

## **Partnership between Korean and Latin Missions in Asia**

- **Introduction KWMA and General Secretary Kang, Daeheung**

I am a missionary with a denominational background.

I pastored for 6 years in Korea before going to the mission field. I was sent to Thailand as a missionary in 1987. At first, I served a Korean diaspora church (Korean Union Chapel in Bangkok) as the senior pastor. A year later, in 1989, I realized the importance of ministry with the Thai people. Since then, I have been serving in cross-cultural ministry with the Thai people. Since 1990, I have focused on Thai pastors and worked to enhance pastoral training with the sixth district of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT). I invited Thai pastors of the CCT supported by CCT leaders throughout Thailand and trained them for two years. I diligently trained the Thai pastors, visiting their churches, consulting with their wives, listening to the elders' requests regarding ministry... During the visit I slept at the pastor's house. Eventually, Thai leaders liked my missionary passion and asked me to invite more missionaries like me.

Six more missionary units joined which became the start of team ministry under the name of Korea Global Alliance Mission (KGAM). KGAM now has 17 missionary units. After 19 years of ministry in Thailand, I was called to serve Global Mission Society (GMS), the largest denominational Mission Society in Korea, as the general secretary in 2006. In 2012 I returned to Thailand to start a prayer movement and establish a Thai church planting school. In January 2021, I was elected as the general secretary of Korea World Missions Association (KWMA) and returned to Korea.

I am not a missionary scholar. I am a mission worker who works in the mission field. I also consult on the ministry of my fellow missionaries. My strength and expertise in ministry lies in field ministry. However, when I work at the mission headquarters of Global Mission Society<sup>69</sup>, I am a mission administrator, a mission strategist, and a mission mobilizer. My strong point here was understanding the concern of church mission (modality).

Korea World Missions Association (KWMA) is the national mission association of Korea. It is not a mission agency, so it does not manage missionaries directly. KWMA has mission societies as its members. In order to support the ministry of KWMA, 16 denominational mission boards, 59 churches and 126 mission agencies provide monthly support.

Our main tasks are:

1. Ministry to serve and support the entire Korean missionary movement, which is an impossible task for any single organization
2. Mobilization for the entire Korean missionary movement

### 3. Developing Mission Policies and demonstrating its need, and creating committees to organize

As the General Secretary of KWMA, I was invited to the forum of the leaders of COMIBAM in Guadalajara, Mexico from March 22 to 25, 2022. In the forum of missionary training leaders of COMIBAM, I shared two presentations.

#### 1. Mission History and Mission Policy of Korean church: From the early Korean church (1900 –1950) to the present

#### 2. Recent missionary training and field-oriented mission policies of Korean Mission

About 25 leaders sent from missionary training institutes from 10 countries gathered and asked many questions about the development of the Korean mission movement and the way that Korean missionaries work in their respective mission fields.

As we know, there are 1,300 Korean missionaries serving in Latin America. The number of Latin American missionaries serving in Asia is approximately 2,000. However, the main mission field where Korean missionaries serve is Asia. Latin America, being geographically far from Asia, the Korean church has a tendency to think that Latin America is a mission field that should be served by the church in North America. Furthermore, since Latin America is a predominantly Catholic and Christian world, progressive denominations of the Korean church tend to be passive in relation to mission in Latin America.

This paper is about how the Korean and Latin American mission movements can best collaborate.

#### • **COMIBAM & Latin Missionaries in Asia**

World mission goes beyond the age of Western Christianity and enters the age of world Christianity. Now missionaries are being sent ‘from everywhere to everywhere.’ As a pioneer of a mission movement in the non-Western world, the Korean church is serving the nations by sending 22,800 missionaries to Asia (the Middle East, Central Asia and East and West Asia), Africa, Europe and the Americas (from the research by KWMA and Krim, December 2021). The South American church and mission movement represented by COMIBAM, is participating in this global mission by sending more than 30,000 missionaries to people groups in Latin America and other continents.

COMIBAM, an **Ibero American** missionary commission, was born out of the first Ibero American Missions Congress in San Pablo, Brazil, in 1987. The purpose of that gathering was to discuss the formation of an international congress with the purpose of promoting the development of the mission’s vision throughout the continent. More than 3,000 representatives from every nation in Latin America, Spain and Portugal participated. It was during that congress that Luis Bush, the main speaker, declared with other Latin American leadership that “in 1916 Latin America was declared a

mission field, but today 1987, Latin America is now declared as a missionary force.” Today it is reported that there are approximately 32,000 cross-cultural Latin American missionaries. A large number of these missionaries are serving within national borders to many indigenous groups. However, though the statistic is not clear, a significant number of South American missionaries were sent to Asia including East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Central Asia. For example, a significant number of Latin American ministers were sent to Japan to serve the 500,000 Hispanic migrants living in Japan. Despite the lack of accurate data there are missionaries from Brazil and other South American countries working in Mongolia, Bangladesh, and Indonesia, etc. In the era of Majority World missions, cooperation between non-Western mission movements have become important. Here are some examples of how the Korean church supports and cooperates with Latin American missionaries from South America working in Asia.

### ● **Cooperation in Philippine**

#### 1. Latin American heritage in Asia

Throughout history, the Latin influence in the Philippines and several other Asian countries was prominent not only because of the arrival of these discoverers in these lands by Ferdinand Magellan, but also because of the cultural heritage that was forged over time. For example, the establishment of trans-Pacific communication between New Spain and the Philippine Islands in 1565 spurred the development of significant cultural, economic and migratory processes involving these two areas. This included the trans-Pacific migration of free Asians to the central region of the Viceroyalty of New Spain from 1565 to 1700. Due to the grand exchange with the Philippines in those days, many cultural traits were adopted by one another, with Mexicans remaining in the Philippines, and Filipinos establishing their lives in Mexico, particularly the central west coast, near the port town of Acapulco.

In truth, there are an estimated 200,000 descendants of the Philippines in southern Mexico in the year 2000. For sixteen years the community has grown and flourished, and with it the Filipino-Mexican ties. They are concentrated in Costa Grande, north of Acapulco. In addition, the town of Cayuca, 35 miles north of Acapulco, was even called “Filipino town” in the old days. And the connections don’t end there.

#### 2. Expected Cooperation between PMA, KWMA and COMIBAM

It was during the last Missionary Conference that COMIBAM leaders met leaders from Asia. Over the last few years, God has opened the door for the Latin American Missionary Commission to interact with the Philippine Missionary Association to discover the relationship between the two cultures and historic backgrounds. As dialogues and interactions started, Latin American leaders learned about Latin

American influence in the Philippines, and that there were bridges that were built to reach the Muslims in the Mindanao Island in the Philippines. Several years ago, Zamboanga City declared itself as the Latin City of Asia. Zamboanga City would become a hub for the Latin American missionaries to feel like home to evangelize the Muslims. One of the dialects like Chavacano uses about 60% of their vocabulary from Spanish. There are 14 unreached Muslim groups in Mindanao. KWMA will work with Philippine Missionary Association to partner with Latino missionaries from COMIBAM to reach the Muslims not only in the Mindanao Island but beyond to other Muslim areas that surround Mindanao.

As KWMA and PMA, approached COMIBAM with opportunities to work together and partner. COMIBAM was in need to bring missionary care to the many missionaries working in different parts of Asia. As for Latin Americans, Asia is the end of the world. Just as for Asians, Latin America would be the end of the world. What better way could there be for the Asian Missionary Associations to partner with Latin American Missionary movements by extending the hand to the Latin American brothers and sisters partnering with COMIBAM and host continuous training in the field implemented by the Asian church leadership. This would be a way for Latin American missionaries to be hosted by national churches that they are working at. It would open ways to work together and reach the Kingdom.

### ● **The Rest Program: Sooyoungro Church's Sabbatical Program**

Sooyoungro Church is a mega church located in Busan, Southern Korea. Also, as a church with a very strong passion for mission, it has sent 143 missionaries, supports 332 cooperative missionaries, and 157 local missionaries to 58 countries. In particular, Sooyoungro Church is running a Rest Program to serve Latin American missionaries in Asia. The Rest Program began with the personal experience of missionary Seonghan Kim who served Colombia for 30 years. While there, Kim's child got seriously ill. If they were to transfer his child back to Korea, they may have died en route. As a missionary in South America, Kim realized the geographical distance between Asia and South America and the real-life challenges due to it. With this understanding, Kim proposed a program to Suyeongro Church and started to plan the Rest Program for Latin American missionaries in Asia.

It takes a lot of time and money for Latin American missionaries in Asia to return home to Latin America for medical treatment and refreshment. To this end, Sooyoungro Church provides the Rest Program for those who need it every year for Latin American missionaries in Asia. This program provides the missionaries a place to stay for one month., as well as basic hospital service and dental treatments through church members who are medical professionals. The participants can attend refresh training programs and worship services in 13 different languages including Spanish . Meetings and fellowship with Latin American missionaries and Korean Christians naturally led to the

development of sponsorships. The target of the Rest Program is for missionaries who are geographically close to Korea, such as Mongolia, Japan, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. Sooyoungro Church determines the participants through the recommendation of an organization that has an official MOU relationship with Sooyoungro Church.

## 1. "ADOPT A MISSIONARY" Project & its support

One of the major issues with Latin American missionaries serving abroad in other continents is financial struggle. Many missionaries are left as orphan missionaries since they have lost their sending churches' financial support as the churches themselves are facing major economic struggles. The pandemic has closed about 20-30% of churches throughout the continent. Furthermore, thousands of pastors have passed away as well through the pandemic in Latin America.

To solve these financial problems, some of Korean missionary suggested that KWMA in collaboration with COMIBAM will launch a project to match funds sent to support those Latin American missionaries. The organization is working with Latin American churches in the US to match funds raised in Latin America for the missionaries in a project called "ADOPT A MISSIONARY".

Each Latin American missionary on average needs to fundraise certain amount of USD per month to be in the field. The missionary will raise 1/3 USD from their home country, and that amount will be matched by a Latino church in the US, and a Korean or Asian church. However, this plan has been delayed until now due to the pandemic.

Regarding sponsorship, besides "ADOPT A MISSIONARY", the sponsorship of Sooyoungro Church could be another example. There were cases in which the participants of the Rest Program were sponsored by the church through fellowship and friendship. Currently, Sooyoungro Church is providing financial support 15 Latino ministers out of 157 local ministers.

Lastly, from my perspective the farthest country in world missions for the Korean church is those countries that does not permit those with South Korean passports to enter. Though the South Korean passport is known to be the second most powerful passport in the world, those holding it cannot enter North Korea. North Korea is a communist country that does not recognize Christianity. In the past, foreign missionaries preparing to enter North Korea had done their language and cultural preparation in China, but nowadays this base has moved to Taebaek, a city in the Gangwon province in the northern part of South Korea.

Last month I was able to visit the center in Taebaek where the northern part of South Korea and met 2 South American missionaries from Brazil and Venezuela going through the training. KWMA is collaborating with (this training facility) and recommending that these two missionaries receive the visa. I would be delighted to see many South American missionaries going to North Korea, and the Korean church will support this ministry.

- **Conclusion**

World Mission has entered a new period of great transition. After the era of Western missions, new mission movements are emerging in Korea, China, South America, Africa, and India. Just as the Korean church was transformed from a mission field to a mission force, the same thing is happening to the church in South America. The one-way communication and methodology from the West to the non-Western has now come to an end. A new communication and culture of mission cooperation between the newly emerging non-Western missionary movements must be formed. KWMA shared some examples of Korean missions cooperating with Latin American mission movements. The Korean mission movement has been developing while overcoming challenges and difficult times since the 1980s. Therefore, the Korean church can similarly understand the difficulties of the Latin American missionary movement in its early stage, because of Korean church already has done church's trial, errors, and difficulties in cross-cultural missions. The Korean church has the heart to help and serve the newly emerging mission movement. As a member of World Christianity, KWMA wants to build God's Kingdom together through the sharing of experiences and resources with the majority world's new mission movement.

Daeheung Kang served as a Sung Eun Presbyterian church pastor in Seoul from 1982 to 1987 and was sent as a missionary to Thailand in 1987. In 1990, he organized a local missionary group called KGAM(Korea Global Alliance Mission), established a dorm called Green Pasture for missionary Kids in Chiang Mai for strategic missions, and served as Dom Parents for 2 years and 6 months. He adopted a sea gypsy tribe from Lanta Island, Southern Thailand, and planted a church, making it a self-supporting church. Rev Kang served at the Pastor Training Center for church growth, lay missionary training, church planting movement through named Thailand Church Planting, and Thailand Mission Perspectives for the past 8 years. He served as GMS Secretary General (2006-2010) and then served as KWMA General secretary from January 2021.