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# A Brief History of the Accord Network and Synopsis of OneAccord23

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## A Brief History of the Accord Network

Like any flourishing organization, the [Accord Network](#) has grown and changed since its founding in 1977. Originally known as the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations, or AERDO, the organization changed its name in 2010 to the Accord Network and has become ever more influential in the world of US-based Christian organizations engaged in what we have come to know as “integral development.” The new name was unanimously chosen by the members of the Board, because, as Scott Todd, Board President in 2010 says, it was simpler, rich in meaning, better “branding,” and more inviting to Christian organizations wary of the term “evangelical.” Sadly, notes Todd, this term had already become politicized, and was not sufficiently welcoming to potential members with other theological backgrounds, like those from Roman Catholic, Reformed, or Mennonite traditions. Originally, being a member of AERDO required affirmation of the Statement of Faith of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), but along with the name change, aspiring members could now opt simply to affirm the Apostles Creed (Todd 2024).

A main player in the Accord Network’s evolution, recently deceased executive director Chad Hayward, provided a spiritual center to the organization as well as much-needed direction and continuity. Under Hayward’s 17-year leadership, the membership grew to over 120 organizations and initiated annual meetings that encouraged members to gather for learning, sharing, worship, and general inspiration. In addition to a rich variety of workshop topics and plenary presentations chosen every year, annual meetings provide opportunities for Accord working groups to spend whole days in “intensives” that focus on specific topics and areas of ministry. These include Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Monitoring & Evaluation and Spiritual Metrics (both under the Accord Research Alliance (ARA)), Christian Economic Development (CED), or the most recent working group, Formation and Care.

Another key development in Accord’s history was its affiliation with this journal, *Christian Relief, Development, and Advocacy*. Conversations among Hayward and the journal’s founders began in 2017, with Hayward heartily encouraging the development of the journal, along with an independent editorial board. The Accord Network board and the journal’s newly-constituted editorial board readily agreed that *CRDA* would become the official journal of the Accord Network, dedicated to providing “a forum in which practices, ideas, research, theories, ethics, and controversies of relief, development, and advocacy are presented, discussed, and debated by those who share a commitment to live in service to Jesus Christ” ([CRDA website - About](#)). As part of this affiliation, this journal plans to include brief summaries of the yearly meetings and associated intensives, which are simply titled “OneAccord##,” where “##” stands for the current year. What follows is a synopsis of OneAccord23, held in October 2023.

## Synopsis of OneAccord23

The theme of OneAccord23 was “Flourish.” The idea of human flourishing weaved its way through all presentations, beginning with four all day “intensives” on the day prior to the meeting, and continuing with five plenary addresses and all four program tracks in the three days that followed.

### *Plenaries*

**Katie Toop**, Senior Director of Transformational Development at World Concern, got the plenary sessions off to a strong start with her comments on “Flourishing and Worship.” She reminded attendees of God’s love and promise of abundant life and pointed out that a flourishing life is a life of worship to the Triune God.

**Alia Abboud**, Chief Development Office for the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development (LSESD), wondered whether flourishing can arise in times of crisis. She told how God is using refugees to teach the church about God, and that the

refugee crisis has restored the mission of the church in Lebanon to preaching Christ, not Christianity. And she explained how preaching Christ during a crisis can lead to flourishing.

**JoAnne Lyons** shared from her personal experiences and the holistic practices of John Wesley to remind attendees that the mission of Accord is God's mission. Referring to Christopher Wright, she argued that the church is God's mission in the world, and that the Spirit brings impact and results that we could have never planned.

In the final plenary address, **Mike Mantel**, CEO of Living Water International, pushed his listeners to build organizations that pursue both physical and spiritual wellbeing modeled on the Biblical concept of *Shalom*. Moreover, he encouraged us not to forget 1) that God (the Master Strategist) loves you; 2) that God equips you and invites you to serve right where you are, and 3) that God's world needs you.

### **Workshop Tracks**

Throughout the several days of OneAccord23, participants attended workshops and/or breakout sessions on Flourishing ...

1. Through Program,
2. Through Marketing and Fund Development,
3. Through People and Operations, and
4. In Kingdom Opportunities.

Each track offered four sessions, covering a wide variety of practical issues of great interest to the Accord community. These included forays into such perennial issues as understanding poverty, fundraising, and hiring global staff, but also some newer ones, like responding to climate change, evaluating the importance of grit in entrepreneurship, and harnessing artificial intelligence (AI) for integral mission.

One theme that permeated the entire conference was the shared desire to be faithful to our callings in serving a Savior who cares about the wellbeing of everyone the world over and asks us to care about it too.

For an overview of all the workshops and presenters involved, see the 2023 [OneAccord program](#).

### **Intensives**

The purpose of the **Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Intensive** was to take a deep dive into the complexities of integral mission topics. Presentations and collegial conversation addressed the pursuit of transformation in the context of a variety of political, social, and spiritual environments, focusing especially on communications strategies, technology, financing,

and monitoring. To learn more, contact Thomas Soerens at [soerens@messiah.edu](mailto:soerens@messiah.edu).

**The Formation & Care Intensive** enjoyed its inaugural Accord intensive and focused on practitioners who wanted to learn more about how to support the spiritual formation and care of staff/volunteers. Biblical reflection, prayer, silence and solitude, and sharing personal stories all played a role in this intensive. To learn more about or join this Community of Practice, write to Odoi Odotei ([odoi\\_odotei@wvi.org](mailto:odoi_odotei@wvi.org)).

**The Christian Economic Development (CED) Intensive** addressed how flourishing in partnership and collaboration requires an end to paternalistic models and relationships led by organizations in the Global North on the one hand, and, on the other, the development of new models through which we can serve God's people together. To learn more, visit <https://www.cednetwork.org/> or contact Gillian Foster Wilkinson ([gwilkinson@hopeinternational.org](mailto:gwilkinson@hopeinternational.org)).

**The Accord Research Alliance (ARA) Intensive**, which focused this year on spiritual metrics, addressed the mutual organizational interest in measuring the faith-oriented part of our work. There was much diversity here. Some presenters emphasized how often the gospel message is heard and shared, while others focused more on the increase in human dignity and sharing in the common good. Everyone seemed keen on finding statistically acceptable techniques. Including program participants in the design of program and measurement strategies was also a key theme. For more information, contact David Bronkema at [dbronkem@eastern.edu](mailto:dbronkem@eastern.edu).

### **References**

Todd, Scott. March 8, 2024. Email conversation with Roland Hoksbergen, *CRDA* editor.

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