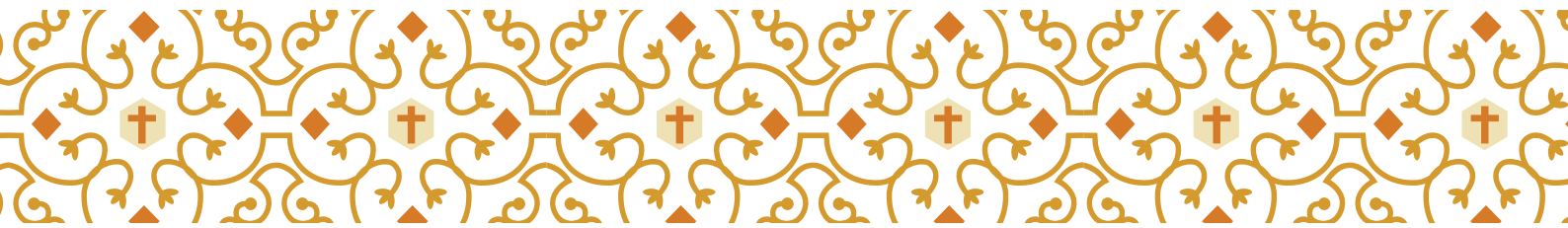
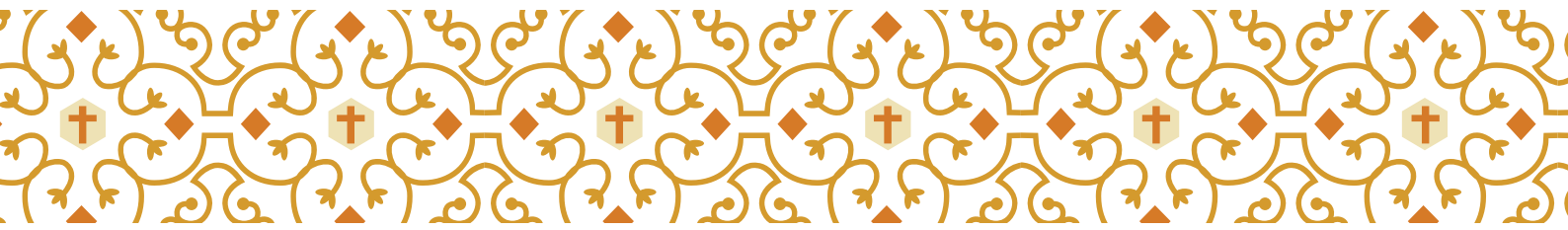


THE PAKISTANI CHURCH:  
**PRESENT**  
**DAY** CHALLENGES  
AND  
OPPORTUNITIES



# Table of Contents

Adeel Rehmat, National Coordinator, Micah Pakistan	05
Sheryl Haw, International Director, Micah Global	06
The Right Reverend Humphrey Sarfaraz Peters, Chair of the Report Steering Group	07
Jonathan Mitchell PhD, Adviser to the Report Project Team	08
Process and Purpose of the Report	10
What We Understand by ‘Church’	10
Background and Context	11
Leadership	16
Perspectives on the Church	23
The Church and Its Preparedness for Outreach	25
Organizational Weaknesses	29
Preparation of Church Leaders	35
Young People	38
Persecution and Discrimination	43
Experiences of Isolation	51
Unnecessary Burdens	54
Missionary Legacy	58
Tools for Outreach	62
The Global Church, Donors and International Community	67
A Window of Opportunity	70
Author’s Observations	71
Acknowledgements and Thanks	72

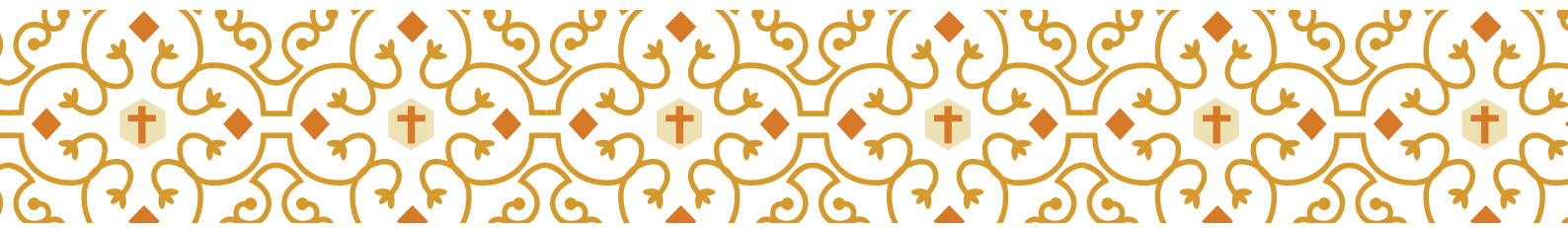


**“God has placed us here,  
sometimes in difficult places.  
He has placed us here for His  
purposes and for His glory.  
We Christians should not run.  
This is the time for us to take  
a stand.”**

**Humphrey S Peters**

**The Right Reverend Bishop of Peshawar (KPK and FATA)**

**Church of Pakistan**



# Adeel Rehmat

## National Coordinator, Micah Pakistan



The Pakistani Church: Present Challenges and Opportunities is a response to the burden felt by many like-minded Christian leaders in Pakistan. This project has given us the chance to begin a new phase in Pakistan, with the starting point of where we stand right now as a Church and Christian community in the 21st century. Despite the fact that we as nation, and particularly as a Pakistani Christian community, face so many challenges, this report provides glimpses of opportunities and strengths that exist, and are growing, in the Pakistani Church.

This report is a collection of experiences and testimonies of many Christian leaders about how the Lord is at work in Pakistan and the struggles being made to bring change in the Christian community, the Church and the country. It acts as a mirror to reflect back to the Church all that we have heard so that we can come together on these points and create a way forward.

Four provincial consultations and focused conversations with over 50 Christian leaders provided us opportunities to discuss the existing challenges of accountability, transparency, lack of vision and professionalism in organizations with local leadership. We learned that there is a desire among leaders to change the present mindset of the Christian community and they are committed to finding ways to overcome this situation by developing new engagement strategies with different community groups and congregations.

Ultimately, this report gives a clarion call to move forward with hope, in a new spirit, by joining hands as a Christian community and raising our voices with national partners and the international community. It challenges us to design a roadmap with strategies that meet present day challenges, new approaches to partnerships and networking, and for investing in people, particularly Christian youth, to secure the future of the Pakistani Church and our country. The Lord has blessed the Pakistani Church abundantly to do this.

**Adeel Rehmat**

# Sheryl Haw

**International Director, Micah Global**

Micah Global is a network and movement of organizations and individuals united by our passion and conviction to see integral mission understood and lived out around the world. We are compelled by God's love and His Mission, believing it is a world transforming mission. We believe the Church is called out to take responsibility to demonstrate the Kingdom of God in every community. Micah creates spaces and platforms for learning, acting, articulating and advocating together to transform mission. Our shared vision is to see communities living life in all its fullness, free from poverty, injustice and conflict.



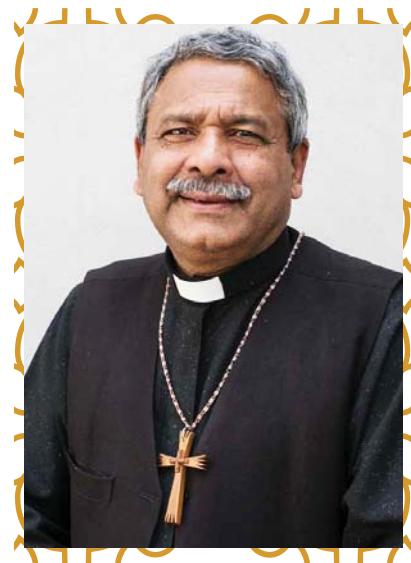
Micah is a global movement and has national expressions that enable contextualization of our shared vision as well as creating opportunities for inclusion of national perspectives into regional and global consultations.

Micah is thrilled to work with members in Pakistan as they seek to be a blessing to communities around the country. The Pakistani Church: Present Day Challenges and Opportunities will create a helpful baseline of gifts and needs so as to envision and enable one another to serve for the wellbeing of Pakistan.

**Sheryl Haw**

# Humphrey S Peters

**The Right Reverend Bishop of Peshawar (KPK and FATA),  
Church of Pakistan  
Chair of the Report Steering Group**



Not many people are aware of how much Pakistani Christians contributed to the creation of Pakistan in 1947 and the ongoing process of nation building. Christians who decided to live in Pakistan at that time chanted a slogan, *seenai par goli khain ghay, Pakistani banai ghay*, translated approximately as, with bullets in our chests, we will create Pakistan. In being freedom fighters, as I call them, and contributors to the country, we should see ourselves and be seen by others, not as a minority group, but as Pakistani Christians, standing shoulder to shoulder with fellow citizens of all backgrounds for the building of our dear nation, Pakistan.

In our role as fellow citizens, we want to see the Pakistani Church become a source of blessing for all Pakistani peoples, an instrument of sharing the good news and the beautiful concept of salvation through sharing the love of God that the Church enjoys through the Lord Jesus. It is my hope that this report will play a catalytic role in bringing Christians together to become an even greater source of blessing for our country. If the body of Christ in Pakistan, and globally, accept this challenge, the Church will become a greater source of joy, contentment and blessing for all the people of God in Pakistan

This report would not be possible without the project team, who worked tirelessly to bring about this project, and the many people who shared their time, thoughts, insights and opinions. I wish to thank you all.

*Humphrey, Peshawar*

**Bishop Humphrey S Peters**

# Jonathan Mitchell PhD

**President and Founder, Concentric Development Inc.  
Adviser to the Report Project Team**

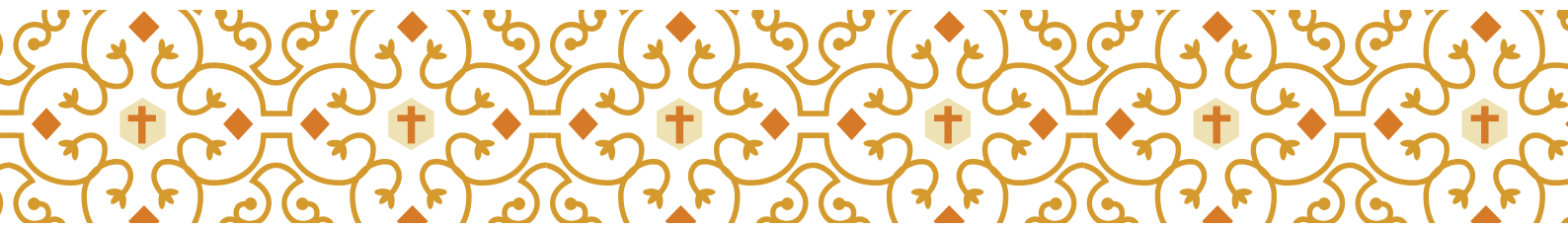


I have spent more than 35 years of my life in Pakistan, a country and people I love deeply. My parents were missionaries in Pakistan. As a child I was privileged to personally know many of the spiritual giants of the Pakistani Church, godly men and women, obedient and faithful to God's call on their lives. Some of them have been spiritual mentors to me; without their influence I would not be the person I am today.

Yet, I saw that many Pakistani Christians in leadership positions were isolated, reluctant to share struggles with each other, and often caught up in turf battles and rivalries. I grew up listening to missionaries express frustration at the divisiveness of local leadership patterns as well as a lack of vision within the Pakistani church for a broader role in the nation. I also witnessed the ups and downs of efforts by foreign missionaries to turn their institutions over to local leadership.

In 2013, I dropped in to visit a few new ministries led by young Pakistani Christian leaders. I was not prepared for what I found. I discovered a new generation of Pakistani Christians deeply committed to serving the least reached in the most difficult places and to equipping the Pakistani Church to join them in this task. They valued partnership, collaboration and the sharing of resources. They saw accountability and transparency in decision-making and the use of funds as critical to organizational effectiveness. I discovered teams confident in dealing with government officials, able to forge close relationships with Muslim religious leaders, seeking to work to international standards and committed to maintaining a public Christian identity in their work.

At their request, I began working with several of these organizations to not only strengthen them in key areas but as part of a broader strategy to raise them up as role models and catalysts for change. Through this effort, I discovered more new Christian organizations led by young Pakistani Christian leaders. Some of these were doing amazing things, like ministering to widows and orphans; introducing Android tablets in remote rural schools that are covering their operating costs through fees; using community-led total sanitation approaches in water and sanitation programs; influencing government policy on issues of social justice and racial discrimination; providing training to staff of the Aga Khan University Hospital in how to deal with drug addiction; and, experimenting with using web-based strategies for sharing the love of Christ. The list goes on. I discovered that my old opinions and views of what the Church is doing and is capable of were no longer valid. Something fundamental had changed.

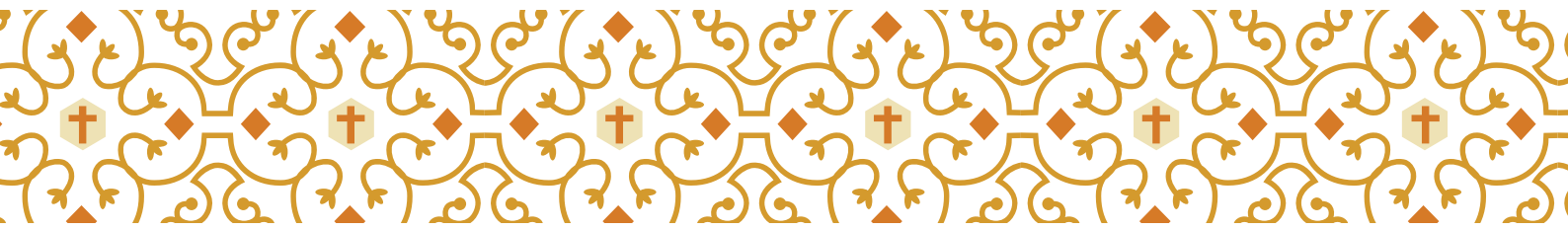


I was curious to know if these examples were just exceptions or if this was part of a broader trend. What else was going on that I had not discovered? As I talked to various Pakistani friends and colleagues, I realized that no one had an overview of what God is doing in and through the Church in Pakistan. I encouraged them to find out and the result is this report, *The Pakistani Church: Present Day Challenges and Opportunities*. This has very much been a Pakistani effort, led and conducted by Pakistanis. I merely provided encouragement and occasional suggestions along the way.

We trust that this document will serve as a tool as the Pakistani Church looks to the future and considers how it can be salt and light in this great nation. We also trust this document will serve as a resource for the global Church to better understand how it can encourage and partner with the body of Christ in Pakistan.

**Jonathan Mitchell**





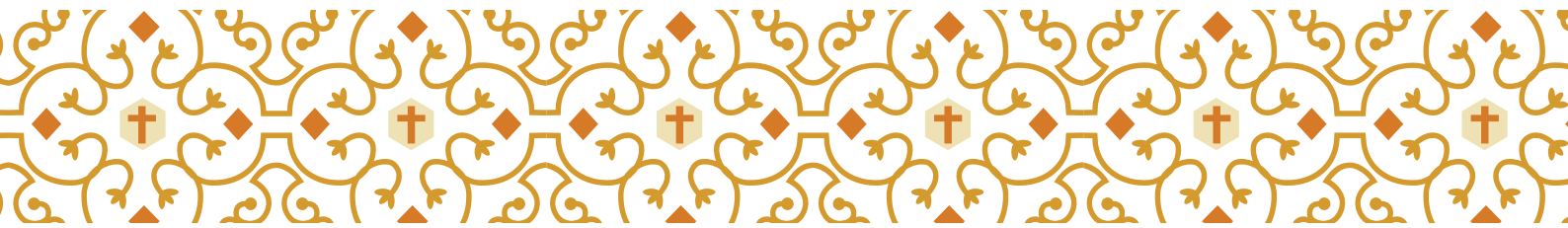
## 1.0. Process and Purpose of the Report

This report has collated opinions, insights and reflections from a broad range of almost 200 Pakistani Christian leaders. These women and men represent a diversity of ministries, organizations, independent churches, denominations, and career paths, as well as of geography. For the purpose of this report, the project team defines leader as any Pakistani Christian with a position of authority or responsibility actively investing in their country and community. Of the 200 leaders involved, the project team held one-to-one focused conversations with 57 leaders regarding their thoughts on the Pakistani Church's present day challenges and opportunities. The project team engaged the remaining leaders on the same topics through a series of four provincial group-conversation and workshop events.

It is important to think of this report as a mirror, reflecting back to the Church what the project team heard from this cross-section of Pakistani Christian leaders. This is why there are so many direct quotes throughout the report – they are the words and voices of Pakistani Christian leaders themselves. The power of this lies in capturing in writing, in one place, possibly for the first time, Pakistani Christian leaders' views on the health and current state of the Pakistani Church and Pakistani Christian community. In essence, the report is a public acknowledgement of what is often said behind closed doors, or swept under the carpet to be dealt with at another time. In presenting these views back to the Pakistani Church in the form of a report, the project team hopes that it will catalyze further commitment and unified action toward tackling the challenges and seizing the opportunities of the present day, contributing to an uplift in the Pakistani Christian community and the nation of Pakistan. Additionally, it is important to note that this report does not set out a list of recommendations about next steps, nor a roadmap for the way forward; it is entirely the place of Pakistani Christian leaders to come together around the challenges and opportunities they have identified to tackle the former and seize the latter. The most appropriate next steps, the most sustainable way forward and the most impactful roadmap will be those identified, designed and implemented by Pakistani Christians taking on the mantle of the opportunities presented to them at this time.

## 2.0. What We Understand by Church

In the title, the author refers to the Pakistani Church. The author understands this to mean the totality of Christian expression in Pakistan. This includes all denominations, ministries and efforts, whether individual or organizational, and all people who define



themselves as Christian, whatever their background.

Another term in the report is Pakistani Christian community, by which the author means the people within the historically established Christian community, not encompassing the organizations, denominations, institutions and structures of which many Pakistani Christians are a part.

## 3.0. Background and Context

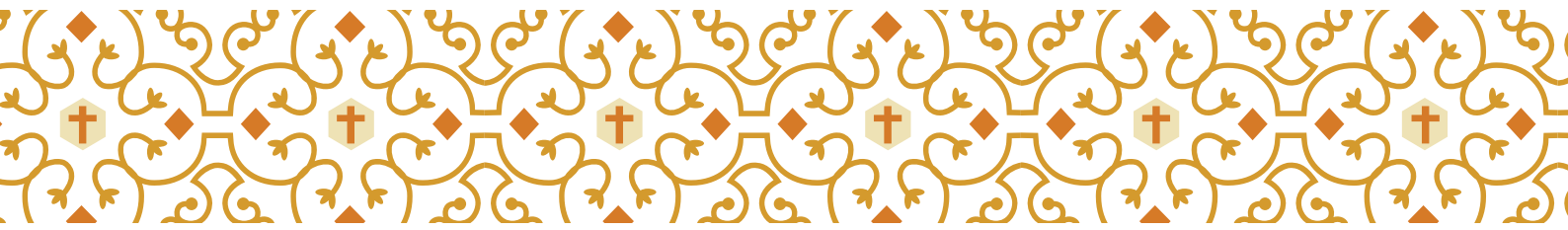
This section is written as a brief introduction to Pakistan and the Pakistani Church for readers unfamiliar with the context. The perspectives that emerged from our conversations with Pakistani Christian leaders begin in chapter 4.0.

### 3.1. The Country

Pakistan is a land of contrasts. From and within in her borders are vast plains and some of the world's tallest mountains, deserts and rich irrigated cropland, immense wealth and grinding poverty, Nobel Prize winners and tens of millions of people who cannot read and write, hope and despair, progressive outlooks and conservatives, as well as more recently, extremists.

Pakistan is the second largest Muslim country after Indonesia, with 96 percent of the country's 190 million people being Muslim. Within the Muslim community, approximately 80 percent are Sunni and 20 percent Shia. Originally part of British India, Pakistan was partitioned out of India as a separate country when the British granted independence to the Indian subcontinent in 1947. The massive movement of Hindus out of what became Pakistan, and of Muslims into it, degenerated into large-scale violence that left upwards of three million people dead. This was a very painful beginning and Pakistan has had a history of instability ever since. Pakistan and India have fought three wars over the region of Kashmir, which went to India at the time of partition, but which Pakistan claims should be theirs by virtue of its Muslim majority. As a result, the army has played an outsized role in Pakistan and has ruled the country for nearly half of its history.

The largest religious minority groups are Christians and Hindus, each making up about two percent of the population. In addition, there are pockets of other religious groups such as Sikhs, Parsis and Bahais. While religious minorities have the right to practice and propagate their religion, they are generally treated as second-class citizens. Christians, in particular, are often viewed as allied with the supposedly 'Christian West' and often



bear the brunt of tensions over things like European cartoons viewed as offensive to Muslims.

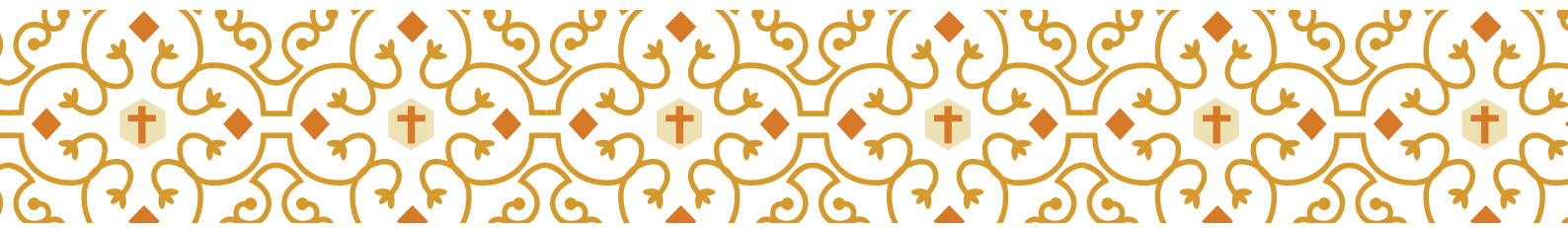
### 3.2. Background to the Pakistani Christian Community

There is no claim of continuity in the history of Christianity in Pakistan. Christianity in present day Pakistan spread through the modern missionary movement, which began in the 18th century. In the 19th century both Catholic and Protestant mission efforts tended to focus on the low castes as these people were more attracted to Christianity as a group. Christianity attracted several groups from among low caste Hindus, yet the largest group that turned to Christianity in the Punjab was the **Chuhras**. British census documents classified them as one of the scheduled castes. They were despised because their work involved menial jobs such as disposing of dead animals and human waste, in other words, everything that was unclean. They were the Dalits of Pakistan. As a people, they had been subjugated for centuries, fighting for survival on the periphery of society. Beginning around 1880 and continuing through the 1930s, large numbers turned to Christianity, sometimes with entire communities becoming Christians as a group. Many came to genuine faith, but some scholars contend that many of them were prompted primarily by the desire to escape their low status, which may explain the high levels of nominalism that is still characteristic of much of the Christian community in Pakistan.

Despite leaving their low caste status as Hindus, the Christian community has largely remained poor and marginalized in Pakistan. They often live in slums, called **bastis**, in larger cities where many of them are hired by municipalities as sweepers and cleaners, or by households as domestic servants. Many work as bonded laborers in brick kilns, a form of modern slavery marked by perpetual intergenerational debt.

Pakistani Christians have suffered from an extreme lack of educational and economic opportunity. In 1972, the Government of Pakistan nationalized all private educational colleges and schools under a socialist policy mandated by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This severely undermined the educational and economic development of the Christian community because it deprived the Christian community of affordable and preferential access to quality education, which many viewed as the only path out of poverty. This was a major blow to the Christian community. Indeed, many basti dwellers no longer aspire to educate their children beyond primary level and are resigned to being stuck in the 'sweeper class'.

For decades, minorities have had separate political representation in Pakistan, with a token number of reserved minority seats in the national and provincial assemblies.



While this provision ensures that Christians have had political representation, it has also means that local politicians have never sought the Christian vote and it has perpetuated a sense of being second-class citizens.

### **3.3. Background to the Pakistani Church**

There are approximately equal numbers of Catholics and Protestants in Pakistan. The largest Protestant denominations are the Church of Pakistan, Presbyterian Church of Pakistan and Full Gospel Assembly. These are often referred to as mainline churches. There is a smattering of other groups including Baptist, Brethren, Assemblies of God, independent Pentecostal, Evangelical and Salvation Army.

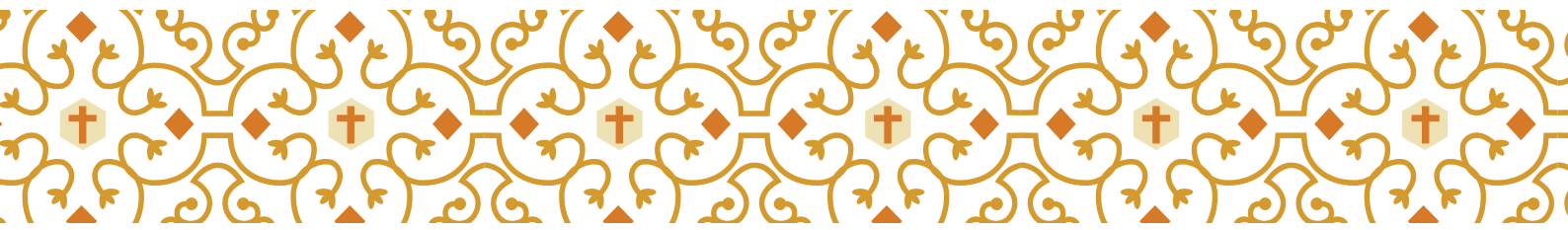
Historically, the Church of Pakistan and Presbyterian denominations have been largely inward looking, preoccupied with managing and maintaining properties and institutions inherited from missionaries. Until recently, their theological seminaries have focused primarily on preparing clergy for their congregations rather than on preparing evangelists, missionaries or other roles. There is a perception that the smaller denominations and independent churches are growing more rapidly and have more of an outreach focus.

Levels of giving within in Pakistani churches are generally low. Historically, the Christian community has had a welfare and entitlement mentality that is often reinforced by well-intentioned efforts to help them. With such low levels of giving, it is difficult for many small churches to support a pastor, and the ability of churches to support indigenous ministry is low.

Due to their low economic and social status and history of persecution and discrimination, many Pakistani Christians have viewed sharing the gospel as something difficult for them, something the foreign missionary is better placed to do. Indeed, in the past many missionaries expressed considerable frustration at the lack of evangelistic motivation within the Pakistani Church. Yet, in a recent survey of attitudes towards evangelism conducted by a leading Pakistani seminary, 96 percent of respondents stated that every believer is responsible for sharing the gospel with non-Christians. In the same survey, though, few felt they were equipped to share the gospel and 46 percent responded that they, or their pastor, never take church members out to share the gospel. Fear was identified as one of the most common reasons for this reluctance.

### **3.4. Historical Patterns of Christian Outreach in Pakistan**

One of the most visible monuments to early missionary endeavor in Pakistan is the



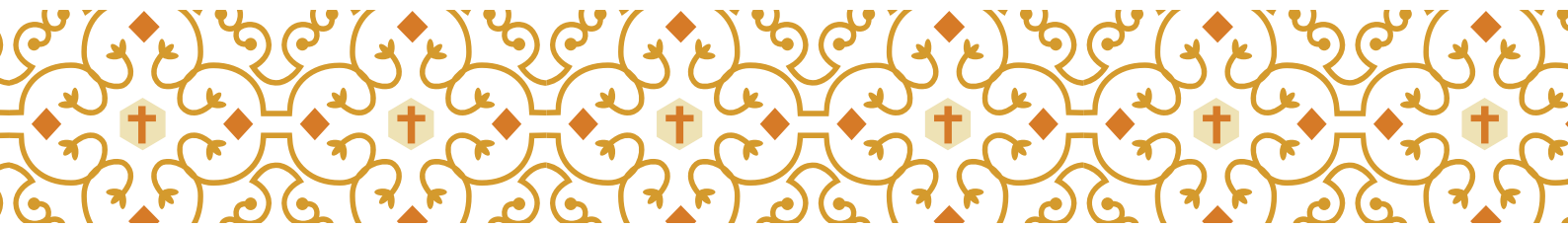
mission hospitals and schools that can be found across the country. Although many schools were nationalized in 1972, most schools along with one college, Forman Christian College, have since been handed back to their denominations. Pakistani Christians enjoy a strong association with health and education because of these institutions and their high standards.

In addition to these more service-oriented means of ministry, evangelistic efforts have included book rooms where seekers can access Christian literature, literature distribution, large tent meetings, Bible correspondence courses, campus ministries such as the Pakistan Fellowship of Evangelical Students, radio programs, prison ministry and traditional street evangelism. Many ministries now distribute CDs, DVDs and memory cards with Christian content. More recently, a number of Christian TV channels have started and, over the past 25 years, there has been a growing number of Christian organizations engaged in disaster response and community development. In addition, interfaith dialogue has become an increasingly common feature in Christian-Muslim relationships.

A language recordings ministry has identified 73 language groups in Pakistan, many of which have multiple subgroups. Of these, 13 are listed as unreached and unengaged by Finishing the Task. There are large areas of the country where there is no active Christian witness and the vast majority of Pakistanis have never heard the gospel.

Given Pakistan's Muslim identity, Christian ministries have had remarkable freedom to operate openly. Article 20 of Pakistan's constitution states that, "Subject to law, public order and morality: every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his religion and every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions." Yet, increased restrictions abound. Missionary visas have become much more difficult to obtain, and even these can only be replacement visas for those taking the place of departing missionaries. New rules for relief and development organizations require No Objection Certificates, which often state that missionary activity is not allowed.

In Sindh in particular, Hindus have proven to be very open to the gospel, but historically the numbers of believers from a Muslim background have been low. Muslim background believers have found it difficult to assimilate into Pakistani churches. The Christian community often views them with deep suspicion and the cultural gap between the predominantly Hindu-background, culturally Punjabi church and a new believer from a Muslim background has proved very difficult to bridge. This difficulty of assimilating into the local church, combined with frequent rejection and persecution from their own family and community, makes it hard for a new believer from a Muslim background to



find nurturing fellowship and to sustain their faith.

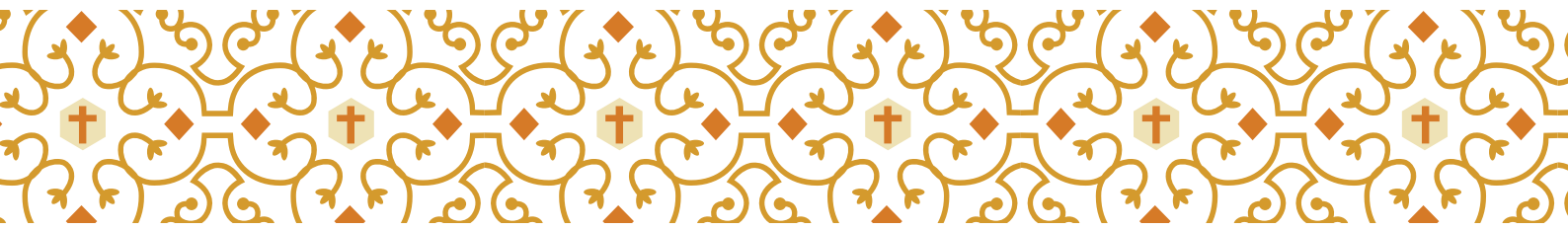
### 3.5. A Changing Landscape

Pakistan has experienced enormous changes over the past 40 years. After declaring martial law in 1977, President Zia-ul-Haq began a process of Islamization. This led to aspects of sharia law creeping into Pakistan's legal system, including the contentious blasphemy laws, particularly section 295-C, which carries the death penalty, as well as the dramatic expansion of madrassas, many of which teach Wahhabism, a particularly austere and rigid form of Islam rooted in Saudi Arabia. This Islamization process exposed and exacerbated many of the divisions within Islam, contributing to increased Sunni-Shia violence. It also resulted in the increased political power of the religious right.

After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan became the staging ground for insurgent groups that fought against and eventually ousted the Soviet army with US support in the form of money and arms. Foreign fighters from all over the Muslim world were brought to Pakistan and trained to fight. After the Soviets' defeat in Afghanistan, the US and all allies left. Pakistan was awash with weapons, mujahedeen groups and Afghan refugees, as well as cheap heroin, the production of which in Afghanistan was ramped up to help finance the war. Before long, drug addiction became, and remains, a major problem in Pakistan, especially in the Christian *bastis*.

After the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, the country descended into chaos. A number of groups, some say with support from within Pakistan, gradually coalesced into the Taliban, which overthrew the Soviet supported central government in Kabul in 1996. It was from their base in Afghanistan that Al-Qaeda plotted the 9/11 attacks, which prompted the US to overthrow the Taliban. Pakistan was subsequently pressured to crack down on insurgent groups that operated from within Pakistan's border areas. The resulting violence, as these groups retaliated against Pakistan, remains a regular feature of life in Pakistan.

Indeed, Pakistan has become a much more violent and intolerant country. Not only are attacks on schools, markets, courts, mosques, shrines and churches commonplace, but people seem to take offense more quickly and minor disputes turn violent in an instant. The country that was renowned for peace and hospitality is now dominated by fear and intolerance. Overt bias against non-Muslims has made its way into textbooks and minorities feel increasingly under threat. The governor of Punjab and the minorities minister, a Christian, were both murdered for their efforts to amend the blasphemy laws.

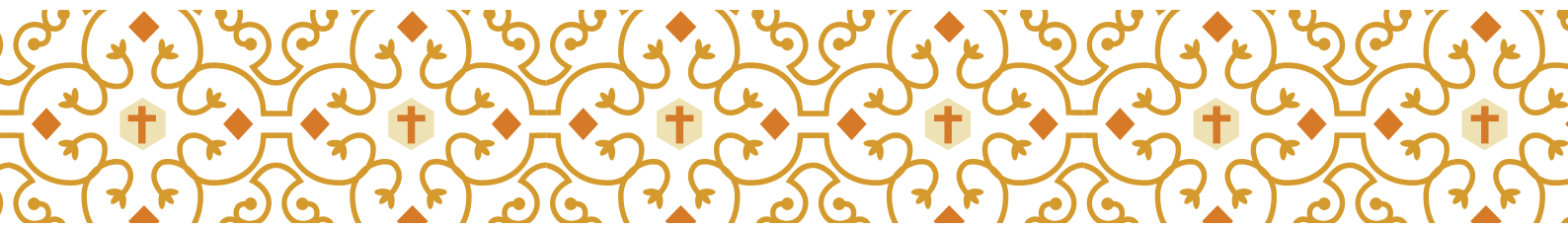


Economically, Pakistan has grown dramatically over the last three decades. It has the fastest pace of urbanization in South Asia, and the UN estimates that half of Pakistan's population will live in cities by 2025. There is a growing urban middle class and cities like Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad boast modern multistory malls. Even smaller cities now have Western fast food chains. Access to information is exploding, with rapidly growing smart phone penetration as well as satellite and cable channels. Even in remote rural areas, people are becoming aware that there are other points of view. At the same time, unemployment remains high and income disparities are rapidly growing.

These dramatic changes in Pakistan, and the turmoil in the Muslim world more generally, have had a profound effect on Pakistan's Muslims. The foundations of contentment with religion are now less secure. Pakistanis working in the Middle East have often been treated badly by their Muslim brothers. The excesses of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the example of theocracy in Iran have not appealed to Pakistanis. The horrors of what is being done in the name of Islam by people claiming to be good Muslims, not only in Pakistan but in Afghanistan and Syria, have caused many Pakistani Muslims to question that brand of Islam. Some have chosen to become more devout, some in private confess that they are sick of religion. Many have begun searching for truth outside of Islam, but often they do so in fear of being discovered. This has led to an openness to new perspectives in Pakistan, which is historically unprecedented.

## 4.0. Leadership

In our conversations, leadership within the Pakistani Church was the most frequently mentioned topic, about which people had strong opinions. This broad concept covers people who assume community leadership positions, church pastors and leaders, denominational leaders and heads, educators, those involved in politics, and ministry and non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders among others. Overall, while many people thought that current leadership lacks the capacity required to catalyze transformation both inside and outside the Christian community, there are signs that this is beginning to change. One of these signs is the recent launch of a Master's program in Organizational Leadership for Pakistani Christian leaders. The program is run by Zarephath Bible Seminary, Rawalpindi, in partnership with Forman Christian College, Lahore, and it currently has 34 leaders from a diversity of organizational backgrounds pursuing the qualification.



## 4.1. Vision

A verse frequently quoted from Proverbs in teams, groups and churches across the country is, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” At its worst, many believe that Pakistani churches have no vision, neither for the Christian community itself nor for the nation of Pakistan. As a result, many feel that the Pakistani Christian community is not fulfilling its potential in many realms and spheres, from literacy rates to employment, from upward mobility to integration, indeed, to living life in all its fullness as a vibrant community of salt and light.

The deputy director of an international NGO (INGO) expresses his concern that, “There is no collective vision. There are so many denominations and groups [and a] great need for a collective vision. Leadership is not at all clear about their vision.” One of the many consequences of this lack of collective vision and leadership is that there is a lack of responsibility and ownership for addressing key issues that impact the Pakistani Christian community, which are necessary to begin a process of change and transformation. Without collective vision, there can be no answers to the community’s, let alone the country’s, many significant, endemic problems. As a result, there has been very little progress in the development of the Pakistani Christian community and the propagation of the gospel over the last few decades.

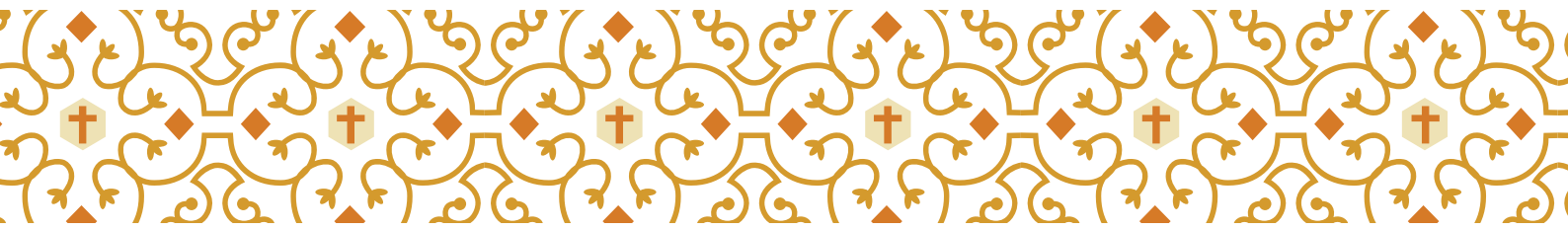
One of the primary symptoms of this lack of collective vision is disunity in the Church. There are high levels of mistrust between leaders and there is a distinct lack of networking and cooperation. However, many leaders are beginning to recognize the need for change in this area and addressing it practically.

## 4.2. Family Dynasties

It is important to understand that Pakistan is a feudal system, which means that, as the principal of a seminary explains, “in ministry and in our families we tend to behave that way.” The system or culture means that everything tends to ‘stay in the family’, including ministries and other organizations. One of the key ways this can be seen is through giving preference to family members for employment or hereditary succession of leadership roles as opposed to recruiting the right person for the right job. It is important to note that this approach is not exclusive to the Christian community, reflecting the wider culture in which family and the family network have a supreme place in society.

Over the years, Pakistan has been blessed by family-run organizations that have been handed over to the next generation of a family. However, people are beginning to see





this in a new light and realize that, for the demands of the present day, such practices are inadequate for running successful ministries and organizations. As a result, some organizations or ministries have begun to stagnate or even collapse.

While many people think that the good fruit of these family dynasties can be seen today, the executive director of an NGO sees that the concept of family dynasties is changing: “Previously, people used to build their empires around their family structures – those days are gone. Now there is a different perspective and vision.” Generally, while this was identified as an ongoing problem by many, there was also a feeling that people are seeing the disadvantages of dynastic approaches.

The same seminary principal gives an important reminder regarding culture: “Each culture has to be tested by the word of God. It needs to be filtered through the Word of God.”

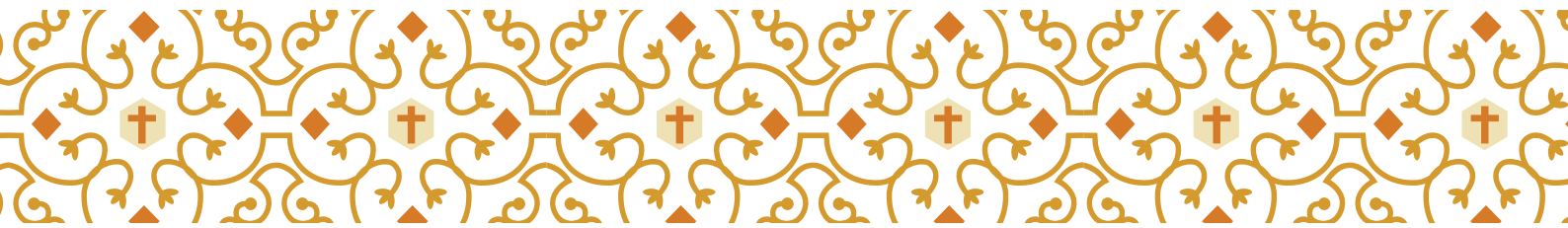
### 4.3. Women in Leadership

While women in leadership roles in Pakistani society is low but slowly increasing, so some of these challenges are reflected within the Pakistani Christian community and Church. The female director of a denominationally based project comments that, “As far as Christian female leaders [are concerned], I feel we have opposition at home. We have opposition in church, and we have opposition in organizations also... I have hardly seen any women, even in our own [denominational] forums. Very few females come forward [or are] part of any boards.”

The roots of this are deep in culture and education. “I think our education system should encourage females more. We talk a lot about female education and promoting females, but that is up to... 10th or 12th grade. The idea is that the female will get an education and will get married, [not that] she could do something else. She has that potential. So, in our own society, we limit our females by saying, ‘You can’t do this. This is not your thing.’ It is a very male-oriented society. So it’s not an easy task, especially for the Church.”

Yet, this same project director felt positively that, “I think we will see more women leaders in the future. But, again, I think all this depends on how encouraged they will be. Will they receive encouragement from their leaders or will they be discouraged by them?”

It is possible that there are more women in leadership than these views suggest. For



example, one quarter of the participants in the aforementioned Master's in Organizational Leadership are women, all of whom are in senior leadership roles.

#### 4.4. Age and Succession

As a seminary principal states, "Pakistan has suffered a lot by people staying in leadership too long." This longstanding trend of leaders staying in their positions for extended periods, even until death, is a reflection of certain cultural values such as respect for elders and, to a lesser extent, the honor of being associated with a high position and the shame of moving on from the high position 'prematurely'. As he continues, the problem is that nowadays the pace of change is so great that it is difficult for older generations to keep up, so the generation gap is accelerating.

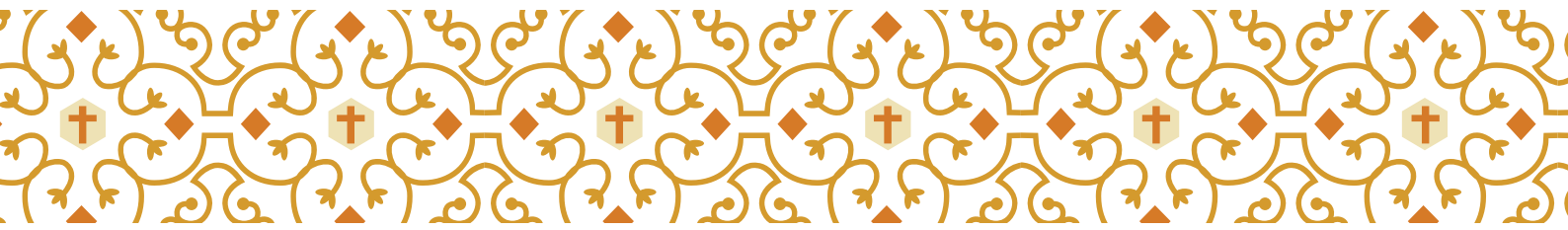
In recognizing this as an issue to be addressed organizationally, a well-known seminary has instituted a retirement age of 60 in its constitution, a step that would allow leaders who reach that age to step down with grace and dignity. Another example of good practice is at a national parachurch organization, which is implementing a detailed succession plan that includes a one-year handover period with the new CEO before the current one retires.

#### 4.5. Second Line Leadership

A further outworking of extended tenures in leadership positions and poor succession planning is a lack of investment in second line leadership. Time and time again in conversation, this is stated strongly as a critical issue within the Pakistani Church. A female program head at an INGO says, "We lack a second tier of leadership in the Christian community, [which] goes back to our social norms because [in] the culture we hold onto power. This has been done deliberately, that we don't prepare [a] second line of leadership."

A manager at an INGO and emerging leader suggests that while there is an awareness of the lack of investment in second line leadership, there is little being done about it: "We always talk about second line leadership. A 60-year-old man, when he was in his 40s or 50s, he used to talk about second line leadership. But, he never jumped in deeply to build a second line leadership... The younger leaders in their 40s or 50s, they are now talking about second line leadership but they are not building it up."

A ministry leader suggests that one of the problems is that "everybody is doing his own thing and he doesn't want to share; he wants to build himself. It's self-centered.



He doesn't want to transfer his contacts, his abilities, his skills to others." A female seminary principal agrees with this, saying, "The Church is weak in preparing second line leadership. There are places where you can see a person retiring from one institution and working in another or you can see that his tenure will be limited to a year or two due to various issues including health, but still we are fearful and unwilling to accept second line leadership." Indeed, as another seminary principal points out, a major risk is that young people will not wait around for opportunities to open up; instead, they will take their talents elsewhere.

A female ministry director, and many leaders like her, sees what needs to be done. In her words, "every Moses needs a Joshua. And, that is missing in churches." She further mentions that there is a lack of young people and fresh talent sitting on boards, locking out younger people. The risk is that this glass ceiling built by older people breeds resentment in some of younger people. She also points out that young people must truly be welcomed in and included, rather than paying lip service to their talents and contributions.

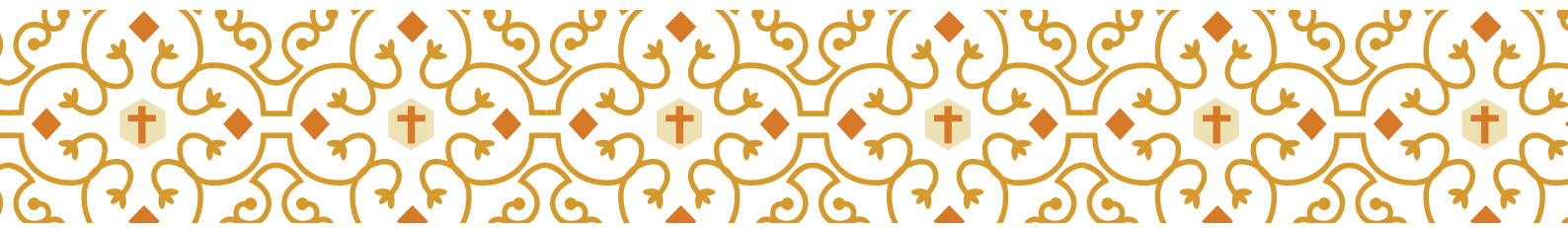
#### 4.6. Leadership Qualities

On the one hand, it is easy to identify what is wrong with leadership, on the other, it is more difficult to explain exactly what good leadership looks like. An INGO country coordinator believes, "Leadership starts in the family, where you are spiritually nurtured... We need leaders with a serving heart, serving the poor and providing justice... We need a revival of Christian leadership that follows Christ."

Many people echo the ideas of servant leadership, prophetic leadership and practicing what one preaches; leadership is a lifestyle as much as anything else. "If [people] watch a leader's lifestyle, if the lifestyle is simple, people listen to what he says and they will take him seriously," says a Catholic church leader.

The deputy director of an INGO reflects on his experience of good leadership, the markers of which are actively working across denominations and churches, being well connected with Muslim leadership and engaging with politicians. He says, "We need this kind of leadership in Pakistan."

While it is important to consider training, development and capacity building for leaders, an INGO country coordinator reminds us "not [to] forget the work of the Holy Spirit in our leaders," while an NGO executive director exhorts the Christian community to encourage its leaders: "We don't encourage our leaders or individuals who are working hard. They



need encouragement.”

#### **4.7. Adapting to the Demands of the Present Day**

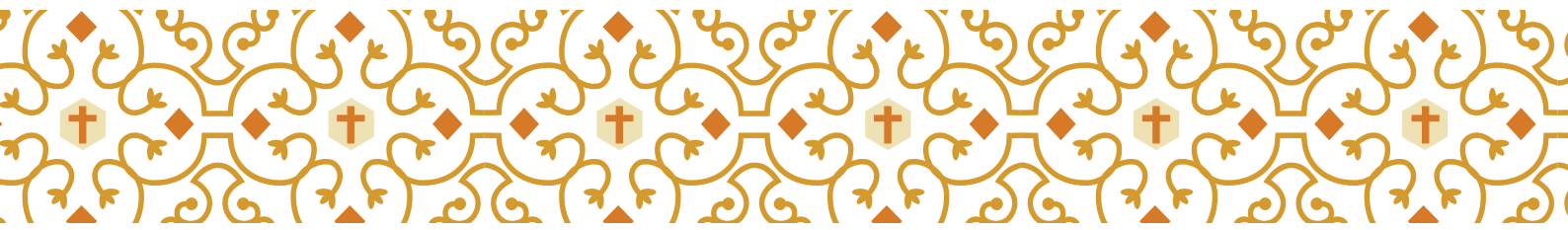
Across the world, leaders must adapt their skills to their environments in order for their communities, teams or organizations to succeed. This is no less true for Pakistani Christian leaders. Many are worried, though, that Christian leaders are unable to adapt nor operate effectively according to the demands of today. The principal of a seminary comments, “Old strategies are no longer effective. Change is on a fast track. Our challenges are that as leaders we can’t change quickly enough. Some of us still have the old missionary mindset because that is whom we learned from.” Further, a former missionary and visiting trainer describes the most common leadership style in the Pakistani Christian community as a “top down approach with the expectation that there needs to be compliance with what the leader says. The attitude of releasing people to their giftings, giving them responsibility and handling the conflict of different visions in a constructive way is not very broadly found.”

At the same time, a fresh wave of new leaders with different skillsets and standards is emerging. The same seminary principal observes, “New leadership is emerging. People in their 30s and 40s. It is good they are taking up leadership. They have good English language and communication skills. The older generation no longer has overwhelming control. This is good. We have come to a moment with new leadership running the show, [along with the] need for mentoring, and development of character and integrity.”

Advising on what it takes to be a leader in Pakistan, the same former missionary and visiting trainer feels that, “It needs someone with courage, with vision and with an extraordinary approach to really genuinely want his people to thrive, develop, even if it goes into a different direction than he had envisaged for them to go... Leadership development has to cover releasing people, serving others, and growing people rather than controlling.” Indeed, the director of a rights based organization states, “The Church needs a new phase of leadership that will allow it to democratize and liberalize, by diversifying its leaders, representatives and participants in decision making. Through such an approach it is possible to care for the legitimate interests of everyone.”

#### **4.8. Trust and Unity**

Many people feel that the Pakistani Church is held back by mistrust, disunity and isolation. One of the reasons behind this is a cultural mindset and innate fear that someone might take advantage, resulting in people wanting to become leaders and doing their



own thing. Indeed, a female development program manager describes a certain level of rivalry in church leadership and among denominations, which prevents unity. While the causes and roots may be numerous, the result is a fragmented Pakistani Church pulling in many different directions unable to gather momentum for significant, lasting change.

This fragmentation, many comment, has resulted in many leaders and no followers; everyone wants to be a shepherd, yet no one is willing to be a sheep. A Presbyterian leader observes, “That’s what our community really needs, they want to be recognized as leaders. They don’t want to recognize leadership in others. This is one of the issues we have with our own people. This is weakening us because we are being divided into smaller and smaller groups.”

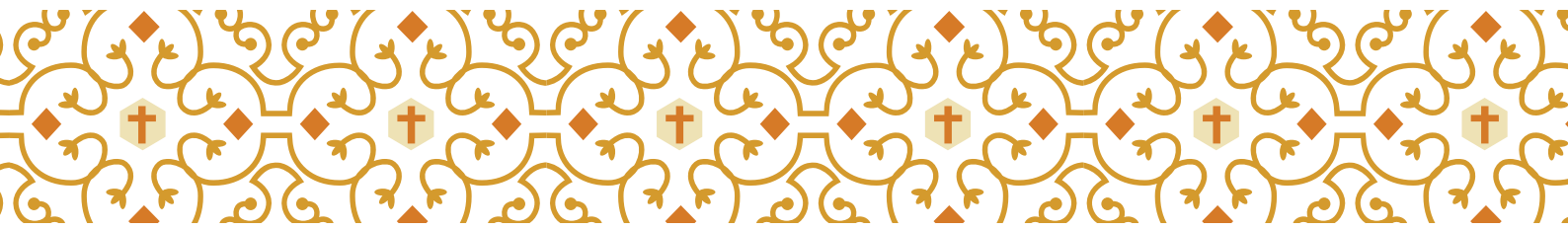
Yet, in many people’s experiences, there seems to be change on the horizon, which will need to be captured and nurtured. As a seminary director shares:

“Change is coming. It’s always slow but there is a change. Because, in previous generations, what I saw in leadership was a lack of trust. There was no relationship, too much confrontation within denominations’ leaderships and all that. But, I think... there is a desire for change and many young leaders say that we should not do those things that the previous generation has done, we should try to bring some change.”

At a more organizational and ministry level, where they are directed by boards, there is the feeling that leaders and board members have a deeper understanding of their roles and are better connected than previously, resulting in stronger ministries and organizations.

#### **4.9. Coaching, Mentoring and Development**

A major gap that is expressed is the lack of coaching, mentoring and development available for leaders, particularly for emerging and second line leaders. The aforementioned lack of trust that exists within the Christian community is a contributing factor to the lack of formal or informal mentoring and coaching relationships between peers and leaders. Further inhibiting factors include the fear that if one shares one’s personal or organizational weaknesses, then others might exploit them, as well as the fact that a culture of confidentiality simply does not exist; one implicitly doubts the other’s capacity of acceptance and ability to behave constructively. Additionally, as an honor-shame culture, there is a sense of shame associated with expressing weaknesses of any kind. There are clearly significant cultural reasons underlying this overall gap.



Those who have experienced mentorship and coaching have really benefited from those relationships and say that these relationships contributed to their success. As the director of a seminary highlights from his experiences, there are benefits and pitfalls to not having any kind of mentoring:

“I have three to four people who are really trustworthy. Whatever I’ve shared with them, they haven’t used against me. I haven’t heard of this kind of thing from other people. I am privileged to have this mentoring group. Leaders need some kind of help this way. Mostly, the big leaders in our community are burnt out, completely failed in leadership, because nobody was there to support them.”

More broadly, and particularly within more organizational settings, many believe that leaders need to create and open up opportunities for their second line leaders and teams, that mentoring and development is more than just sharing knowledge but allowing someone to do something for themselves. Further, to complement concerted efforts in this area, greater access to formal training and development is highly important.

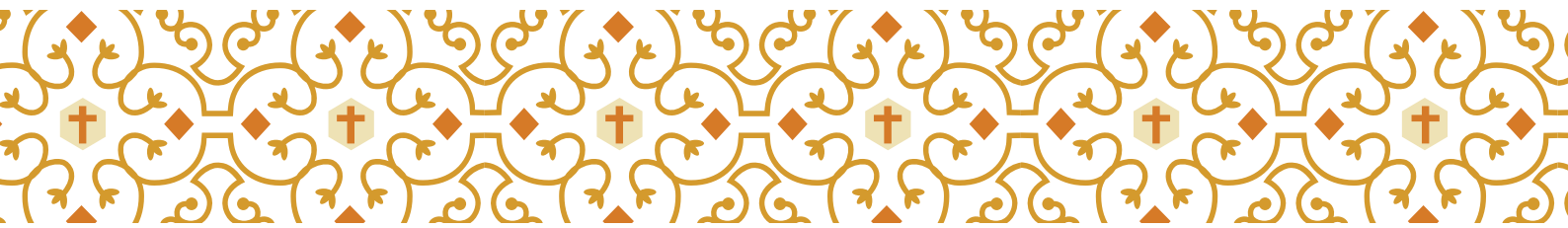
## 5.0. Perspectives on the Church

Leaders’ perspectives on the Pakistani Church are diverse, reflecting both positive and negative views. These perspectives are formed over time through experiences and contact with a diversity of individuals, churches and ministries. Below are leaders’ most frequently voiced perspectives that came through during the course of our conversations.

### 5.1. Nominalism

Pakistanis have a fierce pride when it comes to their religious identity. Regardless of whether that religion is lived out as a personal faith, people hold fast to being a Muslim, a Christian, a Hindu or another religion. This is true for the Christian community and it belies a significant nominalism within the Church. A Church of Pakistan leader and seminary professor expresses it like this:

“We think that the Church does not need to be evangelized. The Church is in much need of being evangelized because many times I feel that we are living as a Church without Christ. We are ignoring this. We are former Christians and traditional Christians. We are not targeting Christians to give their lives to Christ. We are not targeting churches to change and mobilize towards the ways of Christ. We are a very traditional people and traditional creatures and we need to evangelize the Church



as well.”

## 5.2. Church and Parachurch Relationships

Many express that there is a significant division between churches and parachurch organizations. The regional director of a mission organization reflects on the feelings on both sides of the divide: “I think we have brought about a very strong divide between churches and Christian organizations. Christian organizations think they are the boss and churches think they are usurping churches’ authority.”

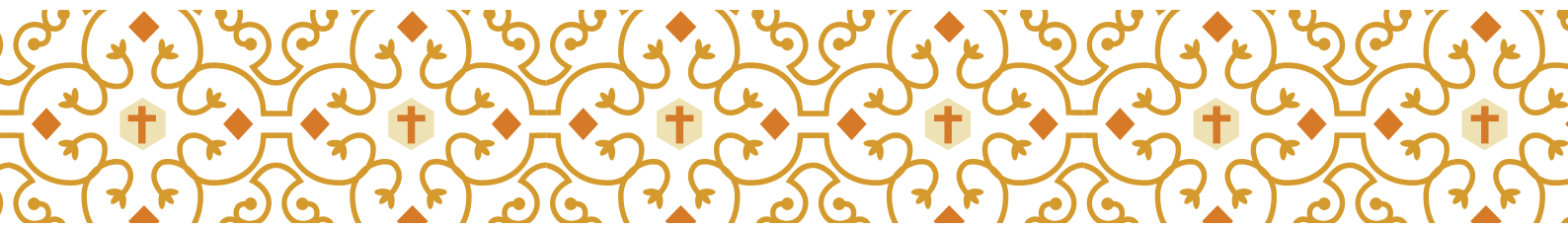
What both sides express about this divide is a sense of resentment and animosity, even. While many realize the need to overcome the challenges in relating to and working with one another, the question remains whether there is the will to overcome them, not to mention the need to create appropriate opportunities to do that. As the regional director concludes, “What we need to recognize is that Christian organizations’ strength is from the Church.”

## 5.3. Looking Inward

Within the Church there is always the tension between ‘looking inward’, that is, encouraging unity, maturity and the developing of the fruit of the spirit, and ‘looking outward’, that is, ensuring we are living in and connecting with the world so that our light can be seen by all, not hidden under a bushel. Many people’s reflections are that the Pakistani Church has become too inward looking at the cost of being concerned for the world outside. A mission organization’s regional director sums this up:

“By and large, [the Church has] adopt[ed] a mentality that seeks to look within. It’s become an insular society rather than looking to the needs of the world around them. The Church is in a withholding mode. It wants to maintain the status quo rather than rock the boat. There are small pockets where there is a real desire or appetite to cross barriers, whether they be cultural, religious, linguistic, or otherwise. They are few and far between.”

While many single out established denominations as being characterized by this ‘inwardness’, some reflect that it is much wider, including charismatic and Pentecostal churches. Time and again, the creation of new churches and denominations, as well as inadequate leadership, was put forward as a key reason for this problem. A pastor and ministry director says, “[The] Church can do everything, but church leaders are the hurdles. The main reason is the creation of new denominations. People are not working



for the kingdom of God, they are just working for their denominations. We are one in Jesus Christ and if we are working for the kingdom of God, then we need to be united, interlinked with each other.”

#### 5.4. Loving the Church

As well as sharing their frustrations with denominations, institutions and leaders, a significant number of leaders also express the need to love the Church, with all its failings and frailties. The director of a language recordings ministry sums it up by saying, “We have to be very patient with the Church, not criticizing, but standing side-by-side with pastors, leaders and church members to help them go through this journey of faith.”

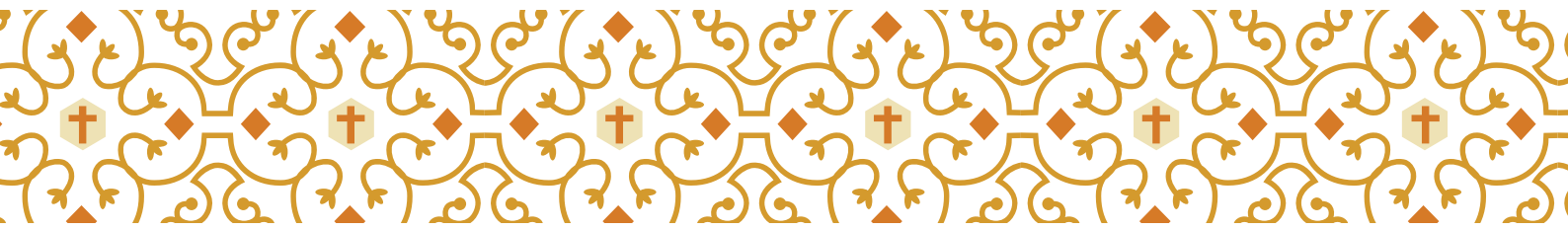
The director of a rights based organization reminds us of the fact that the “[Pakistani] Christian community is very special and dynamic. It has learned to survive in a difficult environment.” This is something to be remembered and celebrated. Further, and fittingly, he also suggests that the Church should develop a theology of *baradari*, or community, a contextualization of the biblical concepts of the Church being a family and acting as one body, a task already begun by theologians such as the late Catholic Bishop, Right Reverend Patras Yousaf.

### 6.0. The Church and Its Preparedness for Outreach

At this time, an important question to ask is, how prepared is the Pakistani Church for reaching out to people from different backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities?

The general response to this question is that the Church is not sufficiently prepared but that it is at the beginning of the journey to becoming so. While the Pakistani Christian community is largely relationally distant from and fearful of the Muslim and other communities, there are glimmers of change through the increase in the number of lay people attending evening classes at seminaries or participating in correspondence courses as well as a growing interest in and understanding of mission, particularly among young people. Indeed, from the experience of a former missionary and visiting trainer, entrenched ideas about what church is and its role need to be reworked. As he teaches in his sessions, “I’m not just called to Christian community; I should transverse the boundary. I must rethink my model of what church is. I must liberate myself from the thinking that I always need a building.”





In the light of the Church needing to welcome people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, a ministry director and entrepreneur believes that the Pakistani Church is not adequately prepared. What needs to happen is the development of a more contextualized model of church, rather than perpetuating a transplanted model brought from the West. He says, “Maybe in five years, there may be massive [movement of] people coming to Christ from different cultures but the Church is not prepared to accept them. Are we working towards a more indigenous church model? Because if you go to our churches they are still very Western. We need to have indigenous church models where we can welcome people from the majority community.”

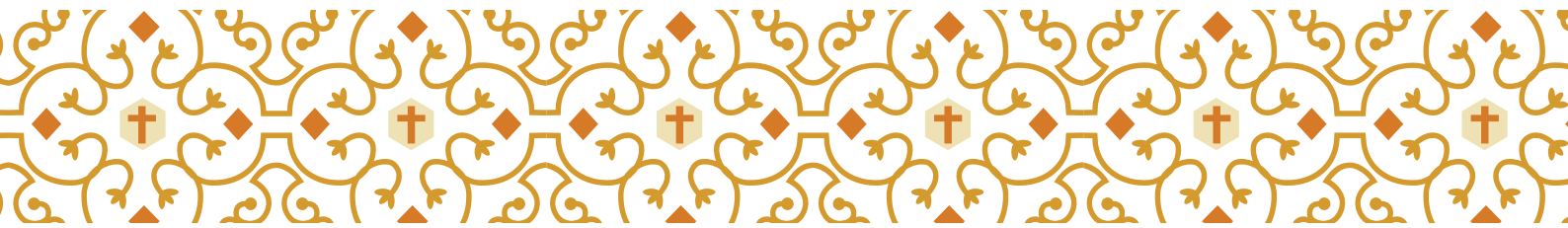
Some also point out that the Pakistani Church is still on a journey out of its former bondage. As the director of a language recordings ministry states, “My experience is that because the majority of us Christians come from a Hindu background, so we have our own bondages and I feel through personal experience that there are powers that are still trying to get hold of our lives because our forefathers worshiped them... It’s not only the journey of those who are far away from the Lord – it’s our journey, too.”

## 6.1. Inward Looking

While many are quick to acknowledge that there are positive changes taking place within the Pakistani Christian community, they still observe that the Church is still largely inward looking. Each person has his or her own ideas as to why this is the case, which include a lack of confidence, a ghetto mentality, poor teaching in churches, a lack of congregational level efforts to reach out to other communities and an ignorance of Islam. In expressing his thoughts on this subject, a theology scholar explains it like this:

“We need to think about Islam seriously and engage ourselves. If our students are not given broader education, broader vision, then their minds don’t broaden. We are constantly saying we are being persecuted, we are terrible, and our lives are at stake, and you just cushion yourself, don’t speak out. So, it’s all fear; we live in an environment of fear. So, that of course produces people who are much more introverted, self-interested, and the Church becomes self-serving. The mode becomes just a survival mode rather than a serving mode and going out there. So, I think that it’s really, really important that we break those molds, expose ourselves and our students, let’s have dialogue, let’s have relationship with the majority community.”

Yet, the barriers to looking outward are strong. One seminary has a carefully designed three-year program to prepare its students for outreach. The first year is spent developing a forgiving heart towards those that have persecuted and discriminated against them.



“This requires a lot of prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit. The forgiving spirit doesn’t come over night”, says the principal of the seminary. However, most students do not believe outreach to others is possible for a Pakistani Christian given their low status in society. The seminary principal adds, “So for the second year we bring in people who are actually doing outreach, to tell their stories and challenge our students to realize that other Christians are actually doing this.” The final year is spent giving student practical outreach skills, including practicing them in local towns and markets. This experience demonstrates that equipping the next generation of Christians for effective outreach requires a well thought out strategy. It takes time but it can be done.

## 6.2. Receiving Not Sending Missionaries

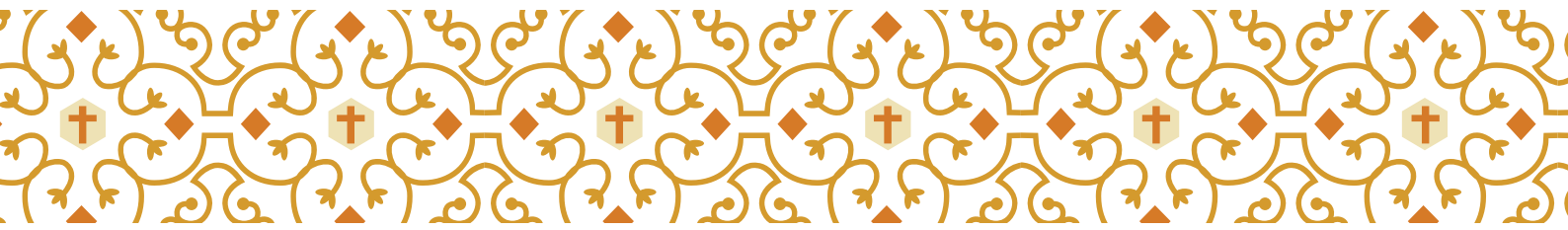
The Pakistani Church has historically been a recipient of missionaries and not a sender of missionaries. There is a lack of understanding in the Church about missions, a lack of awareness. What this means is that the Church is not in a position to reach out because it does not realize it has to, nor does it know how to. A theology scholar candidly describes this lack of sending of missionaries as a “blockage of blessing.”

It is difficult to ascertain how important missions is to Pakistani Christian leaders – the lack of missionary effort might indicate that, generally, mission is not a priority. But, God is changing leaders’ hearts, as a pastor and ministry director testifies:

“[At the] start of my service, I was a pastor and hadn’t much experience. I was just doing work for the spiritual enhancement of my congregation. But, after gaining experience and awareness, I would approach all people and have a desire to see change in their lives. In 2007, I was at a mission conference in Peshawar, I was praying about my vision, and on the last day I realized that my love should be for all people, not only for my congregation, community and even religion. It should be for other nations as well.”

This same pastor and ministry director then began a course at his church to increase his congregation’s understanding of mission and of God’s love for the nations. Something he addresses through the course is the fear under which many Christians live, inhibiting them from reaching out to others. He witnesses that most of the people in his network are now sharing the Lord Jesus’s love with others, free from fear.

Within this situation, the same theology scholar believes that young people and seminary students need to have more exposure to the country, its many people groups, cultures and landscapes through the prism of mission. He also believes that there needs to be



better support systems for those who feel called, so they are “properly looked after... that at least their basic needs may be met and they would be encouraged to go and serve as missionaries.”

Importantly, there are many, like a mission organization regional director, who believe that Pakistanis must lead in the efforts to reach Pakistanis. He says that such efforts need to be “funded and resourced by Pakistanis” with help from overseas friends where appropriate. He continues: “I very strongly believe that whatever effort is made by Pakistanis to reach Pakistanis, it has to be a Pakistani initiative. I believe that if we are to reach Pakistan, it is our responsibility. And, for Pakistani Christians to do that, it has to be paid for by Pakistanis as well. Unless we become a giving church, unless we give painfully, we will not understand what it means to be fully involved in this.”

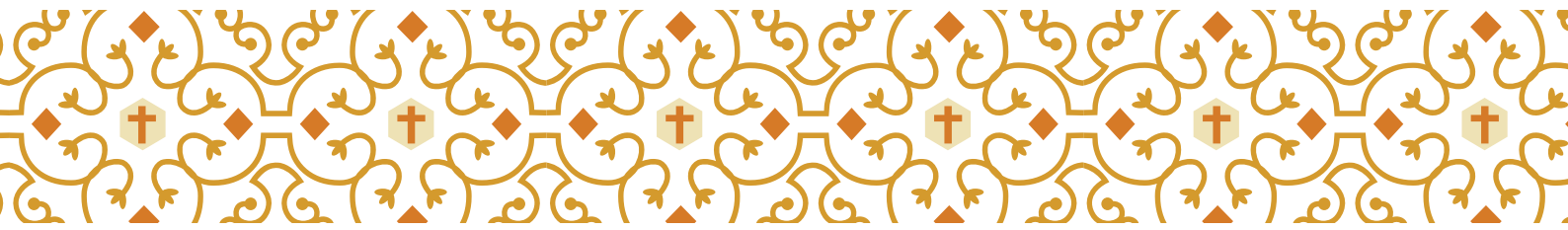
As the theology scholar reminds us, “This movement of sending begins with God. So given clearly the theoretical basis in the Bible that God has always been a sending God and that we need to be a sending Church, unless that happens, we are not actually doing the work.”

### **6.3. Welcoming New Believers**

Once a person from outside of the traditional Christian community becomes a believer, what happens next? In terms of follow up and discipleship, many are concerned that the answer is not much. Most churches do not have clear ideas or plans about how to walk with and support a new believer. Additionally, because of prevailing circumstances, the Christian community often does not provide a warm welcome to newcomers owing to suspicion, fear and prejudice. In one female ministry leader’s experience, the majority of new believers will leave their newfound faith because of bad experiences with Christians.

A number of leaders comment that even though there are efforts to reach out to non-Christians, few people have thought through what happens if someone comes to Christ and their involvement in that. An emerging leader describes a situation whereby “many are evangelizing the majority community but when they come to Christ, the church has no plan to help them.” Similarly, a female ministry leader says, “We pray for people to come to Christ but if they do we are not prepared.”

In terms of discipleship, the regional director of a mission organization feels that “when it comes to disciples, we have failed and failed miserably. And, that is why the Church has not grown. Discipleship is where you get your hands dirty. That is where you spend your time, your resources and you become involved with people. Your life is not your



own anymore. Your life belongs to others. That is what we have failed to do.”

## 6.4. Readiness for Spiritual Battle and Prayer

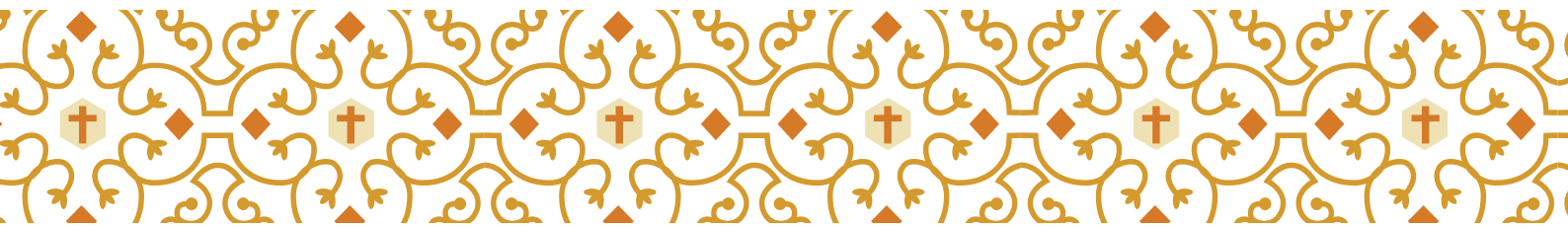
What is important to remember is that all of this exists within the context of a spiritual battle, a battle that has its own dynamics specific to the spiritual environment in Pakistan. In conversation with leaders, this topic is surprisingly rare, which may be indicative of the low level of emphasis given to it. Indeed, a female ministry leader believes that the Pakistani Christians do not have much of a concept of spiritual warfare.

An important tool in spiritual warfare is prayer and some would describe the Pakistani Church as a praying Church. However, even those describing the Church as a praying Church feel that more can be done in terms of length, depth and frequency of churches’ engagement in prayer. An emerging leader describes the Pakistani Church as a ‘dry eye’ church, though, because even with the increase in prayer in the Church, he does not see that people’s hearts have been indelibly touched:

“Unfortunately, the Pakistani Church is a ‘dry eye’ church. Which means they are not weeping for the majority community. In the last 65 years, a lot of resources have been spent. But, where is the fruit? How can we become a weeping church? Only when God gives the vision. And, God can only reach us if we have a personal encounter and relationship with our Heavenly Father.”

The role of prayer is vital for transformation. There are signs that the Church is beginning to respond to the prevailing climate of the country in prayer and for the people groups of the country. There is a very small but increasing number of people and churches focused on prayer through extended times of prayer, creating prayer networks and equipping and training for prayer. The small number of people who mention prayer and spiritual warfare in conversation, agree that engaging more and deeper prayer in the Church is necessary.

The director of a national children’s ministry is clear on the need for prayer: “The first thing in Pakistan is that ministries and movements need prayer warriors. Prayer warriors are key, before funds and everything [else]. Some people need to adopt these ministries as prayer warriors. This really is a priority.”



## 7.0. Organizational Weaknesses

Below are some of the most common organizational weaknesses identified by Pakistani Christian leaders. These weaknesses are equally applicable to an individual church, a whole denomination, a Christian NGO or any other kind of Christian ministry, organization or institution. Many of the leaders involved highlight that it is important not to hide but to acknowledge weaknesses and so address them successfully.

### 7.1. Transparency and Accountability

Many express the need for greater transparency and accountability within the Christian sector, whether churches, ministries, NGOs or other kinds of parachurch organization. Most agree that this is not a new concept for Pakistani Christian organizations but one that needs to be strengthened, in particular for leaders of churches and ministries.

The deputy director of an INGO observes a lack of will among church leaders to strengthen transparency and accountability, largely because there exists an attitude that these apply only to NGOs, ministries and organizations, not churches. He, along with others, cite the fact that funding comes from Christian donors too easily and often they do not emphasize transparency and accountability enough with church partners.

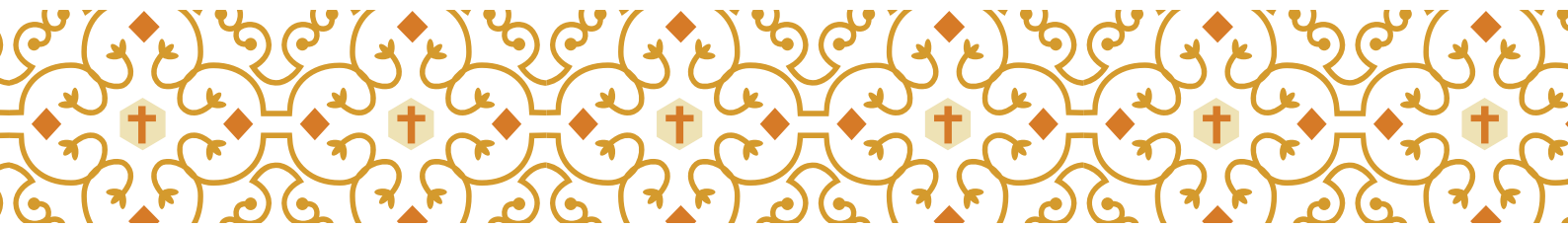
The female director of a denominationally led project reminds us that transparency and accountability are not solely in relation to donors: “How can we be more answerable not only to donors but to local people also, whom we are responsible for, like beneficiaries?” Being more transparent with and accountable to others locally has the potential to breed a culture where it becomes an expectation and demanded locally, too.

Compounding this overall lack of transparency and accountability is the irresponsible giving of foreign Christian donors. These donors give ‘in faith’ without making any requirements for reporting, transparency and accountability. Many see that this kind of giving has led to instances of funds being misused or spent inappropriately, often perpetuating what some call ‘Prado culture’.<sup>1</sup>

### 7.2. Salary Packages

The Christian sector is known for paying low wages. There are instances of some organizations paying less than what would be considered a living wage. One benchmark for this is the federal government’s salary structure and grading system. Generally,

<sup>1</sup> The idea of having to appear successful, an indicator of which is an expensive car, such as a Prado, a large 4 x 4



these are lower than the private sector, but job security and benefits make government service attractive. Yet, salaries in many established Christian institutions are well below government levels, without the same job security and few benefits. One of the root causes of this problem is that, particularly for institutions such as seminaries, schools and hospitals originally founded by missionaries, until recently they relied heavily on missionary staff whose ‘salaries’ were covered by their sending agencies and not reflected in institutional budgets. Fees structures, fund raising and long-term planning were not designed with a transfer to an exclusively local staff in mind, or for a time when donations from abroad might diminish. Even though the last of its missionary staff left a number of years ago, a female seminary principal relates the example of her seminary, which is still struggling: “When foreigners were principal and teaching faculty, their salaries used to be sent by their churches. Now the staff is national... the burden of all expenditure is on the organization and we have to do fundraising for salaries and all expenses.”

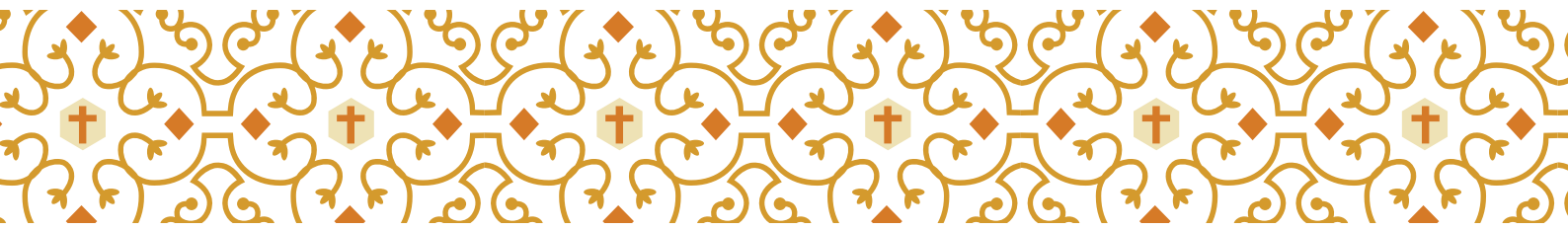
Another issue is that Christian NGOs cannot compete with salary packages offered by INGOs, which are well above the market rate. This means that salary expectations become skewed, particularly among those qualified and experienced Christians who have been successful enough to forge careers within INGOs. As such, they are reluctant to work for local NGOs and the local NGOs cannot afford them. Or, those who start out in the Christian NGO sector often see it as a stepping stone toward better paid jobs at an INGO. More broadly than this, many ministries and organizations complain that they cannot find suitably qualified talent to employ from within the Pakistani Christian community. However, most of these ministries and organizations are offering salary packages that are unattractive to the level of talent they are seeking to hire.

A Catholic church leader identifies that the issue of remuneration is integral to the broader question of sustainability “because what you start with foreign support, a lot of money, how can it be supported locally? An example is that many Christian schools that were begun for poor Christian families or poorer Muslim families. Now, when the foreign funding stops, they have to increase the school fees. So, who comes? The people who can pay.”

This raises the issue of how pioneering Christian outreach in new places can be sustained. Several leaders touched on the possibility of engaging with the Pakistani Christian diaspora to support this kind of work.

### **7.3. Qualifications, Capacity, Competency**

The right person for the right job is a difficult objective to realize when there are so few



‘right’ people in the first place, that is, those with the relevant qualifications, capacities and competencies. A ministry leader remarks that his organization’s “number one challenge is that we don’t have very many skilled people.” A Pentecostal leader further comments, “I struggle with not having competent people around me. So, sometimes, when things need to get done, I have to do it myself. This is very frustrating. In the past when we have had people who are competent or have the potential to be competent, they tend to want to leave Pakistan for any Western country.”

The director of a rights based organization insists that to overcome this issue, “capacity building is vital. Wherever talent exists, there are communities you can work with. You can coopt members of the majority community. You can coopt missionaries. We have to connect with international ministries. Pakistan can’t live without integrating internationally.”

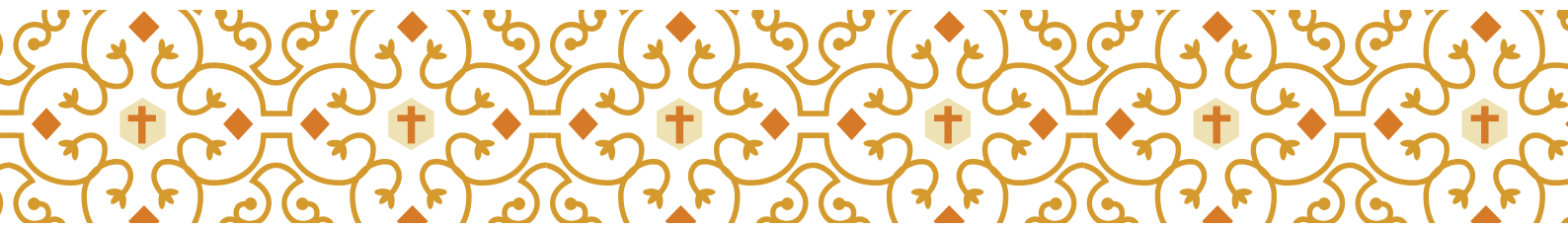
One of the hurdles to integrating internationally is the English language. Even though English is an official language in Pakistan<sup>2</sup> and in many schools it is the medium of instruction, levels of ability across most sectors of Pakistani society are generally poor. Even with a good working knowledge of English, a further barrier is the specialized terms that are often used in partnerships or donor funding relationships. The same Pentecostal leader explains:

“We have found that competency is affected by the language demands of our donors. We used to plant simple churches using our own simple language. But now, our donors expect us to make reports using their highly educated, professional English language and we do not know that language – even I have not learned that language. So we have been found to be incompetent in light of their requirements, demands and language... In addition, in order to hire a professional person who could understand and work with donors’ requirements, we would need to pay them a high wage that we cannot afford.”

#### **7.4. Meeting Registration Requirements and Legal Compliance**

The federal government has recently introduced new legislation regarding the registration of NGOs. At a provincial level, the Punjab Government has introduced new industry standards for healthcare facilities. Such initiatives, appropriately implemented and administered, ought to be welcomed as they bring increased regulation, standardization, transparency and accountability. What is difficult, though, is that many Christian organizations are struggling to meet these standards because of a lack of awareness

<sup>2</sup> Urdu and English are currently both official languages in Pakistan. However, in 2015 the government announced plans to abolish English as an official language. It remains to be seen if and when any measures will be taken toward this.

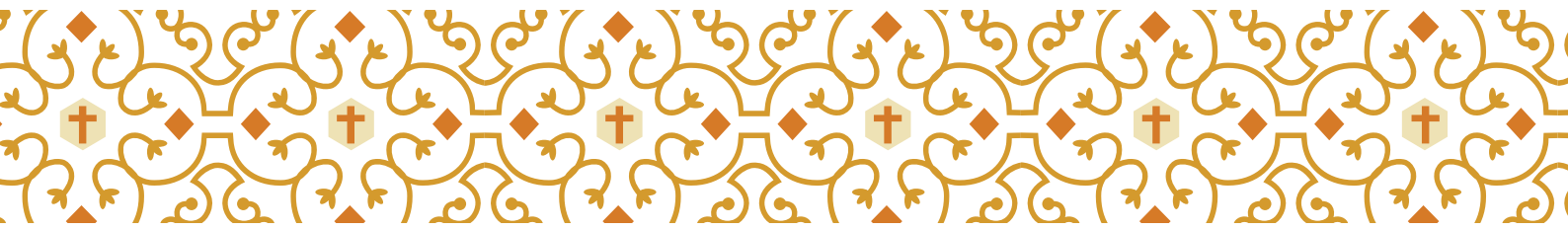


of the new policies and organizational capacity issues inhibiting them from reaching government standards in a short time period.

As regards NGO registration, there are a number of issues at play, including a lack of awareness about the new process and a lack of organizational capacity to meet the new rigorous requirements of registration. These requirements include submitting annual reports and annual financial audits, as well as the internal implementation of specific policies, all of which need to be reported back to the government. The lack of organizational capacity is especially true of smaller, less sophisticated organizations. The leader of a drug rehabilitation ministry shares his experiences: “We are not registered, so we cannot receive funds. Registration criteria are there and they are very difficult [to meet].” An outreach ministry leader says that his organization’s bank accounts were frozen because he has not yet registered his organization, although there is confusion as to whether he needs to because his organization is officially a denominationally based ministry. In the implementation of this new legislation, there are also stories of banks not opening accounts for NGOs; organizations being sealed, forced to close and cease activities; permission from government departments being required to host training, workshops and other events; activities being closely watched and scrutinized; and, it is increasingly difficult to get the appropriate permission to start new projects and host donor visits. Many fear that this is ultimately leading to a shrinking space in which any kind of community based organization can operate, as well as creating an environment of survival of the fittest for such organizations.

With reference to the legislative changes taking place in the Punjab, the provincial Health Department has been implementing its Healthcare Commission Act with mandatory, minimum standards that all health facilities must meet. A large, successful, Pakistani-led, Christian hospital’s experiences of meeting the act’s requirements typify the struggles of other institutions. The act’s regulations include staff’s qualifications and medical equipment, among many other benchmarks. Regarding qualifications, healthcare establishments must have qualified specialists in each of its fields of practice. These days, largely because of lower salary packages at Christian hospitals, it is difficult to attract appropriately qualified candidates from within the Christian community, let alone identify qualified specialists, there being so few Christian doctors anyway. Additionally, the high levels of training and qualifications that this institution provides its staff, especially targeting Christian young people to enter health related professions, are not recognized because they are not accredited. Additionally, there is the financial burden of raising the capital required to purchase the prescribed medical equipment. Ultimately, if any healthcare establishment does not meet the provincial Health Department’s minimum standards according to the establishment’s categorization, then the Health Department has the authority to close it down.





Critically, what this means for Christian ministries, organizations and institutions is greater efforts toward strategically planning their organizations' and, more broadly, sectors' futures. Many believe that now is a time of adapt or die. Unfortunately, while there are some who seem to realize this, few are equipped for it, let alone doing it.

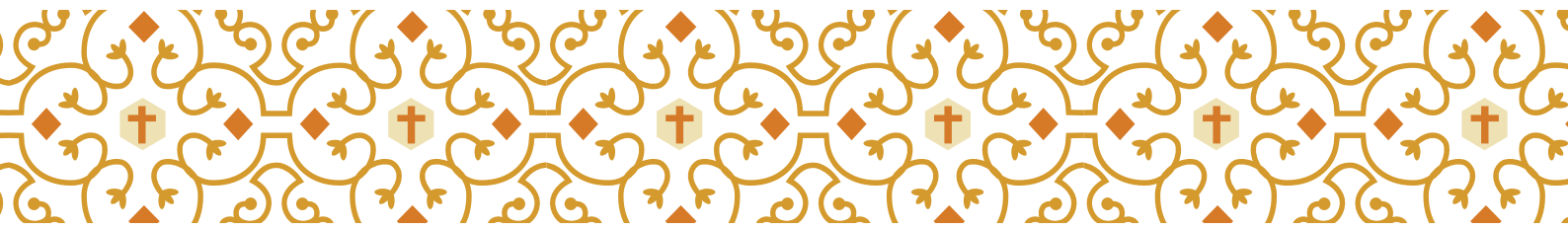
## 7.5. Adapting and Planning for the Future

An NGO director states that “very few Christian organizations have a plan to improve or to face future challenges.” An INGO country representative estimates that of his organization's implementing partners, about 50 percent have a strategic plan. Of those 50 percent, few organizations will refer to their plan, carry out appropriate actions toward fulfilling objectives or assess progress. What this reflects is an overall lack of strategic planning, contingency planning or long-term thinking in Pakistani Christian organizations.

An example of this overall lack can be seen in the education and healthcare sectors, in which historically Christian institutions have been leaders in their fields. Their reputations of excellence reflected positively on Pakistani Christians. However, many of these Christian institutions have been left behind as capacity has increased in the secular education and healthcare sectors, with private school systems and hospitals offering international standards. This leaves many heads of and boards of organizations with major questions about where to go from here, not to mention the individuals who face diminishing employment opportunities with Christian institutions.

The executive director of an NGO describes the situation like this: “[Private school systems] are growing and doing very well. Christian schools are going downhill. We used to have a reputation for excellence, but we have lost it. But, even the schools that are doing well, that have long waiting lists, aren't doing well financially. The same with health facilities. The Christian health sector hasn't invested in its own capacity.”

There is a broad range of factors that combine to result in this predicament. The principal of a seminary attributes the lack of innovation in Christian education and healthcare establishments to the fact that they have enjoyed external support, while secular institutions are more responsive to the market since they depend on students or patients for their income. Other factors include a focus on survival rather than casting a broader vision, little to no ongoing training and development in this area given by employers and, possibly, a lack of attention given to reasoned thinking and planning in schools and universities.



In realizing the prognosis, an NGO director warns that “in the current environment Christian organizations really need to think about survival strategies.” Heeding his own advice, this director began implementing strategies to reduce his organization’s dependence on foreign funds and to form a separate organization in which to use the profit from the first for community development. If Christian organizations and institutions want to exist in the near future, then critical decisions about how to move forward need to be taken urgently.

An educationist asks important questions that ought to be asked by all leaders in churches, ministries and organizations. What is our vision for the future? Where are we going? How are we going to get there? In answering these questions, leaders can begin to build plans for the way forward and invite others, including the global Church, to join with them in that journey.

## 8.0. Preparation of Church Leaders

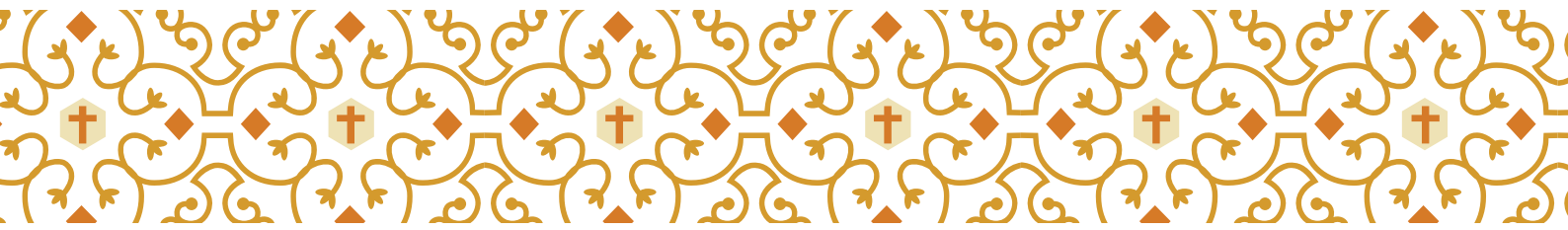
There are around 15 established Protestant seminaries in Pakistan,<sup>3</sup> two of which are accredited internationally by the Asia Theological Association. In addition to these, there are two Catholic seminaries with accreditation from Rome, as well as a number of smaller seminaries servicing the church’s dioceses and formation houses for preparing women and men to serve in various ways and in religious orders. As seminaries, Bible colleges and other theological education institutions are not regulated nationally, it is understood that there is a significant number of small organizations operating in this field, with an increasing number opening up. Many leaders point out the inherent risks with this phenomenon.

Among the historical and established seminaries, these institutions are being strengthened by Pakistani professors teaching in them after receiving advanced degrees from overseas. Some, especially those outside of a denominational affiliation, are diversifying their offerings to students with a view to equipping lay people and seeking organizational sustainability. Yet, the challenges for these organizations are great. What follows are reflections from a cross-section of leaders who work in, are or were seminary students, or have a close affiliation with them.

### 8.1. Broadening and Diversifying Curricula

Historically, theological seminaries in Pakistan have aimed to prepare ministry and church leaders for service in the church. However, in a context in which the demands

<sup>3</sup> Currently, there are no PhD programs at any Pakistani seminary, MPhil or equivalent being the highest theological qualification available in the country



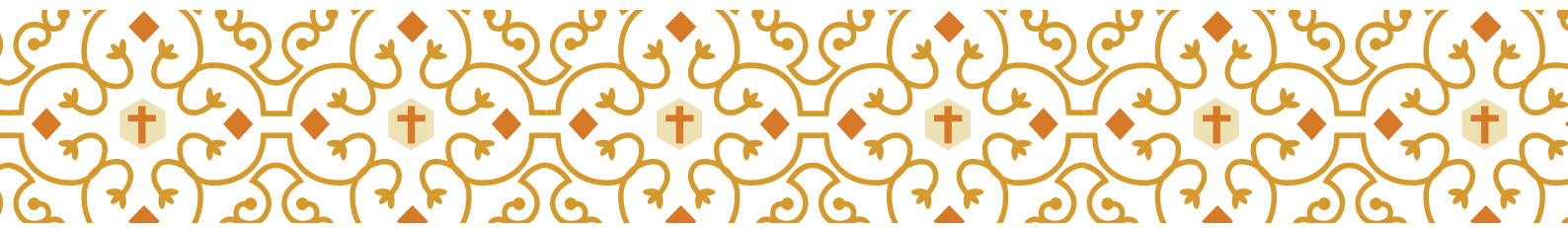
on ministry and church leaders are great and expectations are high, there is a great need for seminaries to broaden and diversify their curricula in order to better prepare students for the realities they face upon graduation.

Today's church and ministry leaders must be able to respond appropriately to the many challenges their congregations and the wider Christian community face, ranging from career counseling to family mediation, from discrimination and persecution to high levels of poverty, from alcohol and drug addiction to pornography and sexuality. Additionally, all of this within the dynamic of a Muslim majority country.

The CEO of a national parachurch organization agrees that seminaries are doing a good job at theological training but that for broader ministry in the community, they are failing both students and the Christian community at large. For example, as an Islamic republic, surprisingly few seminaries equip students with an understanding of Islam so as to minister more confidently in the national context. Regarding other realities, he adds bluntly that, "Pastors are not equipped to address issues [like] marriage, career counseling, addiction, sex, pornography." Like this CEO, a theology scholar admits, "I don't think we are doing enough to equip students to meet the challenges which we are all facing right now." He says further, "We have traditional subjects we try to teach, and then they can go and preach good sermons; we prepare good preachers but maybe not such good servants." At the same time, there are a few seminaries that have realized the need to address more practical topics and have introduced classes on addiction and sexual abuse.

As has been outlined in section 4.0., leadership is a critical gap within the Christian community. Many feel that leadership skills is a field that seminaries could introduce to complement more traditional subject areas. Flowing from this, a number of leaders recognize a need for subjects such as project management, proposal writing, donor relations and English. This is because across the country there are numerous examples of church-led initiatives such as literacy classes, sewing and other livelihoods projects, as well as relief and development initiatives. When these projects have received donor funding, the church or ministry leader has often struggled to manage the workload related to reporting and maintaining the relationship with the donor. In some cases, this has led to funding being withdrawn.

More broadly, the same theology scholar observes that graduates "are just thrown in on their own; they don't know what to do with the management of finances, time management, how to take good care of the managerial aspect of the congregation. That creates lots of problems because they don't know, or they fall into the trap with some people who are powerful in the congregation and they will manage, or they just ruin



many things.” This presents an opportunity for seminaries to meet the needs of church and ministry leaders who have to go in to churches and prepare the congregation to address the challenges of the world around them.

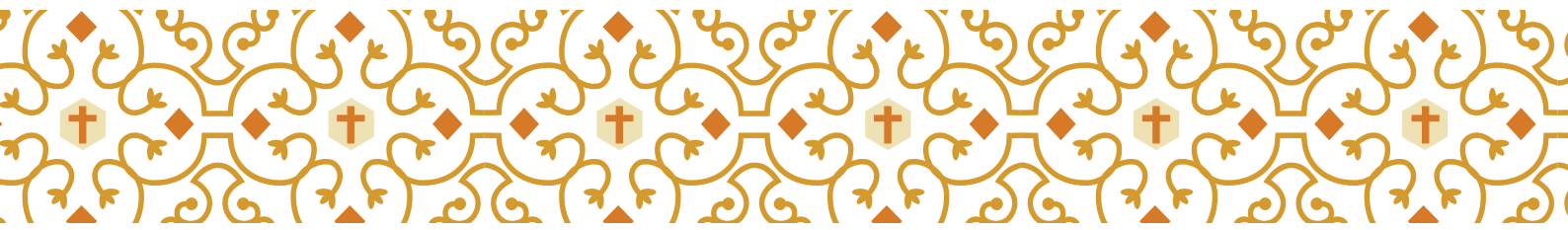
## 8.2. Candidate Selection

Those people who work for or have close contact with traditional denominational seminaries, feel that there could be more rigor in selecting candidates wishing to attend seminary, particularly as regards the area of calling. A Church of Pakistan leader and seminary professor said that, “[Seminary students] are not aware of their calling when they enter this institution. They don’t exactly know what calling is.” Further, a pastor and ministry director observes a real need to challenge and change the thinking of seminarians to be more outward looking than they are, as many current leaders, who attended seminary, are preoccupied with serving the Christian community as opposed to leading the Church to serve others. A sense of calling has a direct impact on the extent to which church and ministry leaders actively lead their communities to reach out to others.

An adverse effect that can be seen from a lack of calling is what the director of a radio ministry terms careerism. He says, “Church leadership should not be a matter of education but of calling. Careerism in ministry means that the church is seen rather like government employment, with pastors being transferred and promoted. But what kind of church will this leave behind?” Many agree that the answer to that question is that it leaves behind a church that is self-interested and inward looking, which many feel are characteristics of the Pakistani Church.

On the other hand, there is a Pentecostal seminary, known for producing passionate, active graduates, who seek to strengthen their congregations to be blessings to all people. This seminary makes calling an entry requirement for their seminary. A Pentecostal leader states:

“[Calling] is one of the admission requirements for our young people. They must have a very strong conviction that they are called by the Lord. How do we know, since everybody says they are called? They tell us in their own words and generally we trust them but it is tested by the passage of time. Our committee listens carefully and prayerfully to each candidate to make sure they are comfortable in admitting them. This might be one reason our graduates are a little bit more enthusiastic than [graduates from other seminaries]. We value very much the character of each student more than academics. We don’t compromise on academics but integrity, character, testimony and how you are is more important.”



More broadly, in order to produce women and men who are prepared for the ‘real world’, a mission organization regional director advocates that seminaries “should not accept fresh graduates... Make them go into the workforce. Help them to get a secular job somewhere. Help them to see how the real world works. Then when you see how he learns to function and live in that situation, let him come into the seminary and learn God’s word and begin to use it in the pulpit.” In making professional experience a prerequisite for entry to seminary, it may go a long way to addressing skills gaps among candidates.

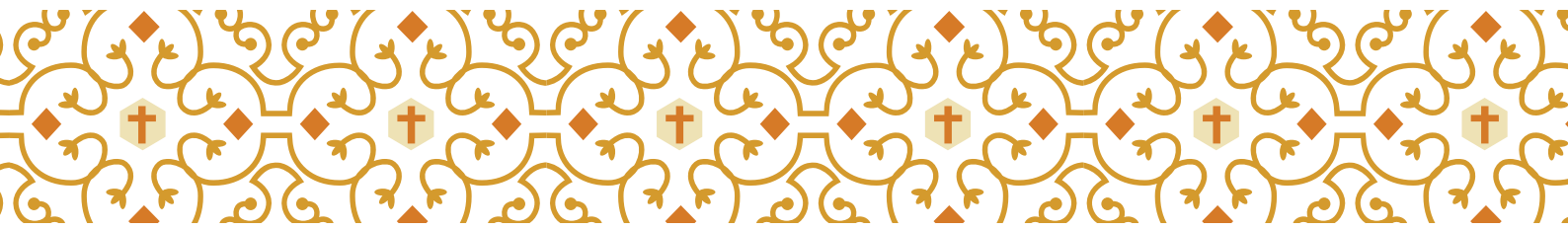
### **8.3. A Strategic Role for Seminary Education**

There is a clear strategic role for seminary education to prepare and equip women and men to meet the pressing and multiple needs of the people around them, both inside and outside of the Pakistani Christian community, as well as to develop Christian leaders, thinkers and influencers. As seminaries’ academics and teachers continue to strengthen and diversify their fields, so there is the expectation that theological education in Pakistan will see some significant changes. With the adoption of critical thinking approaches, as well as more research and investigation, facilitated by Pakistani academics, we ought to see more contextualized missiology and self-theologizing, as a result.

A broader issue regards ensuring the pursuit of quality theological education. While a nascent, national Theological Educators Forum does exist, there is no regulatory body accrediting or scrutinizing seminaries. There are only two Protestant and two Catholic seminaries whose qualifications are accredited internationally, requiring rigorous standards of governance and compliance. This lack of procedure within the country means that “it takes nothing now to open a seminary. One could open up next door next week,” observes a seminary principal. “All it takes is someone who knows how to communicate [in order to raise funds]. It is no longer controlled by anyone. Now the question is, how will people use this? It can be used for God’s glory or it can be misused.”

Seminary education in Pakistan is critical for equipping and training current and future generations for life and ministry in a challenging environment. Indeed, a seasoned lawyer believes that seminaries are in a prime position for addressing the challenges the Pakistani Christian community faces. He states,

“The people who have the ability to reach out, who have the potential to talk to the other people, they are leaving the country. And our skilled people, those who can compete in the majority community, they are no more in Pakistan. How can we help



the church to think out-of-box? Firstly, through our seminaries.”

## 9.0. Young People

Investing in, guiding and supporting young people is crucial to the future direction and success of any community, society or country. Most people feel that the Pakistani Church should be doing more to invest in, guide and support its young people; some would term it more urgently, that without collective action being taken now, then the Pakistani Christian community is facing the possibility of a lost generation, something that would have dire and long-lasting ramifications. It is time for less talk and more action when it comes to Christian young people’s education, employment, future prospects and spiritual growth.

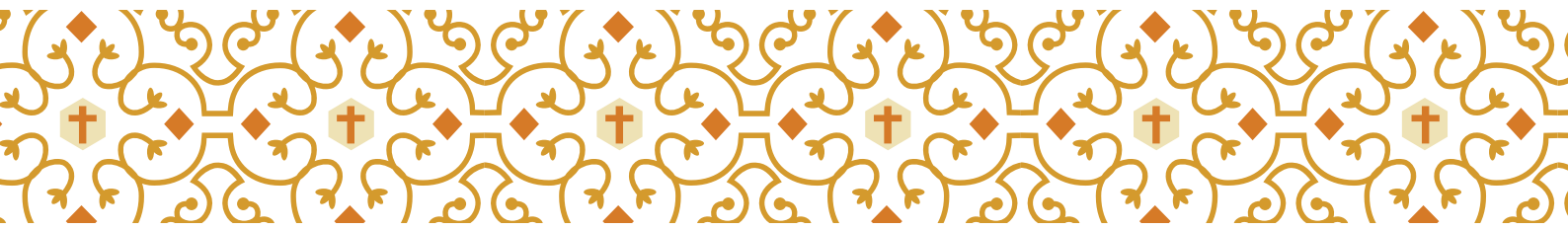
Here, a Pentecostal pastor gives an excellent summary of the context of Christian young people’s struggles, which provide a framework for understanding some of the topics further expanded below:

“We blame the youth, saying that they are lazy and they do nothing, but I think differently about it. They do not [have] an [enabling] atmosphere at home to compel them [towards] education. They do not have [resilience] as compared to [the Muslim] community, as at a very early stage [Christian young people experience religiously based bullying]. Young people are coming out of childhood, going into adulthood depressed, entering the rest of life [with an] inferiority complex. At college or university, they do not have the financial resources that the majority community has. This imbalance causes them great embarrassment. The impression of the Christian community in our society is that we are not equal, and it hurts our youth. The only hope they have is from the Church. There are uncountable challenges our youth has to face.”

### 9.1. Generation Gap

Generation gaps are common everywhere. As the pace of technological, political and economic advances seem to speed up, so the gap seems to be ever-widening. A female seminary principal comments that, “I see a gap and that is the Church does not understand the problems of the youth. There are many special issues which older generations cannot understand. They try to see the youth according to their age and lens; that is why the Church is not able to connect effectively with the youth.”

Many agree that, in terms of investing in Christian young people, the time is as critical



now as ever. But, what can parachurch organizations and churches do differently? A political leader and activist is adamant that they need to become more inclusive of young people. He explains:

“I think youth needs to be included. They need to be made part of the planning. They need to be made part of the thinking and they need to be made part of the, ‘what is it that they want?’ I sit down, I make an agenda for those whom I’m not including. How is it I’m going to get their buy in? So, if we’re excluding the youth in planning, in the thinking process, we’re not going to achieve anything unless we make them part of it from the very beginning.”

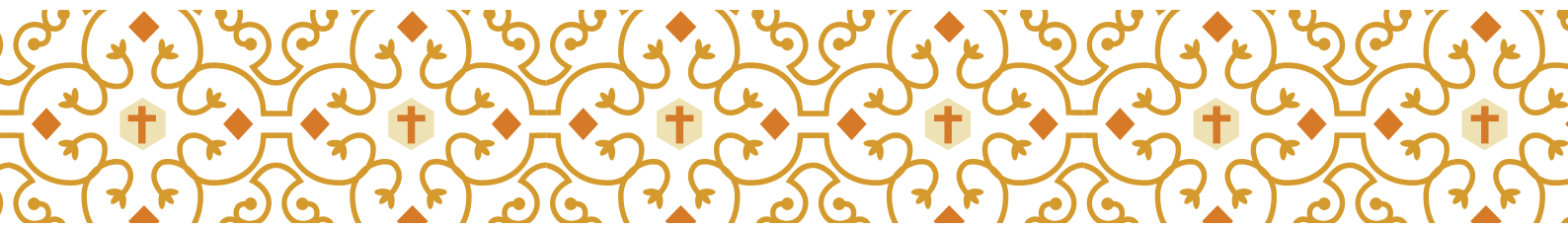
Another way forward, suggests the female seminary principal, is developing youth leaders who are appropriately trained and can address many of the issues young people face. A female consultant and trainer thinks similarly, that there need to be trained leaders willing to answer young people’s questions and support them in having roles in the church. She says, “Many of young people’s questions are not satisfactorily answered. And, they have very normal questions. ‘Why do we wear a duputta?’ ‘Why can’t we wear jeans?’ ‘Do we need to sit separate and why do we need to take our shoes off before we go into church?’ All those normal questions. But, also they have questions because they have Muslim friends, they get questions from them and then they ask us. So, can young people have a role in the church, and what kind of role?”

## 9.2. Access to Quality Education

Anecdotal evidence indicates that more and more Christian young people are getting higher qualifications than ever before. A manager at an INGO and emerging leader says that, “Young Christians are moving towards education and they are going for higher education as well, PhDs, and in the medical field.” This is a positive development for young people and the Christian community as a whole.

However, overall levels of educational attainment in the Christian community are low and Christians are proportionally underrepresented at the university level. Indeed, there is a “big need for scholarships for Christian youth. Many brilliant ones can’t afford higher education,” says a female academic. In addition to higher education, some believe that leaders need to put greater emphasis on pre-university technical education, an area that has many employment opportunities and offers Christians a route to economic independence and stability.

As well as the financial barriers to education faced by the Christian community, another factor is housing for Christian young people who have to live away from home for their



studies. As the director of a radio ministry reminds us, “the founding of hostels has been, and remains, key in enabling young people to receive an education, so that they can go on to become leaders. These hostels are still badly needed in rural Sindh, where the illiteracy rate is higher than in Punjab. Sadly, many of the Christian hostels are not adequately supported in the way they were before.” Some have recently closed. Without adequate, safe and affordable accommodation, pursuing education becomes all the more difficult.

### 9.3. The World of Work

There is broad agreement that, as the deputy director of an INGO puts it, “Christian youth are poorly prepared for the workplace or getting admission in good institutions. They claim it is discrimination but they don’t realize how poorly prepared they are.”

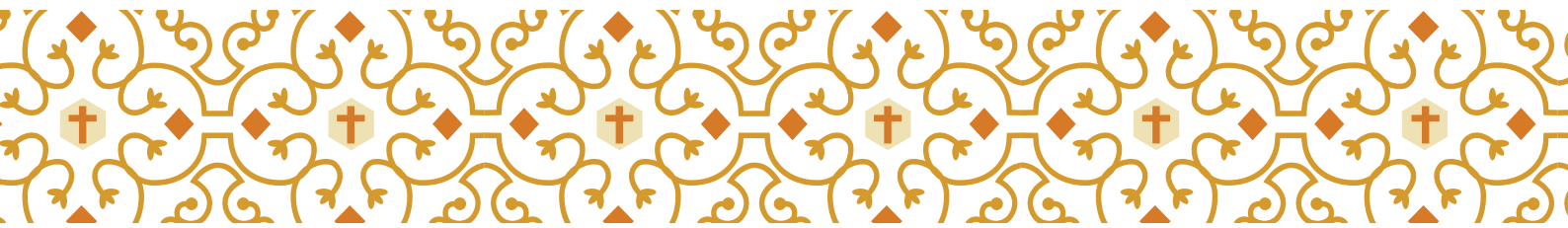
Similarly, an INGO country representative recognizes that, “We [Pakistani Christians] need to better support young people in choosing their careers and entering the world of work; we need to help young people to become involved in their churches and communities; we need to open the doors for them to do so.”

Indeed, there are church and community leaders who recognize that churches need to be actively involved in career counseling. A Pentecostal pastor shares his experiences of doing this with his congregation in Rawalpindi:

“In our church we make an annual schedule. In it we make sure that at least twice we have a seminar on career counseling, as most churches do not have such types of activity. We invite successful professionals, like Christian MNAs [Members of the National Assembly], MPAs [Members of the Provincial Assembly], army officers and so on, and they share their stories. We also try get them [the young people] to understand that education along with spiritual knowledge is essential.”

Many agree that the Christian community needs to break out of the traditional sectors in which they have tended to remain concentrated, namely education and health and in these, largely as teachers and nurses. Further, some suggest that young people need to be actively encouraged towards careers in entertainment and media; business; government and politics; and, more senior positions in education and health. More than this, a ministry director and entrepreneur believes that churches and denominations should be setting themselves targets: “If we talk about one church or denomination, so that denomination should be focused on producing 10 theologians, five doctors, 10 lawyers, 20 people in the marketplace and the church needs to really support them and





journey with them.”

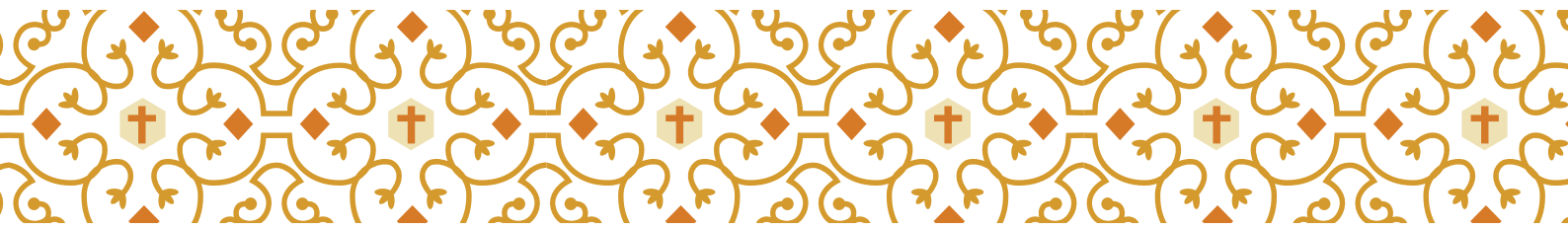
A manager at an INGO and emerging leader also believes a more hands on approach to the problem is required. He suggests that successful Christian professionals need to come together to build a network to work with young people to support them with career counseling, capacity building and mentoring. The purpose of this, broadly, would be to support young people to face and overcome the challenges they face in reaching where they want to go and in flourishing when they get there.

## 9.4. Identity

Pakistani Christian young people struggle to find their place in society. This is largely to do with the disconnect between their religious identity, which is very closely tied to their ethnocultural identity, and a national identity centered on Islam; to be truly Pakistani is to be Muslim. The result is an everyday experience, as a female consultant and trainer puts it, of “the pressure, the feeling, that you are basically a lesser human being because you are a Christian.” She goes on to say, “I think that that takes a lot of endurance. I think that takes much more endurance than when people talk about.. persecution. I think that sense, that you are less important as a human being, is much more difficult to live with every day. To feel that, when you go to work, when you go to school; having to defend yourself every day.”

From a political leader and activist’s point of view, the result of young people feeling locked out of being Pakistani is that “they are unable to relate themselves to Pakistan. We are not owning Pakistan... Young people want to leave Pakistan. They don’t want to become part of Pakistan. We need to bring our youth back from this direction. Pakistan is our home. Pakistan is our country. There are difficulties. It is not easy for everyone. But, we have to contribute towards Pakistan’s development if we want to develop in Pakistan.” In his work with young people across the country, a sports ministry pioneer sees this, too. “Young people don’t want to be called Pakistani because of bad experiences. Even in cricket, whenever they watch Pakistan and some other team, they never support Pakistan. That’s why we are trying to give them hope and encourage them. We are Pakistani. It doesn’t matter if we are Christian, first we are Pakistani.”

While nearly all leaders recognize this as a critical issue for the Pakistani Christian community, there is much less agreement on the way forward and how to tackle such a deep rooted, systemic problem. At a broader level, most agree that increasing young people’s confidence is vital and that a significant component of that is increasing the confidence in their faith. Like the rector of a renowned college, many see it this way:



“It’s important for us with our Christians to disciple them, to mentor them, to help them develop in their faith and at the same time, develop professionally so they can stand in society. And, in the process of learning about their faith and growing, they’re doing it in the context of the environment in which they live, and learning how to stand and compete in that environment and discovering [that] they can compete just as easily in a classroom as the next person, and not adopt a sense of inferiority because of your background or who you are.”

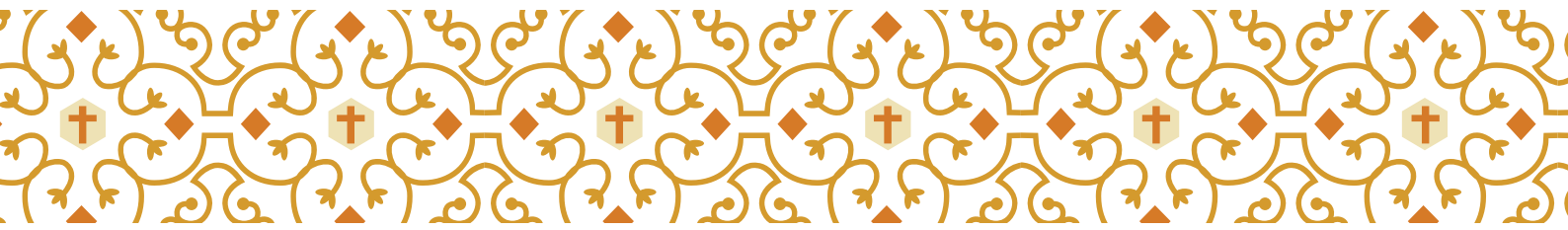
## 9.5. Greater Number of Opportunities

As we have seen, it is true that the challenges are many and that the challenges are great for Pakistani Christian young people. At the same time, they live in a day and age when they have more opportunities available to them than previous generations. A female consultant and trainer says, “It would be good for young people to see how many more possibilities there are. And, I think there are many more possibilities than people use.”

These ever-increasing opportunities are in line with the changes that Pakistan as a whole is experiencing. Expanding telecoms, dairy, retail and other sectors. Generous scholarships to study in Pakistan and overseas. Interfaith programs and activities. Small business funding. Inward investment from China creating hundreds of job opportunities. These are available to all Pakistani young people, including Christian young people. Yet, significant questions remain – whether Christian young people are aware these exist and whether they are able to compete for them on an equal footing in an increasingly competitive world.

## 10.0. Persecution and Discrimination

Persecution and discrimination are real experiences in Pakistan. How they are experienced often depends on the person’s socioeconomic background, level of education or field of work. Despite shocking examples of targeted attacks on, mob-led violence against and lynchings of Christians, the more common experience is that persecution and discrimination are systemic and institutional. For example, it is enshrined in law that a non-Muslim cannot become prime minister or president. However, persecution and discrimination are not necessarily a universal experience. There is a small, yet significant, number of people who say they have not personally experienced persecution or discrimination and a female ministry director acknowledges that these experiences of persecution and discrimination are worse outside of the megacity of Karachi, where she is from. Like many things, the experience of persecution and discrimination in Pakistan is, while largely personal, complex and multifaceted.



Indeed, an overemphasis on the narrative of persecution by the global Church and international organizations could be distorting the size of the problem and its impacts on Pakistani Christians.

## 10.1. Increasing Extremism

Most people observe that religious extremism is on the rise in Pakistan. It must be clearly stated that this is distinct from terrorism. In fact, the number of terrorist incidents in 2016 was almost half the number that occurred in 2013. An insight to this trend is offered by a Presbyterian leader:

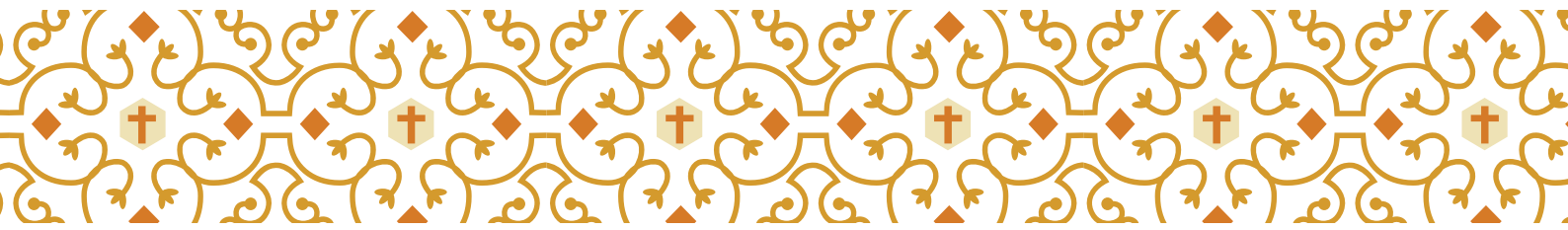
“We strongly feel that extremism is growing at a much faster pace than we ever imagined. We’re finding that mothers are teaching their little children things that make you tremble. But, this is a reality. Blasphemy lies [false accusations of blasphemy] are becoming a nerve breaking reality. It can strike at any time and does not discriminate between men, women, children or old people. It is out of our hands now and is much worse than we would like to admit.”

Adding to this, a seasoned lawyer goes as far as to say that, “what I think is that church buildings, I don’t see them in a proper existence in the near future. Probably like whatever happened in Iraq, I foresee the things like that. We need to promote house churches. Buildings won’t be the important place for the Christians any more.”

Whatever the extent of extremism in Pakistan, and however the future may look, the Pakistani Church has a counter message, as the leader of a publication ministry reminds us:

“Personally, I have great hopes. I am always optimistic. Extremism is increasing. But, day by day we are also seeing opposition to extremism. And, that is encouraging. If the Church continues to render its services in education, in hospitals, in development, in difficult opportunities, the Church will gain strength. We have to stand and stay. One unfortunate thing is that our expertise is migrating to other countries on the pretext of extremism, which is absolutely wrong. The Church has a big challenge to encourage the community to stay where they are. And, to help grow in different fields and serve the people in Pakistan. This is the Christian message. This is the message from the Lord.”

Even more radically, a seminary principal describes extremism as the greatest opportunity that God has given the Pakistani Church:



“Another challenge, which I don’t think is so big, but others do think it is extremism, blasphemy laws, and so on. But, I think this is the greatest opportunity God has given us. We need to exercise our authority over Satan; God has given us all the tools to fight, the whole armor of God. It is a huge opportunity for the Pakistani church. We have the opportunity to demonstrate God’s love for our neighbors. This is the time. We have the opportunity to reach out to everyone.”

## 10.2. Blasphemy Laws

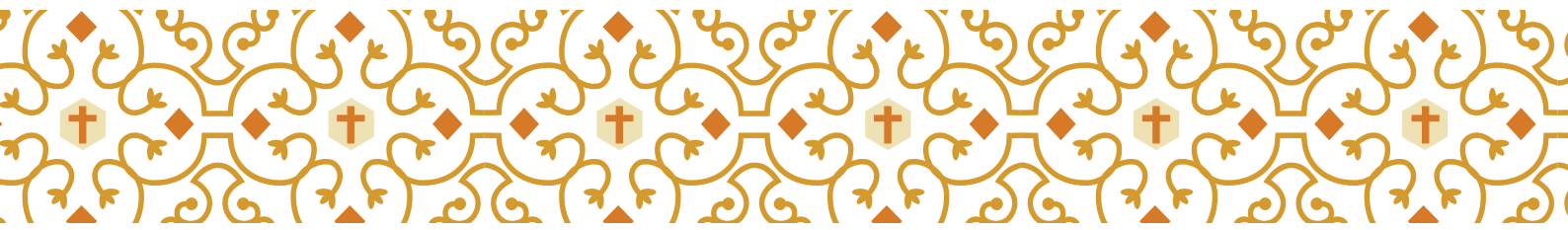
During his military regime, General Zia ul Haq introduced five additional clauses to Pakistan’s blasphemy laws. These were 295-B and C, and 298-A, B and C. The former two clauses are the harshest. 295-B carries a potential life sentence for anyone who insults the Holy Quran, while 295-C carries a mandatory death sentence for anyone who insults the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), even if the insult is unintentional. Critics say these laws have been used to persecute minority faiths and unfairly target minorities. As such, many Christians live under the fear that at any point this law could be used against them to settle a score, for personal gain by the accuser, or simply because something they said was misheard, misinterpreted or misquoted.

One of the issues this creates is that when a Christian is asked a genuine question about their faith or what they believe, they may hesitate to give an answer or do not give one at all in case what they say is construed as blasphemy. As a manager at an INGO and emerging leader sees it,

“The problem is you know the answers to critical questions from the Bible but even knowing the answer, you don’t give the answer because you know there is always a fear of the blasphemy laws and that these blasphemy laws turn into more difficulties. So, you are wise not to give the answer. Even in my education, in my school, my university, most of my friends asked me questions and I tried to avoid the answers because I knew the fears I faced and what the consequences of the answers were.”

A female development specialist talks of her experience in this way:

“I do feel this threat. I can be victimized any time if someone has a personal grudge, even. We fear that. Where I was working before, I was a project coordinator, I was leading a project at [a UN body]. Whenever they talked about religious things, all my Muslim colleagues were talking, I never took part. A Muslim may be forgiven, but if I say something, although I have many things in my heart, I will never say them. From the womb we are taught, you do not take part in such discussions, because you will be victimized. We are easy targets.”



Regarding outreach specifically, a seasoned lawyer observes that “you don’t see any pastor charged with 295-C. You don’t see any evangelist ever charged with 295-C. You see that the first victims of 295-C are those who are growing quickly economically. They have their own tractor, they buy more land, and mostly economic reasons were behind the allegations.”

As a result of allegations of blasphemy, whatever the origins of the accusations, in the last decade the Christian community has experienced the torching of homes, businesses and churches, as well as a number of deaths at the hands of vigilante mobs. Yet, testifies a Catholic church leader, throughout it all, “people are strong in their Christian identity and they feel the bond of brotherhood and sisterhood as strong as ever.”

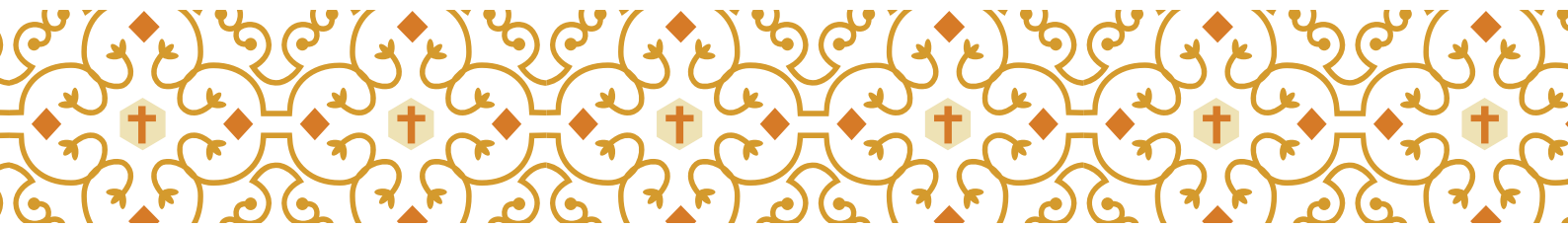
The country representative of a mission organization presents another view, that the Christian community’s challenges are more perceived than actual. A Presbyterian leader agrees, saying, “60 to 70 percent of our problems come from ourselves – not from the Muslim community.” Further, the deputy director of an INGO asks the question, “Are Christians really experiencing discrimination in Pakistan?” He believes that “there are Christians who are exploiting this discrimination to migrate. Most of the migration is due to economic reasons, but they use discrimination as an excuse.”

As an exhortation to the Christian community living in the midst of this, a pastor and ministry director says, “We should believe in Jesus, that Jesus is with us till the end. For me, in Pakistan’s history 295-C is especially against the Christians and we encourage our people that nobody can kill us while doing evangelism.”

### 10.3. Caste System

Despite the fact that Pakistan is a Muslim majority country, the culture is influenced by the history of Hinduism and its caste system, which formerly held sway in the region. Indeed, the majority of the Christian community can trace its roots back to low caste Hindu tribes and people groups, the ‘untouchables’. The regional director of a mission organization describes the situation like this:

“The caste system is perpetuated in Christians’ minds, even though several generations have gone by. Most of the Christians came from the untouchables of the Hindu caste system; they are still considered as lowly [by many Pakistanis], the lowest of the low, the cleaners, the street sweepers... That is a huge barrier to cross. Even today well placed Christians refer to other Christians as **chuhra** or **chuhri**, which is something that just carries on.”



The caste system is thus perpetuated in the thinking and outlook of the Christian community and reinforced by the culture around them. Not only this, a female consultant and trainer observes that the Christian community actively perpetuates the rigidity and discrimination of the caste system by stratifying its own community:

“I heard so many people say, ‘Oh, those are the **chuhras**.’ And, it was a Christian talking about other Christians. If mom and dad are sweepers and maybe the son is not a sweeper, but has done a BA, he will not be able to marry a woman from the higher classes because his mom and dad are sweepers.”

What this hangover from their past, and present, low social status breeds is a sense of self-limitation and that to step out to do anything different would be futile. Accompanying this is a sense of hopelessness, the rigidity of the system and the depth of entrenchment mean that many people do not see any hope of change.

From a 2013 article in a national English language newspaper, the words of Afzal Masih sadly exemplify this and the discrimination that exists through the social ostracization of Christians:

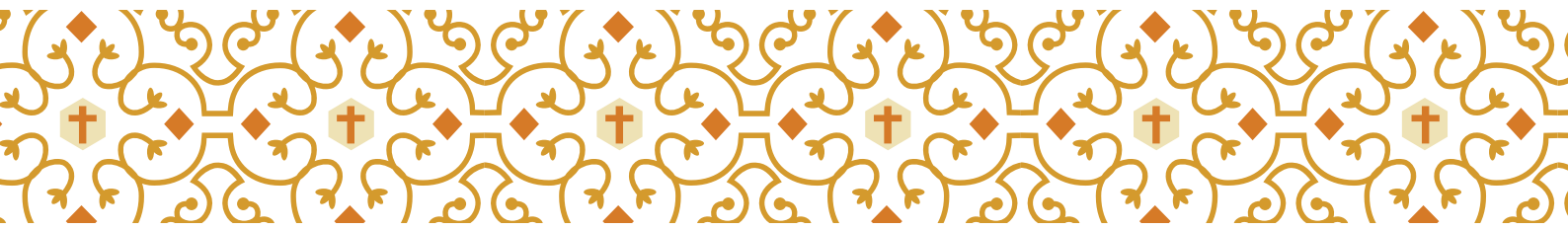
“I am a sweeper, my sons will be sweepers and, in the future, so will my grandsons. Nothing changes for us. We will live and die sweeping. We are born for this work. The majority of Christians work as sweepers. So why should my kids expect to lead a life that is different from mine? What are the benefits of education for our people when we know that, ultimately, none of us will amount to more than sweepers? We will be sweepers even if we are graduates. We have lived in Peshawar for centuries and have no problems as such. We perform our religious rituals in church and don’t face hurdles in that respect. However, people generally don’t want to mingle with us socially.”<sup>4</sup>

## 10.4. Outsiders

Besides the discrimination that comes from religiously based stratification as outlined above, on a broader level, Pakistani Christians are often seen as outsiders, belonging to neither the country nor the land, with allegiances elsewhere. Demonstrating this, the director of a national children’s ministry recalls an encounter his young daughter had in her school in a significantly sized city in the Punjab:

“Her classmate asked her, ‘You are Christian?’ She said, ‘Yes, you know it.’ She said, ‘Yes, but you are enemies of Islam. You are enemies of Pakistan. You are a friend of

<sup>4</sup> Zia, Asad. ‘Nothing changes for us...we will live and die sweeping.’ The Express Tribune 30 March 2013. Web, 27 January 2013



Israel. You are a friend of India. You are a friend of the US.”<sup>5</sup>

One of the consequences of this ‘outsiderness’ is that Pakistani Christians become scapegoats for things done by the ‘Christian West’ that Muslims in Pakistan find offensive. The country coordinator of an INGO says, “If any political action or statement happens in another part of the world, the Christian community has to bear the consequences here in Pakistan.” Indeed, a seasoned lawyer thinks, “We’re [Pakistani Christians] the scapegoats for the Europeans or the Americans or whosoever.”

It is interesting to note that, while the idea of Christians being outsiders is a view promoted largely by those outside of the Christian community, in the media and certain strands of religious teaching, the Christian community reinforces this idea, too. Some Christians live in gated mission compounds, often part of a Christian hospital, church building or denominational office. The wall around the compound is a barrier that keeps the world out and the Christian community living there confined. As well as the mission compounds, most Christians live Christian neighborhoods, separated from Muslims. The physical reality of living separately represents and reinforces the idea of being outsiders.

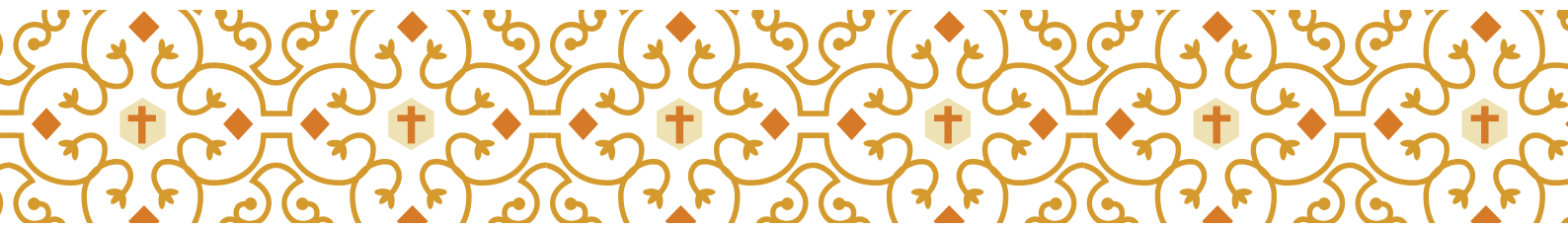
According to a ministry director and entrepreneur, this physical reality is further reinforced in the home and by elders in the Christian community: “I think the problem with young people is that they get this instruction from their elders not to mix with Muslims, they are bad people and things like that. But they are not bad people, I have many Muslim friends and we drink from the same cup and eat together and there is no problem.”

Additionally, some people feel that the language of minority is not helpful, that it creates a divide and further entrenches the idea of being outsiders. The same seasoned lawyer expresses it like this:

“I’m not from a minority, I’m a Pakistani Christian and I’m proud to be called and to be known as a Pakistani Christian. Since we serve the country through the army, through our health ministries, through our education ministries and we took part when Pakistan came into being, so politically we supported Pakistan and otherwise we supported Pakistan. We are first Pakistani and then Christian.”

An NGO leader has another way of looking at this question of identity and overcoming the sense of being an outsider: “If you believe that you are a Christian and that is why you are put down, then you are serving yourself. But, I believe the other way, I believe that I am a Christian, that is why I am on top. Jesus is my strength. I am a Christian,

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that in this instance, the director of a national children’s ministry was able to take up this matter with the school’s principal, who in turn approached the other girl’s parents regarding the incident



that is my strength. And, believe me, wherever I have been, I feel myself standing on the ground, I see myself being respected just because I am a Christian. I feel Christianity is a strength of mine, but other people try to take the other way.”

## 10.5. Job Market

Some Christians experience discrimination in the marketplace, unable to enter work appropriate to their level of education. While the reasons behind this are manifold and too complex to discuss in depth in this report, it is true that Christians are underrepresented in fields such as technology, engineering and business, as well as in skilled positions across all sectors and fields.

On the one hand, a female program head at an INGO says that she still hears “that being Christian you won’t get that job or admission to university, they will discourage you and you will experience a lot of discrimination there. Of course, that is there.” On the other hand, a Church of Pakistan leader and seminary professor says, “When Christian people go into the sphere of the majority community, they have their own fears, self-projected fears. I know many young people who are living and working in the majority community with great Christian integrity. They are on their way to success. They are enjoying very high levels office.”

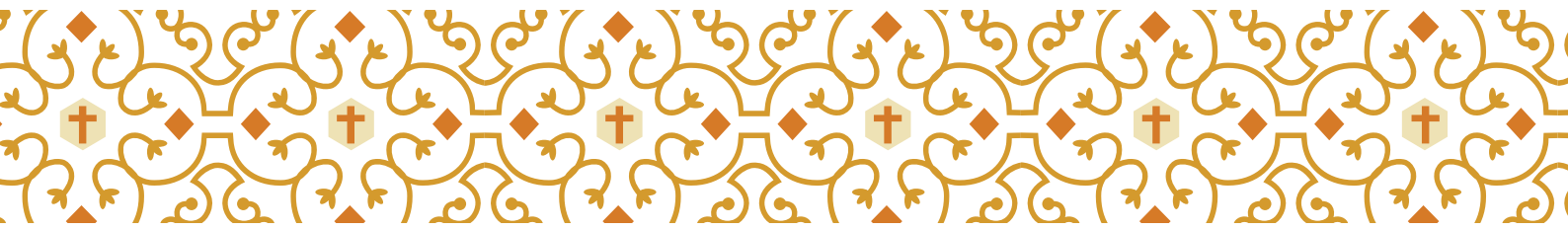
Even though there are Christians who enjoy well-paying professional jobs, they are the exception rather than the rule. While some struggle to enter professional jobs, a seminary director describes the saving grace of the Christian sector and denominations as regards employment. “Mostly, Christians are surviving because of church-based jobs. I think 60 percent, that’s my guess. I think that 60 percent of Christians get jobs in Christian faith-based institutions. If that source was not available to the Christian community here in Pakistan, where would we be?” he asks.

There are undoubtedly many ways of tackling this problem, from career counseling to workshops on interview skills and CV writing, from mentoring and coaching to small business incubation. Whatever the way forward, as someone who struggled to achieve her own ambitions, the INGO program head exhorts the Christian community to demonstrate its skills and leadership.

## 10.6. To Go or To Stay

Today, we can see that more and more Pakistani Christians are leaving the country, while there also seems to be an increasing number who have committed to investing





their lives to see the Christian community and their country flourish. Strength of feeling seems to be increasing on both ends of this spectrum, witnessing to both experiences of hopelessness and hope, visionlessness and vision. As a female development specialist observes, “If they Christians have any opportunity to go out, go abroad, they prefer to. It’s not because you are not providing scholarships or opportunities in the community; it’s mainly because of the insecurity of being a minority. That’s the main thing.”

In opposition to the prevailing flight of many Pakistani Christians from their homeland, there are those whose focus is to stick it out and stand up for their community and country. The director of a language recordings ministry describes this as “a revival wave in Pakistan and there are many young people God is calling for mission work. Many of them are looking for people who can train them, help them.”

## 10.7. More than These Experiences

While Pakistani Christians’ experiences of discrimination and persecution are irrefutable, for most Christians outside of Pakistan this is how the Pakistani Christian community has come to be defined. To view the Pakistani Christian solely through this lens is disempowering and a negation of the community’s strengths, not to mention how God is at work. Despite discrimination and persecution being a straightforward hook to catch the attention of governments, donors and Christians across the globe in terms of fundraising, it is an unhelpful, restrictive narrative.

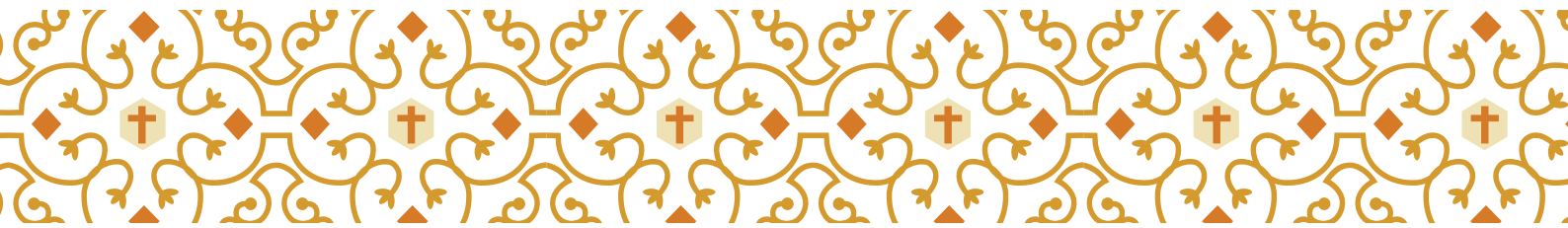
The principal of a seminary went on a speaking tour of churches in the UK to raise awareness about the seminary he leads. This is what he has to say about his time there:

“When I visited the UK and was asked to talk about the seminary I am principal of, I prepared a short video that communicates the exciting opportunities we are responding to. At the end of my talk, all the questions were about Asia Bibi<sup>6</sup> and the blasphemy laws. I wasn’t prepared for that. All the questions were focused on that everywhere I went. There are many Pakistanis who constantly send newsletters about blasphemy laws and persecution and people respond to that. But, it isn’t the whole picture. So, I had to change my talk to include the persecution issue, but also added that we are thankful to God for the opportunities he has given. God is doing his work in Pakistan.”

## 10.8. First and Foremost Pakistani

Over and above all things, Pakistani Christian leaders identify as just that, Pakistanis.

<sup>6</sup> Asia Bibi is a Pakistani Christian woman on death row for blasphemy



They are Pakistanis who love their country and their fellow Pakistanis. This is how the Pakistani Christian community wishes to be seen by their fellow citizens, as Pakistanis, whose inclusion is essential to growth and success of their country. All of this is despite the multiple, complex challenges regarding identity, which undergird and are interwoven with the experiences of persecution and discrimination.

Related to this, many people raised the issue of the Christian community needing to have an increased presence in and be better represented across media, as well as in school textbooks and other publically consumed materials. The purpose of this would be twofold, firstly, to improve other communities' perceptions and understanding of the Christian community. Secondly, to improve Christians' self-image and sense of place in Pakistan.

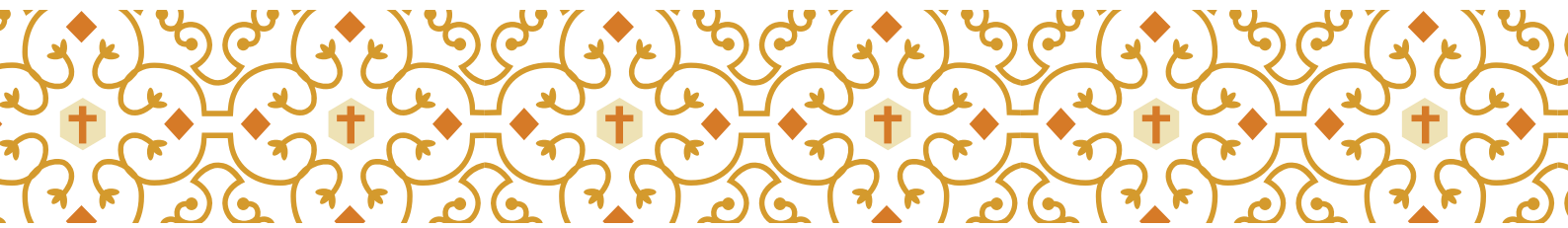
On this subject, a leader in technical education insists, "We need representation in the media. We need to learn how to promote ourselves. We need to break the barriers that keep us from being in the media. We are in the media only when there is scandal. The media reports that we preach and try to convert people, that we only serve Christians, but none of this is true. But, we don't promote ourselves. We need to get positive news into the media every once in a while. We don't even try. We are contributing for 116 years and no one knows"

## 11.0. Experiences of Isolation

The Pakistani Christian community is an isolated one. There are three key experiences of isolation. The first is that many Pakistani Christians are isolated from one another, whether that is because of patterns of culture and behavior or simply through a lack of awareness of what one another is doing in similar fields. The second is that the Pakistani Christian community is largely isolated from other Pakistani communities, including the Muslim and other religious communities. This is both a physical isolation, with most Pakistani Christians living in separate neighborhoods, which also perpetuates a relational isolation from these different communities. The one feeds into the other, creating a cycle that entrenches the isolation even further. Lastly, the author has observed that the Pakistani Church is isolated from the global Church.

### 11.1. Isolated From One Another

As we have seen in 4.8., there exists mistrust among Christian leaders, which causes leaders as well as their churches, ministries and organizations, to be isolated from one another. This is reflected through a lack of interdependence and unified voice. Further



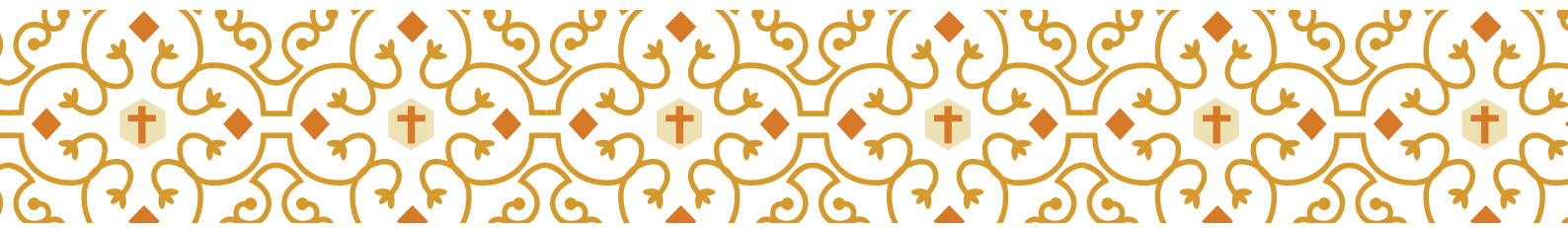
compounding this reality is the fact that Pakistani Christians are largely ‘un-networked’, meaning that there are few linkages or connections between individuals groups of people working in similar fields, professions or ministries. By way of example, the author met two leaders working in different cities undertaking pioneering efforts to mentor young people, both using the same model developed by the same international partner and both in contact with this partner – neither leader had heard of the other, let alone talked, shared ideas or worked together on developing resources in Urdu. Part of this is due to the lack of regular opportunities for Christian leaders to come together to encourage each other and learn about each other’s efforts. This inhibits the development of a sense of shared purpose and exacerbates people’s geographic isolation.

A number of leaders mention a high point when Christians of all backgrounds came together on one platform in the early 90s to protest the government’s initiative to include religion on national identity cards. In the end, the government relented and religion was, and is still, not included on these mandatory identification cards. A Presbyterian leader says of that time, “Christians all over Pakistan had one voice and within one week the government had to listen to us.” Since then, laments the same leader, the Christian community has not come together again in such a manner, “now we don’t have one voice.”

Encouragingly, there are signs that there is a growing desire to overcome these barriers to work towards the greater good of the Christian community and the country. Even through the course of group discussions for this report, participants repeatedly expressed their delight at the opportunity to come together and discuss the challenges the Christian community and nation are facing and to identify and work toward solutions. The enthusiasm was palpable, in large part, because few to no such opportunities or platforms currently exist.

Many express, as an INGO country representative does, “We need to begin networking with each other, building stronger relationships and networks.” Similarly, the deputy director of an INGO echoes this, “there is a big need for networks where Christians can come together for networking on issues of national importance.”

The Islamabad United Council (IUC) is an excellent example of such a network. This is a network of church leaders and pastors in Islamabad who meet together to discuss issues, share ideas and pray. As the network has become more established, politicians have approached IUC for input on issues related to the Christian community. There are similar networks in Abbottabad, Faisalabad and Rawalpindi. A Pentecostal pastor shares that a family friend, a pastor, believes that this kind of network is so important that he travels to other cities bearing his own expenses to work with church leaders



and pastors to bring them together to build a network in their city. Other examples of networks include the Theological Educators Forum, the Nurses Christian Fellowship Pakistan and the Christian Hospitals Association Pakistan.

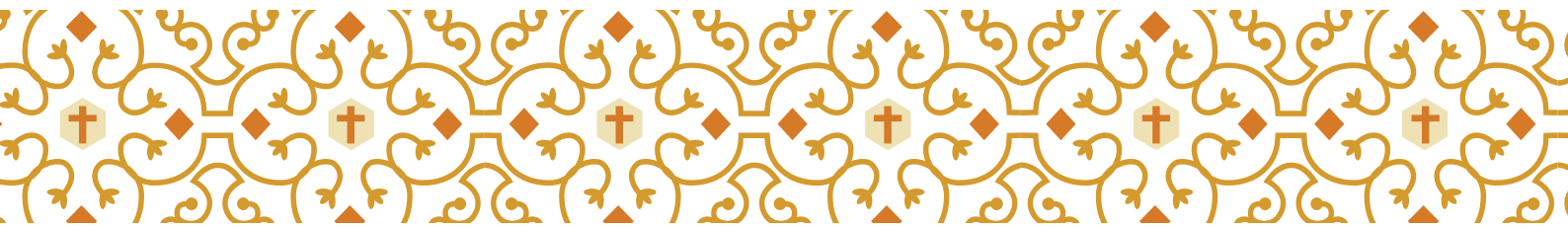
## 11.2. Isolated from Other Communities

Many observe that the Pakistani Christian community is isolated from other communities, including the Muslim community and other religious communities. The Pakistani Christian community is described by Pakistani Christian leaders as cocooned, set apart, ghettoized and isolated. On the one hand, the Christian community itself is actively doing this. Common practices within the Christian community further entrench sense of separation, often in simple ways, such as living in separate Christian neighborhoods, choosing English names for their children or styles of dress.

Of course, external events outside the control of the Pakistani Christian community have also contributed to this disconnectedness. For example, as a female ministry director shares, “9/11 has done a lot of damage to our relationship with Muslims. Anything that takes place in America or anything that Israel does, it is considered that the Christian community is at fault. It is a mark on us – if America has done it then the Christians have done it. So, it is a stigma on us.”

All of this creates a disconnect between Pakistani Christians and Muslims as well as a disconnect with the ideas of the nation of Pakistan and being Pakistani. Many leaders believe that the most significant way of tackling this is through the public acknowledgement and increased awareness of Christians’ and other minorities’ contributions to the creation and nation building of Pakistan. Highlighting key individuals and their contributions would imbue the Pakistani Christian community with pride and ownership, as well as help Muslims to understand that non-Muslims’ efforts were critical for the creation of Pakistan. A Church of Pakistan bishop says,

“The Christian community is serving the nation. This is very important for us to know and realize as Pakistani Christians, that there is a role to be played in the life of nation. We want to play our role because in the past, for the last many, many years, the Church has played its role in the areas of healthcare and education. There will be a time when the nation will recognize our services in different social areas. For example, people are working for disabled people. There are people working for the drug addicts, poor people, and people working for some other needs. There will be a time when they will recognize our services as church organizations.”



### 11.3. Abandoned by the Global Church

Although there had been a falloff of foreign missionary numbers in Pakistan prior to 9/11, that event accelerated this decline. Western missionaries were often the main point of contact with foreign mission agencies as well as with supporting churches and generous donors to Christian efforts in Pakistan; when the missionaries left, relationships with Pakistanis tended to die out and the funds they had brought into the country greatly decreased. It has become difficult for Pakistani leaders to get visas to visit Western countries to communicate their vision, and often Westerners are reluctant to travel to Pakistan given the safety and security concerns. Indeed, many churches in the West are surprised to learn that the Pakistani Church is active. The result has been a growing isolation of the Pakistani Church from the global Church.

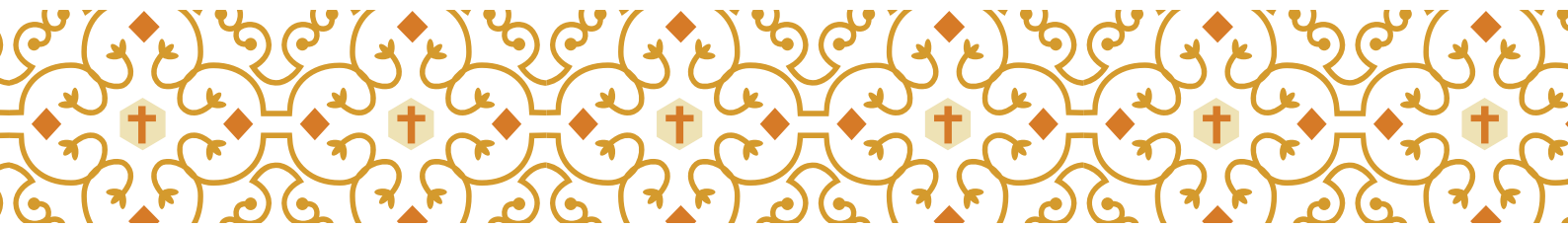
One impact of this has been financial. Not only have sources of financial support diminished, often the salaries of missionaries were not included in ministry budgets. As a female seminary principal points out, “When foreigners were principal and teaching faculty, their salaries used to be covered by their churches. Now the staff is national and the burden of all expenditure is on the organization and we have to do fundraising for salaries and all other expenses.”

Beyond this some people allude to a sense of being forgotten by departing missionaries. The same principal says, “I see their interest and their aid diminishing... To a large extent their interest has lessened, but I am not saying that it has totally finished, but it has definitely lessened.” There is definitely the sense that the Pakistani Church feels abandoned by the global Church.

The relative isolation of the Pakistani Church from the global Church is also reflected by the general lack of awareness among ministry leaders of what is happening and bearing fruit in other parts of the world. The terminology of unreached people groups and disciple making movements is missing in conversations. Few seem aware of what is available on a Kindle or of what can be accessed on the internet. It can be difficult to find someone who is familiar with titles such as *When Helping Hurts* or *Miraculous Movements*.

## 12.0. Unnecessary Burdens

All societies and all cultures have their ‘baggage’. These traits or norms are deep rooted and, often, have developed and become entrenched over centuries, if not millennia. This is the same for the Pakistani Christian community and the people groups,



ethnicities and cultures that exist in the nation state we know as Pakistan. Listed below are some key insights to patterns within the Pakistani Christian community that serve to hold it back.

## 12.1. Fear

In Pakistan fear is everywhere. Fear for the future. Fear of others. Fear of violence. Fear of death. Fear-based parenting. Fear used to exploit others. Fear is all pervasive; it seems to be deep rooted and ingrained. These are not simply many people's personal fears amplified across the country. Rather, it is what may be termed a collective experience of fear or a culture of fear. And, this fear seems to be more intensely experienced by marginalized and minority groups like the Pakistani Christian community.

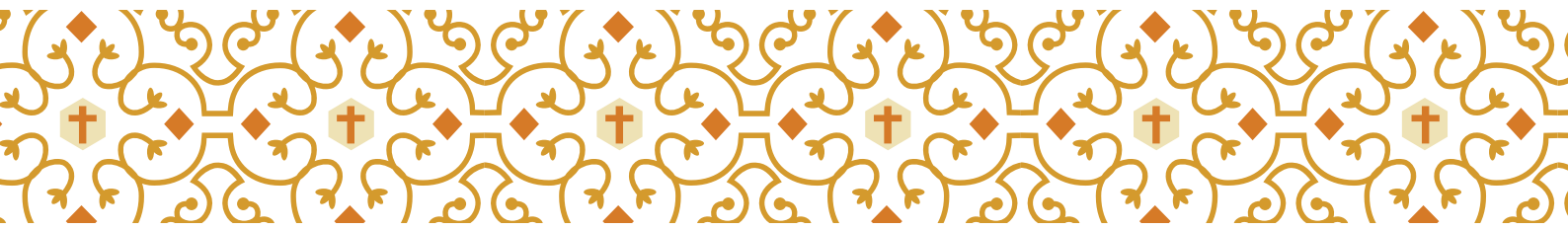
A seminary principal comments that this fear is passed down from generation to generation, that it is learned at an early age and needs to be undone at an early age. He says, "We need to teach our children not to be fearful. We shouldn't nurture the fear factor. It only leads to hate and fear. Fear and hate are a terrible combination. They will fail when a crisis comes. With a fearful mindset the only solution is to leave the country. This isn't the solution."

The symptoms of this fear can be readily seen in how the Christian community tends to live in 'colonies', almost exclusively Christian neighborhoods, with very little contact with Muslim people. Despite the Christian community being largely close-knit, there is little to no networking between Christian professionals and ministries. Another symptom of fear is self-limiting behaviors that inhibit people from doing new things and pushing new boundaries. A ministry leader and entrepreneur working across the Punjab believes that the 'fear factor' inhibits Christians from starting businesses. When canvassing opinion on opening an arts café, the entrepreneur's Muslim friends championed the idea, whereas his Christian contacts said that it could not be done. A female consultant and trainer says that she has had to let people go from her business because they did not want to grow – her employees feared moving forward. A female project director says that "in the Pakistani context... we have a lot of fears about if someone will get better than me, what will happen to me?"

Like the principal of the seminary comments above, fear results in an outflux of Christians and other minorities from the country. According to a recent study, 21 Pakistani non-Muslims are leaving the country every day,<sup>7</sup> with Christians among their number. Indeed, the Christian community is suffering from the flight of its brightest, most talented and best-educated young people.

7

Aftab, Safay; Taj, Arif (2015) Migration of Minorities in Pakistan: A Case Study Analysis [www.aawaz.org.pk](http://www.aawaz.org.pk)



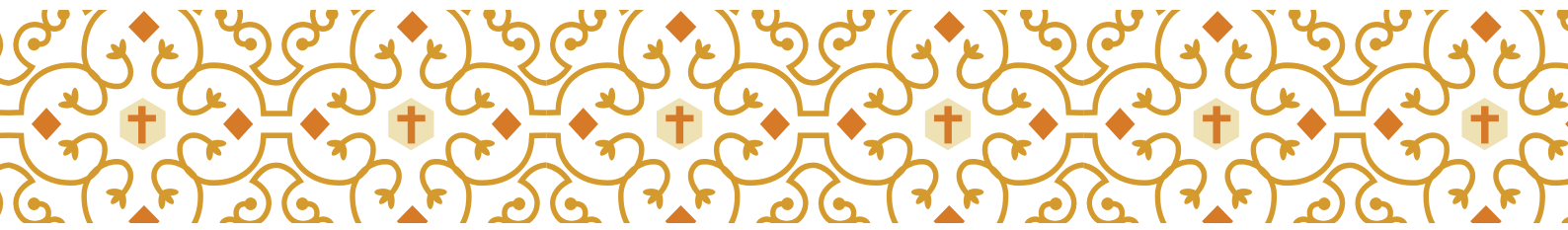
Many agree that one of the first steps to overcome this ingrained fear in the Pakistani community is greater transparency and openness towards one another, at personal, professional and organizational levels. A former missionary and visiting trainer comments on the concept of transparency being misunderstood in partnerships and donor relationships, that in having to be transparent means there is a lack of trust. He says, “I think there is a hesitancy and a fear to lay open. Transparency is not treasured because it’s assumed that your partner should know how much money you have or how it’s handled. They label it a lack of trust, whereas they should understand accountability actually increases trust.” Over and above greater transparency and openness, there are many who think that the capacity building of leaders, who, their positions of authority and influence, can support and encourage behavioral changes from the top. Put simply, a female project director has “learned that, if I keep moving forward myself, I don’t have fear. If leaders are not building their own capacities, they will always have fear.”

## 12.2. Dependency

A significant number of people comment that a welfare or dependency mentality exists within the Pakistani Christian community. A female INGO program manager believes that this situation has arisen because of ongoing help coming from outside of the country and a historical focus on aid, which has “made our Christian community into beggars.” A Church of Pakistan leader and seminary professor likens this dependency to an addiction, saying that the Pakistani Christian community is hooked on charity.

External factors continue to perpetuate this, even those that are intended to provide uplift to the Pakistani Christian community. Family structure is one such factor. Of this, a ministry director and entrepreneur says, “Our culture does not support us or promote us to have basic life skills; you cannot make your own decisions and you are always dependent on your parents telling you what you’ll become or study. It’s the overall culture where you are not supported in a way that you should excel in area in which you are good.” Another factor is the government’s quota of five percent of public sector jobs being reserved for religious minorities. For an INGO country coordinator, the quota system entrenches the idea of dependency, believing that the younger generations need to learn to compete on their own merit to enter government jobs. A more frequent criticism is that the quota is not adequately implemented and that many positions remain unfilled. Nonetheless, many do believe the quota system is a real opportunity for Pakistani Christians to break the glass ceiling, an opportunity that most young people do not know how to access.

Everyone agrees that the Christian community’s dependency needs to be combated. The same Church of Pakistan leader and seminary professor, who also works with more



marginalized sections of the Pakistani Christian community, is doing just that through skills development, training and employment opportunities. Indeed, as understanding develops and awareness grows, there are a small and increasing number of such initiatives across the country.

### 12.3. Diminished Reputation

For decades, the Pakistani Christian community has enjoyed a reputation for being hard working, trustworthy and honest. So much so that Christians would be sought out for cash handling, accountancy jobs and any role that required dealing with money. Christian nurses were thought of as the most reliable and highly sought after. Christian hospitals were known to have the best patient care. However, through increased nominalism in the Christian community, and increased associations with gambling, prostitution, alcohol and drugs, the Christian community no longer enjoys the reputation it once had. Indeed, there are many who see this as a symptom of a wider moral malaise in the country as a whole.

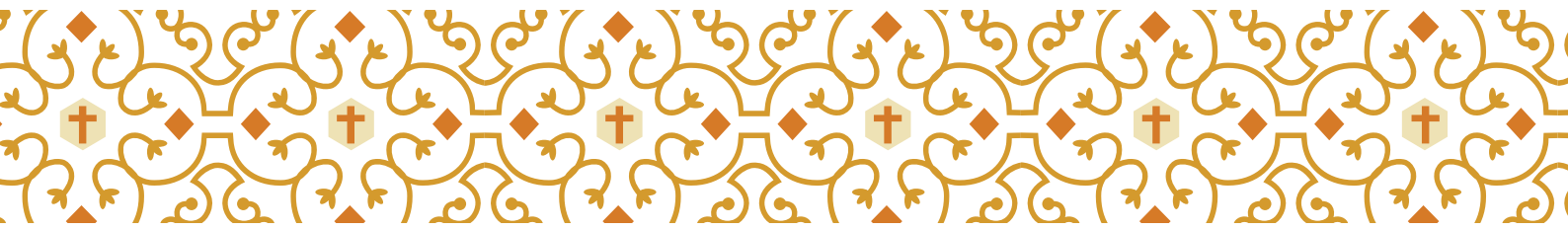
### 12.4. Identity

Identity is core to being human and having a strong sense of identity is important in order to flourish personally and as a group, whether as a family, a congregation, a neighborhood or a country. In Pakistan, there are multiple, largely rigid, layers of identity. Most Pakistanis will have a combination of, if not all, the following identities: ethnic, linguistic, caste, religious and national. That is without adding in potentially more fluid indicators of identity such as economic status, social standing and level of educational attainment.

In the Christian community, the feeling is strong that there is an identity crisis, particularly among young people. Many young people do not want to be defined by a religious label that sets them apart as a religious minority, and neither do they feel they can freely embrace a Pakistani national identity because a large part of that is Islamic. This creates within young people a sense that they do not belong anywhere, which can have damaging ramifications.

Like many others, a sports ministry pioneer believes the Church can play a big role in addressing this identity crisis as well as raise aspirations. One thing he is doing in his congregation is inviting Christian women and men who are successful in their fields to visit his church. He explains:

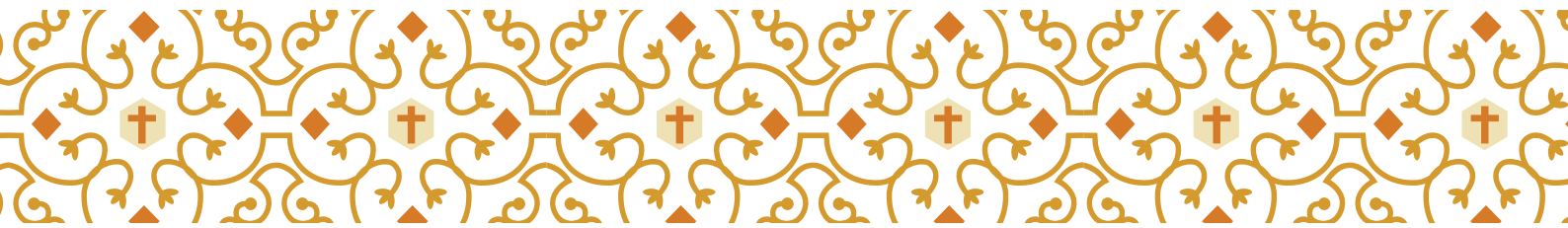




“We invite people in government, someone in sports, people in different fields, to present themselves to the congregation during church, then the young people can be encouraged by these people through church. I think it’s a good idea, if churches present someone who is doing really good things for the country. I was reading through Facebook how one Christian guy who is a fighter pilot. If churches such people and show young people, look, he’s Pakistani, he’s doing wonderfully and he’s a Christian. These things can be done through churches. But, at churches this is difficult – they don’t give time to other people. That’s a big issue.”

## 13.0. Missionary Legacy

The area of the world that has been called Pakistan since 1947 has enjoyed a rich, fascinating missionary history, when the Lord Jesus’s apostle Thomas was said to have spent time in the city now known as Taxila, some thirty minutes from the present day capital, Islamabad. The modern missionary era began in the mid-1800s and reached its height in the early 20th century. The current Pakistani Church is the fruit of those efforts. After World War II, a further wave of Western missionaries came, often for periods lasting 30 to 40 years, with many retiring in the 1980s and 1990s as age took its toll. Many of the missionaries that replaced them came for shorter periods, with the result that missionary numbers were tapering off by the year 2000. After 9/11 the remaining missionaries faced an unprecedented choice. In previous times of unrest and insecurity, such as times of war or anti-American protests in the streets, the missionaries continued to stay. Following 9/11, though, with the American invasion of Afghanistan on the horizon, there was a widespread concern that violence might be targeted specifically at foreigners and no one wanted to put the Pakistan Church in the position of having to risk their lives to protect missionaries. That would exacerbate the perception that Pakistani Christians are representatives of the West and unnecessarily place them in harm’s way. Many missionaries chose to evacuate, planning to return when the time was right. Some were able to return, but many were not. In 2002 several missionary institutions were attacked, adding a new level of security concern. Visas became more difficult to obtain and schooling options for children became more complex. As a result, missionary numbers are far below the numbers of 20 to 30 years ago. Many say the missionary period in Pakistan is drawing to a close or transforming into something different. Interestingly, while the overall number of missionaries, mostly Western, has decreased dramatically, within that trend there has actually been a significant increase in the number of missionaries from Asia and to a lesser extent from sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. Additionally, there is a growing number of Pakistanis becoming missionaries to other cultures and language groups found within the borders of the country.



Missionaries were responsible for developing an important health and education infrastructure in Pakistan. Christian schools, colleges, clinics, hospitals and other institutions can be found across the country, each with a proud history of pioneering service. In fact, so well renowned were mission schools that many prominent Muslim figures in Pakistan studied at mission or convent schools and are proud to have done so. The rector of a renowned college shares, “It’s often the case when I meet graduates of [this college], they will proudly say that they are products completely of missionary education – they see that as a good thing. ‘I came through St. Anthony’s.’ ‘I came through a convent school.’ ‘I came from here, I came from that.’ And, they’re very proud of that. That happens dozens and dozens of times in a year.”

### 13.1. Vestiges of the Missionary Legacy

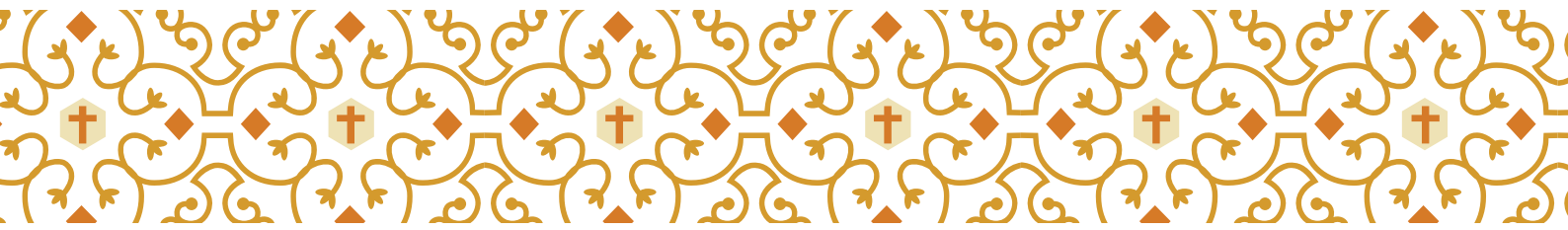
There are many things to give thanks for and rejoice over regarding the history of missions in Pakistan. At the same time, it is also important to acknowledge some of the gaps that have been left behind as a result of the methods and approaches missionaries have used over time and the rapid exodus after 9/11.

One of the major gaps is in leadership, largely because of uneven handover of organizations and institutions from missionaries to Pakistanis. Difficult handovers have been a result of a lack of succession planning, a lack of investing in future leaders over the longer term as well not being prepared for the rapid and unexpected changes that came in 2001. What has happened, says the director of a radio ministry, is that “good institutions have had to close because local believers have not been adequately prepared and trained to take over management roles. This is a weakness of how missionaries have led. Once the key missionary leaves, funding usually stops and often, institutions have to close. Others continue to run, but the transition should be prepared for and implemented step by step.”

A political leader and activist explains this in more detail:

“Before partition, missionaries were very strong in this region. When they left, the local leadership became powerful. The missionaries were unable to adequately devolve or transfer power. They just left the Church with no proper planning about how things should be. It was handed over to the locals and the locals couldn’t run things. Today’s conflicts in the Pakistani Church... are a result of that the lack of devolution, the lack of transfer of power, or not transferring resources. So, today, we’re not transferring power, not transferring leadership to the upcoming generations, we’re not giving confidence to the next generation that they can be leaders as well.”

Missionaries were not completely unaware of the need to raise up local leaders. Many



potential leaders were identified at an early stage and prepared for leadership, including sending them abroad for higher studies. Unfortunately, many of these never returned, and this problem remains to this day, hampering efforts to raise up highly qualified local faculty for seminaries and colleges.

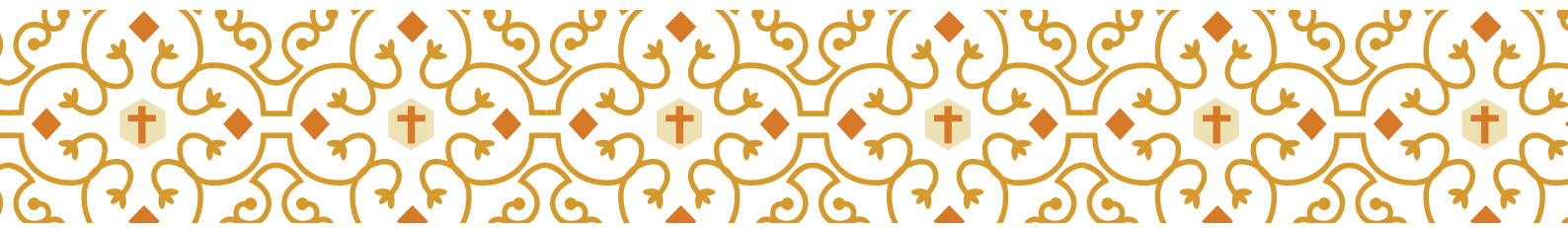
Missionaries brought with them their own attitudes and biases about the role of church and parachurch organizations and often formed their own opinions about the ability of the local church to engage in outreach. A seminary principal points out, “For some reason missionaries kept churches and outreach separate. A vision for outreach was not instilled in the Church. It was instilled in individuals, but not in the Church. There was no discussion of it, no stories, no request for funds.” He continues by saying, “Some missionaries are still in the old mode. They have their own vision and are working on that. It is my money and my vision.” This pattern is still visible in the Pakistani Church. Much of the outreach is being done by individuals and organizations separate from the church.

In the past 20 years the pace of change in the world has greatly increased. Over the course of 40 years of service from 1945 to 1985, a missionary may have experienced the addition of electricity to their home, an improvement in roads and maybe even a connection for their first phone. Otherwise, many things remained the same. There was little need to consider new opportunities or to adapt to a changing environment. Thus, a tendency to continue as one has done in the past marks the culture of many institutions started by missionaries. As the same principal states, “Christian leaders still see things through the eyes of their missionary mentors even though times have changed. Old strategies are no longer so effective. Change is on a fast track. Our challenges are that as leaders we can’t change quickly enough. Some of us still have the old missionary mindset because that is who we learned from.”

## **13.2. The Changing Role of Missionaries and the Global Church**

Mission in Pakistan in years gone by was characterized by decades of service, largely operating in leadership positions and often working in established Christian institutions and organizations. These norms no longer stand; the role of the missionary in Pakistan has changed and is continuing to change. Yet, most agree that missionaries still have a role to play in Pakistan.

“The missionary needs to do what others can’t do. Otherwise, it isn’t a good use of resources and they can become a hindrance to developing local talent,” says the principal of a seminary. In practical terms, what this looks like says a Catholic church leader, is “maybe foreign missionaries come to do a specific job for a few months, maybe in



training if that was required. They are invited to do a specific job and then move on. Train, train, train local people and then move on.” A seminary director adds, “I think that the missionary’s role in this era is mostly in the supporting role, not in the driving role and not on the front line.” The same seminary principal echoes this, “Missionaries that do come need to align with the local vision.”

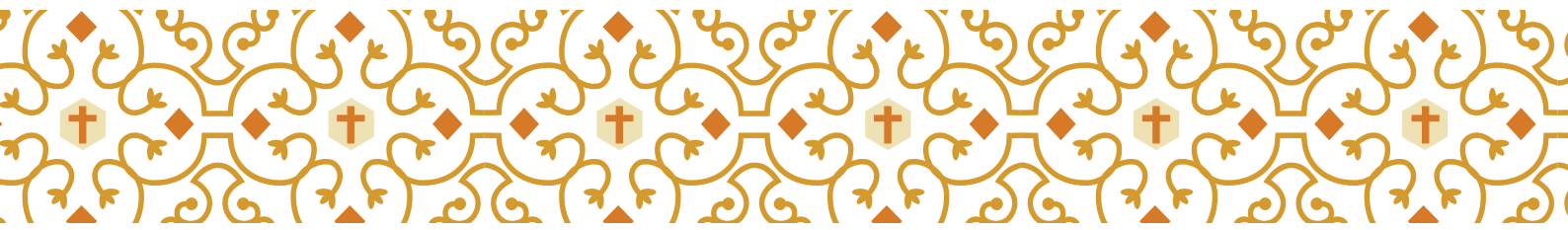
The director of a language recordings ministry has had a successful experience of this new way of working. He says, “There was one young man from England who came here. He helped us to produce a prayer book for 15 language groups. We could not have done that on our own, so he had to play his part. He’s gone, he was a volunteer for few months. We need one another.”

In the spirit of needing one another, evoking the biblical idea of one body, many parts, this same ministry director relates that the task before the Pakistani Church is “beyond our capacity in prayer, manpower and resource. We are social people... Westerners are more planners, project runners. That’s okay, let’s come together and work. God is humbling us to realize that we cannot handle the task on our own. There was a time when Pakistani leaders said, ‘Thank you, we don’t need you anymore,’ because maybe there was a colonial style initially, but now new people coming to Pakistan are not like that and our young people also don’t understand the colonial thing, so the new generation is different.”

An emerging leader hopes that foreign missions will “invest in our young emerging leaders so that they do not become dependent on outside resources. We need to be able to create and use resources that we have within the country. We need to be able to support and stand beside those people who want to do the work to reach the majority community. We need our own people to support them. In a few years the ability of foreign organizations to help will be limited. I would encourage foreign and local organizations to help people to become self-supporting. This is why I encourage people to start small businesses and ministries to become a for-profit and use that profit for God.”

The regional director of a mission organization sums it up like this:

“I do not want to rob the Church in the West of its God given priority to be part of mission; restricting money or missionaries would be restricting God’s work. Partnering with us is coming to us, working alongside us and possibly working under us – in a very Christian, servant leadership way. Medical work is still very much open. Teaching theology is open. Business as mission is a whole new world – it is imparting Christian values to its workers. There is no end to where missionaries can work. Christians in the arts – writers, thinkers, performers, journalists. There is no dearth of ways you



can be a Christian and work here. We have become boxed into our way of thinking.” And herein lies the challenge presented by the regional director of a mission organization to the global Church and missionary community, how will their thinking evolve and adapt to see new opportunities to serve in Pakistan, to partner with, equip and encourage the Pakistani Church?

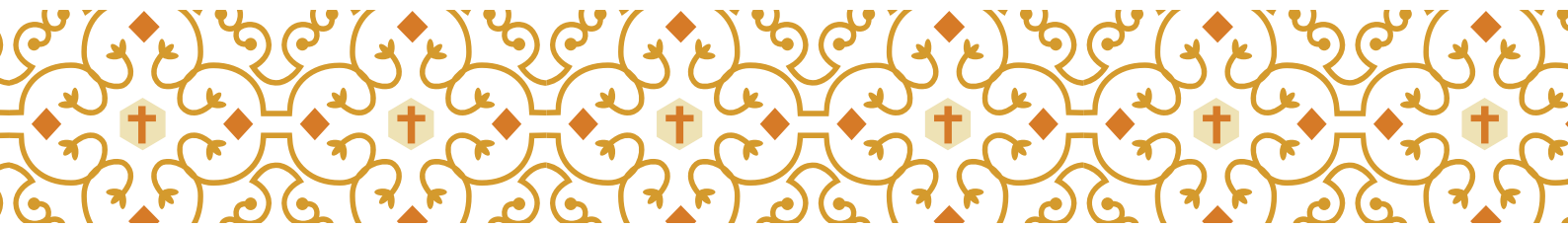
## 14.0. Tools for Outreach

Historically, a good portion of Christian outreach in Pakistan was centered on engagement through hospitals and schools, providing quality and high standards in the fields of health and education, often serving the most impoverished and marginalized communities. Increasingly, though, high quality private healthcare and education services are becoming much more widely available, and Christian providers no longer stand out in the way they used to. Indeed, many Christian hospitals and schools are struggling in the current environment. This fact, along with advances in technology, media and a more connected world, means that Pakistani ministries and churches are at a point where they need to reassess how they engage with the world around them. As a seasoned lawyer shares, “I think that now the time has come that we need to engage other faith communities through different tools. Before, we had two tools: one was health, our hospitals, and the other, schools. But, we need to explore more avenues, more tools to reach out to people because the world has been changed.”

### 14.1. Holistic Approach, Integral Mission

Many of the models of Christian outreach in Pakistan tend to fall into the categories of exclusively addressing people’s spiritual need through the sharing of the gospel message, or, exclusively meeting people’s physical needs through projects and other endeavors that have little or no gospel content. There is often little combination of intentionally meeting both people’s spiritual and physical needs together at the level of their daily lives.

This may be changing. There are some who comment that the awareness and understanding of the concept of holistic ministry or integral mission is growing, while a Pentecostal pastor identifies Pentecostal churches as being leaders in this area. What may be helpful in further developing and cementing the idea of holistic ministry or integral mission, would be creating avenues for leaders and churches to learn from other leaders’ and churches’ experiences of living this out, like a pastor and ministry director based in the Sindh. This pastor and ministry director led his church in starting a project in rural Sindh, something that was completely new to him and the church.



He testifies that through this experience the church has built strong friendships and relationships with the community they are working with, which has brought acceptance and opportunities to share life with them; people experience the Lord Jesus's love for them through the compassion shown by the church, and the relationships offer the opportunity to share personal testimonies.

There is a small and increasing number of individuals, ministries, churches and more established Christian NGOs serving Muslim and Hindu communities through new initiatives in education, health and other areas. Initiatives in within these sectors differ from others that have gone before in that they are project based as opposed to institutional and involve going into local communities where the needs are rather than waiting for people to come to established institutions located in compounds.

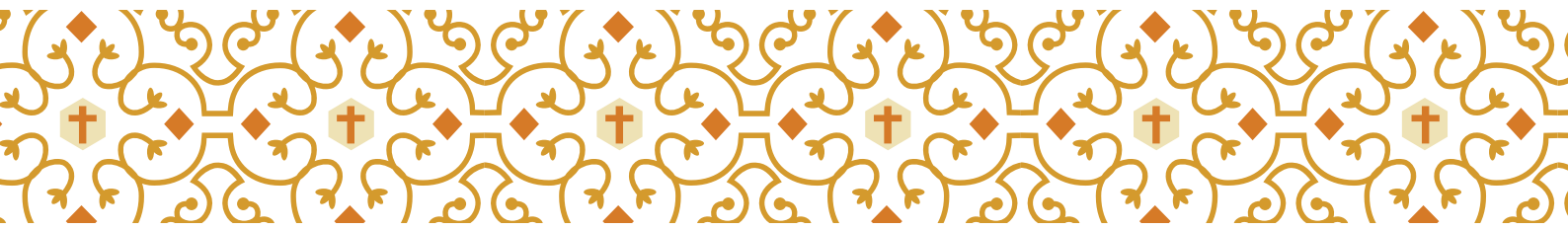
Examples of initiatives and projects include literacy centers for women; Christian health professionals coming together to volunteer their time to run medical camps; disaster relief; water, sanitation and hygiene projects; children's education projects; and assistance to drug addicts. What is striking is that those organizations that have seen the most spiritual fruit are those that have worked with the same communities over the course of tens of years and established long-term personal relationships. Many note that personal relationships are key and a more holistic approach seems to provide a natural opportunity for these.

## 14.2. Scripture

Hebrews 12:4 (NIV) declares, "The word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." If people read Scripture, Scripture will do what it has the power to do in partnership with the Holy Spirit. Recognizing this, a number of individuals and organizations are working to ensure Scripture in written, audio and video form is available to anyone who wishes to access it. Methods include bookstalls in marketplaces or on roadsides, correspondence courses advertised in newspapers and online, through libraries and bookshops, online downloadable content and door to door.<sup>8</sup>

There are a number of challenges in the Pakistani context for this kind of ministry. Many of the distinct people groups and cultures found within the borders of Pakistan come from oral traditions. As such, a reading culture is not highly developed in Pakistan. Pakistan's adult literacy rate is just a little over 50 percent. Additionally, there is the cost, which for a Bible is around US\$5.00 and must be borne by someone.

<sup>8</sup> Door to door is done from small shop to small shop as house to house is culturally inappropriate



That being said, every second person has a level of literacy to allow them to engage with Scripture in written form and from those who are involved with this kind of ministry, they see a growing desire among Pakistanis to read Scripture. In the past, open literature distribution and the use of book vans and bookrooms were common means of sharing the Scriptures, but in the current context there is less and less freedom to do this. New methods include creating access through local libraries and secular bookshops, online downloadable content and door to door. Yet, the old methods are not dead: one small organization based in the Punjab has sold, at subsidized rates, around 150,000 Bibles since it began in the early 1990s. Another organization sends out its unsalaried field staff to marketplaces in towns and villages across the Punjab to sell Holy Books, the money they make from selling these being their income.

An outreach ministry leader points out that an important channel for distributing Holy Books is local libraries, where they are often checked out and not returned. He regularly resupplies local libraries, recognizing the growing demand for the Word of God.

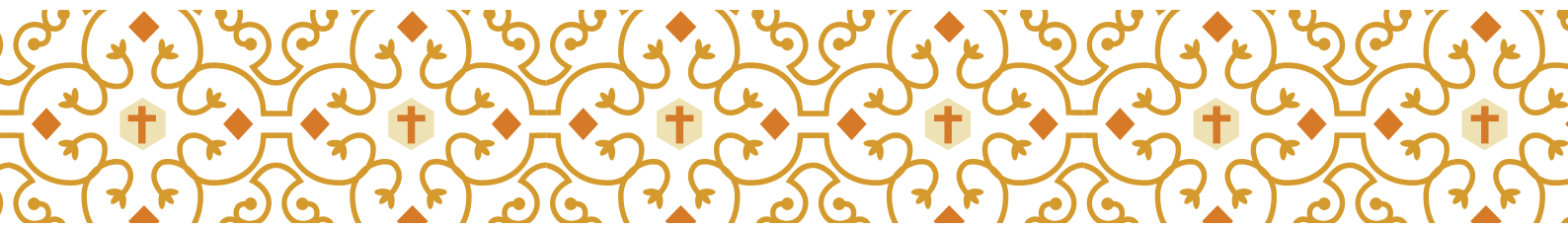
In addition to making Scripture available to non-Christians, there is a small number of groups working to get the Christian community engaged more deeply with Scripture. Such initiatives include creating simple programs for families to read together as well as focused programs for young people.

Further, given Pakistan's oral traditions and low literacy rate, there are a few groups across the country working on gospel recordings in minority languages as well as producing a broad range of other audio and audiovisual materials.

### **14.3. New Technology and Media**

The world over, the rapid changes in technology and media have presented an increasing number of ways for Christians to connect with and bless their neighbors. What we see in Pakistan is a small number of individuals and ministries beginning to explore the opportunities that new technologies and media present.

Examples of this include a correspondence institution that has begun putting its courses online and promoting themselves through Facebook; a radio programming ministry switching to transmitting programs over the internet instead of by short wave; utilizing the capacities of mobile phones for SMS and online methods of communicating; creating downloadable online content and videos; and, developing apps. That being said, it looks like churches and ministries could do more to maximize the potential of technology and media for their work, ministries and outreach. Few seem to have expertise or experience in this area.



One national children's ministry has embraced technology and media in a significant way. The director of a national children's ministry relates his experiences of this:

“As time has passed, we have gone toward media, we have gone toward apps, we have gone toward animations, and all those things. We are not only focusing on books, but we are also focusing on animations and on videos. We have seen a huge change in the last sixteen years. Sixteen years ago, if you gave a book to a kid, they were happy to have it because they had no distractions. Nowadays, if you show children a book and at the same time show them an app on a phone, they want to hold the phone because every child is playing with their parents' phones, parents' smartphones or parents' iPad. Just a few months ago we launched a Bible app for kids. That's in Urdu, it's animated, it's very interactive.”

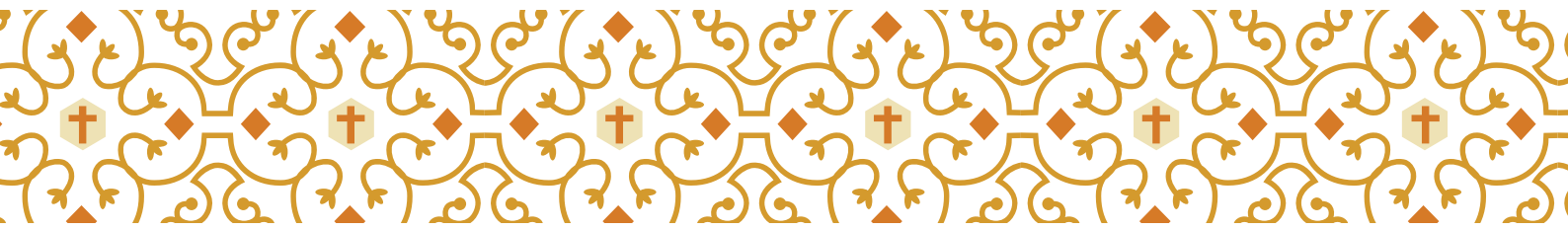
There are now also a number of Christian TV channels that broadcast across the country, including satellite broadcasts. Much of the content is targeted at the Christian community, and in the past they have been able to operate relatively freely. Recently, however, there have been news reports that the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority has deemed Christian channels illegal and is cracking down on those still airing content. Their ability to continue broadcasting is in question.

#### 14.4. Sports

The Church is beginning to catch on to the idea of meeting people where they are through interests, pastimes and hobbies, and using them as a vehicle for reaching out to others. Sports is one of these, with a handful of individuals and ministries pioneering this in Pakistan.

There are very few opportunities for Pakistani youth to participate in organized sports. The CEO of a national parachurch organization shares that through soccer and basketball activities and events, they are engaging more than 3,000 Christian young people. But, cricket is the game that really captures the Pakistani heart, and a sports ministry pioneer has found that organizing cricket tournaments provides a natural way for Christian and Muslim youth to mix in a way that does not draw attention to religious differences but provides an opportunity to pray and engage people with Scripture. Similarly, sports clinics designed to improve specific skills, can draw a large number of youth, particularly if a well known sports star is involved. One well known Christian sports figure spoke about the freedom he has when teaching cricket skills to share the importance of faith in his life in a natural way that does not evoke a negative reaction. Bringing in sports figures from abroad can also fit well with this type of event.





Although using sports as a means for outreach is still new to the Church, there is considerable scope for this to grow. Municipalities maintain sports fields in most cities and towns, which can be rented for a nominal fee. This is also a means by which the Church can demonstrate a visible contribution to the public good and generate goodwill.

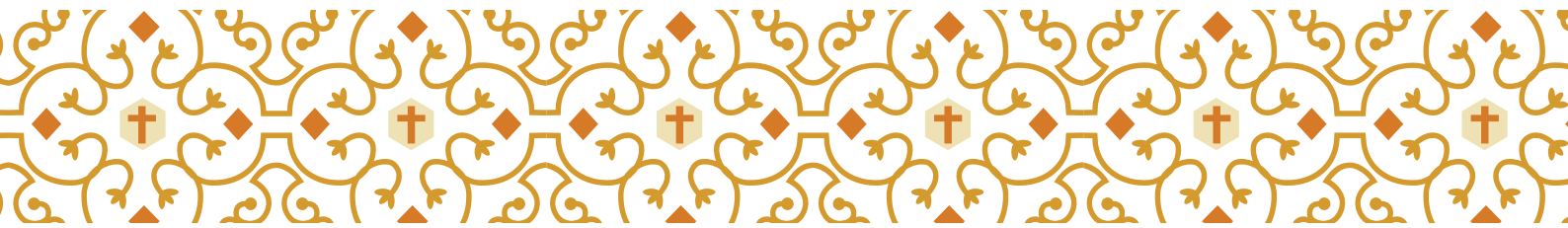
## 14.5. Interfaith Dialog and Building Bridges

Interfaith dialog is contentious: It has both its proponents and detractors. Some feel it is a worthwhile initiative for improving Pakistani Christian-Muslim relations, while others believe it is a waste of time, effort and finance.

Whatever individual opinions on interfaith dialog through projects, platforms and other formal initiatives, the principle behind it is to bring Christians, Muslims and other faith communities together. As we have seen, because the Christian community is isolated at best and ghettoized at worst, Christians need to make more effort to overcome entrenched prejudices about the Muslim community and reach out to their Muslim neighbors in friendship, even if as a means of self-protection. A Presbyterian leader, who is involved in formal interfaith activities in the community and on university campuses, has a simple approach that he encourages his congregation to adopt:

“My church is situated in a central place, one of the main congregations in this country. We also happen to have five mosques around us from all Islamic sects. When I moved to this congregation, I walked into one of the nearby mosques, introduced myself and asked the name of the Imam there. Starting with that simple greeting, we are now very good friends. Nobody had known anything about this church or what happens here. But now, all five of these Imams are just a phone call away... You don't wait. You go and introduce yourself. Sometimes you are afraid and they are afraid, also. Sometimes you misunderstand them and they may misunderstand you. So, it is helpful if the pastor also makes a visit to the local mosque. The response may not always be positive but usually it is positive.”

A political leader and activist holds a rather strong negative opinion about interfaith dialog. He thinks that “interfaith dialog in Pakistan is not achieving anything... there is no basis for interfaith dialog and it's not getting anywhere. We're spending lots of money that could be spent on other things.” Yet, a seasoned lawyer believes that “there is a need for interfaith dialog; there should be a revival in the interfaith area and that must be started from the grassroots. And, the Church needs to be involved in it along with local political leadership.”



## 15.0. The Global Church, Donors and International Community

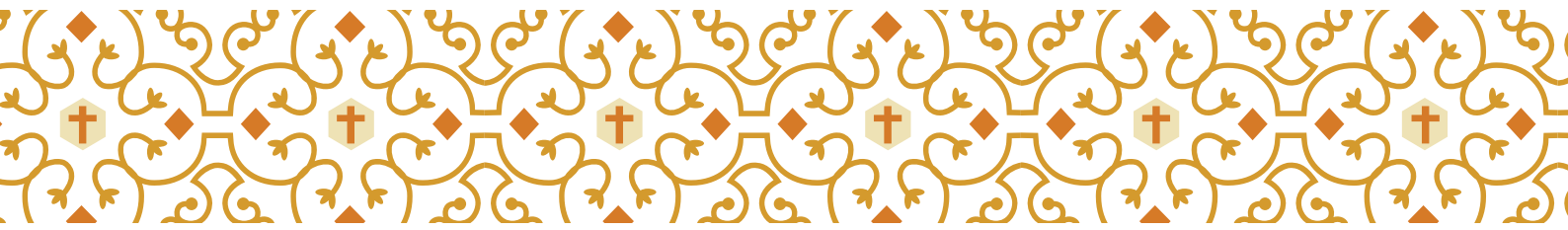
The Pakistani Church needs the encouragement, support and partnership of the international community, of that there is no doubt. Yet, it seems that there is growing desire to redefine what that support and partnership looks like in order to increase sustainability and self-confidence as well as decrease dependence. A political leader and activist importantly reminds us that local solutions to local problems are the longest lasting. It may be that this is what the international community is well placed to facilitate and support. He says,

“The one thing we Pakistani Christians have to understand, and one thing the international community has to understand, is that solutions are always local. We cannot import solutions. We need to extract the solutions to our problems from within us. The international community coming from outside cannot solve our problems. What the international community or Pakistanis living overseas, what they have to understand is, that they have to become the resources, not the solutions themselves. The solutions are going to be from within the community, from within the Christians in Pakistan. We have to own our problems... The international community has to understand that they can advocate for us and, perhaps if we need resources and if they have resources, they can help us with resources. But, the work has to be done by us.”

### 15.1. Know Your Partner

Some leaders feel that donors and partners, as individuals and organizations, can do more research in terms of understanding their partners and the context in which they work.

In the case of Pakistani ministries soliciting funds speculatively, these same leaders warn, ‘do your homework’. Many complain that it is individuals outside of Pakistan giving irresponsibly who fuel the worst practices of financial mismanagement and misspent funds. This is because individuals, even churches, make gifts of thousands of dollars without doing any homework or having any requirements for reporting on how funds are spent. “If you see organizations a lot on Facebook, a lot on the internet, a lot on social media, just think twice,” advises the director of a national children’s ministry. “You have to ask yourself, are they really serving? Or, are they really working? Or, are they just putting a show on?”



Internationally, there are often tensions between donors or partners outside of the country and the local partners on the ground, relating to the pressure for quick results and the reality on the ground making these unrealistic. This is no less true for Pakistani churches, ministries, organizations and their international partners. If donors and partners were to have a more background on the context and the communities in which the local partner is working, then there would be more understanding of the realities and constrictions facing the local partner.

Additionally, when international partners come with their plans and agendas without considering the local context and carrying out due diligence, it essentially threatens the long-term sustainability of good work being carried out by local partners. A Pentecostal leader shares his experience, which resulted in funding being withdrawn from the international partner:

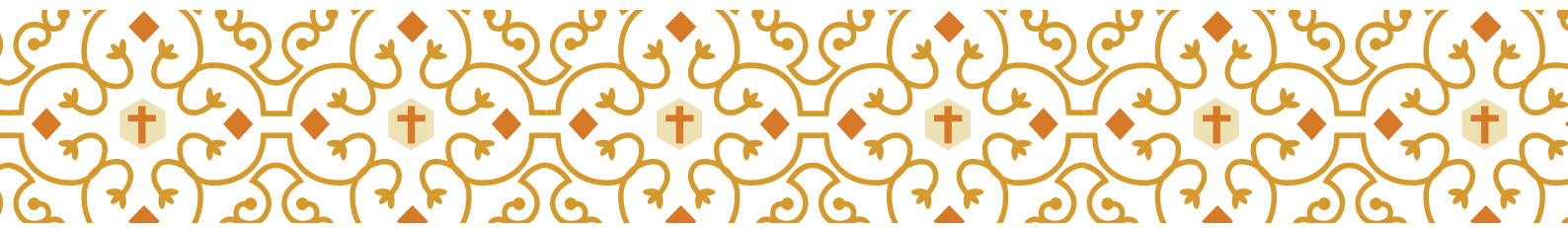
“We had a very good adult literacy project. It started in the early 70s. We were one of the early pioneers of this type of work. We had great success among men and women in the communities. We did this work until about four or five years ago. What happened was that our donor had their agenda. They wanted us to transform the entire community. We had been teaching one family at a time and it was working very well. The donor did not understand how this society works and their idea would not work here.”

## 15.2. More Than Funding

What Pakistani leaders, ministries and organizations are looking for is more than funding. They are looking for ongoing, long-term, sustained relationships of mutual benefit and edification. This is echoed and championed by a number of leaders who interact regularly with the international community in a variety of capacities. A theology scholar expresses it like this:

“Financial help is the only one thing. I think that is really a secondary, or maybe not even a secondary thing. If we have good relationships and know we are brothers and sisters in Christ, we belong to one body, then supporting each other is a natural process. It shouldn’t be all that difficult. So, we’re asking the international community, our global brothers and sisters just to be our brothers and sisters, to stand with us, be friends.”

Coupled with this idea of standing together is the importance of understanding what God is doing, rather than solely focusing on delivering an agenda. The director of a language recordings ministry believes that this is something that partners should be



doing together, seeking God for what His agenda is, what He is doing and joining in with that together.

In this and other respects, a Pentecostal leader believes that the international community may have to change. “They [foreigners] come here with their own agenda and they find people who agree with them and it does not work. Instead, they must come to us, watch and listen to see what our needs are. An American with good intentions came to teach our leaders how to reach Muslims. It became apparent that he did not know anything about Pakistan and how to reach Pakistani Muslims. They need to change and we need to change.”

Ultimately, partnership begins with an invitation, which the director of a language recordings ministry eloquently extends:

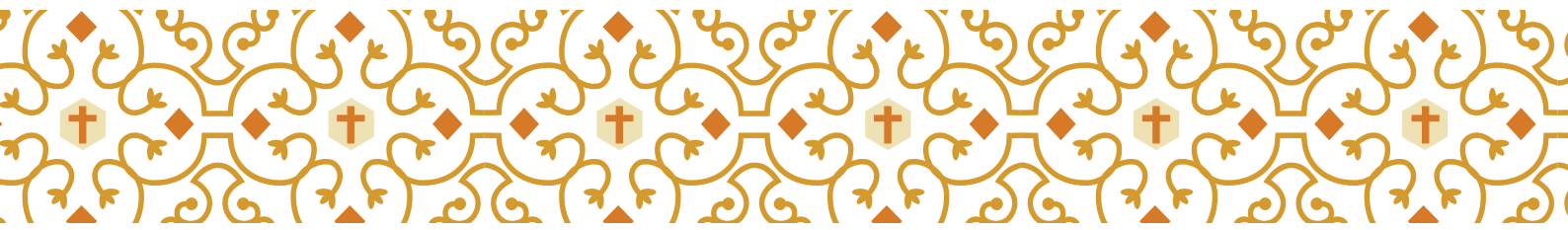
“Brothers and sisters, don’t make yourselves separate. Come and join me. Join the journey. It’s your journey with me. It’s not only me journeying with you. It’s not that you are the agency that provided and I just receive. I’m not the receiving agency. We are together a receiving agency from the Father because He is the Lord of the harvest. So humble yourself. Let me be humble before you and you be humble before me. Don’t be my boss. Let God be the boss.”

### 15.3. New Ways of Working Together

Pakistani ministries, churches, organizations and their partners outside of the country need to come together to discuss, plan and implement new ways of working together. It is clear that current methods are insufficient to release greater impact and transformation. As such, Pakistani churches, ministries and organizations are at the initial stages of experimenting with different ways of working together, such as working in consortia or finding mutual benefit in sharing underutilized denomination-owned buildings.<sup>9</sup>

Many believe that partnership among Pakistani organizations is essential. This is the time that such partnerships need to be created and invested in, and that international partners become partners with these partnerships as opposed to working with separate ministries, churches and organizations. The director of a national children’s ministry sees it this way, “Resources should be delivered to the partnerships, not to the organizations. Some people become gatekeepers for those funds, for those resources, and they control everything. In doing that from here onwards, the future would look different.”

<sup>9</sup> Mainline denominations such as the Church of Pakistan, the Roman Catholic Church of Pakistan and the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan have underutilized buildings they cannot afford to upkeep inherited from British following the colonial period. Until recently, other groups have not used these buildings for their own purposes.



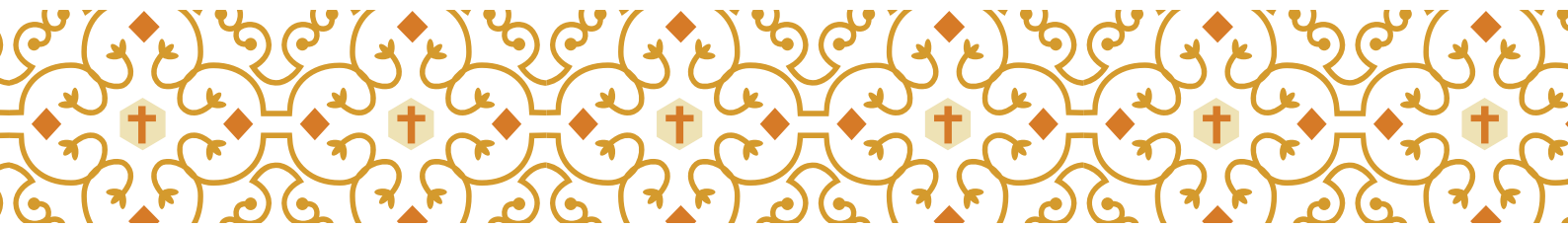
Again, many believe that there is an urgency to creating national partnerships and working towards less reliance on international partnerships because at any time the door may close to receiving funds. This same national children's ministry director further comments: "Urgency, we need to understand the urgency. You never know the door will shut [on international funding and partnerships] at some stage. So, there is an urgency and there is a need still. We need to understand that and we need to really jump in. The key again would be partnerships, working at building the partnerships within the country. That's the key."

## 16.0. A Window of Opportunity

In hearing what Pakistani Christian leaders have to say, it is clear that the Pakistani Church is at a critical juncture; how she moves forward from this point in history, how she adapts, begins to network, connect, grow, face challenges, seize opportunities and engage the global Church now, will have lasting impacts on future generations, the Church and the country. For this task, it is also clear that the Lord is raising a generation of thinkers, leaders, influencers and innovators who want to work toward transformation alongside others and, ultimately, create together new ways of doing this. In many ways, it seems like an opportunity to break from the past to embrace a new vision for the future, which must and will be created by this and future generations – if this and future generations will be given the space, training and support to do that. This is a clear window of opportunity for the Church to capture and accelerate the burgeoning momentum that is evidently out there.

Interestingly, another window of opportunity is opening for the Church. Many leaders comment that Muslims have been more open to learn about the Lord Jesus than ever before. "Yes," says a Pentecostal leader, "there is much more openness in the Muslim community to listen to us... I have seen more Muslims coming to the Lord Jesus now than ever before."

Like the Pentecostal leader above, many notice more interest and observe more responsiveness among Muslims. Why this is happening, explains an emerging leader, is "due to the political and religious situation; many people are fed up and they are asking, what is reality?" "The growth of media, including Facebook, has given Muslims the chance to hear different opinions and people to discuss a lot of things," says a female ministry leader. In addition, in this emerging leader's experience, "some are even coming to Christ who had no one to tell them. They are having dreams about the Lord Jesus and then begin a search for the truth of the gospel."



While there appears to be an awakening among Muslims, there is an awakening of another kind among Christians: “It’s not denominations per se, it’s not the church as such, but it’s individual churches, it’s individual people, it’s families, who are beginning to say, yes, I have a part in this. If I am a follower of Christ, then the great commission is for me,” says the regional director of a mission organization. The director of a language recordings ministry agrees and thinks that “God is doing something new. He’s bringing this burden to people in the Church.” “The most striking change over the past five years,” says a former missionary and visiting trainer, “is that the actual topic of mission has become a topic that Pakistanis talk about.”

Poignantly, the emerging leader asks and lays down a challenge: “Who will respond to our Muslim neighbors?”

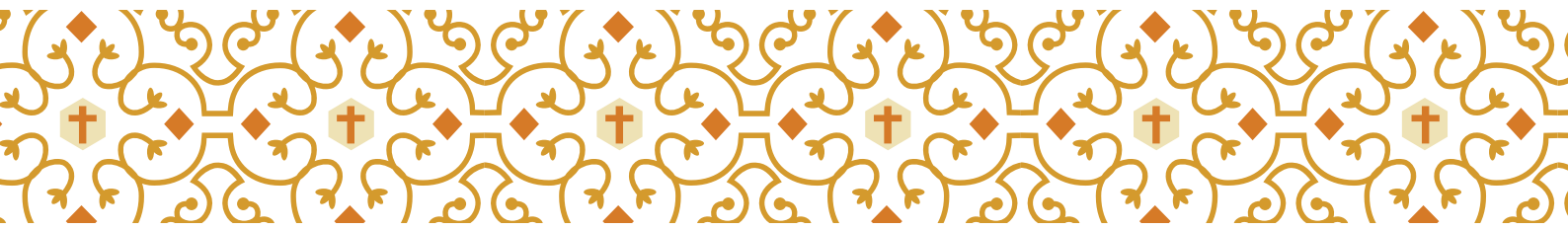
Indeed, for the Pakistani Church to respond, she needs to function as one body to tackle her present day challenges and seize her present day opportunities. In the words of the Right Reverend Bishop of Peshawar,

“God has placed us here, sometimes in difficult places. He has placed us here for His purposes and for His Glory. We Christians should not run. This is the time for us to take a stand.”

## 17.0. Author’s Observations

In authoring the report the way I have, I have sought simply to reflect back to the Pakistani Church what the project team and I have heard through our series of one-to-one and group conversations. However, I would like to take this opportunity to make personal observations from what I have heard and learned during the course of the listening phase.

At our four provincial group events, when there were anywhere between 20 to 40 Christian leaders gathered together, the caliber and passion of the assembled leadership really struck me. These were committed, industrious women and men having real impact within their spheres of influence. I really believe that the potential of the rich human capital and God-given gifts represented, appropriately harnessed, could release untold blessing and transformation. At these events, it was extremely powerful to see people connecting, networking, sharing and debating, perhaps doing so for the first time, in such a forum. People said that they needed more of the same, more opportunities to meet one another and create ways for moving forward together. At the same time, I was stuck by the general lack of connectedness between leaders and the low levels of awareness



of what each other is doing, often in the same city or in the same field. This is a major gap. It perhaps presents an opportunity for international partners to encourage and support in creating greater connection, collaboration and sharing of resources between Pakistani ministries through communities of practice, networks or regular events.

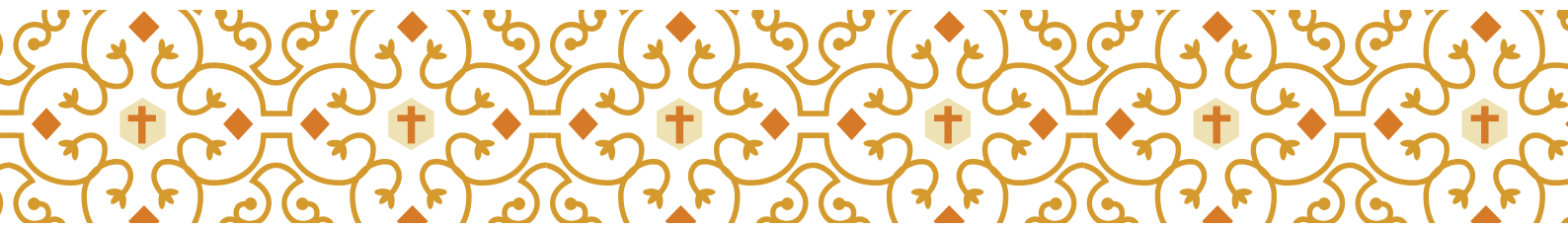
For many clear and understandable reasons, it came across that leaders of established institutions are focused, or are having to focus, on maintaining what exists and are limited in casting new vision. The hopes of some seemed limited to survival. The more passionate voices were those who had started their own ministries. There seems to be a difference in vision between those carrying on what missionaries had begun and those starting afresh. There also appears to be more vision and creativity among individuals and small teams than in churches or denominations. Yes, the Church is responding to new opportunities, but in an organic rather than institutionalized way.

Moreover, given all that I have had the privilege of hearing and learning, I feel that the timing of this project complements and gives voice to a sense of expectation that already exists in many leaders' and everyday Christians' hearts and minds. This is an expectation for change, for moving forward, for coming together and for working differently together as one body. Yet, inasmuch as I have seen an appetite for change, I have equally witnessed a lack of will for making it happen. The Pakistani Church must ask hard questions and make critical decisions in these times. Unfortunately, there are many who seem to have their heads stuck in the sand, unwilling or unable, to engage at this level. Clearly, this tension will take courage and boldness to address.

Ultimately, the author's takeaway message from this project is that God is very much at work in Pakistan. It is for the Pakistani Church to recognize, celebrate and take confidence in this, while the global Church must honor the fact and ask God and the Pakistani Church about how to join in with what He is doing. Yes, hear this, God is at work in Pakistan.

## 18.0. Acknowledgements and Thanks

The author wishes to extend his appreciation to the hundreds of people who have played a part in making this project possible and in bringing this report to life. Thank you to each of the individuals who spared us time, welcomed us warmly and shared with us openly in one-to-one conversations; and, the many people who gave up a working day to attend one of our regional dialogues; the drivers who took us to where we needed to be; the people who brought us refreshments. And, of course, the generous donors who collaborated in the project through giving.



Below, the author would like to expressly extend his gratitude to the Steering Group, Editorial Committee, Project Team, Facilitator, Adviser and Designer for their time, dedication, oversight, expertise, guidance and advice.

## Steering Group

**Aamir Shahzad**, CMS Asia

**Ashraf Mall**, Tearfund

**Humphrey S Peters**, Honorable Rt. Rev. Bishop of Peshawar (KPK and FATA), Church of Pakistan

**Michael Abel**, People International

**Qaiser Julius PhD**, Open Theological Seminary

**Sebastian Justin**

## Editorial Committee

**Aamir Shahzad**, CMS Asia

**Ashraf Mall**, Tearfund

**Qaiser Julius PhD**, Open Theological Seminary

**Sarah Safdar PhD**

## Project Team

**Adeel Rehmat**

**Ivanna Smith**

**John Douglas**

**Sebastian Justin**

**Solomon Khurram**

## Facilitator

**Aamir Shahzad**, CMS Asia

## Adviser and Contributor

**Jonathan Mitchell PhD**, Concentric Development Inc.

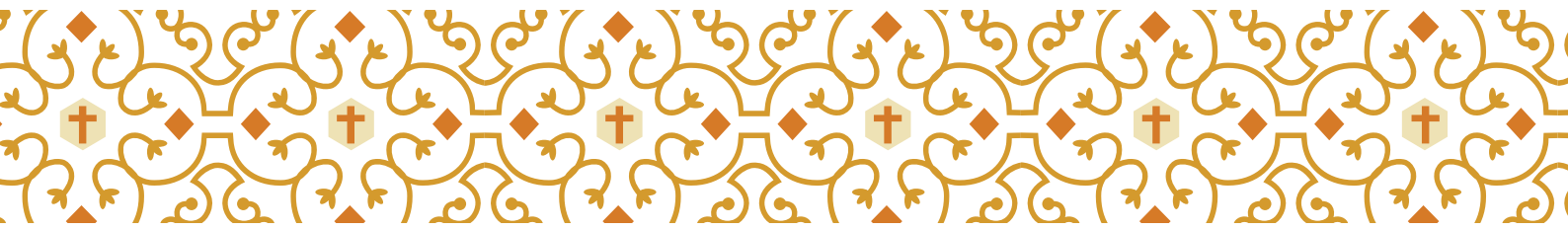
## Author

**John Douglas**

## Designer

**Shahzad Bhatti**





**“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.”**

**1 Corinthians 1:27**



# Micah Global

PO Box 381  
Carlisle  
CA1 9FE  
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 1228 231 073  
[info@micahnetwork.org](mailto:info@micahnetwork.org)  
[www.micahnetwork.org](http://www.micahnetwork.org)