

Crosslinks Mission Director's Annual Report 2007-2008

Introduction

As I sat down to prepare this Annual Report I was tempted to give quite a downbeat flavour to it, and there would be plenty of reason for this as will be seen later. Two things have struck me however that have reminded me of the remarkable things that our Lord has chosen to do under the name of BCMS and Crosslinks, and which the same Lord may continue under the same banner.

I have the great privilege of attending the occasional memorial service for some former BCMS/Crosslinks person who has died. Last Friday I decided to go to the thanksgiving in St Paul's Church, Leamington Spa of Mrs Molly Mackenzie (née Hill) who died aged 98. I had known nothing about her and found few within Crosslinks circles that did know her. I was tempted to stick to the long list of tasks awaiting me on my desk, thinking that I would not be missed. Whether or not I would have been missed is immaterial and reflects my own sinfulness, but with hindsight I would not have missed that thanksgiving for anything.

Molly came to know the Lord in 1931 hearing a message from 1 Corinthians 2, and almost immediately developed a deep love for the Africans amongst whom she had been living in Kenya; she had a vision of African women with a burden of sin and longed to do something about it. After time at Dalton House (the BCMS ladies' training college in Bristol) she accompanied the great missionary pioneer, Alfred Buxton, to the Karamojong and prayed with him for a door to be opened in Ethiopia as they looked across the border. In 1934 she went to Addis Ababa and then to Asbe Taferi (on the road east of Addis) where she served in a team amongst Muslim and pagan peoples and married her husband Colin. Despite a fruitful ministry things became very difficult with the Italian invasion and Colin's serious illness leading to insanity, but she was challenged that those who put their hands to the plough should not look back.

She served in different capacities in Kenya and then returned to Ethiopia first as an interpreter and in 1942 as Principal of the Bible School for women, seeking to train Ethiopians as evangelists. She also travelled Ethiopia by mule in the cause of ministry and returned to England in 1951. Her ministry continued in England as Principal of Ridgeland Bible College (today part of All Nations Christian College) and then in local ministry in Leamington before heading to South Africa in her mid-70s, to join her son and his family, and to help equip a local church (an early NEXT volunteer!).

I have only conveyed a brief and inadequate sketch of Molly's life. She had been unknown to me but known and used by her Lord, as well as known by a great many others judging by the numbers at the Thanksgiving. These are the kinds of things that God has been doing in his mission through BCMS/Crosslinks. Her request that an offering be taken for Crosslinks suggests that she felt that we continue to have a role.

The second thing that struck me today was a forwarded message from Egbu Chukwuemeka the Nigeria co-ordinator of a recent NIFES (Nigerian IFES movement,

the largest such movement) Expository Bible Training Course. He thanks us for allowing Alan Purser to facilitate this. There were 143 participants and facilitators and the feedback was that: "The Course touched many lives in many ways. God has helped us experience in a fresh way His Word, our misconceptions and misguided frameworks were challenged, rebuilt and transformed. Many participants left determined to lead godly lives and to teach God's Word faithfully. The hearts of many were warmed up by God's Word through His Spirit, and many left wondering why NIFES is just starting this course now. We are happy to have started! We will appreciate your extending these greetings to the entire family of Crosslinks"

And there could have been many more such things said so, as we take a clear look at Crosslinks in this Report, acknowledging much weakness and incompetence, let us not forget what the Lord has made possible and in His mercy continues to do.

A number have commented on the relative lack of information coming from Crosslinks to our members in recent months. I apologise for this. I hope that this report addresses this in part, but may I also encourage you to come to the Annual Meeting of Members on 17th September. We have made two changes to this in addition to putting it back from June to September this year:

- **Change of venue.** We want to make attendance as easy as possible for those outside London and so are trying out St Michael's Chester Square this year, very close to Victoria Rail and Coach Stations.
- **Change of timing.** We would like to make it more possible for those working in London to consider attending and so have put the AMM start time back to 6pm, hopefully still early enough to allow people to travel home in good time. For those who are able to come earlier there will be light refreshments (from 4.30pm) and two presentations by mission partners returning after many years serving in other parts of the world (5-6pm). We hope to hear something of the Lord's work of David and Angie Ball's work in South India and that of Godfrey and Rachel Tarling in the Diocese of Mpwapwa in Tanzania.

Do consider joining us on the day. Whilst wanting to ensure a prompt finish of the AMM (by 7pm latest) it will also be an opportunity for members to ask questions about any aspect of the Society's work, or even better, if you were to write to me with questions beforehand I could ensure that I try to give an answer on the day.

So with all the above in mind let us turn to the work of the Society in what has been quite a turbulent year.

Membership and Governance

Last year I mentioned the need to work on increasing membership and that was borne out by a question at the AMM. The current total figure is 1165 members (16% of whom are in Northern Ireland with only 1% from Scotland and Wales combined) and we are writing to incumbents of linked churches asking them to find and commend membership to five people in their congregations. We also have a much better membership form that will be available at the AMM, or which you can request from the London Office.

The members of the Society elect the General Council (trustees) to run the affairs of Crosslinks; last year marked the end of a significant period of change in composition

of this body as we now have 8 elected members, up to 4 co-opted members and the Principal of Trinity College Bristol, all as voting trustees and one General Synod representative, non-voting. This last year has seen the arrival of new trustees: Ian Dobbie, Les Jesudason and Mel Lacy, by election, along with David Batchelor, co-opted as Treasurer and Andrew Muwowo co-opted to bring a different and more international perspective (in place of Tim Wambunya who has become a mission partner in Kenya).

There are two election vacancies this year: Esther Clift, our Vice Chair, has to stand down for at least a year (although we have prevailed upon her to give us some continuity in an unofficial capacity) and Bryan Kerr was up for election. As there was only one candidate, Bryan, he is duly elected for a second term on General Council.

There are a number of issues that are apparent from all this:

- We need to address why it is that few are prepared to stand for election.
- If you look at our overall Council composition we are very strong in some areas but weak in others. This may lead us to looking at co-opting some to cover areas that we need to run the Society; when David Batchelor was ill earlier this year we were hard-pressed in terms of financial expertise.
- Another issue that is becoming apparent is that of continuity. At present no-one can stand for more than two consecutive terms of 3 years before standing down; this means, for example, that our Chairman, Matthew Payne, who has only been Chairman a year must stand down next year at the end of his 6 years as a trustee.

May I take this opportunity to thank General Council members for giving of time and energy to help run the Society. This year has been particularly demanding for them and I do not take them for granted. On behalf of us all may I acknowledge their commitment (as well as that of work, church and/or spouse in freeing them up).

The group that has worked even harder has been the Standing Committee (Matthew Payne, Esther Clift, David Batchelor, Simon Smallwood, Cathy Blair and Bryan Kerr). They and we have been able to call on the services of David Mills and John Wain (John has had to leave on one side all the governance related issues highlighted last year to help with the various issues arising this year, with the invaluable assistance of Jackie, his wife) to form what has been called the Steering Group, dealing with some of the big issues facing us. I am grateful indeed for the time taken in meetings, travels and telephone conferences.

David Mills has covered a huge mileage this year on our behalf as he has conducted a review of our operations involving him in face-to-face interviews with every member of staff as well as visiting the Autumn Conference, other meetings and correspondence from members, churches and mission partners, and then all the meetings that have resulted from the Review. In addition he continues to represent us on the Trinity College Bristol Council. We certainly get our money's worth from our Honorary Ambassador.

Review

One mission partner said to me recently that the word Review has hardly been off the scene during my entire 8 years with Crosslinks. That is probably true and is partly due

to the need to have a Society that is ‘light on its feet’ in responding quickly to the changing circumstances, but is also the case because we have not been providing the service that we should have done. I mentioned in my February letter that there were (and are) many cases of poor service for which I take responsibility and apologise. Whilst there are no excuses for our poor performance there have been some reasons: in the finance area we lost John Boase (Accountant) to retirement, David Batchelor (Treasurer) to ill health and Janet Horsman (Mission Resources Team Leader) to long-term sick leave. In addition David Mills highlighted a number of areas that needed attention in a report submitted to General Council under circumstances of strict confidentiality. Since then a number of actions have been taken:

- Formation of the Steering Group to help see through whatever changes were necessary.
- Recruitment of an Operations Director and the change of my Job Title from General Secretary to Mission Director/ CEO.
- Recruitment with the help of volunteer advice of a temporary accountant
- A series of other measures that are in the pipeline and cannot at this stage be revealed.

A few comments then to amplify the above; the idea behind the Steering Committee is designed to ensure some continuity over an extended period of time as well as bringing in the necessary external advice. The change in Job Title was owing to the need to free me from the day-to-day responsibilities of running the London Office and staff, in order that I could concentrate more on areas of my own experience (and inclination). This required the recruitment of an Operations Director to take those other key responsibilities. I am hugely grateful to Peter Teague (a friend and fellow member of the church I attend) who stepped into the financial management vacuum despite many other commitments and a house move, to help analyse major areas of financial management that needed attention, and to recruit and manage a temporary accountant, Peter Gordon, giving him a series of planned priorities and tasks. We are hoping to see the further measures this autumn, which should result in considerable improvement in the services we provide.

Giles Rawlinson

Members will have a chance to meet Giles Rawlinson, our new Operations Director, at the Annual Meeting. Giles is well-qualified by training and experience from his time at Christian Medical Fellowship, the Titus Trust and elsewhere to take over the day-to-day operations of Crosslinks. The added bonus was that he was available to start in early June. Since then he has been making significant progress in a number of areas. Do please pray for Giles, that he would have the right priorities and that under him Crosslinks will be more effective in serving in mission.

Staff

There have been considerable changes in the staff teams over the year. Please use these points for prayer;

Ireland Team

Last year we were looking back over a long period without local staff leadership. Since then Tim Silk has come aboard as Ireland Team Leader alongside his church-planting role in the Republic of Ireland and Sam McGeown has joined us as Northern Team Leader. Much has been done in terms of reconnecting with churches (considerable numbers of visits to churches and rectors) and members in Ireland, and training in the Ambassador programme. Irishlinks has been very upbeat and there

have been considerable initiatives in terms of short-term trips. A number of Crosslinks mission partners have developed good links with churches and individuals in Ireland. Together with Val Ellis, Pam Smyth (Belfast) and Hazel Coulter (Dublin) the work has gone forward in a variety of ways, not least in terms of regular Missionary Care Fellowships aimed at serving the older retired members, and the two summer camps, which have proved significant again. Despite the advances there are many challenges ahead and it has been difficult for the team working with all the uncertainties of the London Office. A prayer request would be for greater clarity about the relationship between the offices in Belfast, Dublin and London.

Church Partnerships Team

Personnel changes have been considerable in the CPT; John Martin went to study for ordained ministry at Wycliffe Hall to be replaced by Rob Mullock, currently also taking on the mantle of membership secretary. Julia Smith has also moved on, to be replaced by Miriam Pike, and she in turn is now also moving on to ministry in Birmingham with a successor due soon. Lindiwe has joined Simon Banda in his apprenticeship as colleague and wife! Despite this a considerable amount has been achieved with visits by Alan Purser and the team to churches and mission consultations, work on Sunday School material and material for the SMILE teams, a church plants' conference and involvement in 3 Schools of Biblical Training (Thailand, South Africa and two in Nigeria).

Mission Personnel Team

It says much about the turnover of people in Crosslinks that Jo Sayer seems so much part of the establishment after two years! She is accompanied by Chris Jennings (SMILE and Projects) and Krista Potts (NEXT), and has seen Thelma Boase (Associate Mission Partners and team assistant) and Rebecca Sangeetha (BEST) move on to Cornwall and India respectively. Despite the disruption caused by all this change there is still a considerable throughput of long-term mission personnel to Czech Republic, Italy, India, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Serbia and Great Britain, and considerable growth in terms of short-term mission (both NEXT and SMILE). We praise God for these, something we have prayed very much for.

Mission Resources

This has been a difficult year for the Mission Resources Team with Janet Horsman suffering bereavement and then long-term sick leave, John Boase (Accountant) retiring, Suzy Wakefield moving to Scotland and Karen Jefferys beginning maternity leave. Giles has taken on interim leadership of the team with Peter Gordon helping out as temporary accountant. Mariana Joseph has joined as assistant to Karen Jefferys. These work alongside Mark Gillespie (taking on the editing of the magazine), Martin Brown (Finance team), Peter Cottingham (IT and new-look website) and Lynda Blake (Reception). Jocelyn Heyford helped out on a temporary basis after Suzy Wakefield's departure.

So do pray with us, giving thanks for staff, past and present, and praying that God would enable us to do the work he wants Crosslinks to do.

Objectives

In September 2007 the General Council adopted a new set of objectives. These are drawn out of our Vision Statement 2005-1015 and are:

- 1. Rigorously apply our priorities of evangelistic opportunities and training trainers across all programmes by:**

- assessing all engagements, personnel, placements and redeployments of all Means as to how they further God's Word to God's World.
- 2. Pursue highest standards of care and service in the everyday business of the agency by:**
 - training all staff, enquirers and existing mission personnel in Crosslinks' core documents.
 - improving communication amongst Crosslinks staff and mission personnel.
 - improving procedures and understanding for Phase 2 (Endorsement to Deployment) of mission personnel.
 - developing Risk Assessments across all aspects of Crosslinks' work.
 - developing a coherent strategy for meeting support costs.
 - clarifying and communicating accountability and relationship between London Office and Ireland
 - Quarterly review by General Council of performance against 'smart' objectives
 - Developing the use of short-term volunteers in UK and Ireland operations
 - 3. Strategise within regions and countries by:**
 - Developing 3 Strategy Papers. **SE Asia, Ireland and Europe**
 - Developing mutually supportive clusters across all Means.
 - 4. Develop Schools of Biblical Training by:**
 - Appointing personnel to make provision to co-ordinate the development of SBTs.
 - 5. Develop short-term programmes by:**
 - Identifying and developing **AT LEAST** one new short-term opportunity.
 - Increasing the number of individual volunteers and teams for SMILE and NEXT.
 - developing ongoing links with former NEXT and SMILE volunteers.
 - 6. Develop the Study Partner (BEST) programme by:**
 - Developing partnerships between churches and BEST students.
 - Developing links with current and former BEST students.
 - Developing recruitment for the BEST programme.
 - 7. Assisting indigenous mission endeavours by:**
 - Developing partnerships between churches and Project Partners.
 - 8. Promote active engagement in mission amongst UK and Irish churches by:**
 - Developing biblical understanding amongst children and youth.
 - Facilitating biblical mission strategy in local churches, home and away.
 - Developing gospel partnerships in God's mission.
 - Developing the church planters' conference.
 - Initiating church planting in the Republic of Ireland.
 - Teaching mission in new and existing venues e.g. conferences, colleges etc
 - 9. Define Anglican identity in terms of belief not structure by:**
 - Standing with confessional Anglicans worldwide, especially the most 'vulnerable'.
 - Seeking to encourage biblical reformation.
 - Enabling General Secretary for active Anglican networking in the context of Lambeth 2008.

These are still in place but already certain things can be drawn out by way of how Crosslinks is going:

- It is proving helpful to be able to assess with greater conscious rigour the nature of the mission engagements that we consider taking on.
- Under the second objective there has been notable progress in most areas. The two areas where considerable effort needs to be applied are the development of the coherent strategy to meet support costs, and the use of short-term volunteers. The former will only become possible once the nature of the financial detail is known but it forms a significant part of the ongoing review. The latter is perhaps due to the significant turnover of employed staff.
- A Strategy paper for Europe has been agreed, South East Asia is in the pipeline, and we are due to spend time on the Ireland strategy in the Residential General Council.

- We are having to revise the plan for establishing a co-ordinator for the Schools of Biblical Training in the UK but another possibility is emerging elsewhere.
- Progress is being made in all the objectives under short-term mission and the study partner (BEST programme) with new placements, more people and a greater connection to post-placement personnel.
- Project Partners have developed well but further progress will be limited by financial constraints, as indeed also in the BEST programme.
- There has been progress in objective 8 and the Irish church-planting venture has a number of promising avenues to pursue.
- Thanks to Giles's appointment I have been able to give more time to the issues surrounding the Anglican Communion; these are ongoing. Standing with Confessional Anglicans worldwide, especially the most vulnerable, has led to active participation in both GAFCON (Global Anglican Future Conference) and the Lambeth Conference, along with a host of other meetings such as EFAC (Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion), and Anglican Mainstream. What is clear is that there are confessional Anglicans in both the GAFCON and Lambeth streams although these brothers and sisters have chosen differing strategies, and Crosslinks is in a good position to work across both streams. Our good relations with Archbishop Greg Venables of the Southern Cone, as well as the GB church plants and the groups of evangelicals operating within the Church of England have meant that he has asked me to keep him informed of events in the English scene.
- In the context of Anglicanism our good relations with the Burmese church leaders may lead to very positive possibilities in the coming years.

Conclusion

It has been a strange and uncomfortable year with wonderful mission opportunities, actual work and an Anglican context that all seem tailor-made for Crosslinks, but also with massive frustration at staff and day-to-day running levels. I believe that we have the beginnings of some satisfactory resolutions in sight but much patience will be required and it is likely to continue to be a rough ride. I am grateful to staff and trustees for their commitment and perseverance through difficult times. I am reminded that it is in the difficult times that we grow more, and perhaps we need to take heed to Molly Mackenzie's lesson in the face of difficulty:

“No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62)

Andy Lines
Mission Director