



ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

## Monthly bulletin – January 2012

Guest editor: Stan Nussbaum

---

<b>Executive board</b>	<b>Advisory board</b>	Wayne Burgess	Timothy Reeves
Jim Harries, Chair	Alex Araujo	Jay Gary	Gord Sawatzky
Stan Nussbaum		Stan Chu Ilo	Hans Schultheiss
Chris Flanders		Frank Paul	Stephen Skuce

---

[Guest editorial: Missionary Methods – 1912 and 2012](#)

[VM conferences in March – register to participate/present](#)

[Vulnerable Mission representation at European youth-missions conference](#)

[New book by Jim Harries: \*Three Days in the Life of an African Christian Villager\*](#)

[Thank you, Fiona! \(and “Help Wanted”\)](#)

### Guest Editorial: Missionary Methods – 1912 and 2012

The centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference was marked by four major conferences of various kinds, the largest being the Lausanne Movement meeting in Cape Town. In 2012 we mark the centenary of another event that has reverberated through the mission world for a whole century. It was the publication of Roland Allen’s book, *Missionary Methods: St. Pauls or Ours*. (Free at <http://ia600300.us.archive.org/35/items/missionarymethod00alle/missionarymethod00alle.pdf>) In the U.S., the Evangelical Missiological Society has made “mission methods” its theme of the year, calling attention to this book and its continuing relevance.

In contrast to the “bigger and better” (and more expensive) approach to mission that dominated the Edinburgh conference, Allen argued that modern mission had already become too modern, too encumbered with modern trappings, to take the gospel to the world effectively even if more money and manpower were poured into it. He proposed a strategy deliberately modeled on Paul’s strategy, which was very different than the strategies prevailing in 1910.

Sometimes Allen sounds like he might have been reading Jim Harries. For example (p. 43), “I cannot help thinking that the day is not far distant when we shall consider the offering of any material inducement as contrary to sound doctrine as we now consider the money payments of former days [referring to the 19<sup>th</sup> century practice of paying people in India to attend Christian schools and receive Christian instruction].”

Can we then claim Allen as the patron saint of vulnerable mission (VM), though he did not use that term? No, not if we read him carefully. The fascinating thing is that he thoroughly endorsed one of the two core pillars of VM but deliberately rejected the other. He sounds like a VM advocate when he talks about relying on local resources while planting a congregation, keeping foreign money out of the picture entirely, but he sounds like a VM opponent when he talks about Paul avoiding the translation of

the Scriptures into local languages and avoiding preaching in mono-cultural cities. Paul relied instead on the Greek language and focused on the population centers most influenced by Roman government, Greek language, and Jewish presence, assuming they would serve as adequate bases for reaching the indigenous populations in the region (p. 13-15).

Paul did not engage in teaching Greek as a way to gain a hearing for the gospel, the way people today often use the teaching of English. But he did deliberately go to people who already spoke Greek fluently, and he acted like it was possible for them to comprehend the gospel and spread it in their regions even if he as the gospel-bringer never spoke the local language at all.

I am not writing this editorial about Allen in order to resolve the problem about use of local language, only to point the problem out as one of many good reasons to focus on VM more than ever in 2012. This is the year of “missionary methods,” and VM is exactly about missionary methods. Engaging with Allen and others ought to drive us back to deeper reflection on the Scriptures and on our own positions so that we go about our mission and our service with less worldly baggage and more spiritual power, just as Allen advocated.

This is the kind of thing I look forward to considering together at the VM conference in March. Please join us in Texas or England to discuss the most God-honoring methods of doing the most important thing in the world—representing the Messiah.

---- *Stan Nussbaum*

## **Conferences on Vulnerable Mission**

**Post-colonial mission and development  
at depth without dependency**

**Texas, March 7-10, 2012**

**U.K., March 20-21, 2012**



See program and registration details at:

[www.vulnerablemission.org/vulnerable-mission-conference-2012/](http://www.vulnerablemission.org/vulnerable-mission-conference-2012/)

The call for papers and workshop presentations is still open. If you have something important to say about mission under the cross, this is your golden opportunity to say it.

Co-sponsors for the US conference are AVM, the Halbert Institute for Missions, and Trans World Radio.

### **Vulnerable Mission representation at European youth-missions conference**

Frank Paul (AVM advisory board member) and Jim Harries (AVM chairman) manned

a stall at the above congress, held 28<sup>th</sup> December 2011 to 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2012 at Erfurt in Germany. This congress, arranged by the Evangelical Alliance of Europe, was attended by almost 2,500 young people from 40 European countries, plus many mission leaders from over 100 organisations.

Frank Paul's presentation about the work of the missionary team amongst the Toba Indians of Argentina attracted over 140 young people, many of whom demonstrated a strong interest in the AVM. Jim's presentation a few days later, also well attended, resulted in a lively discussion of VM issues. The AVM stall attracted hundreds of visitors, leading to many in depth conversations as well as a general raising-awareness of the presence and ministry of the AVM. Particularly memorable, were various young men from different mission organizations who engaged us in in-depth conversations almost up to midnight on three days running. Many people from the Spanish-speaking world showed interest. A few came to talk to us in Kiswahili.

A number of conference themes resonated with the AVM. A representative from Turkey, after explaining that there might have been more Christians at this Congress than in the whole of his country, explained clearly to all 2,500 plus people at the Congress, that the evangelization of Turkey needs "**people and not money**". Representatives from IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students), YWAM (Youth with a Mission), various theological colleges in Germany, SIM (Serving in Mission), and many other organizations and agencies showed a clear interest in the questions that we are raising in the AVM. Some are signed up for the Bulletin, and we hope some will attend the British conference in March. Almost 60 people signed up either to receive more information on the AVM over the internet, or to receive the AVM Bulletin. The strongest interest seems to have come from people who already have long-term experience in mission outside of the West. This is perhaps especially those who did not feel constrained by their allegiance to another mission body.

The Congress has left us all the more convinced regarding the vital importance of the message that we are seeking to share. The reason only a relatively small proportion of the total number of attendees at the Congress were exposed to and responded to the VM message is because of a still generally low level of awareness of the issues we are raising. I am convinced that we would have been given centre-stage had more of the congress leaders known what we are doing. It is encouraging to find that Frank Paul is very effectively promoting vulnerable mission especially in German and Spanish-speaking circles on an ongoing basis.

----- *Frank Paul and Jim Harries*

**New book by Jim Harries: *Three Days in the Life of an African Christian Villager***

Paperback or e-book download at

[www.authorsonline.co.uk/book/1153/Three+Days+in+the+Life+of+an+African+Christian+Villager/](http://www.authorsonline.co.uk/book/1153/Three+Days+in+the+Life+of+an+African+Christian+Villager/)

One of the major fruits of using a vulnerable mission approach is that the users begin to be able to understand what is going on around them and how it is affecting the Christian faith and understanding of local people. Without using vulnerable mission including local language, foreigners have no idea what they are missing. In this little book Jim Harries gives them a glimpse of the kinds of things they never dreamed were going on, or perhaps noticed but never could fathom. The book is not a

substitute for doing ones own study of Luo or any other culture, but rather a powerful motivator for doing that study.

Synopsis (from the web site):

“While sitting reflectively watching the smoke emerging from his wife's kitchen, this African villager recounts his thoughts and observations on just three days of village life. On Friday, his boss tries to deal with a fall in profit margins of the company he works for. Saturday's account explains some of the intrigues surrounding just another village funeral. Village Christianity becomes the focus of the Sunday. Read this intriguing little diary, a close literal translation from an original in Dholuo (of western Kenya), to begin to acquire fascinating insights into contemporary village life as an African Christian man.”

**Thank you, Fiona! (and “Help Wanted”)**

Fiona Adams has been serving the AVM board as a volunteer for the past year, donating up to 10 hours in some weeks as our administrative assistant. Because of her help AVM has come a long way as a fledgling organization during this period. We are very grateful for her skill and her graciousness, and we are sorry that she resigned from this role last month. She will be greatly missed.

Volunteers of her caliber are not easily found. Should you know of anyone who would like to discuss the sort of help we need, please inform our chairman, Jim Harries [jim@vulnerablemission.org](mailto:jim@vulnerablemission.org). Fiona was based in the UK but the person would not need to be there, as there is no physical VM office to maintain.

---