

## INTRODUCTION TO THIS ISSUE

This entire issue of *The Journey* is about an event that happened months ago...and most of you weren't there. People often sum up an event with "you had to have been there," meaning you can't really understand what happened if you weren't there. While sometimes true, it isn't very encouraging! This time, however, rather than saying "you had to have been there," I'd like to say, "you're going to be there!" Because this event represents our future, and you will be there!

An Alliance community of multicultural, multilingual, multiple-generation men and women from different contexts and backgrounds—that's already a reality. And it just gets better from there.

We're seeing a new environment of trust, deepening relationships, unity, vulnerability and creativity. Look for it in your sphere of influence. Plant it where you don't see it. Cultivate it where there are beginning signs. Nurture this environment and appreciate this gift God has given us.

Being a participant in this event far surpassed any of the many books I've read or workshops I've attended on global leadership and cultures. Take for example the gift-giving experience. One of the gifts was time. There is often discussion, joking and tension among various cultures concerning the use of time. But when time becomes a gift offered and people begin to truly explore how being "on time" and being "late" are both expressions of respect for relationships in different contexts, there is suddenly common ground. And that common ground makes room for grace.

As you will read in the participants' articles, the example of Jesus plus prayer plus friendship created just the right mix to give us a glimpse of what can be. It is Kingdom come and coming. And you're going to be there!

— Susan Van Wynen, Editor

## The Third Table Forum – Leaders Journeying Together

by Todd Poulter



The venue for the Third Table Forum was Istanbul—because of its actual and symbolic location where East meets West at the Bosphorus Straits (above).

I sense that in our day, God is putting the pieces in place to unlock the collective potential of younger and older mission leaders around the world. In light of the disruptions, crises and complexity that increasingly characterize our world, we will need both younger and older leaders to discern together how God is at work and what He is saying, and to engage together in wise and courageous initiatives in response.

The older leaders are there. And the younger leaders are there. What's missing is as simple as it is challenging: helping these two groups of leaders find each other and get deeply connected. This means creating inter-cultural and inter-generational communities where younger and older leaders come together as spiritual friends, serve together as trusted colleagues, and venture together into the future as wise, courageous guides for their fellow mission travelers.

*The Journey is produced to help foster the community of the Wycliffe Global Alliance as it participates in Bible translation movements as part of God's mission.*

## IN THIS ISSUE

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The Third Table Forum –<br>Leaders Journeying Together  | 1  |
| Some Observations on the<br>Third Table Forum           | 6  |
| Jesus is the Model for Leaders<br>in the Mission of God | 7  |
| Investing in Others                                     | 8  |
| Reflections on the<br>Third Table Forum                 | 9  |
| Leadership in a<br>Global Context                       | 10 |
| Friendship. Really?                                     | 11 |

Click on title to jump to article

So where do we start in joining God in what He is doing? At a global level, the Alliance has initiated two consultations under the theme “Leaders Journeying Together.” The first took place at the Christian International Conference Center (operated by Bible Translation and Literacy) in Kenya October 14-18, 2013, and the second near Istanbul, Turkey April 27-May 1, 2015. We’ll focus here on the latter gathering, “The Third Table Forum: Leaders Journeying Together.”

“...we will need both younger and older leaders to discern together how God is at work and what He is saying...”

Twenty-five older and younger leaders came together from around the Alliance, men and women from each of the four Alliance Areas. The Area Directors played a central role in selecting participants to get the desired balance of male/female, older/younger, and Global North/South. Leaders came from Australia, Benin, Brazil, Colombia, England, Ethiopia, Germany, Jamaica, Kenya, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, South Africa, Singapore, Slovakia, Trinidad & Tobago, and the United States. The youngest was 23, the oldest, me. (I had the privilege of celebrating my 63rd birthday that week.) A member of the Alliance Board, and Peter Tarantal, Associate Director of Operation Mobilization, also participated. Kirk Franklin, Susan Van Wynen, and my wife Karla and I represented the Alliance Global Leadership Team. The facilitation team was drawn from the participants themselves: 1 from Asia, 2 from Latin America, 1 from Africa, 2 from Europe, and myself (U.S.).

Why did we meet in Istanbul? We chose the city because of its actual and symbolic location, where East meets West at the Bosphorus Straits, in line with our Third



A key goal in bringing twenty-five leaders together was that they could interact with one another across generations and cultures—on issues relevant to their development as leaders in the Alliance. (Above) Simon Wan presents at one of the sessions.

Table theme (see sidebar, page 3). To help us understand the significance of that symbolism, a local expert explained the history of the region before we headed out on an evening boat ride on the Bosphorus.

What was our goal in bringing those twenty-five leaders together? We wanted to create a safe, yet challenging community environment. A place where participants could interact with one another across generations and cultures—on issues relevant to their development as leaders in the Alliance.

#### Advance Preparation

Creating that community actually started four months before the event. We divided into four “Watching Jesus” groups and assigned a different gospel to each group. Starting back in December 2014, group members read through their assigned gospel, focusing on a specific

theme for that month. In January, February, and March, the process was repeated, using a different theme each successive month. By the time we came together in April, we had already been “watching Jesus” together and sharing our insights.

During the event, we identified a number of building blocks for community, including:

- › intentionality
- › friendship
- › diversity
- › vulnerability
- › reflective practice
- › shared learning, and
- › participation, and then wove those themes into the various sessions.

We responded to the question, “*How has God shaped us as leaders?*” by telling stories of significant people and experiences in our development, many of which were quite moving. Throughout the week, each individual or couple had the opportunity to share what they sensed God saying to them about being a leader and leading in His mission, and then the group prayed for them. Those brief times turned out to be some of the most meaningful of the whole week.

“Everyone gained practice in learning when to express or withhold their perspective for the good of the group.”



Karla and Todd Poulter celebrate Todd’s birthday at the event. The sharing in celebrations and the sharing of food—in this instance, a birthday cake—are not merely actions to squeeze into the minutes before a coffee break. They are truly part of gathering together at “the third table.” They are, in fact, gifts.

## Session Highlights

Kirk Franklin led us in reflecting on the Alliance Journey, Community, Friendship, and Leadership Communities in Global-Local contexts. For some leaders, this was their first exposure to these themes. For others, it may have been the second or third time to address the topics, but each exposure deepened their understanding and appreciation of the issues.

David Cárdenas and Angelika Marsch did a wonderfully creative job engaging participants in the biblical reflections, based on the four monthly “Watching Jesus” themes:

1. Who is He? The person and character of Jesus.
2. What’s important to Him? Jesus’ purpose and priorities.
3. How does He lead? How does He exercise power and authority?
4. How does He develop and enable leaders?

The first day the groups wrote songs or psalms; another day they performed short dramas. The real “hit” of the week was a mock television show with David and Angelika as hosts. Each group identified a biblical character that had been personally impacted by Jesus, who was then invited to serve on a panel on the “television show.” It’s not clear how much new biblical insight was generated by the panel discussion, but everyone had a great time.

Peter Tarantal shared the story of Operation Mobilization’s history and how his own development as a leader has been shaped by his experiences. He also described what OM is seeking to do to become a movement whose systems as well as their values

## What is the Third Table?

Imagine the characteristic beliefs, values and practices of the Global North and West as the basic elements of a First Table, and those of the Global South and East as the basic elements of a Second Table. The need for a “Third Table”<sup>1</sup> arises out of the desire on the part of those who are members of the First and Second Tables to relate to one another more closely and deeply. The goal is to create a new *table*, if you will (or think of it as a meeting environment—either physical or virtual), whose culture, beliefs, values and practices are informed by the Word of God, and have been negotiated and agreed upon by those from the First and Second Tables.

Such a table is neither the table of the Global South and East nor of the Global North and West, but truly a Third Table in which everyone is on relatively equal—and slightly uncertain—footing. Participation at such a third table requires each person to hold loosely what feels “right” to them. Those who come to the table need to feel safe enough to participate, uncomfortable enough to be stretched, and disoriented enough to be unsure whether things will turn out as they wish.

The creation of such third tables has implications that go beyond Global North/South relationships, e.g. to relationships between senior mission leaders and younger mission leaders. The differences in status and role between these leaders (related to their respective levels of authority and power) have often made it difficult or impossible for them to sit at the same table together as trusted colleagues, just as has been the case with those from the Global North and South. A third table opens possibilities for dialogue and joint action.

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support leaders from anywhere in the world serving on their regional and global leadership teams. “We need to train up people so they are able to sit around the same table [with those who are more proficient in our organizational cultures] and to be comfortable.”

“...the future will not be built on individual leaders, but on the relationships that are built between older and younger leaders.”

### Creating a Third Table

Peter’s session prepared the ground for the following session, where we set out to collectively create a Third Table, which is built upon on the construct of bringing together the best of what the Global North and West, and the Global South and East have to contribute. This was an especially meaningful time for many of us, so much so that one individual referred to it as a prophetic moment. What actually happened?

We divided ourselves into two groups: those from the Global South and East, and those from the Global North and West. Our first task was to identify characteristic attitudes or behaviors of our regions related to such things as leadership and decision-making, friendship and community, time orientation, use of money, trust and accountability, etc. We then grouped these characteristics into clusters of similar items.

The next and more challenging task was to ask ourselves: “Which of these clusters of characteristics would we like to offer as gifts to others in the Alliance to make us a strong and healthy community?” Any items that didn’t meet this criterion were put to the side.

### A Gift Exchange

Each group then wrote out descriptions of their “gifts” on separate pieces of stiff paper printed to look like gift boxes. Now came the interesting part—the gift exchange. Each group read out one of their gifts and offered it to the other group. The group who received the gift then discussed amongst themselves: “Are we ready to accept this gift? Do we need more clarification? Or do we want to send it back and ask the other group to make changes and then offer it again?” That process resulted in much discussion. The groups used all three of these options, depending on the gift.

Some gifts were sent back, modified, and then accepted the second time around. Each time a gift was accepted, it was posted on a wall chart labeled “Third Table.” When we ran out of time, the group unanimously voted to extend time until dinner so that we could finish the exercise.

Two examples of the gift exchange:

1. The Second Table offered the First Table the gift of a friendly, approachable community, allowing for collaborative input, valuing inclusive rather than exclusive rights. The Second Table was happily amazed when the First Table willingly accepted this gift, recognizing their need for guidance in achieving community within the global context.
2. The First Table presented the Second Table with the gift of dealing with conflict with love, respect, and doing so in a timely manner, which meant not avoiding or ignoring conflict, and leaving room for multiple ways of dealing with it. The Second Table graciously accepted the gift.

While we did end up with a list of gifts on the wall chart, what seemed to me to be even more important than the

In chapter two of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul describes God’s initiative in creating such a third table for Gentiles and Jews, bringing them together in His body. “His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace” (Eph 2:15). This picture of what Jesus has done in His own body is one of God’s assurances that He is committed to removing the barriers of hostility or fear that will open the way for many such “tables” to be created.

A few characteristics of the Third Table:

1. It is actually a new third culture that no one is at home in.<sup>2</sup>
2. It is different from the table of the historically more powerful.  
The more powerful table is often the domain of older, male or Global North/West leaders, who have often invited younger or Global South/East leaders to join their table in order to give them directions, or to resource or “empower” them.
3. It is different from the table of the historically less powerful.  
The less powerful table is often the domain of younger, female or Global South/East leaders, who have often invited older or Global North/West leaders to join their table in the hope of getting their attention, or attracting their help and resources.
4. It is not for cowards.  
It requires a commitment to create and participate in a truly shared culture.<sup>3</sup> And it requires intentionality and perseverance that isn’t required of us in our own home cultures.

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“final product” was the interaction and learning that took place—first at the separate tables, and then together, as the two tables sought to create something new from the best of what they respectively had to offer. Everyone gained practice in learning when to express or withhold their perspective for the good of the group. It was obvious how much each table felt valued when the other table accepted their gift, with or without questions! Both tables appreciated the affirmation that they had things to offer at the Third Table. And both appreciated being carefully listened to and respected by their counterparts. As one participant said with obvious emotion at the close of the session, “This is the first time I have been in a meeting with North Americans where we could negotiate. They normally just dictate to us—‘This is the way it is going to be.’”

### Building More Third Table Communities, and Potential Future Discussions

One of our goals for this gathering was to model and practice the quality of community we desire to see reproduced throughout the Alliance—among older and younger leaders, as well as within organizations, and at national and regional levels. Our hope is that each of us who participated in this event will follow up in two areas. First, by sharing what we learned with our co-workers and partners back in our home contexts. And second, by continuing to consider what gifts each of us can bring—as younger and older generations of women and men from the Global North, South, East and West—to build vibrant Third Table communities in the Alliance, whose members can serve together and venture courageously into the future.

I look forward to exploring additional areas together with similar inter-cultural and inter-generational groups. For example:

- › How does God intend for power and authority to be exercised in His mission?
- › Where are the most significant gaps between cultural values and biblical values in the way we actually practice leadership in our various contexts?
- › What can we do to strengthen intergenerational relationships among older and younger leaders, as well as cross-regional relationships?

Discussions like these will require the active participation of both younger and older leaders. Younger leaders are especially adept at identifying “un-discussable issues,” and areas where things aren’t working as they should be—where no one is willing to discuss them. And older leaders have the authority to create space to talk about such issues when they are raised. I strongly believe that the future will not be built on individual leaders, but on the relationships that are built between older and younger leaders.

This is challenging territory for all of us in the Alliance, which brings to mind a favorite African proverb: We make our path by walking on it.



Todd Poulter serves the Alliance as Global Consultant for Leadership Development

5. It is designed to be mutually welcoming from a power-sharing perspective.

All participants have equitable opportunities to participate and influence the process and outcomes: younger/older, Global South/East and North/West, and male/female leaders and the mission communities they represent.

6. It will change us to the extent that we are willing to enter in as learners.

We cannot simultaneously hold onto the beliefs, values and practices of our home Table and enter into those of a Third Table. What’s required of those who engage in the culture of a Third Table is analogous to what South African ministry leader Jacques van Bommel observed about the demands of partnering: “It takes longer, costs more, and turns out different from what you expect. And you are changed in the process.”

Interaction in this unfamiliar, uncomfortable territory has the potential to provoke deeper dialogue, learning and relationships than often happens when a single group does the hosting and controls the process and the outcomes. And there is potential for significant individual and collective growth in faith, and change in outlook and practice.

1. The “third table” terminology comes originally from Peter Tarantal, former Director for South/East Africa for Operation Mobilization (OM), now an Associate International Director for OM.

2. An analogy can be made between such Third Tables and what are called “third culture kids” (TCKs). For these children, their first culture is their parents’ culture of origin, their second culture is a different culture where their family resides or has resided, and their third culture is a blend of these two cultures which is unique to each child.

3. This Third Table cannot simply be a modified version of the First Table or Second Table to which those from the other Table are invited. E.g. it is not about saying, “Our western planning needs to be informed by Global South perspectives.” Rather, it is asking: “What would it look like for us to envision the future together and figure out together how we are going to move into that future?”

# Some Observations on the Third Table Forum

By Shanna Elliot-Mohammed

To really understand my experience at the Third Table Forum requires just a bit of background information. Having been born and raised in Trinidad & Tobago, I've had the privilege of being a part of a multicultural or cosmopolitan society. Having traveled to both North and South America on various mission-related initiatives has also given me a glimpse into other cultures. Being of mixed descent I can choose to view life as either “not belonging to any” or “being a part of all”...I choose the latter. Lastly, as a child of the 1980s, it seems like such an exciting time to be alive with the growth of communication via the Internet, and being connected to an inherently global community.

The Third Table Leaders Forum seemed like a live simulation of what is taking place worldwide but with an extra special aspect—a common belief in Jesus and a desire to make Him known. This basic underlying belief in itself created an atmosphere of unity, community and friendship, which were indeed the themes for the various sessions. We received insight into the history of Wycliffe Bible Translators—and now the Alliance—and that Wycliffe originally grew from friendship between the founder, William “Uncle Cam” Townsend and Francisco Díaz, a Cakchiquel man he met in Guatemala.

We discussed the understanding of the need for unity and community, and that the Triune God is an example of community/unity for us. We were reminded that the essence of community rings out in the statement “Love is selfless.”

Over twenty leaders of many different nationalities came together—which created a mix of cultures, ages

and genders. It was fascinating to see such a wide cross-section of people. It truly felt like being a part of the Body of Christ. What stood out though is that our similarities and differences, strengths and weaknesses, struggles and achievements all transcend the aspects of culture, age and gender that define and sometimes even separate us.

I'm not sure how much time was spent in planning for this forum; it would seem like quite a bit given the level of organization and attention to details. For example, as participants we were assigned to one of four groups. Each group was then assigned to study one of the gospels. Then, from about four months leading up to the event we were asked to read through that gospel once per month, looking at different qualities of Jesus each time. Studying the leadership style of Jesus proved to be an infallible method of learning. Manuals are wonderful, yet really delving into the Word of God and understanding that He is the example for us as leaders left little or no room for contention. Still, what may have been the most powerful element of this event would have been the prayer. Each of us had a team of people praying for us back home and we prayed consistently and specifically throughout our time together!

Some specific things that I learned or was reminded of:

- › The “great divide” (first table, second table) is a lot more present than I was aware of, but there is strength in our differences, especially when working together and appreciating each other. My outlook has been that while some characteristics define us, they should not limit us. Through evaluation we identify and then develop our strengths and acknowledge our weaknesses.



The art of listening. (Above) Shanna Elliot-Mohammed gains the attention of her colleagues at one of the sessions.

- › Language and perception are critical to communication. You may speak the same language but interpretation (sometimes based on perception) may vary. It is so important to be clear in what you are trying to communicate and to take the time to fully understand what someone else may be trying to communicate.
- › Faith requires action!
- › The Church is the Body of Christ, made up of various parts—different functions but all with purpose! We need to “be” the church and not just “do” church.

Almost everyone I'm in regular contact with is aware of the desire within the Alliance for a change towards “Third Table Thinking.” I share about it as much as I can in official, social and relational capacities. I sincerely hope that this movement can grow!



Shanna Elliot-Mohammed, Operations – Wycliffe Caribbean, Trinidad & Tobago Team

# Jesus is the Model for Leaders in the Mission of God

by David Cárdenas

Is Jesus a leadership model to be followed by leaders in the Wycliffe Global Alliance? What are the values and practices that mission leaders should consider?

In Latin America, the measure of success of the Christian leader usually is based on the number of results in the ministry, the number of followers, the quality of charisma and degree of position and power. Unfortunately, these measures have infiltrated the work in missions. Leaders of today battle against these trends, while seeking to show leadership without losing its true character, and must excel in order to advance the mission of God.

What does it take to care for leaders and help them survive? It is a challenge today as it was in the time of Jesus, when leaders then battled the same unhealthy trends. This is why the example and message of Jesus as a model for Christian leaders is as relevant today as it has been at any point in history.

With this concern, before and during the Alliance's Third Table Forum event, the other participants and I took time to get closer to the four Gospels and dialogue about "Jesus as a leader in God's mission." Issues such as the following were considered:

- › How do we understand the person and character of Jesus as a leader in God's mission?
- › How were the purposes and priorities of Jesus revealed?
- › How did Jesus exercise His power and authority?
- › How did Jesus develop leaders for God's mission?

At the event, I had the privilege of working with Angelika Marsch to conduct and facilitate reflections on these questions, which we did using a good deal of creativity and appealing music, dramas, a "TV show," and reflection groups.

What did we discover or rediscover? Jesus lived the mission of God in community. His authority and power was manifested in His intervention in the natural and the supernatural world. Jesus reflected a balanced character—living between being and doing. He avoided the temptation of activism in the midst of constant demand from those around Him. Jesus manifested, through His message and His actions, building bridges of reconciliation and restoration between man and God. Jesus also knew how to handle the temptation of fame.

Jesus shared His power and authority with the disciples and others to lead in His kingdom. He modeled a life of humility, financial dependence on the Father, a life of prayer, a servant's heart, a life of faith, love and mercy for the marginalized of society. He confronted unjust systems. Jesus showed happiness in God's mission in spite of persecution and death.

Jesus invested most of His time with those who had no place within the social and religious system of that era. In His purposes and priorities, Jesus linked with the poor and marginalized, shaking the pillars of the religious systems. His missionary practice deeply bothered men of power. He invited and caused people to define themselves

with the fundamental values of human life: justice, brotherhood, truth, love, mercy, generosity and honesty.

When He used His power and authority, it was not to enhance His own status—but instead to serve, help, heal, deliver, feed, raise the dead, teach, confront, restore dignity, forgive and reconcile. As a result, people knew that Jesus was the Son of God.

Jesus knew he had to build relationships before anything happened. He met people in places like weddings, parties, fishing trips, business meetings and community festivals. They could see His power and listen to His teachings. Once the relationship was in place, Jesus walked with people as He asked them to "come and follow me." Jesus modeled what leadership should look like. His behaviors, actions, attitudes, and relationships were observed by His followers while they were following him. Later, these followers became leaders of others and ones that emulated the virtues, teachings, behavior and lifestyle of Christ.

After meeting Jesus, and having the experience of looking at His leadership and discussing that model with my fellow participants at the Third Table forum, today I consider myself a more informed person, challenged to continue to make Jesus my model of leadership in God's mission—not only in relation to the Alliance, but in all areas of my life.

Is Jesus your leader in mission? He is the most amazing leader I have ever met.



David Cárdenas, from Colombia, serves in COMIBAM Internacional, and as the Partnerships Facilitator for the Americas Area of the Alliance

# Investing in Others

by Carole Avande Houndjo

I am grateful to the Lord, and to the Alliance Africa Area Director, Mundara Muturi, for investing in me and giving me the opportunity to be involved in the Third Table Leaders Forum. I would like to briefly share about the following areas of the event that were highlights for me:

## 1. Biblical Reflection

Several months before the Third Table forum we all began reflecting on one of the gospels. I was in the group looking at the gospel of Luke. This study of Luke helped me to discover the style of leadership of the Lord Jesus, which is characterized by humility, service, love and kindness. Jesus also challenged cultural and religious expectations.

As a leader, I decided to imitate Jesus' leadership style by showing love, kindness and flexibility in my daily work. My prayer is also to continue to serve in His mission with humility and excellence.

Having an hour each day set aside for our time of reflection made a real difference or had a/made a big impact.

## 2. The Alliance Journey

This topic, as presented by Alliance Executive Director, Kirk Franklin, was useful because it helped me to deeply understand the transformation that the Alliance and its various organizations has gone through. Kirk's full participation at this event was so encouraging for me, as I discovered that he is so humble. Both his humility and open-mindedness challenged me in my desire to be shaped by the Lord in order to be His humble servant.



The challenge and the joy: creating inter-cultural and inter-generational communities where younger and older leaders come together as spiritual friends, serve together as trusted colleagues, and venture together into the future as wise, courageous guides for their fellow mission travelers.

## 3. Times of Prayer

It was the first time that I had experienced such wonderful moments in a meeting where we could pray for each participant after they shared their joys and challenges in the mission of God. We really sensed the presence of God, and it was a privilege to hear the manner in which He is leading His servants in other places in the world.

## 4. Friendship

This event brought together people from different continents and generations. It was a great opportunity to share with people of my generation and with other generations. I learned so much from each person, and our discussions gave me inspiration and ideas that I have started to implement back home in Bénin.

I would like to underline the fact that it was the first meeting I've attended in a Christian context with an equal gender balance.

Now that I'm back working in my role, my commitment is to continue to reinforce the friendship environment at Wycliffe Bénin, and to invest in others, in order to help them to become more Christ-like leaders.



Carole Avande Houndjo serves as the Bible Translation Program Manager for Wycliffe Bénin



# Reflections on the Third Table Forum

by Ann Kuy

Friendship is an easy playground practice. No one needs to teach toddlers how to make friends. Kindergarten was fun with friends! But I noticed that the older I became, the more I lost what is now seen as a life “skill.”

Friendship had become a concept, an idea, a figment of imagination as I finished my studies, went to work, built a family and so on. It was a word I didn’t have to look up. It seemed so easy that the real meaning was then lost. In fact, it became just a word—especially in this social media age.

“Will you be my friend?” was the invitational question asked by Rev. Samuel Azariah at the influential mission conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910. His question from long ago is the simplest yet most profound question in line with missions. It was a question that sparked a renewed definition in my own heart when Kirk Franklin presented the friendship theme at the Third Table Leaders Forum in Turkey last April. Why did the question pinch my heart? I then remembered what Jesus said in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” That was what He did on the cross. And it was because He calls me His friend.

During the five days with my Third Table colleagues, I re-learned friendship, the real meaning of friendship in the Bible. My colleagues became my friends as we discussed our personal experiences and insights as



Kirk Franklin and Tony Kotauga have a chance for some informal discussion.

well as our daily reflections and prayers. I enjoyed the cultural diversity as well as the intergenerational mix, as I learned more about Jesus’ servant leadership from them. I learned as if living life all over again!

As the word friendship became my new word for leadership, I realized that my new definition is all positive—creating, building and affirming community without borders. Taking the counter-intuitive thought a notch higher, friendship celebrates culture through “vulnerability” and “thoughtful risks” instead of power struggles and domination.

Unlike many other leadership seminars, we watched Jesus through the Gospels as our preparation for the week of meetings. The book of Matthew prepared me well. I was further inspired and moved to imitate Jesus especially in the areas of servant leadership and building strong friendships.

Leaving the Third Table Forum and my new friends was only physical and temporary. I know that God will enrich what we have discovered and built. We have been keeping in touch through WhatsApp and other social media platforms. As I now approach my job, my friendships have taken on a constant practice of surrender to God as well as openness and accountability. From recent projects after the trip, I have become more flexible and more accommodating of the Holy Spirit and the gifts my friends from other cultures bring to the (third) table.



Ann Kuy serves as Communication Consultant for the Philippine Partnership for Bible Translation

# Leadership in a Global Context

by Phil Prior

I work for Wycliffe Bible Translators in the UK. And while my current role is mostly UK focused, the truth is everything we do has a global impact. Whether that's because we are praying for or providing financial support for particular projects, or we are training and sending personnel to support work in particular locations, what we do from our office in the UK can have ripples of impact in the lives and work of people in many different locations.

It's not so much about getting things wrong and the ripples causing problems for others (though that does happen occasionally), or success that brings its own pressures; instead it's about sharing in something and recognising the value of each individual, culture and organisation.

Last April I was able to spend a week with a group of leaders from around the world at the Wycliffe Global Alliance-sponsored Third Table Forum. We were a properly global group with representatives from Brazil, Costa Rica, the Caribbean, Germany, Norway, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, Kenya, Benin, the United States... you get the picture. Plus we were a mix of ages and genders at different stages of our leadership journeys.

The most wonderful thing about this group was our openness with each other. We had all been nominated and invited to be there so we didn't need to justify our reason for being part of the group. Maybe that

simple fact removed the usual burden that comes with conferences—the need to impress—though that seems to be an ever-decreasing part of our culture. Instead, there was an openness and honesty within the group that I've not experienced in events of this type before.

Over the five days we worked together, ate together, played together, prayed together (specifically for each participant) and celebrated who we are as people and as participants in global mission. It was fun, emotional and affirming—and quite challenging.

All of this has made summing it up and sharing it with others really difficult. I know that this is one of the most important events of my career.

- › It challenged me that it is OK to be called to leadership, and that I should move beyond my current stance of being willing to serve others to equipping myself to lead well.
- › I'm excited by the current generation and the next generation of mission leaders within the Alliance that have vision, enthusiasm and a desire to serve. I'm also excited by the kindness, generosity and love of this group.
- › I saw, probably for the first time, a group that worked really well together. Even when we disagreed, offended each other, or simply got it wrong, we took action to repair the damage, and showed understanding and

love in listening and giving others the chance to make amends. We even showed understanding to the point of realising that we just don't see things in the same way—sometimes it's OK to be different.

- › It reminded me of the importance of informed, directed prayer. This was the first event that I attended that asked delegates to form a specific prayer support team that would journey with them through the week. I'm sure that, above all else, made the real difference.

I hope you sense my joy in being part of this group and some of the excitement of what God was doing through that week. Of course, while I've already mentioned the centrality of prayer to this event, I recognise that it was God's gracious answers to those prayers that made the difference.



Phil Prior serves as Director of Marketing and Communications for Wycliffe UK

## Friendship. Really?

By Margareth Botelho Spencer

When I initially received the instructions for our readings and meditations on the gospels in preparation for my participation in the Third Table Leader's Forum—and then seeing the list of participants—I confess I felt so incredibly intimidated by it all.

How could I contribute something new and enlightening? And I wasn't even thinking of anything impressive—I was so nervous!

So I did what I know best. I ran to the Lord, and as I prayed, I came to understand I shouldn't worry about any of those things, but truly ask Him what He wanted me to learn for my personal growth—especially as a leader. From that point on, the Lord walked me through new lessons He wished to teach me.

My first lesson was very intense—and it happened several months before I even attended the leaders' event in Turkey.

My whole family went down from the mountains where we live in Brazil to the beach for our Christmas vacation. The day after we arrived there was a major flood where waters rose in certain places 2 meters above normal. I did fear for my three young children who don't swim, along with my mom and my sister's infant child.



The background slide reads, "Serve one another as Jesus serves us." The embrace speaks for itself.

As the rain continued to pour down and the waters continued to rise, my mom and I stretched our hands out the window of the only two story house in the condominium and prayed. I voiced out the passage in the book of Mark when Jesus calms the storm and orders the wind. This same Jesus was with us at that very moment.

Within 10 minutes the floodwaters began to recede.

We witnessed a miracle—because the heavy tropical rain went on for more than 10 hours.

Through this experience I understood—and could relate to—the disciples when they feared for their lives. If they only knew who Jesus really was! If they only knew that the true living God that had made man was in their fragile boat.

*If only I can always remember that He is with us.*

I shared this personal experience of the floodwaters with the group, and I was happy (and relieved) to see everyone truly sharing from their hearts as well. I had never been in a meeting where everyone shared so deeply from their hearts, and we were all challenged to do things in light of the Bible.

During some sessions in the forum I began to worry, because there were some presentations where I would have to be in front of the entire group. I am extremely outgoing and talkative, but the only shy bone in me happens to be related to speaking in front of groups. I couldn't help but share this with some of the more experienced leaders, and they demonstrated so much love and patience, and challenged me to overcome it. They actually said that could be my alter ego, my "Über Ich". I couldn't help but laugh, and pray for the Lord to help me get over it. All this was done in a way that made our friendship grow.

Healing took place when we offered each other gifts, which could be accepted or rejected during the Third Table gift exchange. Our fears and traumas sometimes got the best of us, but each one of us was ministered to in a way we can only recognize as the Holy Spirit touching our lives.

Being part of this leadership journey has been a blessing for me. The Lord prepared us in advance so we could meet together. He challenged those of us who can sometimes be skeptical.

Friendship was a presentation topic—and some of us thought: "Friendship. Really?"

But I admit that this actually happened!



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