and congregations whose members must be released to start and maintain the ministries the Holy Spirit has for them to do (ministry entrepreneurs).

1. TUMI emphasizes that leadership and church offices given and conferred based on the anointing and gifting of the Spirit recognized and displayed amid the people of God (pastoral imprimatur within a legitimate communion).
2. Theological and pastoral education that is not tethered to discreet ecclesial authority may easily become sectarian, schismatic and unhelpful.
3. The proliferation of so many individualized, non-ecclesial ministry initiatives which are not connected to solid Christian community oversight is a sign that perhaps our theological education structures contribute to the schismatic nature of much 21<sup>st</sup> century outreach.
4. Theological education must always affirm and support the notion that ministry comes from an awakening of the empowering presence of the Spirit in the life of the church.

## **What TUMI Is Doing**

1. We do not use academic, professional, and external criteria as the primary means of selecting church leaders
2. Reliance on confirmed leadership amid the church is our criterion for training
3. Only one reference in the TUMI admissions packet: the pastor's evaluation and recommendation
4. Not based on what you know but who you are: church leaders must be set apart for their tasks and offices through an acknowledgment of their gifts of the Spirit and testimony, confirmed through the consensus of the church and its leaders

## **TUMI's Burden**

1. Resource congregations to select and equip their chosen leaders to identify the place and opportunities for ministry that the Holy Spirit has called them to do.
2. Commission and resource those chosen leaders to do it.

## **TUMI's Ministry Implication**

TUMI provides its leadership resources to leaders within and through the church, in its diverse traditions, organizational and liturgical forms, and local church venues.

### **4. The Barrier of Programming Irrelevance and Impotence**

The fourth barrier addresses the character of the content offered in our traditional Christian leadership circles. We must abandon any unthinking devotion to abstract, professionally oriented, and hard-for-laymen-to-reproduce programs and in their place streamline our equipping for a more basic Biblical and historically orthodox core that can be passionately preached and reproduced.

TUMI is committed to retelling the Story of the Kingdom of God in the Bible, with Jesus Christ as Center of the Story, and using the Nicene Creed as the plumb line for a truly evangelical orthodoxy.

### **Theological Tenet: The Biblical Story of Christ and His Kingdom**

1. The biblical story of Christ and His Kingdom interpreted through lens of Christus Victor.
2. The biblical story of Christ and His Kingdom as developed through the Great Tradition.

### **The Problem**

1. Once bloated curriculums have necessarily been shortened and amended because of the lack of enrollment taking place throughout our seminary networks (The 126-hour program at \$700+ per credit hour is a thing of the past!).

2. Too long: years of work, often time for contexts different than the one assumed in school.
3. In most programs, the student takes assigned courses and must hope the courses assigned are the very ones they need and will use after their course of study.
4. Sadly, virtually nothing offered in our traditional programs focus on the poor *per se* either in the city, the prison, or country, with little related to urban concerns.

### **What TUMI Is Doing**

1. We are multiplying qualified spiritual laborers to minister among the unengaged and unreached, especially among the urban poor.
2. Since 1995, we have innovated to provide credible biblical and pastoral education for the urban poor that is academically accessible and culturally conducive.
3. It can cost up to \$100,000 annually to deploy a Western missionary; we can equip an indigenous Christian worker in their own context for around \$50 per month.
4. We help churches and movements form satellites and turnkey administration. We grew from twelve satellites in 2006 to 287 as of September 2018.
5. We design resources, events, and programming serving churches and movements for church planting, discipleship, outreach, and ministry consultation.
6. We can resource God-called, gifted indigenous leaders anywhere on earth, whether urban or rural, or from northern to southern hemisphere.
7. *The Capstone Curriculum* is a systematic, seminary-level program consisting of historically orthodox, practical, independent courses for equipping of leaders. It contains sixteen modules, representing 64 hours of teaching and ten thousand pages of text. Like our *Foundations for Ministry Series*, it is divided into four subject areas: Biblical Studies, Theology and Ethics, Christian Ministry, and Urban Mission.
8. All courses and programs are modular in design, group-based learning in structure and urban in cultural orientation. They are also geared toward oral learners.

### **Benefits of the TUMI Model of Leadership Development**

1. Dramatically simple and thoroughgoingly biblical.
2. Eliminate waste of time, dollars, and effort.
3. Allows the church to be the center of training.
4. Is conducive to the poor (who have neither the money nor the leisure to go somewhere for four years for training).
5. Builds on the Great Tradition of the Church.

6. Provides a wonderful syllabus for grounding new believers, training Christian leaders, and taking seriously church history.

### **TUMI's Ministry Implication**

TUMI builds its entire theological vision around the biblical theology of the Kingdom of God, and its meaning vis-a-vis the church and the world

### **5. The Barrier of Non-Entrepreneurial Investment**

Finally, we believe that we ought not live for the purpose of studying but study for the purpose of living. We must therefore shift our leadership development programs and ministerial studies from an emphasis on covering intellectual ground to equipping people for ministry, whether it is how to evangelize, how to disciple, or how to plant churches among the unreached.

TUMI concentrates its efforts on equipping individuals, teams, and congregations for effective ministry in underserved communities among the poor. We resource urban Christians and their congregations whose members to initiate and fulfill new kinds of ministries in communities where no evangelical presence or witness exists.

### **Theological Tenet: Ministry Entrepreneurship Is the Goal of All Christian Leadership Development**

Training is for the equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:9–16).

### **The Problem**

1. The unbelievable ripeness of the urban harvest (John 4:35).
2. The shortage of urban laborers (Matt 9:35–38).

### **What TUMI Is Doing**

1. Using local church cohort learning to equip urban Christian leaders who will evangelize and make disciples in urban contexts.
2. Creating a network of training centers (TUMI satellites) in urban areas that can provide excellent and affordable ministry education that is sensitive to urban culture.
3. Equipping church plant team trainers among the poor and under-resourced. The Evangel School of Urban Church Planting, Dean Training provides excellent equipping for church plant trainers responsible for assessing, training, commissioning, and/or coaching church planters working among the poor:
  - a. The *Evangel School Boot Camp* includes a team assessment and an application process which helps to confirm that the planter has the calling, character, and competence required of a church planter working among the poor.

- b. Seminars on every phase of urban cross-cultural church planting: Prepare, Launch, Assemble, Nurture and Transition (PLANT).
  - c. Evangel Coaches come alongside the church planters and their teams to listen and cooperate with the Holy Spirit to see that their vision becomes a reality.
4. Sponsoring courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, and publications all designed to dramatically increase the number of workers in unreached urban neighborhoods.

### **TUMI's Ministry Implication**

TUMI seeks to generate ministry entrepreneurs who, under the guidance of their spiritual leaders and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, will invest their lives and efforts in new and diverse ways of ministry, both in the church and to the world.

### **Conclusion: Equipping Leaders, Empowering Movements**

We have designed the TUMI portfolio of resources and events to enable disciples, leaders, churches, and movements of Christ to fulfill their calling under God to be agents and ambassadors of Christ and His Kingdom among the poorest and least targeted areas where Christ is not known. Our entire collection of resources seeks to empower such movements to confess, defend, reenact, embody, declare, and demonstrate the Gospel story of Christ among the broken and oppressed in the city, in the prison, among the poor (wherever they are found) and internationally among those least served, as God leads.

Our intent is to shift the focus of evangelical leadership development programs and ministerial studies from an emphasis on information research to equipping ordinary people for ministry among the under-resourced and forgotten, whether it concerns their maturity in Christ, their ability to evangelize, to disciple others, to plant churches among the unreached, or to multiply movements of Christ around the globe.

Despite the vast numbers of lost at our domestic doorsteps, most workers and missionaries do not serve in communities of the poor, either here or abroad. As of 2000, 419,000 Christian workers were serving God outside of their home countries (this number includes missionaries of all traditions: Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, independent, and marginal Christian). The U.S. is the largest mission sending and receiving country on earth, sending 118,200 missionaries to other countries and receiving 33,200. Most workers go to the least needy fields, though over 60 percent of all people live in cities.

We are challenged to look afresh at the paradigms, methods, and rules of theological and ministerial education, and, for the sake of the poor and the Kingdom, are willing to call our traditional forms into question in order to ensure the most biblical, culturally conducive, and affordable leadership training possible for the urban church. Without question, TUMI owns several distinctives which highlight our deep commitment to see God arise within these urban neighborhoods, and new vital evangelical churches to be born which will serve as outposts of the Kingdom of God in their respective neighborhoods.

How do we find imaginative ways to overcome the barriers which impede the anointing and unction of Christian workers and churches among the poor to fulfill the vision and call the Lord has placed on their hearts to help fulfill the Great Commission? We do this with a fresh reading of the Word of God. Since God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom (James 2:5), all our efforts to empower them can bear genuine fruit, the kind that remains and glorifies Christ, and advances the Kingdom in neighborhoods plagued by years of historical evangelical neglect and indifference. At such a time as this, may it ever be so!