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Abstract

Today, over half of the world's population lives in cities. Global mission strategy should focus more on urban areas due to these growing numbers and because of the strategic communities that live there, including influencers, the under-resourced, immigrants, and young people.

This article develops an evangelical, holistic model for training missionaries to work in the density, intensity, diversity, influence, and community of global cities. This model teaches missionaries how to study complex urban contexts, prepares them for the intensity of urban life and ministry leadership, and helps them understand strategic urban communities and apply holistic methods for urban ministry. Studying in diverse learning communities has been found to improve this model as well.

Introduction

Today, we live in an urban world. Over half of the world's population lives in cities, with Europe, North America, and Latin America all having urban populations of 74% or higher. As urbanization continues, we expect over 2/3 of all people to live in urban areas by 2050, with 90% of that increase coming in Asia and Africa (United Nations 2018). The world is truly becoming more and more urban with each passing year.

Thus, based on sheer numbers, evangelicals that are interested in missions must seriously consider how to do more effective missionary work in urban areas. Yet, even beyond the numbers of urbanization, there are several groups or communities in urban areas that deserve special attention. **These strategic urban communities are influencers, the under-resourced, migrants and immigrants, and young people** (Hildreth 2014).

The first strategic urban community includes people that exert special influence on others, both within urban areas and often far beyond them. These include government officials, businesspeople, media, educators, and artists, among many others. Having an impact for the Gospel upon this community could have far-reaching results.

The second strategic urban community is the under-resourced, including the poor, those struggling with dependencies, and those that are homeless or living in slums. Jesus stressed the importance of ministry to the poor and needy, even stating that caring for those most in need was equivalent to loving and caring for Jesus Himself (Matthew 25:31ff). Thus, ministry to the under-resourced should be a strategic priority of evangelical missionary work as well.

Thirdly, urban areas attract growing numbers of migrants and immigrants, including those from unreached people groups. As people move to cities from both rural areas and across international borders, they seek work, housing, education, or sometimes simply survival. Urban migrants and immigrants are uprooted from their home cultures and religions, and thus, they are often more open to humanitarian help and the Gospel. Furthermore, if some of these migrants or immigrants come to Christ, it can open doors for the Gospel back in their home villages and countries (Johnstone with Merrill 2015, 19).

It is interesting to note that Tim Keller, who has given leadership to urban churches and the global urban movement, “Redeemer City to City,” claimed that impacting these three groups is the best way to influence the future of the city and the culture (Keller, 2016). Yet if this is true, the future of the city and the culture will be even more impacted by ministry to a fourth strategic urban community: young people.

Cities are incubators for the growing global youth culture. As young people are connected through technology and opportunities in urban areas, they often have more in common with one another across the world than with older generations within their own cultures. These young people are searching for meaning, identity, and community, even as some of them prepare to be future leaders of the world. Thus, to impact the future urbanizing world, evangelical missionaries must consider how to better minister to global urban youth.

The Challenge of Preparing Missionaries for the Global Urban Context

Since there are both statistical and strategic reasons to focus more missionary work on the world's cities, we should prioritize preparing missionaries for the global urban context.¹ This new context requires new thinking and new skills for missionary training and education in order to overcome several shortcomings of traditional missionary preparation.

But how did we get here? Why have Western evangelicals not increased their missionary work in cities naturally along with the growth of urbanization over the past century and a half? In the early 20th century in the United States, “the great reversal” occurred (Moberg 2006, 11). Up until that time, evangelical Christians were significantly involved in both local urban ministry and global missionary ministry. A. T. Pierson was a great example of this in the late 19th century, both pastoring prominent urban churches in the US and promoting global missions (Robert 2003).

Unfortunately, the great reversal happened when evangelicals rejected “the social gospel” that liberal churches actively promoted in cities. Evangelicals became more and more concerned with individual, private faith, most retreated to the suburbs, and they decided to focus on overseas missionary work, typically in rural areas, where the “unreached” lived. Evangelical ministry in local urban areas was largely abandoned (Conn 1994, 89, 93; Moberg 2006). Only in the past 50 years have evangelicals slowly started to become active in urban ministry again (Conn 1994, 106ff). Therefore, evangelicals’ involvement in cross-cultural global mission has been separated from urban mission most of the past century.

Thus, it is not surprising that missionaries have typically been prepared for work overseas by focusing on learning a new language and a new culture to minister to monocultural, rural people, often using methods from anthropology. Yet in modern urban contexts, multiple cultures may be encountered, including hybrid mixing of cultures. Multiple languages may be needed, or in some cases, one common language will be the most important (although extra languages are always helpful!) as immigrants strive to learn the national language or a common language, such as English.

¹ There are theological reasons as well (see Crane 2021), but they are not the focus of this paper.

Furthermore, social, economic, political, and justice issues can be very important in cities. Missionaries often lack skills that could be helpful in dealing with these issues. A better understanding of sociology, economics, political science, and urban studies could help missionaries in global urban contexts. Methods such as community organizing and establishing community centers, that in the past have been left to liberal churches or to government or private institutions, need to be considered and utilized for global urban mission.

Missionary training tends to focus on individual spiritual and cultural issues, but often the best ministries in cities are formed when the place and needs of the community are central. Each city and neighborhood in a city has its own history, mix of cultures, and social issues. Missionaries need to understand how to better analyze the place of their ministry (not just the broader culture) and how to understand and better integrate into the local community. Missionaries need to think less about the “missionary field” where they work and more about the community which they and their church are joining.

And in addition to traditional training on how to deal with cultural shock and stress, global urban missionaries need to be prepared for the fast pace and multitasking of urban life. The intensity and temptations that abound in cities can overwhelm missionaries, leading to burn out or falling into sin. The fast pace of urban life affects many aspects of ministry as well, including developing leadership, doing evangelism, and establishing healthy, contextual methods of discipleship.

Finally, we need to consider what educational materials are needed. What books and training materials would be good resources for global urban missionaries to use as they study their cities and consider potential kinds of ministry? In some cases, resources might not exist for a particular city, or, for example, there is no resource that comprehensively explains the history of global urban mission. In our situation at my seminary in Ukraine, we had to translate and publish several books on urban mission, including books on the theology of urban mission, ministry to the poor, urban church planting, and community organizing. All training must include good educational materials for students to analyze, apply, and reference in the future.

Contours of an Evangelical, Holistic Model for Mission in Global Cities

Considering the multifaceted nature of cities and the importance of social, economic, and justice issues in them, it is logical that urban mission must be holistic in nature. Yet, it is that holistic nature that has concerned many evangelical missionaries who did not want to slip into liberalism as they ministered to people's physical needs. Thus, we need to develop an evangelical, holistic model for mission that is both biblical and effective in cities.

In order to maintain an evangelical focus for urban mission, we can turn to the Lausanne Covenant, a document affirmed by a wide representation of evangelicals around the world. This document promotes the idea that evangelism and social concern are both important, and although social action does not directly lead to personal salvation, one's saving faith should naturally lead to Christian social responsibility (Lausanne Covenant, 1974). Thus, the call from much of the Global South "for a holistic ministry to match the holism of the city" (Conn and Ortiz 2001, 225) is a call that must be answered, although never separated from the priority of evangelism that leads to people's personal salvation and reconciliation with God.

So, we can start with Mark Gornik's definition of holistic ministry in the context of urban church planting as being spiritual, social, and economic (Gornik 1997, 241). And from there, considering both local and global urban contexts, **we can define an evangelical, holistic model for urban mission as one that considers and appropriately addresses spiritual, cultural, social, economic, and justice issues.** In other words, an evangelical, holistic model should address one's relationship with God, with one's larger culture, with one's community, with the economy, and with the government and other institutions that have power and give order to the community. Let me also qualify this definition by adding that our model follows the Lausanne Covenant in that it will always prioritize spiritual issues while attempting to minister to as many of the other areas as appropriate and effective.

In developing this model, I have been a part of an academic team creating a master's program, "Mission in the Modern City," for Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary in Kyiv, Ukraine. I have also worked with my American mission organization, WorldVenture, to construct a strategy for urban mission for our global workers.

In Ukraine, we started our work on this model by consulting with local urban church and ministry leaders. Then, we looked at various kinds of urban mission programs in the West, although most of these programs were focused on the local urban context and not a global one. After developing this model in the Ukrainian academic context for several years, I started working on an urban strategy for WorldVenture. This task led me to consult with numerous urban missionaries from around the world that worked in different and sometimes multiple cities.

Listening to these varied voices and working with teachers and students in our master's program in Ukraine, an evangelical, holistic model started to form. This model has been modified over the past several years as various needs and opportunities have presented themselves. In addition to consulting with different urban ministry leaders, this model has directly interacted with numerous Ukrainian students, several African students, and many American missionaries. We have learned some helpful lessons and had some success, but there is certainly a lot still to learn, especially as we consider different urban contexts around the world.

This model has four parts, each part reflecting different characteristics of the urban context and urban ministry. But before moving further, it would be helpful to give a brief definition of the city. As is reflected in the title of this article, **cities are characterized by a dense and large population, an intense and complex lifestyle, a diversity of peoples, hubs of influence and migration, and specialized and segmented communities.**²

In order to holistically train evangelical missionaries for this urban context, they must be prepared in four general areas. First, missionaries must learn how to study the global urban context. Second, missionaries must be prepared to personally cope with the intense pace of life in cities and remain true to the Gospel in their lives, ministries, and as they lead others. Third, missionaries must

² This simple definition is derived from the more thorough definition:

A city is a place that is characterized, *relative to the surrounding area*, by:

- A dense and large human population (Keller 2012, 135; Lees 2015, 2; Smith 2019, 12);
- Complexity and intensity in way of life and mindset (a complex ecosystem with many interrelated purposes, organizations, and processes, a fast pace of activity, multitasking, etc.) (Condon 2015, 62; Gornik 2002, 5; Greenwood 2019, 47);
- Diversity (ethnic, socioeconomic, etc.) and variety (of relationships, jobs, etc.) (Abrahamson 2014, 5-6; Smith, 2019 12; Wirth 1938, 8);
- Hubs of concentrated influence (over different sectors of society, for both good and for evil, both spreading outward from the city and attracting inward to the city) (Conn and Ortiz 2001, 233; Crane 2015, 20; Linthicum 1991, 62);
- Hubs of networks and movement (within the city, connecting with people from outside the city, facilitating migration from rural areas and across international borders) (Davis 2017, 5; Katz, Altman, and Wagner 2007, 477; Lynch 1960, 102); and
- Specialized and segmented communities (influencers, under-resourced and poor, migrants and immigrants, young people, etc.) (Davis 2017, 7; Hildreth 2014; Wirth 1938, 12-13).

learn about the four strategic urban groups of people, including their needs, their mindsets, and potential openness to the Gospel. Finally, missionaries need to be trained in various methods of ministry that are biblical, holistic, and effective in urban contexts.

Although each area of missionary training can touch on all the characteristics of a city, I will focus on one of these key characteristics for each area of missionary preparation that follows below.

Density: Studying the Global Urban Context

Probably the most prominent characteristic of all cities, as understood in the Bible as well as through history and today, is that they have dense human populations (Keller 2012, 135; Lees 2015, 2; Smith 2019, 12). Density naturally leads to large populations as well, but it is density that makes a city a city and this density often naturally leads to the other prominent urban characteristics (intensity, diversity, influence, and specialized and segmented communities).

It is the density of the city that makes it a different and much more complex context than the countryside, and it is this density that often requires research to be understood. As mentioned earlier, the anthropological skills that missionaries are typically trained with can be helpful, but they are often not sufficient in dense urban contexts.

Therefore, at Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary, we branched out into three areas to better understand urban contexts: history, anthropology with sociology, and the particularities of the local urban context. Perhaps the second category, anthropology with sociology, could be broken down further into two or more different directions in order to develop more for global urban missionaries in the future.

Ray Bakke, one of the leading voices of the 20th and 21st centuries in global urban mission, often asserted the need to understand the history of a city or a particular urban neighborhood in order to better minister in it. Bakke himself became a leading expert on the city of Chicago. And his expertise was broad, including the history of the ethnic groups, the urban development, and the ministry that happened in that city (e.g., Bakke 1999, 27ff).

Therefore, in preparing missionaries for global urban contexts, our seminary sought to teach them an overview of the history of cities and the Christian ministry that went

on within them. We've challenged students to look at specific historical examples of urban ministry (e.g., William and Catherine Booth and the Salvation Army, D.L. Moody, Toyohiko Kagawa, and Jackie Pullinger) and to glean what can be applied from their examples for urban ministry today.

Further, we offered training in urban anthropology and sociology in order to study the current urban context. Admittedly, we mainly focused on anthropology, since that is the area that most teachers of missiology know best. So, this helped students to understand culture, worldview, felt needs, and skills in cross-cultural communication and incarnational ministry. Considering our evangelical, holistic model, this teaching would generally only cover two aspects: the spiritual and the cultural.

Some training in sociology helped cover more of our model. We were able to offer some basic teaching on social structures, the domains (or sectors) of society, and demographics. Understanding these areas allows the missionary to deal with the social and perhaps economic aspects of urban contexts.

In addition, we offered some material in urban studies. First, we addressed the many forces at work in cities, including urbanization, globalization, migration, and multiculturalism. Second, we studied how urban spaces work and the movement between them (e.g., following Kevin Lynch's model (1960)). Further, we discussed the nature of urban communities and some issues of social justice. Finally, we also gave some practical exercises to our students. In one case we did a community needs assessment (following John Fuder's model in *Neighborhood Mapping* (2014)), and in another case we sent students to do a prayer walk, to look at an urban neighborhood and seek God's direction. These lessons and activities touched on all five aspects of our holistic model.³

We also guided our students to better understand the local urban context. Several groups have researched their own urban contexts, although the focus of these studies has varied widely. For example, the *Neighborhood Mapping* book described above is complemented by a guide for praying for all the neighborhoods of Chicago with some basic demographics and history of each neighborhood (Fuder with Koenig 2014). New York City was studied with a focus on all the ethnicities of the city and prayer for them (Clayman and Lee 2010). The twin cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul were studied with a focus on religion and doing church ministry (Mayer 2020). I am also in the process of finishing a study of Eurasian cities, including Ukraine, with a primary focus on history and understanding cities for ministry.

³ Some other useful tools for global urban missionaries can be found in *Tradecraft* (Crider, et al. 2013) and *Mosaic* (Looney and Bouchelle 2017).

Thus, there are many ways to study cities today, and we must offer more of these as we train missionaries for global urban contexts. As has been demonstrated, there is much to cover in studying dense urban populations.

Intensity: Preparing Missionaries for the Complex, Fast-Paced Global Urban Environment

In addition to focusing on the context of urban ministry, it is vital to think about the missionary her/himself. What kind of training is needed to help in the personal development of missionaries and to keep them healthy and effective in global urban contexts? What will keep missionaries going in the midst of stress and failure and complex problems that seem too difficult to solve?

First, theological training is needed. This training must go beyond the basic training that most ministers receive and include some study on a biblical view of cities from both the Old and New Testaments. Key urban issues should be discussed in biblical perspective, including issues like theology of place, poverty, suffering, power, justice, and citizenship. Further, a theological vision for urban mission should be developed in order to ground the missionary both biblically and theologically (Keller 2012, 17). Missionaries in global urban contexts need to be certain of God's love for cities as well as their own personal callings to ministry there.

Next, the urban minister needs to be prepared to think critically. We found this to be very helpful in our Ukrainian context. Cities are extremely complex, and both the people and the problems of the city tend to be complex, as well. Urban ministers need to be able to problem solve and work through complicated and often changing issues. Urban ministers need to be prepared to interact with some of the smartest and most creative people in the world as well as some of the neediest and most broken people. And occasionally, they must deal with some of the vilest people in the world as well. All these kinds of people tend to be drawn to cities.

In addition, the urban minister needs to balance his/her personal life with being a ministry leader. Cities have a fast pace of life and there are often many things vying for attention at once. Not only does an urban minister need to multitask effectively, she/he needs to avoid temptation and make sure that she/he gets a sufficient amount of rest in order to live a healthy life and be an effective minister. Therefore, we like to train our students for both leadership in urban ministry and life in an urban setting together in one course.⁴

⁴ Some helpful resources in spiritual formation/leadership are *In the Name of Jesus* (Nouwen 1989) and

In leadership, those in urban ministry need to think about how to build and lead an effective ministry team as well as how to make good partnerships for urban ministry. Cities are so complex that it is virtually impossible to do ministry alone. As Ray Bakke reflected on effective urban ministry, he said that

It takes time, of course, and it takes city ministry partnerships that can combine the good news with good advice resources. It's bringing them together that is required, to best capture the significance of Jesus in the Gospels and the Jesus of my city nearly two thousand years later (Bakke 1997, 138).

Missionaries to the city may come as outsiders, but they can be “gifts of grace to insiders” if they can form real partnerships together (Bakke and Sharpe 2006, 143). And, missionaries in urban contexts often need to raise financial support both from partners both within and outside the community in order to pay for building projects, youth camps, soup kitchens, and other kinds of ministry. Collaboration is vitally important for successful global urban ministry, as shown by numerous ministries around the world, including Redeemer City to City (Powell and James 2019) and Movement Day (Pier 2016).

Diversity and Influence: Focusing Ministry on Strategic Urban Groups

Cities are made up of many diverse and influential groups. As mentioned above, there are four groups of urban people that appear to be particularly strategic: Influencers, the under-resourced, migrants and immigrants, and young people. Therefore, in preparing urban missionaries, we have developed a curriculum focused on these four groups.

Of course, each of these groups have significant differences, although sometimes they can overlap. For example, a poor immigrant working multiple jobs in a Western city might be an influencer back in his/her home village/country. But, in any case, it is helpful to think about these strategic groups separately when planning for ministry.

First, in order to minister to influencers more effectively, it is vital to understand how power and systems in the city work. Furthermore, culture change needs to be considered as do the nature of change agents and how to be/find them. At my seminary

Reaching Out (Nouwen 1986); in the area of psychology, *Headspace: The Psychology of City Living* (Keedwell 2017); and in the area of urban life/leadership, *City of God*, *City of Satan* (Linthicum 1991) and *Encounter God in the City* (White 2006).

in Ukraine, we invited successful Christian ministers from around the country that worked with different groups of influencers in order to inspire and challenge our students, including those working in politics/government, business, media, education, and the arts. The Redeemer City to City ministry has had some particular success in this area around the world which is worth learning from as well (Keller 2012; Keller with Alsdorf 2016).

Ministry to the under-resourced and needy must study the issues of economics, poverty, dependencies, and justice in depth. God's love for the poor and His desire for justice, as seen in both the Old and New Testaments should be addressed. Connecting this topic to the previous one might be helpful since influencers can often help solve the very problems that the under-resourced face. Incarnational, holistic ministry among the poor can be very difficult, so various models for ministry should be considered. Also, avoiding long-term dependencies is very important.⁵

Ministry to migrants and immigrants must consider issues addressed in previous training on urban studies, going into greater depth on topics like migration and multiculturalism. Sociological issues such as race, ethnicity, and religion should be explored as well. As urban areas attract people from many different ethnicities and religions, many of those people come to the city with a greater openness to new ideas and new religion even as the forces of secularism begin to work. Missionaries have opportunities to share the Gospel themselves through different kinds of holistic ministry and religious dialogue in addition to collaborating with established urban churches (that might not easily be able to bridge cultural or language barriers) to facilitate greater amounts of ministry to immigrants.⁶

Finally, ministry to young people must consider both poor and influencer youth. Their needs and interests may vary, but many young urban people are affected by secularism and connected by consumerism, entertainment, and technology (Greenwood, 2019, 18). We must learn how to speak the language of the younger generation and use the means through which they often speak (texting, social media, etc.).

Each of these diverse groups have significant needs and influence in global urban contexts. The better that we understand each of these groups, the more effective we can be in doing ministry among them. However, we need to consider one more area of training: what kind of methods should we use to do ministry in the city?

⁵ A highly recommended book about ministry among the under-resourced is *Companion to the Poor* (Grigg 2013).

⁶ One good source on ministry to urban migrants and immigrants is *Crossroads of the Nations* (Looney 2015).

Community: Methods for Biblical, Holistic Ministry among Global Urban Communities

Cities are characterized by specialized and segmented communities. Some of those specializations and segments were described and considered for ministry above. In order to have a strong holistic ministry within these communities, meaningful relationships need to be built, and that will likely only be possible after spending time and energy learning about the community's culture and language, as appropriate (Bakke and Sharpe 2006, 153).

Considering the needs of the under-resourced, migrant, and immigrant communities, two methods of ministry are often effective in urban settings. First, is the method of community organizing. Second, is establishing a community center. Let's unpack each of these methods and analyze their strengths and weaknesses.

Community organizing has a bad reputation among some Christians because it has a history of being promoted by secular groups. However, community organizing can be a great way to start caring for and investing in a community which can build bridges for evangelism and faith.

In poorer urban communities, unhealthy habits of despair over problems and dependence on others can lead to a poverty not just of economics, but of spirit as well. The missionary task in community organizing is to help people in the community to voice their largest concerns (not imposing what the missionary thinks are the biggest problems) and facilitating them to work together to deal with them (not bringing in lots of help from the outside). Successful organizing can not only solve community problems, but it can also break bad habits of dependency and truly change people. And, as people understand that real changes are taking place in themselves and in their neighborhoods, it is natural to thank the missionary and ask why he/she is helping. Community organizing is a holistic ministry that can address many issues and lead many people to Christian faith and into growing churches (Linthicum 2005).

We like to share examples of community organizing with our students from David and Sally Mann, Baptist pastors ministering in a poor, diverse area of East London. Along with their church renewal and planting ministry, they helped facilitate the clearing of a large field in the city, gathering people from all over the neighborhood and getting the government to haul away the trash collected. By doing this, they eliminated a place where many young people did drugs and created a place where young people

could play football instead. In another instance, the biggest need of the community was a good school, so they established a Christian private school, raised money to purchase a building, and got the community involved in renovating the building so that the school could be opened. This new school provided a good education with Christian teaching and values. Both these community organizing projects provided holistic ministry to the local community.

A second method to consider for urban contexts is establishing a community center. A community center can help provide a variety of services for those in need and can be established in locations with the goal of serving a certain population (e.g., immigrants or the under-resourced). A community center provides another kind of holistic ministry, as it is tailored to the needs of the community. It could include things like a coffee shop (to attract young adults), offer activities for youth, offer inexpensive (or free) clothing, have a soup kitchen (for the under-resourced), and/or offer language lessons or legal advice (for immigrants just settling in the city). Of course, all these activities cost money, so some kind of outside financial support may be necessary to start such a ministry (in contrast to community organizing).

One good example of a community center ministry is the “M2M Network” that WorldVenture supports. M2M stands for “Málaga to Malmo,” signifying a network of European cities in which they have or would like to start community centers in order to minister to the diaspora of unreached immigrants moving into them. This ministry is steadily growing as community centers are established in different cities.

Both these ministries focused on the community can partner with or lead into urban church planting. Urban church planting can be started independently from other ministries as well. A number of themes that have been previously discussed come together in the planting of churches in urban contexts.

First, urban church planting must be focused on the community and not on “outreach,” which can set up an “us versus them” mentality. The church needs to be part of the community, both suffering with it and succeeding with it. Remembering the words of Jeremiah 29:4-7, as the city is blessed, so will God’s people be blessed. Christian missionaries must join with the people they are sent to, in order to understand them better, love them better, and seek God’s blessings, His “shalom,” together (Brooks 2018, 127-128).

Second, building a team for ministry and forming partnerships with other churches, ministries, and organizations are critical for new urban churches. Most of these team members and partners should come from within the community. Urban churches need to contextualize to their environment, which includes its meeting place, meeting time, and ministries in the community. For example, perhaps no building can be afforded, so the church will need to meet in rental space or in homes. Due to the busyness of congregants, maybe small groups need to meet at unusual times (I once heard of a small group of businessmen that decided to meet at 1AM since it was the only time that they were all available).

Another important part of building teams and establishing partnerships is sharing vision. This is the responsibility of the leadership, but vision needs to be shared in such a way that it can be adjusted to the needs of the community and sometimes challenged by both those within and from outside the community.

Furthermore, conflict resolution skills are very important in urban church planting. These can both help resolve problems within the team and partnerships as well as to reduce problems with government institutions and other powerful organizations. Establishing good relationships in the community that can be built upon is vitally important for urban church planting.⁷

There certainly are many more kinds of effective methods for urban ministries, and I would personally like to develop or find some good examples of methods using technology in urban contexts. This is an area to develop in the future, especially as global urban missionary work expands and encounters different needs and opportunities.

Some Practical Lessons that God Gave Along the Way

As we developed our curriculum to prepare missionaries for urban contexts at Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary, we were able to set up coursework for two years of part-time study plus independent work. We invited teachers from abroad with doctorates and significant ministry expertise. Of course, these international teachers spoke English and needed to be translated.

⁷ One good resource for urban leadership and church planting (and many other topics on urban ministry) is *Urban Ministry* (Conn and Ortiz 2001).

Yet, there were a number of factors at work that were beyond our control. Looking back, it seems clear that God was at work, so I'd like to share some of the lessons that we learned. To make these lessons a bit more memorable, I'd like to share these insights again following the major characteristics of cities.

Density: Less and more than we hoped for

One drawback of our program in Ukraine was that, so far, we have not recruited as many students as we hoped to. New programs typically struggle with recruitment during their first years, and then COVID came two years after the program started followed by the current full-scale war in Ukraine two more years after that. These latter problems led to us moving to hybrid instruction, with some teachers and some students connecting online through Zoom instead of in person.

Making instruction available by Zoom pushed teachers and students farther apart, but it also allowed us to invite several teachers that would not have been able to travel to Ukraine otherwise. That made our training more interesting and deeper at several points. And since most of our teachers were being translated from English and instruction was offered on Zoom, we were able to invite four English-speaking students from Africa to take our classes as well (through a partnership with Movement Day). Thus, both teachers and students that we would have never expected were able to join our training.

Intensity: Many lectures and on-site visits for a small number of students

We were able to follow our typical part-time class structure, offering two two-week modules of instruction each year for two years, four modules total. During these modules, the instruction is typically intense (from 9AM to 5PM), but since we had a small number of students, our class time was even more intense than usual for each student.

Our small number of students allowed them to have more personal interaction with the teachers and between the students themselves. So, although fewer students were trained overall, the experiences were richer and allowed for more individual mentoring.

In addition, we tried (as much as COVID and the war allowed) to take students to on-site ministry visits to meet urban ministers and learn about their ministries. These visits helped students experience what had been taught in a more tangible way.

Diversity and Influence: Different countries, different languages, influential ministries

We never expected to have the diversity in our program that we've had over these past few years. We've had teachers from Australia, England, the Netherlands, Scotland, the US, and Ukraine. We've had students from Ukraine, the US, Ghana, and Kenya. And, due to these differences, we've had to translate our teaching and discussions into Ukrainian, Russian, and English.

Our teachers have had influential ministries all over the world – on the continents of North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. We had numerous guest teachers from Ukraine who shared about their urban ministries as well. Furthermore, our students have included pastors and missionaries working in influential ministries themselves.

This combination of diversity and influence proved to be a great blessing. It was especially interesting to note that our Ukrainian and African students loved studying with each other, despite having to wait for translation, and they did not want to take courses separately when given the chance. Having diverse, mature voices sharing with one another was a great addition to our training that we could not have arranged without God's help.

Community: Connecting in person, connecting online

Due to COVID and the war, our students were separated from their teachers and each other much more than we expected. However, there were two good sides of this problem. First, when the students were finally able to get together on our campus with one of our teachers during a class, it was a tremendous blessing that made the teaching time more fruitful.

Second, we realized that we could use the technology of Zoom to connect more regularly than just during our official class time. So, we made it optional (but encouraged) to connect for a Zoom meeting once every one or two months. This allowed us to take questions from students, encourage them to do their assignments, and pray for one another, which was especially important in times of war. In this way, we developed a small but strong community among our students, something that they can hopefully take into their current and future ministry.

Conclusion

We have taken some first steps into training missionaries for global urban contexts. Certainly, more methods can be tried, and the focus of training narrowed for specific needs. In any case, I believe that we have established a basic framework for training that can be used for preparing missionaries for the growing urban mission field.

It may not be possible in every case, but we realized that the diversity of our teachers and students really helped our students see a lot of perspectives and begin to practice interacting with people that were different from them. Both these activities are very valuable for future ministry in global urban contexts.

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