



# Personal Reflections on Lausanne 4

## One Global Missions Leader's Perspective

*This is a combination of three articles released as an editorial series for Christian Daily International, published on 13 October 2024, as part of their reporting on the fourth Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation held in Incheon, South Korea, 22-28 September 2024.*

*In this essay Jay Mātenga reflects back on his experience of Lausanne 4 as a leader of a global missions network, who has served global Evangelical missions for more than 30 years. While there is much to celebrate about the event, the motives of the Lausanne executives made explicit throughout it left much to be desired. Here, Jay examines some of the things that concerned him most, especially as he seeks to strengthen participation in God's purposes in and for the world.*

Lausanne 4 (L4) concluded on September 28, and it has taken me at least this long to make sense of what I experienced at the event—both the absolute privilege of being able to participate in such a grand affair and the unease I felt with the implications coming from the Lausanne executive, which I henceforth identify as Lausanne Central.

In a presentation to the Lausanne Freedom and Justice network prior to the fourth Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization,<sup>1</sup> I positioned myself cautiously on the “prophetic periphery” of Evangelicalism, but in doing so I still consider myself a sincere friend, an insider, and not at all a stranger to the faith.

In my September editorial for Christian Daily International<sup>2</sup> I outlined some hopes for Lausanne 4, and these remain relevant alongside my thinking here. I write as a global leader passionately concerned for the wellbeing and replication of biblically faithful, gospel-centred, maturing, Christ-following Christianity. The kind of Christianity committed to co-creating New Creation as we participate in the purposes of God, communally and individually.

## 1. Celebration

### 1.1 Logistics

L4 attracted almost 5,400 participants from 200 territories and gathered us around 896 discussion tables in the 4,208m<sup>2</sup> (45,300ft<sup>2</sup>) main hall. After the opening night I heard comments that this is the kind of crowd Jesus and the disciples would have fed, with excess left over, from a few loaves and fishes. It was an overwhelming thought.

An additional 2,000 participants joined online from more than 100 countries (just 10 percent of the 20,000 initially projected). The livestream, however, attracted over 30,000 viewers from 161 countries (impressive, but again, far fewer than the hundreds of thousands initially anticipated).

My fellow Kiwi, Andrew Jones led the creation of virtual lounges on spatio.io where online participants could

create avatars, explore specially built exotic spaces, and hang out with each other. Apparently, that space was dominated by Brazilians who brought their “alegría de viver” (zest for life) into the virtual realms!

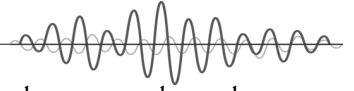
On the visitor's side of the L4 service team, almost 500 people invested themselves selflessly, often going above and beyond the call. They served alongside more than 1,600 Korean volunteers serving in multiple ways with unrestrained enthusiasm. At last count, 6,888 Koreans also participated in a 24/7 prayer meeting for the gathering in a nearby church.

It is now public knowledge that the official demographic breakdown (according to place of residence) included 25.5% North America, 13.4% East Asia (predominantly from South Korea), 13% Europe, 10.3% South Asia, 10.3% Africa (English, Portuguese, Spanish speaking), 9.6% South Asia, 7.7% Latin America, 3% Oceania, 2.5% Africa (Francophone), 2% Middle East/North Africa, 1.6% Eurasia, and 1.1% Caribbean.



Jay Mātenga

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Between North America, Europe, Oceania, and other expatriates, I'd suggest around 40% of the attendees were Anglo-European and related diaspora. Yet, when one was immersed in the crowd, the event did not feel overwhelmingly Western. The same cannot be said for the official language of the congress, which was English.

The main highlight for me was meeting people I don't see often or have only collaborated with virtually, as well as people I didn't even know who took the time to appreciate my work. I know of others who experienced similar, and we were all humbled by it. It is not often that we get confirmation of the reach of our creative contributions towards strengthening participation in the purposes of God in and for the world.

Prior to the event, I refrained from locking down appointments to meet with people. Instead, my wife and I prayed that the Holy Spirit would generate divine appointments—those spontaneous relationship connections that somehow knit together in God's purposes for us and the groups we serve. God certainly answered that prayer. As a result, my contacts database and to-do list has grown significantly larger! I am very thankful for the commitment of the Lausanne Movement to convene occasional large gatherings like L4 for the relationship connections it generates.

Praise too for the L4 program developers who did an excellent job at creating diversity among the speakers on the platform (all of whom were required to speak in English). The overarching narrative, rooted in the book of Acts, allowed for a variety of perspectives to be shared, whether as extended biblical reflections or short, often densely packed, related commentary, or practical instruction.

## 1.2 Lessons

I was blessed by some bold choices in speakers as well as some challenging content that made it through the vetting process. And, if you have been following along, you will be aware that there were some early embarrassing moments for Lausanne Central, as certain influential parties were obviously not used to just sitting in the tensions of difference with lowered defences, listening to learn and seeking to understand. Perhaps some issues were just too raw.

Ironically, the reaction to Dr Ruth Padilla de Borst's challenging presentation,<sup>3</sup> the only person to seriously tackle contemporary justice issues from the main stage (other than related to persecution), just served to amplify Dr Anne Zaki's appeal the following day (approved months before hand) that, "It is time we restored the lost art of church discussions, the art of

talking and listening to each other, even to those who oppose our views on how to interpret the Bible or how to worship or who should lead in the church or which country to bless and which nation to curse."<sup>4</sup>

In a globally diverse gathering as large and ambitious as Lausanne 4, misunderstandings, the associated hurts, and the reconciliation process that must follow, should be expected; and, for me, they should be celebrated too. Contentious issues were raised, refuted, reconciled, and publicly discussed in a way that can co-create far better outcomes than each party could have anticipated.

Ruth's concern for justice and Anne's appeal for mature Christian dialogue were worked out in real-time, as difficult as the process was for all involved. We shouldn't manufacture such painful interaction but when it emerges, and if it is well mediated, it can create a healthy buzz and intense unbridled discussion that can have a positive effect long after the rest of the event is forgotten.

In spite of the best efforts of the program team, very little of what was said from the stage will likely translate into long-term memory. Those of us who wrestled with Ruth and Anne's content in the wake of the controversy raised by Lausanne Central's reactive apology will forever remember it. Participating in side discussions about it changed us. We became emotionally and spiritually engaged in the subject matter.

All the L4 presentations have been recorded for posterity, but they will struggle to find an audience once Lausanne Central (which owns the content by virtue of signed media releases) stops promoting it. Much more might have been retained by participants if Lausanne Central had followed the program team's request that a minimum of 30 minutes per day was spent in prayer. They didn't.

Prayer times were cursory at best. Extended times of prayer allow for processing in a sacred space. It helps with digesting information about God and God's concerns in conversation with God in a shared space. But even brief moments of solemnity lost their potential impact as triumphalistic Christian music of the Western commercialized kind exploded in the air at a volume that sought to raise the dead.

Lausanne Central clearly had less concern for transformative impact or innovative theological engagement about missions than they did for the classic US American pragmatic penchant for getting things done. The very lead-up to the event assumed an immutable foundation of modern Evangelical assumptions that were not permitted to be questioned.

It probably did not occur to Lausanne Central that these assumptions might need to be questioned, deconstructed even, in the hope that we could together co-create concepts of church and mission more biblically faithful and better fit for purpose in our radically changing global contexts. Holding to time-worn assumptions immediately limited what could be achieved with the glorious diversity L4 brought into the room.

In contrast to the transformative lessons the friends of Ruth Padilla de Borst and the adjacently affected Palestinian contingent<sup>5</sup> learned through the apology controversy, and all the other side-conversations we had with friends old and new, Lausanne Central's idea of a co-creative process was to guide participants through a paint-by-numbers discussion process focused on their 25 "great commission gaps".<sup>6</sup>

Every single one of the discussion groups were to follow the same design process. Literally filling in the blanks, sheet after sheet, day after day. It was the ultimate industrialised working group exercise. Step by step collecting data to synthesize towards a grand solution. Actually, not so much a solution as a commitment to keep working towards "closing the gap" together, for as long as it takes following the event.

The aim was not so much in finding a remedy as it was getting people hooked into a collaborative ecosystem controlled and leveraged by Lausanne Central. The permanent system of which has yet to be digitally built, at the cost of many more millions of dollars yet to be raised. The interim system provided at the event repeatedly crashed, leading one leader from the Majority World to comment that the Holy Spirit was once again humbling the grand plans of managerial man.

It is apparent that Lausanne Central has bought into the values of what Susan Cain has dubbed "New Groupthink", the core axiom of which is "none of us is as smart as all of us".<sup>7</sup> The trouble with that theory is it has long proven to be ineffective for true innovation. To the contrary, Cain provides compelling evidence that innovation emerges out of isolation. Chris Wright's work on the Cape Town Commitment is a prime example of this.<sup>8</sup> His inspiration for that document came on the way to John Stott's writing retreat in Wales.<sup>9</sup> Compared to the revelatory genesis of the Cape Town Commitment for L3, the Seoul Statement<sup>10</sup> reads like the by-product of a focus group looking at issues discerned from data as opposed to the result of inspiration that can guide Evangelicalism into a more fruitful future.

Working groups and so-called innovation labs can be helpful for idea generation, information gathering, or

even refining a final product before launch. But, as Susan Cain confirms, the real work of transformative innovation happens in one person's prayer closet, dark office, back room, garage, or writing retreat before it proceeds to change the world. It is here that major inflection points in world history find their source.

## 2. Concerns

### 2.1 Perspectives

I have no desire to be a conflict entrepreneur. I am not writing here for my own gain, neither am I formally representing any of the organisations I work for, seeking their gain (or harm!). I am genuinely concerned for the wellbeing of the global Evangelical community and the missions that flow from our commitment to the gospel—declared and displayed. But, as solutions expert Steve de Shazer has noted, "Where you stand determines what you see... it determines also the angle you see it from; a change in where you stand changes everything."<sup>11</sup> Where you stand influences what you find to be relevant and how you interpret what you see.

From where I stood, somewhere in the back 1/3 of the crowd, as a global missions leader with 30 years' service experience, and as an indigenous person who identifies with Majority World concerns, what I saw or heard from Lausanne Central at the event deserves counterpoint commentary. Mine is not the only, perhaps not even a majority perspective from L4, but I am confident that the view I represent is shared by a fair section of the global Church. In my position, I have the great privilege of being educated by the uninhibited opinions of a wide array of church and missions practitioners and thought leaders from outside of the Western world.

Among all the L4 reviews and commentary I have read, there have been some positive ones, most by North Americans and others enamoured by the industrialised values that inform Lausanne Central's approach. Some who were less exposed to what God is already doing globally have been freshly motivated. If what they heard and experienced at the event motivated them to better action and willingness to collaborate for gospel purposes in their nations, regions, or even transculturally that is a fabulous outcome.

The angle these positive participants were viewing the event from afforded a different view from mine. There was some criticism from the majority North American contingent, but for the most part I don't share their concerns. My concerns run much deeper than whether



or not proclamation evangelism was mentioned or prioritised enough. It was.

It's in the very name that identifies us as Evangel...icals. How often do we need to keep reemphasizing it? It was first of the words on the banners around the room that began with "To declare and display", sometimes putting a hyphen between them to further highlight "declare", unnecessarily I might add. Riffing off the old proverb concerning justice and love, we should agree with Delos Miles and others that proclamation and demonstration are "two wings of the same gospel bird".<sup>12</sup>

But I do not expect participants who are comfortably situated on the industrialised end of a values spectrum to share my more indigenous critique. We experienced the congress from different vantage points. As Dr Anne Zaki encouraged us on day two, I believe we can hold differing views in tension without straining our unity as the body of Christ. That's what maturity looks like.

In my experience though, there were distinct parts of the event that carried a thoroughly globalizing DNA, flattening the diversity of perspectives into a one-dimensional frame. I would go so far as to say there was an attempt at totalizing missions. Having done some behind the scenes investigating, I have confirmed that those were elements that Lausanne Central had direct control over, or over-rode the recommendations of long-suffering volunteers.

At times I wondered if I was still at the same event because such occurrences were substantially different in tone to the biblically based themes, diverse speakers, and content arranged by leaders delegated to create the program—until about one month out from the event, after which Lausanne Central took unilateral control, according to one of my sources.

The worship is one case in point. Aside from the rare opportunity for Korean cultural expression, the setlist for corporate singing was almost indistinguishable from my Baptist home church. Even the Korean and Japanese worship teams played popular Western songs ("Way Maker" by Sinach is technically Nigerian, but it has been thoroughly coopted by the US worship industry).

Then there was Keith and Kristyn Getty. A joyful surprise on the first night. Representative as their music is of Celtic-influenced contemporary hymn making, it is one part of a world full of diverse expressions of Christian worship. But Lausanne Central's choice to have them lead regularly just goes to show that you can have too much of a good thing.

Very soon a lament arose regarding the lack of global diversity in sung and other creative worship

expressions—especially since there were many fine music and dance artists from different cultural backgrounds present. It is probable that the common denominator effect was at play—choosing songs that most people would know and sing, but to what end?

Making the effort to learn something new from a different cultural heritage can further enhance the unique impact of an event. Even better if a new song co-created by a culturally mixed group is learned and sung at the event. It can spread globally, further reinforcing the occasion. Trust me, I've been there. Alas, the common denominator effect ruled, and Lausanne Central has almost 5,000 voices singing in unison on video.

On a related theme, one of the most mixed message faux pas of the congress happened on the first night. Being a worship leader/singer/songwriter, perhaps I was one of only a few who noticed. Regardless, during Michael Oh's passionate speech about the need for collaboration,<sup>13</sup> he spoke of "the four most dangerous words" that he believes hinders gospel advance. Throughout his talk he repeated the words, "I. Don't. Need. You." Seriously, who actually thinks like that in global Christian circles? I don't know of anyone who would outright believe we don't need anyone else. We may get focused on what God's has called us to do, but few would be ignorant enough to think that we're an island. Of course we need each other, we're a body.

I am not entirely sure who "I" and "you" were meant to be, but some in the audience may have felt a brief twinge of guilt for not serving Lausanne's cause more actively. However, no sooner had Michael walked off the stage than the Korean worship band launched into a moving worship song written by the UpperRoom Church (Dallas, USA) titled, "Give me Jesus".<sup>14</sup> So far so good. Then we get to the bridge: "I don't want anyone else, I don't need anything else, You are my one thing, You are my one thing." Sung over and over. I. Don't. Need. You. Just give me Jesus. A moving song. Bad theology. Mixed messaging.

## 2.2 Problems

Lausanne Central's control was no more evident from my perspective than whenever Michael Oh took the stage. The tone tangibly shifted. It felt dissonant. I perceived a focus shift from the issues and concern for God's glory, to the institution and its glory. I am willing to concede a certain amount of perception bias here and allow room for Merton's law of unintended consequences. Taking Michael's rhetoric at face value, one might argue that genuine concern and generosity of

heart was intended. But intention is only one side of a communication process, reception is the other.

Much of what was received was unappreciated by me and many of my peers with long experience in international networks and global missions. If the call really was for greater humility to enable collaboration, and Michael declared as much his opening salvo, something got seriously lost in the transmission process. It would have been nice to see Lausanne Central lead by example.

While trying to make sense of my L4 experience, I realized that such an event brings together three types of people. Let's call them: path makers, path bakers, and path takers. Lausanne prides itself on identifying as a platform "...equipping leaders and influencers to fulfil the Great Commission". There is no doubting the stickiness of the Lausanne brand and its convening power (for those who can afford to participate).

In my experience of Lausanne over the years it has promoted itself on being a community of expert leaders and its congresses as the gathering place for such experts. It led me to expect that L4 would be a place where path makers met and together mapped new ways into the future for global Evangelicalism and its missions, to co-create a vision for path bakers to grow, support, and promote, and path takers to follow and work out. At least, that's what the artefacts (recordings, videos, documents, and historical record) from previous congresses suggested.

Step into the room with Michael Oh speaking, however, and it becomes abundantly clear that the intention of L4 was to reach the path bakers and teach the path takers. Lausanne Central was not interested in hearing from path makers at L4. They would probably argue that they "listened" prior to the event, but those listening forums were little more than information extraction exercises.

Very little innovative theological reimagining featured in any of the lead-up material, the State of the Great Commission report,<sup>15</sup> or even the Seoul Statement.<sup>16</sup> And no opportunity was planned to allow us to influence thinking at the event itself, only to surrender to the prescribed system (unless a collaborative or interest group rebelled, as some did).

Lausanne Central were already convinced of their own path. There were no peers in the room. Taking on the didactic posture of a sensei, Michael Oh presented in elementary terms what a good many of us already knew and are already invested in. He effectively told us off for not doing what a good many of us have been doing for decades at great personal cost to ourselves and our organizations. When he pathologized the lack of

collaboration (read: centralized coordination) as the core reason the great commission had not yet been achieved, Michael raised the ire of many long-serving global leaders.

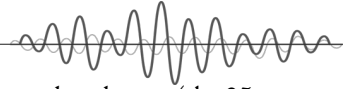
If the chosen metrics of "great commission impact" are in decline it is not because of a lack of enthusiasm, effort, or even collaboration for the gospel by a large proportion of people in the room. We may not have done so within Lausanne's ecosystem but that does not invalidate our participation in God's purposes, and it does not excuse Lausanne Central's ignorance of the fact.

There certainly is room for greater collaboration locally and across sectors, but that could be and should be encouraged without constraining it to a central platform. All that is required is an openness to cooperate. In my experience, the Holy Spirit is more than able to make the necessary connections.

For Lausanne Central, however, improved management is the answer. People with thoroughly industrialised values would view it that way. Their conviction was clear: if it was better coordinated (by them and their digital machinery) it would be more efficient and therefore more effective. The task would be finished quicker. Gaps filled faster. Jesus back sooner. At the L3 reunion meeting, Michael was confident enough in Lausanne's coordination prowess that he didn't think an L5 would be required because of how Lausanne would be "shaping the world" prior to 2050. Move along, no hubris to see here.

In contrast to the demeaning suggestion that we're simply not collaborating enough or being effective enough, Lausanne Central had no qualms possessing anything with a hint of relationship to Lausanne or catalysed out of a Lausanne Congress. Even as it diminished the work of others with its pathological assumptions about the lack of collaboration, Lausanne Central's impact story for the 50th birthday party celebrated as its own the work of hundreds of faithful volunteers, collaborating in good faith outside of their own organisational responsibilities (or loaned to a collaborative initiative) for a common cause only marginally related to Lausanne. But, sure, exploit goodwill and take ownership. That's what colonists do.

Quite quickly, whenever I heard the word "collaborate" I could not help but feel it meant "centralized control", and I was not alone. This was further confirmed as the event went on. Michael consistently positioned Lausanne Central as "we/us" and the audience as "you". The separation was undeniable. "We need you. You need us." During the 50th celebration what Lausanne Central thought we needed was made clear.



Michael introduced a sports metaphor and positioned Lausanne Central's envisioned digital tool as the manager/coach of a team in desperate need of coordination to reach its goals. Then came the borderline blasphemy, made more acute since the first day of L4 was focused on highlighting the role of the Holy Spirit in the purposes of God. What Michael said is so troubling that it deserves to be quoted in full.

Let's say that every member of the team is a Christian and there's a Christian coach. Wonderful. And the coach says, 'Hey, let's play this game God's way, by the power of the Holy Spirit, letting Him guide'. So, the coach says, 'we have no plans, no practice, no positions, no strategy, no technology, no communication. We're going to just let the Holy Spirit lead. So get out there and let's win one for the Lord.'

Let us not excuse poor stewardship, poor planning, poor resourcing, poor communication, poor coordination, poor collaboration by saying you just want to be led by the Holy Spirit...

The sarcasm implied in this woeful metaphor is horrific. He would likely argue that he wasn't saying the Holy Spirit isn't necessary, but that better administration is. Seriously now, what leader in that room of 5,000 plus was not already applying strategy, planning, directive action and cooperation in accordance with the leading of the Holy Spirit as best as they could, and working with others as well as they were able? Will Lausanne's system improve things? No, it will just control them. We were being made a mockery.

No ministry worthy of the name Christian would act according to that inaccurate allegory. All Michael's rhetoric did was further demean his peers in the room. I asked a few global leaders if they heard what I heard, and one senior leader in student ministry said, "I heard the 'spirit of Lausanne' had replaced the Holy Spirit."

To presume to coordinate God's mission more effectively than the Holy Spirit is an outlandish thought. Again, Lausanne Central will be quick to say, "that's not what he meant". Perhaps, but that is what many of us heard. And it was reinforced by Michael and others consistently promoting Lausanne Central's digital mirage of a collaborative action system—the one thing to rule them all. I sardonically joked with someone who shared my concerns, that I live in Tolkien/Peter Jackson's Middle Earth and the only destination for the one thing to rule them all was Mount Doom.

I cannot help but feel that their overreach and uber-confidence will fail to achieve the goals Lausanne Central envisions. If the world was a sports field (which

it most assuredly is not) the actual goal posts (the 25 great commission gaps) may not even be where Lausanne Central have located them. Assuming they can find the financial path bakers (which is far from certain according to my sources), Lausanne Central's digital coordination could lead the path takers in the completely wrong direction, competing against an opposition that is playing an entirely different game.

I am among some who wonder if the classic missions path assumed at L4, associated with a particular understanding of "the great commission", is the very thing that is prohibiting our missional effectiveness. Could it be that the path is leading us in the wrong direction? Is it possible that the hermeneutic with which we have been reading scripture, the very paradigm we are operating within, is that which is hindering global gospel advance? It is apparently too taboo to ask such questions within the domain of Lausanne. But doubling down, trying the same thing time and again, albeit with different tech, and expecting different results is... well, you probably know the proverb. My conviction is that our very way of perceiving God's purposes for the world needs to change.

### 3. Considerations

Reading this far, it will come as no surprise that I count myself among the path makers, relying on path bakers to help establish a new road ahead for upcoming generations of path takers to follow as they bring their gifts and participate in God's purposes for the world.

Lausanne Central will likely be unaffected by what I think, but if they did read this, I imagine they might conclude that I am part of the problem for which they are proposing the solution of centralised coordination. I am representative of the resistance that is not willing to surrender to Lausanne's version of Jesus' John 17 unity.

#### 3.1 Commissions

From L4 I got the sense that Lausanne Central think the reason the great commission hasn't yet been fulfilled is because of leaders like me, leaders who appreciate but don't feel a need to commit to Lausanne, or any centralised strategy to "finish the task". Well, here's a wakeup call... Matthew 24:14 is a promise, not a target. "The Good News about the Kingdom *will be* preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come." It is inevitable. God will use human agency, but no human agent will accelerate God's plans.

There is nothing in Jesus' foretelling that suggests a coordinating group is required to ensure worldwide

proclamation. It has probably already been fulfilled. It is only because of the invention of the unreached people group concept, read back onto the meaning of “whole world”, that some would have us think it hasn’t been fulfilled. Thinking that “the whole world” (Matthew 24:14), or “all nations” (Matthew 28:19), or “every tribe, language, people and nation” (Revelation 5:9, 7:9, 11:9 etc.) means every ethno-linguistic people group of a certain population size is a theoretical interpretation of the text at best.

Interpreting “oikoumenē” or “panta ta ethne” as demographically defined categories of people groups cannot be proven, and the Bible will not reveal it. I don’t deny that it is motivationally helpful, especially since every person does deserve to hear the good news offer at least once, but only the Father knows the appropriate time for Jesus’ return. He could return tomorrow—and that should send shivers up our spine. What more motivation do we need? The question for us is, “will we be found faithful to God’s calling on our lives when he arrives?”, not “will we be found committed to a collaborative action ecosystem?” that believed it somehow sped up his coming.

We sorely need to shift our perspective from the anthropocentric to the theocentric—better yet, the pneumacentric, because the Holy Spirit is the director of God’s mission, and no single earthy entity will be able to constrain the Spirit’s movement. What Michael Oh in his infamous sports team analogy perceived as chaos on the ground, is more likely a glorious Holy Spirit choreography when viewed from God’s perspective.

The Spirit is like the wind, Jesus said (John 3:6-8). These days we can determine when a hurricane, typhoon, or cyclone is coming, but we still cannot accurately predict, let alone control, its path. To think that technology will someday be able to do that is to put one’s confidence in the wrong place. Best you prepare for the storm when it comes, ready to nurture new life in its wake.

I have no doubt the Spirit is working in our day to bring people to Jesus like never before. It is patently evident in the networks I participate in. The handwringing angst of Jesus’ followers in the dying vestiges of Christendom does not represent the global Church experience. Lausanne Central, informed as it is by Western industrialism, seems blind to the massive movements to Christ elsewhere. It does not seem to appreciate the power of indigenous Christianity to grow the global Church.

That said, I will emphasize again that we must continue to ensure the gospel is made available to all people on earth, especially those who do not yet have

access to it. As we are led by the Spirit, propagating the gospel indigenously is central to our participation in the purposes of God and our responsibility as co-creators of New Creation. To that end, I have a high trust in the Holy Spirit to lead people to make their best contribution wherever God calls them to serve, locally or globally.

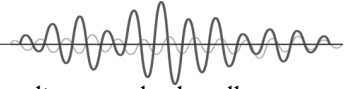
Some of Jesus’ followers are being and will be called to plant and nurture gospel growth in entirely new soil, but fewer in the traditional way of the missionary society. The pathways to those without the gospel are now myriad. Here I need to especially acknowledge migration (whether voluntary or forced) and affirm L4 for allowing at least some mention of the waves of people on the move. Many of them are Christian and the gospel moves with them. Whether for physical migrants, marketplace movers, or digital settlers, we need to support them better with intercultural and disciple-making training as well as deeper theological education for their own spiritual growth and ministry effectiveness.

I am not convinced centralised coordination is a priority of the first order. If a coordinated system is attractive to some Jesus’ followers, to help them better serve their calling, great. Let the system serve those path takers, however many or few. Do we all need to (literally) sign on to a single system to evidence our unity in Christ? No way. That is not the kind of unity Jesus speaks of in John 17. The unity there is one of diversity (all who believe, v20), inclusion and belonging (all who are mine belong to you, v10), authority (by the power of your name, v11), action (sent like Jesus, v18), and outcome (that the world would know and believe, vs21,22). Our position in Christ by faith assumes and assures us of unity—in Christ, not in a collaborative digital ecosystem.

From our mutual abiding in Him, our collaboration with one another should emerge relationally, led by the Holy Spirit over time. We do not need an algorithm to manufacture connections. It did not even work for L4. I heard time and again from leaders of different regions that in their opinion Lausanne Central’s application algorithm prohibited some of the right people from being in the room. Furthermore, the depersonalised contact connections via the app were far less effective than the rich relationships developed via divine appointments that happened in the non-formal spaces.

### 3.2 Commitments

So where do we go from here? Obviously, mine is only one perspective. I am developing my own convictions about the future of missions, influenced by the network of people I am relating and responsible to. These are people that the Holy Spirit has, is, and will bring across



my path. As the leader of a global missions network, I do my best to help our participants navigate their way into future participation in the purposes of God as we reimagine what that future looks like together.

I will not direct or constrain their participation, but as a relational international community with defined network parameters we do our best to encourage and support each other in what we feel God is calling us to do. A number of my co-workers served sacrificially in L4 leadership positions to help Lausanne Central pull off the event and I celebrate that.

I am proud of the energy and talent leaders from my network poured into the L4 event. That kind of pride, I think, is legitimate, but my network won't own it or try to leverage those efforts. Furthermore, in case there is any question, my reflections on L4 should in no way reflect negatively on them or the excellent contribution they or the many others who served us provided.

In his opening address, Michael Oh declared that the global Church had gathered at L4. That kind of hyperbole does not sit well with me. The global Church was nowhere near represented. 5,400 people cannot hope to represent the global Church. We can celebrate the diversity in the room (even better if it was represented more in the program) but Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism does not represent the global Church alone.

## Conclusion

As I was waiting for the bus at the conclusion of the congress, a young Latino came up to me and earnestly asked, "so, with all that now said and done, what is the vision for the future? Is it just to collaborate to fix problems?" The conversation was brief, but it made me wonder what my recommendations would be following the event. There is no doubt that international collaboration has some value but very few can or should participate at that level. That would not be the path to which I'd point young people.

International collaboration is for those who have gained some experience in their specialty. We need people who have something substantial to offer to international conversations. It shouldn't be something we encourage the inexperienced to aspire to. By all means give young people room to get experience, and develop them along the way, but don't treat international involvement as if it is some sort of ministry success marker.

Instead, I would encourage pursuit of local involvement and collaboration. The work of the gospel is always local. It's contextual. So, if you are in a church-based ministry, join or create a local pastor's fellowship and encourage one another. Become a member of your national evangelical alliance and invest in its wellbeing. If you're involved in ministry outside of a local church (including workplace and missions), create your own collaborative group, join or create a local chapter of a special interest global network, and/or contribute to the vitality of the national missions alliance or association. If you're a missionary, invest in your organisation's local and regional networks.

If you are able, participate in regional church or missions alliance gatherings, including Lausanne fellowships if they exist near you. If you are already part of an international organisation, then join a global network of peers sharing your missions interest and collaborate on big-picture issues there. Lausanne issues groups may be an option for that too.

If you are a young person willing to take on leadership responsibilities, prove yourself first wherever God plants you, then be obedient to God's call wherever the Spirit leads you. Do not pursue leadership responsibility, let opportunities present

The global Church is far more diverse and culturally-rich, more dynamic, more healthy, and more effective than we were led to believe at L4. The Kingdom of God is and will continue to advance and no gates of hell will stop it. Furthermore, no centralised coordination will improve it. God's will will be done at God's pace by God's design. Our responsibility is to be obedient as best as we can to the revelation we collectively receive as groups of Christ followers.

Yes, there remains a hurting world in need of healing. Yes, there are problems that we have some synergistic capacity to help resolve. We need new-path makers, new-path bakers, and new-path takers. But let us not lose sight of our destination. Let us not forget that we are not of this world and this world is not ours to fix.

Whatever New Creation glimpses we are able to manifest in our locations for our generation, whatever injustice we rebalance, whatever poverty we alleviate, whatever oppression we liberate, whatever innovations we create, these breakthroughs will not last. We do so, and we must do so, as witnesses of what could be and what is coming. We do so to demonstrate the truth of the message we proclaim so that those who would know, believe, and then participate in it can share in its blessed eternal consequences.



themselves. “Don’t be upset by not getting this opportunity” my pastor told me 35 years ago while declining my desire to lead, “a person’s gifts will always make a way for them”. Faithfulness is the key to fruitfulness.

Collaboration isn’t rocket science and it doesn’t require high-tech assistance for it to be effective, it just needs faithful commitment and a generous attitude. The easiest way to collaborate is to join hands with whomever is next to you in the harvest and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you in relationships from there. That’s what real unity looks like. Global umbrella organisations have their place, but your starting place should be where you are. And, wherever the Spirit leads you; there, be a blessing.

Arohanui ki a koe e haere ana ki te ao (love to you as you go into the world).

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