



# The Institute for Community Transformation

## Holistic Education for Change

By **TODD POKRIFKA**

**Todd and Junia Pokrifka** co-direct the Institute for Community Transformation (ICT; [www.communitytransformation.org](http://www.communitytransformation.org)). They have been pastors, cross-cultural church-planters, mission trainers, and academics. Todd taught Theology at Azusa Pacific University for 16 years.

Simple obedience is not optional as one of the markers of a disciple of Jesus, so nine years ago, when my wife Junia and I heard the small, quiet voice of the Lord to lay down our jobs as professors for the sake of world mission, our joyful response was like that of Isaiah: “Here I am! Send me” (Isa 6:8, ESV).

God called us to stake everything—our jobs and worldly possessions—to partner with him in Christ’s commission to make disciples of all nations and to be *shalom*-makers in all creation.

How? By developing a new kind of education that is integrative, holistic, and missional.

To do this, we had to reach back into our experiences in church planting, discipleship, higher education, and cross-cultural work and partner with a team of experts and advisors. It was time for us to harness the power of spirituality, discipleship, knowledge, insight,

practical skills, and wisdom to innovate toward holistic formation for global mission among, and for the sake of, the least reached.

Since its launch in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown, the Institute for Community Transformation (ICT) has been serving established and emerging global missional leaders. We activate and empower catalysts of holistic transformational movements and call them into the radical love and obedience of Jesus Christ. We see how strategic and effective our holistic formation is as our learners catalyze kingdom breakthrough on the edges of frontier mission. We are thoroughly convinced that those who wish to join God in his global mission, especially on the frontiers, need to be well-formed and competent in their heart (character), head (mind), and hands (skills). The story of one of our learners illustrates the power and potential of holistic training and formation.

## FORMATION

GW is a missionary from Ethiopia who works with Sudanese refugees. Since GW started learning with ICT part-time in the fall of 2023, ICT has been encouraging and empowering GW's impact among several unreached Muslim groups found among Sudanese refugees. GW has been a missionary with his wife for about 11 years in South Sudan.

Despite the horrible violence of the civil war in Sudan, GW believes God has used it to cause many unreached Sudanese peoples to flee Sudan as refugees to have greater access to the gospel. The Lord has recently been accelerating GW's kingdom impact among these least reached Sudanese. His ministry embodies well the values and practices that we emphasize in ICT, including spiritual formation, holistic community development, intercultural competence, and movement dynamics.

To begin with, GW has heartily embraced our emphasis on spiritual formation, character, and relational wholeness as central to his life and ministry. Besides embodying the life of an obedient disciple who makes disciples, GW consistently joins other ICT learners in our annual 40-day and weekly intercession times. He has led our ICT community in prayer for Sudan and the Sudanese, both for the gospel's advance and for God's merciful solution to the ongoing civil war in Sudan, the world's greatest humanitarian crisis. We have seen answers to these prayers. In one case, a Muslim man was dramatically healed after receiving prayers from GW. In response to further prayers, the man received a dream of Jesus that helped him and his wife to become committed followers of and witnesses to Jesus. Due to GW's discipleship and training of the couple, they have led many Muslims to Christ. Prayer and spiritual renewal continue to be a vital part of our ICT program.

In addition, GW's learning experience with ICT exhibits the potential of holistic community development work to open doors for the gospel and to express its transforming power. As part of a course in community transformation, GW did two "seed

projects" to show God's love to non-believers. In one, he mobilized local refugees to build a simple shelter from local materials to protect the people from the searing heat of the sun. This became a natural gathering place for the refugees, a place where Discovery Bible Studies (DBS) happen and where God pours out his Holy Spirit on many in response to GW's prayers. In another seed project, GW worked with community members to build a latrine near a mosque in the refugee camp. The local imam celebrated this act of kindness to the community and encouraged his people to use the latrine and promote better health conditions. GW is working on other seed projects above and beyond the ICT course assignments and is excited to see what doors God will open and how he will increase his kingdom of *shalom* among the poor and vulnerable.

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Another emphasis in the ICT curriculum, the promotion of intercultural and inter-religious understanding and competence, has served GW well in his ministry. While he already has strong linguistic and intercultural skills, speaking Sudanese Arabic fluently and adapting to diverse groups, some ICT instruction and assignments in an Intercultural Studies class provided opportunities for further kingdom breakthrough. He learned how to conduct ethnographic interviews and interviewed a couple of men from the Jumjum UPG to better understand why they seem to frequently get into violent conflicts with other groups. He came to understand better their honor-shame culture of revenge. With the lens of "appreciative

inquiry,” he also learned how the Muslim community elders, or *sheikhs*, already have a capacity to diffuse conflicts and bring greater peace and reconciliation among their neighbors. Accordingly, he made plans to work with the *sheikhs* to do peace-making training among the youth and to pray with the Jumjum church he planted for sustainable peace in the wider Jumjum community. GW is currently in ICT’s “Engaging Muslims” course and is receiving online mentoring from our experienced missionaries to Muslims to improve his ways of engaging diverse groups of Muslims.

Finally, GW exemplifies ICT’s esteem for movement dynamics—one of our five Areas of Focus or specialization. He is using DBS to make disciples who make disciples. He has equipped indigenous leaders to multiply disciples. He has planted simple, culturally sensitive churches among several people groups. GW is taking our “Movement Dynamics” class to learn and implement the proven practices, mindsets, and personal qualities that are most conducive to seeing multiplying movements. In the future, he will have the opportunity to take our “Applied Learning in Movement Dynamics” class in which he will develop and implement a specific plan to promote a Jesus movement among a group of people.

The impact of ICT courses and mentoring on GW and his ministry has led him to make plans to pursue an accredited master’s degree through one of ICT’s partnering universities. Under the care of mentors, students can complete ICT’s program and fulfill a set of competencies to receive a degree awarded by the university. As GW continues to implement what he learns according to his unique calling and gifts, every dimension of his life and ministry—personal, vocational, and academic—will continue to be formed, equipped, empowered, and activated for personal flourishing and great fruitfulness even in the most challenging situations.

What we see in GW’s life is mirrored in many other ICT learners. Our flexible curriculum allows this impact to reach learners in diverse contexts, including those from other African nations such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda. It is also true for our learners from the continents of Asia (Korea, Malaysia and elsewhere in Asia), Europe (Portugal), and North America (Canada and USA).

The impact of ICT is diverse but profound and it is being felt in the lives of both seasoned missional leaders and those who are just beginning to discern a missional calling. Some are seeing economic breakthroughs for their families and ministries through social business training and coaching. Many are seeing many lost people come home to the Father and become disciples of Christ who make disciples. Others have been inspired to launch innovative missional organizations. Virtually every learner is seeing profound transformation in some way—both in their personal lives and in the communities they serve. We are seeing God glorified and his kingdom come among many of the most neglected and vulnerable groups of people on the planet.

*God prepared us for that time when so many refugees were arriving from Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere in need of friendship and help.*

We invite you to join us in the exciting, unfolding story of ICT. You can join us in prayer (contact us to receive monthly prayer updates!). You can join us as a learner, whether you are preparing for or already involved in missional engagement in your field of service. You may also be able join us as a supporter, mentor, or faculty member. We are committed to coming alongside all those who give their radical “Yes” to Jesus and his global purposes that they may flourish and be fruitful in all areas of life.

To find out more about ICT or to apply to join us, go to our website: [communitytransformation.org](http://communitytransformation.org) or reach out to us at [info@communitytransformation.org](mailto:info@communitytransformation.org).

