

Dedicated to the Advancement of Christ's Church and Kingdom in Cities throughout the World.  
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# Editor's Viewpoint



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## GUEST EDITORIAL: A CIRCLE OF MINISTRY

Some puzzles are just too complicated. I'm thinking about some of the pieces now. The city pieces. A "bag lady" arranging her tattered blankets for a night in a deserted subway entrance. A "wino" still asleep—or is he dead—at the bus stop; people on their way to work have to walk around him. The "bum" curled up on newspaper, poor protection against cold ground and damp air. The beggar hunting food in a garbage can. The smelly nursing homes and crowded hospital wards.

I think of the part of the city where I lived for twenty-five years. Whites moved out, and the blacks moved in. In one decade perhaps one quarter of a million blacks moved into my part of the city. Not long before my "white" church moved out, the minister told me four murders had occurred in the church's neighborhood in the past month. When the church had been planted many years before, as many as five thousand attended Sunday School. It was a "mission church," given birth by a downtown church. In the meantime the downtown church moved further out into the suburbs; now my church would close, to "merge" with the suburban congregation. The domino theory, or is it checkers? The puzzle is so complicated.

Job, the Old Testament saint, sat in ashes and made new friends, bag ladies, bums and winos. And he began to say things he would have denied or ignored when he had been a successful suburban entrepreneur: "Like wild donkeys in the desert, the poor go about their labor of foraging food . . . Lacking clothes, they spend the night naked; they have nothing to cover them in the cold. They are drenched by mountain rains and hug the rocks for lack of shelter . . . They crush olives among the terraces; they tread the wine-presses, yet suffer thirst . . . The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out for help. But God charges no one with wrongdoing" (Job 24).

The puzzle has too many pieces. Eight million people in New York City. The arithmetic is staggering. One hundred thousand deaths each year, three hundred a day. Some die in sterile high rise hospitals; perhaps more are found on park benches, in doorways, and three days later in lonely apartments. How many of them lie without Christ and die without hope? The puzzle has too many pieces.

Draw a circle around Westminster Seminary; the radius is just one hundred miles. Allentown, Atlantic City, Baltimore, Bethlehem, New Brunswick, Newark, New York, Scranton; slums and suburbs; people who "mainline" and people who live on the Main Line. Do you know how many people live in that circle? Twenty-five million. *Twenty-five million*. Westminster Seminary is at the urban center of one of the most urbanized countries in the world. By God's providential grace we're right here. We're a piece in the puzzle.

Pray with us about that circle. And pray about the circle in which you are located. The theology of Job's friends was narrow and limited, rigid and partial. In it there was no room for Job or his suffering. They could not enter his suffering, and they could not share his experience. They ignored Job's cry, "The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out for help. But God charges no one with wrongdoing." Their theology was just too small to include Job, or suffering or the city. But God meets his people at the levels of suffering and death (Hebrews 2:5-18). We who claim that reformed theology encompasses all of life, offering a full world view, must identify and act on a theology of suffering and a theology of the city. Our goal must ever be the glory of God and the extension of his kingdom.

At Westminster we are learning more and more how to pray for our circle and reach out to it with the Word and love of God. Pray with us about that circle. A radius of one hundred miles; thirty thousand square miles; twenty-five million people. Pray that Westminster Seminary may be an effective puzzle piece in God's plan for the city. Jesus had special reasons for weeping over Jerusalem; but how it must tear his heart to see the city today. May God make all of us sensitive and available for ministry where we are, at the center of circles of great need.

George C. Fuller  
President  
Westminster Theological Seminary

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# Mission Options in Hong Kong

## Hong Kong's Status

Richard L. Van Houten

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**T**he British Colony of Hong Kong faces an uncertain future. Under British rule for the last century and a half, Hong Kong now faces some kind of change as Britain and China negotiate over her future. Britain acquired Hong Kong as a result of three separate treaties in the nineteenth century. Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon Peninsula were ceded to Britain outright in the treaties of 1842 and 1860. These two concessions comprise about 36 square miles of land. In 1898 a third portion of about 350 square miles was given to Britain as a 99-year leasehold. This is the portion of Hong Kong known as the New Territories. Although the lease must have seemed interminable to its negotiators, the expiration date of June 30, 1997 now looms large before Hong Kong.

### The Political Issues

According to the simple terms of the lease, the New Territories should either revert to China or the lease should be renewed. However, it is impossible to separate the New Territories from the island and the peninsula. The parts are absolutely integrated socially and economically. People live in one part and work in the other. Food is grown in one that is eaten in the other. The runway of the airport is an artificial peninsula that begins in the New Territories but extends south of the