
Editors' Introduction

Roland Hoksbergen and David Bronkema - CRDA Co-Editors

The main question that motivates the entirety of this journal is how the Christian faith can, does, and should influence our inquiries and interventions in the promotion of thriving communities, both locally and globally. This question stands behind all the articles, essays, opinion pieces, interviews, book reviews, and whatever else finds its way into this journal. Make no mistake. The answer to this question is not simple, and in fact raises many more questions, but that does not mean we should not address it. Instead, as Richard Slimbach reminds us at the outset of his essay on "Asking Tough Questions..." we must learn to "love the questions," and, over time, live into them.

Slimbach opens this issue by asking three sets of tough questions about the theory and practices of transformational development, inviting dialogue at every step. The first set has to do with whether and to what extent conversion to Christianity is the underpinning of morality and optimal human development. We generally say that it is, but does this assertion actually hold up when we look at our practices, our theories, and the world at large? The second set questions whether Christians have taken seriously the global forces that have led to such astounding economic inequality and environmental calamity, much of which Christians have themselves perpetrated and seem even now to discount. And the third set of questions asks which groups Christian NGOs do and/or should work with in partnership. Transformational development theory puts a premium on partnering with churches in the Global South. Is this the best approach?

The editors are conscious of the fact that Slimbach's essay will likely be provocative and controversial. That is fine, because, as Slimbach says, we need to talk about hard things. For that reason, we invite you, actually we urge you, to respond to any or all parts of his reflections. If you indeed do feel moved and led to share your thoughts and reactions, whether in support, opposition, or simply in dialogue, please let us know and we will work with you as you prepare a response that contributes to a vigorous, thoughtful, and constructive conversation in the next issue of this journal

Following Slimbach's essay is an engaging piece by Katie Toop of World Concern. Toop shares the story of a field exercise that helped World Concern and its

partners in Africa live into the question of what kind of a partner they are and want to be with the local church, and why. And, in sharing how for World Concern, even though they work with other partners, their partnerships with the local church hold a special place in their hearts and in their programming, she takes on one of Slimbach's tough questions.

This issue also includes a synopsis of the OneAccord 2022 Conference held at Ridgecrest, North Carolina in October of last year, and three book reviews, each of them living into the tough questions in different ways:

- The first is on the role of conversion in our work among the poor - Dwight Mutoonono's review of Rupen Das's book, *The God that the Poor Seek: Conversion, Context, and the World of the Vulnerable*. Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library 2022.
- The second addresses the theology of living faithfully in **this** world - Gregory Leffel's review of Mark R. Teasdale's *Participating in Abundant Life: Holistic Salvation for a Secular Age*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2022.
- And the third is on the history of one Christian NGO's efforts to be faithful throughout its over one-hundred-year history - Katerina Parson's review of Alain Epp Weaver's *Service and the Ministry of Reconciliation: A Missiological History of Mennonite Central Committee*. Newton, KS: Bethel College 2021.

Resources and Upcoming Events

1. Check out the synopsis of OneAccord 2022 in the pages below for highlights from last year's conference and consider attending this year's **OneAccord 2023, October 17-19**, once again in Ridgecrest, NC.
2. The Christian Economic Development Network will hold their next summit, [CED Summit 2023](#), on April 25-26 in Arlington, VA (in the greater Washington DC area). The theme will be "Cultivating resilience in transformative economic development."

3. Check out [the Meros Center](https://meroscenter.org/), “a research and training community for Christian health ministry” that is strengthening research in faith-based organizations. It is a site “where faith-based health organizations, researchers, and learners can find the support they need to measure, innovate, and share their impact” (<https://meroscenter.org/>)
4. [The Accord Research Alliance podcasts continue to be a great source for additional information on Christian relief, development, and advocacy issues.](#)
Two recent podcasts are
 - a. [Decolonizing the Data Journey: a conversation with Dr. Drew Hart](#)
 - b. [Using the Net Promoter Score for Listening: an interview with Emilie Jackson](#)

If you would like to discuss an article you are working on or anything else related to the journal, please contact the editors at CRDA@accordnetwork.org.