



# An example to follow

BY RANDY HURST

Just three months ago, our worldwide fellowship passed a significant milestone — 60 million members. The founding fathers of this great missionary fellowship could hardly have imagined such growth in less than a century of ministry.

In AG World Missions we are often asked why so many national churches around the world are growing at such an amazing rate. A few months ago in an Executive Presbytery meeting, leaders of our U.S. Fellowship asked World Missions Executive Director John Bueno to bring a report to their next meeting concerning why he believes such astounding growth is taking place overseas compared with the U.S. church. At the request of the Executive Presbytery, his response has been published as the cover story in this month's issue.

Not all church growth overseas occurs at the same rate, of course. But a quick summary of countries experiencing marked growth indicates definite patterns.

Assemblies of God fellowships outside the United States grew 57 percent overall in members and adherents during the last eight years. Specifically, 27 countries grew by at least 25 percent, 16 by at least 50 percent, 13 by at least 75 percent, and 24 by at least 100 percent. Significant church growth is happening in all six regions in which AGWM strategically focuses its mission. Some specific examples are South Africa, which grew more than 1,000 percent; Cambodia, which grew 319 percent; Switzerland, which grew 155 percent; and Colombia, which grew 274 percent.

John's analysis focuses on five principles and practices he believes greatly affect church growth overseas and make an impact on communities, regardless of where they are implemented.

What does John's analysis mean for the U.S. church and to each of us as believers?

1. We should determine what we can learn from what's happening in the world and how it applies to our own priorities.
2. We must pray for America — for our national church leaders, for our pastors, and for the Holy Spirit's help in realigning our lives and ministries in whatever ways necessary to accomplish God's purposes.

John's final question of the article is critical: Are we willing to pay the necessary price to see the church in America experience the abundant growth taking place in so many other places throughout the world? **tpe**

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