

Publisher breaks ground with author's debut, *Night Shift*

Communist party leaders praised her as a Christian worker. He leads a double life, bringing help to men held by others at arm's length. In a society fiercely hostile to their message, this international team ministers to the poor. She fights tropical diseases as a lab technician, He rescued a thousand Jews from annihilation in Nazi Germany. In his strife-torn nation, he fights racial injustice. They served a despotic ruler in order to win him over.

What do these people all have in common? They work what author Howard N. Kenyon calls the "night shift."

Kenyon says he is mystified by what he identifies as the intense struggle the American church is having coming to terms with the challenges of the new century. In response, he wrote *Night Shift: Crossing the Cultural Line for the Kingdom* (Fanno Creek Press, April 2011, \$19.95), in which he contends that those who follow Jesus need to rethink their mission if they are to thrive.

As Kenyon explains, "I wanted to take a long, full look at the Christian mandate – the two greatest commandments and the Great Commission – in light of the many complications we contemporary believers face in fulfilling this mandate. My desire is to challenge readers to consider what our mission really is about in this brave new world of the twenty-first century."

Western Christians struggle with how rapidly their own cultures are changing. The default reactions are fight or flee, when they should instead, he says, engage the change. Yet the Christian mandate is all about cultural engagement.

Dennis Gaylor, National Director of Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, USA, writes: "Dr. Howard Kenyon in *Night Shift* explains that if you are a Christian you are a cross-cultural agent. You are commanded to cross borders – geographically, ethnically, culturally, socially, materially and spiritually. You bridge the cultures of death and life, of hell and heaven, of evil and good, of now and forever."

Gaylor, who has known and worked with the author over the past thirty years, adds, "Kenyon presents the challenges and opportunities of crossing cultures by providing tremendous insights and examples that at every level of ministry and every level of service, the work of God is cross-cultural. Kenyon's incarnational, relational and communication practices bring a richness to his book that will challenge you to think differently about fulfilling God's mission in the world."

In a book at once meaty, highly readable and signally personal in style, the author explains the Christian mission, how it is always cross-cultural, and how it is frequently pursued "in the night." It is this third section, in particular, that sets the book apart. Here at last is a theological and ethical framework for cross-cultural ministry in creative access contexts, a gap the new publisher Fanno Creek Press recognized existed in contemporary Christian ministry resources.

What is perhaps even more groundbreaking is that the author couches this "night shift" ministry concept in everyday settings. Such ministry, he adamantly believes, is the norm for believers, not the exception, no matter where they live.

How do people of the light engage the night? That is the central question of the book. Kenyon believes veteran missionaries in exotic places can glean insights from the book, but so can "the average Jane

or Joe who lives and works 'at home' in the familiar." He draws on stories from his own life as well as examples from people he's met over many years and in diverse places, such as an unnamed friend in Asia, a roommate from college in Florida, and a professor on the West Coast.

Dave Bollenbacher, a former coworker of Kenyon's and executive director of Kids Across Cultures states, "Writing from years of experience living and serving abroad, Howard Kenyon provides a challenging and practical work on what it means to be a cross-cultural Christ follower."

Kenyon has spent three decades tooling out the principles of this book in highly creative access settings in Asia and in work among university students and urban poor in the USA. He brings his experiences plus his training in theology, intercultural communication, and ethics to bear on one of the most troubling of questions for Christian leaders: what does ministry look like when it has to be done where it is not welcomed, whether in a supposedly closed country or in a local school or workplace right here in America?

To enhance *Night Shift's* broad applicability, Fanno Creek Press and the author submitted the book at various stages of its development for review by local pastors, campus leaders, professors, missional workers, and believers at the grass roots level. Moreover, much of the material in this book has been seasoned through teaching and training by the author in numerous countries and cultural settings.

Night Shift is destined to be a strategy and concept catalyst for pastors, a missional textbook in Christian colleges and universities, a training tool among university student ministries and cell groups, and a perennial study guide for local congregations and small groups. Fanno Creek Press is launching the book to time with spring church mission conventions and fall book ordering for schools and campus ministries.

In keeping with the book as training resource, Kenyon is producing a monthly online e-zine called *Night Shift Crossing*. Each issue will include a reader Q&A column, an article by the author on issues related to the book's themes, related articles by others, and links to additional resources. E-zine subscriptions are free regardless of book purchase and are available through the author's website at <http://hnk-connect.com>.

Kenyon currently directs the Northeast Emergency Food Program, a direct service for the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, an organization not known for embracing an evangelical perspective such as his. With the same vision, he attends Mosaic church and volunteers with the Oregon Center for Christian Voices, helping in its efforts to fight human trafficking and poverty. Both Mosaic and OCCV are evangelical.

He defies the right-left continuum in contemporary religious and political discussions. "When my boys get into one of their frequent heated debates about a current issue, picking opposite sides and sticking to them, I almost always offer a third option." That is what we need to be doing with the heated affairs of human beings, he says.

Kenyon says he embraces cultural diversity and links evangelism with social justice, challenging traditional ways of thinking. Chapters on understanding cultural values and exploring the moral complexities of working "beyond transparency," as he calls it, reflect his years of intercultural work and his doctoral research in ethics.

Night Shift is the debut offering of Fanno Creek Press, a Portland, Oregon, niche publisher committed to feeding a thinking, activist readership. *Night Shift: Crossing the Cultural Line for the Kingdom* can be ordered from Fanno Creek Press, 6663 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy PMB 223, Portland, OR 97225-1403. For more details, visit <http://fannocreekpress.com>.