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# Editor's Introduction: Our Mission in Trying Times

## Roland Hoksbergen

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The Accord Network of Christ-centered relief and development organizations holds that Christians are called to witness to the integral love of God and be agents in the transforming power of that love in the parts of the world community where poverty reigns. Accord members work to overcome, defeat, and abolish the individual, spiritual, structural, and relational barriers that keep people from living the lives that God desires for them.

Anyone who looks around will have no trouble discerning the presence of such barriers. Right now, we are in the midst of a global pandemic that has already resulted in almost 700,000 confirmed deaths globally, a lower-than-true figure due to what is surely serious undercounting. Other evils, of which racism, violence, corruption, disease, violation of human rights, raw poverty, abuse of power, environmental destruction, and genocide are but a few, intersect with the pandemic in these trying days to create serious threats to global peace, justice, security, and general well-being.

As the Accord Network's fifth principle of integral mission says, in the midst of all this, faithful Christ-followers labor to "address immediate needs and the long-term systemic causes of the problem" and show the way toward a better way of life in a better world.

At *Christian Relief, Development, and Advocacy*, the editorial team is dedicated to playing our part in carrying this mission forward. Our hope is to cultivate a forum where thoughtful Christ-followers can share their research, reflections, and analyses and discuss and critique all this in community as we work to learn all we can in the broad areas of relief, development, and advocacy. In this issue of the journal, and in the heat of these pandemic times, we learn how four organizations are responding to the present realities by changing how they go about their work, especially the way they monitor, evaluate, research, and learn (MERL). The article by Rosie Fyfe wonders how Christian development workers are affected by their almost total immersion in the waters of secular development theory, practice, and general culture. As an alternative, she illustrates how Christian liturgy might mark the way toward a different consciousness and different patterns of life and work that are more in keeping with Christ's call on our lives. A third article,

by long-time development worker, Jaisankar Sarma, discusses how important it is for development organizations to empower their frontline fieldworkers, not so much with marching orders, but with an ability (and permission) to discern, process, and make decisions in relationship with their co-workers from partner organizations.

These three articles are followed by insightful reviews of four excellent recent books that are worth our time and attention.

If you have done research or reflected upon any of the areas listed above and want to join the conversation with other thoughtful and experienced people who, like you, want to be faithful to their calling to be salt and light in a broken world, please consider submitting something for these pages. If you have an idea you would like to explore, please contact CRDA editor-in-chief, Roland Hoksbergen, at [CRDA@accordnetwork.org](mailto:CRDA@accordnetwork.org).