

# Meeting summary with Rodney Ragwan – March 26, 2026

## Key takeaways

- Rodney Ragwan serves as a Global Theological Educator with International Ministries, focusing on providing contextually relevant theological education worldwide
- The mission advocates training introduced Rodney's work supporting theological education in under-resourced regions including India, South Africa, and South Korea
- Rodney teaches 28 Hindi-speaking students in India every Thursday and mentors emerging leaders with a goal of 100 students over 3.5 years
- The inaugural John Rangiah Memorial Missions Conference will be held June 5-6 in South Africa, honoring a historic Indian Baptist missionary
- Rodney recently experienced a house fire that destroyed his third-floor studio and podcast equipment but continues his ministry work
- The church supports 7 missionaries including Rodney and Yuri Lemke through their Go Global missionary team

## Discussed topics

### Introduction and Opening

Al Fletcher welcomed participants to the mission advocate training session and introduced Rodney Ragwan as the guest missionary. Participants joined gradually, with casual conversation about baseball, weather, and snow conditions in Maine.

#### • Details

- Al: Mentioned upcoming trip to Atlanta for National Leadership Council meeting and opportunity to watch Boston play the Braves
- Barb's: Expressed surprise Al had never been to Fenway Park and encouraged him to visit
- Lorna: Reported still having significant snow in her front yard
- Al: Introduced Rodney as global theological educator who came to their attention through Carrie de Villa's Extreme team mission trip to South Africa

#### • Conclusion

- Meeting would be recorded with Rodney's permission
- Rodney would share his screen for the presentation

### Rodney's Background and Calling

Rodney shared his personal journey and how God shaped his calling in three interconnected ways.

#### • Details

- Rodney: Serves as bivocational pastor at North Wales Baptist Church while working as theological educator
- Rodney: Church refused to let him leave when he joined International Ministries and became a financial supporter

- Rodney: Married to Eva who works at Eastern University teaching counseling and in nursing department
- Rodney: Has 3 adult children and 5 grandchildren; eldest in finance, second teaches biochemistry at Villanova, daughter pursuing MA in trauma counseling
- Rodney: Ancestors migrated from India to South Africa, then he moved to United States

- **Conclusion**

- His calling encompasses pastor, theological educator, and global leader developer as one integrated ministry
- Migration is not just a social reality but a missional opportunity
- God moves people so the gospel moves through people

## **Previous Role with International Ministries**

Rodney described his earlier work recruiting missionaries for cross-cultural service.

- **Details**

- Rodney: Served nearly 5 years recruiting candidates for cross-cultural global mission
- Rodney: Onboarded 34 global servants including international associates and mission consultants
- Rodney: Worked with the Lemke family who are supported by Maine churches
- Rodney: Had fond memories of working with missionary candidates during his staff tenure

- **Conclusion**

- Successfully recruited and onboarded significant number of global servants
- Transitioned from staff position with decent salary to donor-supported role to pursue God's dream

## **Biblical and Theological Framework**

Rodney presented his missional hermeneutic approach to Scripture and theological education.

- **Details**

- Rodney: Inspired by Christopher Wright's book "The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative"
- Rodney: Mission is the flashlight that illuminates the whole Bible, not just searching for mission verses
- Rodney: Bible exists because of God's mission, making it a missional phenomenon
- Rodney: Developed tri-exegetical framework: exegesis of the Word, exegesis of the world, exegesis of interpreter's world
- Rodney: Holds Doctor of Ministry in marriage and family (2009) and PhD in church history
- Rodney: Brings family systems theory and historical perspective to theological work

- **Conclusion**

- Reads Scripture through lens of God's mission using missional hermeneutics
- Greatest challenge in global Christianity is formation, not conversion
- Framework helps examine biblical text, contextual issues, and interpreter's personal wounds and biases

## Current Role as Global Theological Educator

Rodney detailed his work providing theological education globally.

### • Details

- Rodney: Requested title change from "consultant" to "educator" due to corporate connotations of consultant
- Rodney: Works with staff, global servants, and international partners to promote contextually relevant theological education
- Rodney: Trains leaders in under-resourced regions, partners with churches globally
- Rodney: Provides accessible theological education to Gen Z through quarterly virtual gatherings
- Rodney: Initiated World Class Podcast with over 200 cities and 38-39 countries listening
- Rodney: Teaches Thursday class to 28 Hindi-speaking students at Orissa Christian Theological College in India
- Rodney: Also teaches Basic Theology 1 and 2 to US students on Thursday evenings
- Rodney: Teaches doctoral class at Palmer Theological Seminary, using income for ministry support

### • Conclusion

- Been in current position approximately one year
- Building relationships with partners in South Africa, India, and South Korea
- Focuses on investing in people rather than projects and buildings

## India Ministry and Confidentiality

Rodney discussed his work in India and security concerns.

### • Details

- Rodney: Travels to India but maintains confidentiality due to Modi government's anti-Christian stance
- Rodney: Careful not to jeopardize entry into country for ministry purposes
- Rodney: Connected with Principal Mary Cheng at India Baptist Summit in October
- Rodney: Teaching leadership development course that concluded with exam the following week
- Rodney: Selecting 15 of 28 students for intensive 3.5-year mentorship in mission, discipleship, and evangelism

### • Conclusion

- Must exercise caution when sharing details about India ministry publicly
- Building long-term mentoring relationships with emerging Indian leaders

## Gen Z Initiative

Rodney explained his focus on engaging younger generation in theological education.

### • Details

- Rodney: Gen Z includes those born between 1997 and 2012, up to age 24

- AI: Provided technical definition in chat for clarity
- Rodney: Hosts quarterly Gen Z virtual gatherings with participants from 9 countries
- Rodney: Countries include Australia, Malaysia, Egypt, South Africa, USA, and Kenya
- Rodney: Focuses on preparing Gen Zs to take up leadership in their respective countries
- Rodney: Discusses theology and how faith applies to everyday living
- **Conclusion**
  - Recent development recognizing need to engage emerging generation
  - Shaping future pastors, missionaries, and movement leaders

## **John Rangiah Memorial Missions Conference**

Rodney shared the historic significance of the upcoming conference honoring an Indian Baptist pioneer.

- **Details**
  - Rodney: Conference scheduled for June 5-6 in Durban, South Africa
  - Rodney: John Rangiah came from India, converted under American Baptist ministry in 1800s
  - Rodney: Rangiah came to South Africa and started first Indian Baptist church in Africa
  - Rodney: Founded Baptist Association of South Africa, which Rodney comes from
  - Rodney: Rangiah attended 1910 Edinburgh Conference, traveling from Africa
  - Rodney: Completed PhD on Rangiah's contribution to global mission
  - Rodney: First time a person of color will be recognized on global scale in this way
  - Rodney: Conference will be held annually
  - Rodney: Will stop in Cape Town en route to do faculty training workshop at Cape Town Baptist Seminary
- **Conclusion**
  - Inaugural conference represents historic recognition of overlooked missionary leader
  - Open invitation extended to mission advocates to attend

## **Northeast India Mission Story**

Rodney recounted the remarkable story of William Petticrou's mission to tribal people.

- **Details**
  - Rodney: Visited Northeast India and shared story of William Petticrou from 1800s
  - Rodney: Tribal people killed anyone entering their territory
  - Rodney: Tribal chief's great-great-grandfather prophesied a light-skinned person would come as blessing
  - Rodney: Chief remembered prophecy and spared Petticrou's life
  - Rodney: Entire village became Christians as result
  - Rodney: Northeast India now approximately 80% Christian, mostly Baptist
- **Conclusion**

- Demonstrates God's preparation and sovereignty in mission work
- Legacy continues with strong Christian presence in region

## **World Class Podcast**

Rodney described his podcast initiative for accessible theological education.

### **• Details**

- Rodney: Initiated podcast one year ago focused on "Listening, Learning, Living"
- Rodney: Features diverse guests including pastors, missionaries, artists, and historians
- Rodney: Available wherever podcasts are accessed by searching "World Class" and his name
- Rodney: Interviewed Yuri Lemke, missionary supported by Maine churches
- Rodney: Highlighted Lemke's story as refugee from Myanmar in Thailand who returned to serve refugee camp

### **• Conclusion**

- Reaching global audience with theological content
- Platform for sharing inspiring mission stories

## **Additional Training and Workshops**

Rodney outlined various teaching and training activities conducted globally.

### **• Details**

- Rodney: Conducted Church Leadership Conference in South Africa
- Rodney: Led marriage seminars with wife Eva using theology of marriage and family framework
- Rodney: Spent year doing weekly virtual training on immigration and welcoming strangers
- Rodney: Developed diasporic framework showing people on move throughout Scripture
- Rodney: Compiled immigration training into manual distributed to participants
- Rodney: Led Adams Lali pastoral leadership workshop for Baptist Association of South Africa pastors

### **• Conclusion**

- Advocates for biblical approach to welcoming displaced people and immigrants
- Creates opportunities to express God's love through hospitality

## **Mentorship Goals**

Rodney shared his vision for developing emerging leaders.

### **• Details**

- Rodney: Goal to mentor 100 students within next 3.5 years
- Rodney: Strong believer in mentoring approach to theological education
- Rodney: Selecting 15 students from India program for intensive mentorship
- Rodney: Will meet with mentees at least once monthly
- Rodney: Developed framework for mission, discipleship, and evangelism activities

- **Conclusion**

- Investing in people through long-term relational development
- Providing seed money to under-resourced aspiring theologians

## **House Fire Experience**

Rodney shared recent traumatic event and spiritual perspective.

- **Details**

- Rodney: Fire occurred previous Friday in parsonage where he and Eva were living
- Rodney: Electrician working in basement shouted fire warning, they evacuated from second floor
- Rodney: Ran out without shoes, 10 fire trucks and 55 firefighters responded
- Rodney: Lost third floor contents including studio equipment for teaching and podcast
- Rodney: Did not have renter's insurance, church has structural insurance only
- Rodney: Currently living with son in King of Prussia basement
- Rodney: Wife Eva occasionally cries being displaced from familiar sacred space
- Rodney: Conference speaker suggested devil unhappy with ministry work
- bunny: Asked if there were needs from fire they could help with
- Rodney: Biggest loss was equipment, not immediate need until new location found
- Rodney: People have been very supportive

- **Conclusion**

- Reflected that what cannot be taken away is lives, faith, and people God calls us to invest in
- Buildings can be rebuilt, possessions replaced, but leaders must be formed
- Requested prayer support and standing against forces of evil
- Encouraged that opposition indicates doing something aligned with God's will

## **Women in Ministry**

Discussion about role of women in pastoral leadership in Global South.

- **Details**

- Lorna: Noticed many women in photos and asked if women accepted as pastors in areas where Christianity growing
- Rodney: Some very patriarchal systems still have challenges
- Rodney: In spaces where he ministers, his American education gives him credibility to provide biblical understanding
- Rodney: Teaches creation of human persons and participation in ministry as God's full servants, both male and female

- **Conclusion**

- Rodney uses his position to advocate for biblical equality in ministry
- Cultural context varies but opportunities exist to influence perspectives

## **Educational Requirements**

Discussion about theological education standards across contexts.

- **Details**

- Lorna: Asked if students have prior education similar to bachelor's degree before seminary
- Rodney: India students are first-year Bachelor of Theology (BTH) students in four-year program
- Rodney: Palmer Seminary students include non-degree certificate students and doctoral students
- Rodney: Doctoral students have completed all requirements including MDiv

- **Conclusion**

- Educational pathways vary by context and program level
- Serves students at multiple educational stages from beginning to advanced

## **Teaching Approach and Student Engagement**

Discussion about what makes Rodney's teaching effective.

- **Details**

- Barb's: Asked if there's a class students really enjoy
- Rodney: Course on context, perspectives, and ministries in 21st century well-received
- Rodney: Weaves stories throughout teaching to illustrate theological truths
- Rodney: Shares lived experience from South Africa including being thrown from train in 1986 due to skin color
- Rodney: Uses past wounds constructively and redemptively in ministry
- Rodney: Helps students ask what God is doing around them and how He's calling them to minister
- Rodney: Brings biblical framework to meet needs in their contexts

- **Conclusion**

- Story-based teaching resonates with students across cultures
- Personal experiences of oppression used for ministry rather than revenge or pity

## **Other Theological Educators**

Discussion about International Ministries theological education staff.

- **Details**

- Susan: Asked if there are other theological educators associated with International Ministries
- Rodney: Stan Slade is prominent name, now retired
- Rodney: Theological coordinator focuses on regional theological education
- Rodney: Believes only two in theological education roles currently
- Rodney: Distinction between theological coordinator and theological educator roles

- **Conclusion**

- Limited number of staff focused specifically on theological education globally
- Rodney's role as educator distinct from coordinator position

## **Partnership and Support**

Rodney invited mission advocates to partner in his ministry.

- **Details**

- Rodney: Grateful for Maine churches' partnership, moved when seeing church names in IM app
- Rodney: Requested continued prayer for ministry and emerging leaders
- Rodney: Encouraged sharing with other churches to raise awareness
- Rodney: Initially uncomfortable asking for money coming from culture where it was difficult
- Rodney: Realized not asking for self but inviting people to join what God is doing
- Rodney: Invited sponsorship of leaders in under-resourced areas
- Rodney: Emphasized this is shared calling in God's global work, not just his mission
- Rodney: Shared Facebook page link: From Africa to USA to the World

- **Conclusion**

- Transitioned from staff salary to donor support to pursue calling
- Views fundraising as invitation to participate in God's mission

## **Closing and Next Steps**

Al wrapped up the session and previewed upcoming events.

- **Details**

- Al: Thanked Rodney for presentation and opened for final questions
- Susan: Offered closing prayer thanking God for global family and blessing on Rodney's mission
- Al: Announced next month's George Dana Boardman Luncheon celebrating mission advocates
- Al: Expecting 120 people at 15 tables for first mission event honoring local church mission
- Al: Mentioned Chip Hilton would present at future training session
- Rodney: Requested to take photo of group for social media to mention meeting with Maine region
- Al: Assured Rodney of continued prayer support

- **Conclusion**

- Mission advocate training series continues monthly
- Upcoming luncheon will honor local mission work

## **Challenges**

- Rodney lost all third-floor studio equipment and podcast recording setup in house fire without renter's insurance coverage
- Rodney and Eva displaced from home, currently living in son's basement, adjusting to unfamiliar space
- Need to find new location and rebuild studio setup before equipment replacement becomes urgent
- Confidentiality concerns limit open sharing about India ministry due to Modi government's anti-Christian policies
- Many leaders in Global South lack access to quality theological education and resources
- Cultural barriers in some patriarchal systems regarding women in pastoral ministry

## **Action items**

- **Rodney**

- Administer exam to 28 Indian students following week after leadership development course conclusion
- Select 15 students from India program for intensive 3.5-year mentorship program
- Travel to South Africa for 3.5-4 weeks in May
- Conduct faculty training workshop at Cape Town Baptist Seminary (before June 5)
- Lead inaugural John Rangiah Memorial Missions Conference (June 5-6)
- Continue quarterly Gen Z virtual gatherings
- Meet monthly with mentees as part of 100-student mentorship goal over 3.5 years
- Find new location to set up studio and replace equipment lost in fire

- **Mission Advocates**

- Continue prayer support for Rodney's ministry and emerging leaders
- Share information about Rodney's work with other churches to raise awareness
- Consider sponsoring leaders in under-resourced areas
- Consider attending John Rangiah Memorial Missions Conference in South Africa (June 5-6, annually thereafter)

- **AI**

- Attend National Leadership Council meeting in Atlanta with opportunity to watch Boston play Braves
- Coordinate George Dana Boardman Luncheon next month with 15 tables for 120 people