

Executive Summary

Mission language

Christians respond positively to the word 'mission' and have difficulty disagreeing with statements containing the word mission. However, naming priorities within mission is much more difficult. Some kinds of mission-related words such as 'hospitality' or 'reconciliation' attract strong positive reactions from all constituencies, while 'justice' is a problematic concept. Christians respond strongly to language which implies generous, mutually giving relationships between human beings and this reflects Trinitarian relationship even where Trinity is not explicitly mentioned. However, mission theological issues about how God works through human beings and who is best equipped to undertake mission prove more difficult to deal with.

Websites are a necessary tool of communication. However, public language about mission and theological statements about mission may be less important than other website content. Pictures and stories may be underestimated as indicators of what mission is about. Websites themselves may be underestimated as actual instruments of mission.

Mission theology

A tension emerges between a vision of, or theological perspective on what mission 'ought' to look like and what in fact the world of mission activity really 'is'. The gap between what mission is and what it ought to be is nonetheless bridged by the *missio Dei* and allows the diverse forms of mission thought and action to illuminate theological principles.

A Trinitarian understanding of mission is present within mission activity in the UK and Ireland, but it is not particularly overt. The *missio Dei* itself is a weak driver for mission. At local level there is more emphasis on biblical drivers such as Matthew 28. 19. Theological drivers and an understanding of *missio Dei* only emerge more clearly when embedded in mission experience. Stories and contexts prove more helpful than theological 'position' or starting points. Reflection through engagement with a missiologically experienced person is particularly helpful in exploring both implicit drivers for mission and new ideas.

Mission praxis

Leadership and representation make talking about the foundations for mission more complex especially when there is a gap between: a leader's personal vision and agency 'position'; between team members; and between the mission understanding of clergy leaders and that of their congregations. Such tensions can be both creative and frustrating and are sometimes solved by talking about 'holistic' mission which covers both sophisticated and unsophisticated views. Reflection on mission issues through a statement survey is extremely challenging but helpful in discovering such gaps and in provoking growth in self-understanding. It is clear however, that there has been a positive shift towards greater mission awareness among local clergy.

Recommendations:

- Churches and agencies at national and local level should pay more attention to their websites as missiological tools. A reflective tool to help this process has been developed as a result of this research.
- Churches and agencies at national and local level should undertake mission audit as a means to understanding their own missiological drivers and understanding of mission. A range of tools based on the research survey will be developed to enable this process.
- Churches and agencies at national and local level can benefit from extended reflection and engagement with mission theological issues. A tool to enable this reflection has been developed as a result of this research.