



Global Mission Network

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Sense Making Faith

In December 2007 the latest publication from the Mission Theology Advisory Group was launched. Anne Richards describes how it was created and how it can be used.

In 2002 the Mission Theological Advisory Group (MTAG) was asked to consider whether the way Christians have traditionally shared their faith with others was still relevant for the 21st century. There were two questions: do we really know enough, live enough, *feel* enough about our faith to share with others what it means to be alive in Christ? And also, do we *really* know enough about the spirituality of the people we meet to understand where they're coming from, what God has already done in their lives?

Sense Making Faith is a resource workbook that gets to grips with both these questions.

share what the Christian faith has to offer. *Sense Making Faith* speaks to the hunger and need of others and we in turn can learn more about the riches of the Christian faith by responding to them.

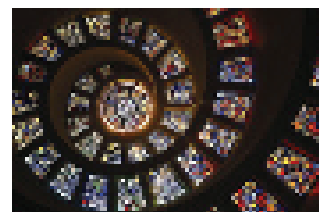
The workbook is designed to be used by Christians who have experience of churchgoing, but it can also be used by anybody on a spiritual journey and by all kinds of groups.

Each chapter has a similar 'journey' format. First, the journey begins by looking at the biological sense and its relation to the human body

Bible and find God in his deep and dazzling darkness? By exploring the experience of these Christians, we can come to appreciate our senses more and pay attention to them. So each chapter then goes on to

explore how we can abuse our God-given senses. Exploration of the sense by finding out how others see/hear/touch/taste/smell/imagine God is

followed by a journey deep into the heart of Christian tradition to discover ways of prayer, meditation, use of icons, fabrics, image or other Christian practice that we may not know much about or may have forgotten. These things are riches for our faith-sharing and also for our ecumenical relationships as we discover the way Christians have used the physical senses in different denominations and traditions.



Shutterstock 436983 spiral dome chapel, Thanksgiving Square Dallas, Texas – copyright RHJR

Each chapter is also intended to be *experience* as well as text. Every page carries coloured images which are chosen to hold the eye – perhaps to

It focuses on the five physical senses as well as the human imagination and looks at how each of those senses has been used to know, encounter, show forth and share Christian faith.

At the same time, each chapter spends time considering how people outside the church use their senses to search for and try to find God. There are many crossed paths between our journey and theirs and where such meeting points exist, there is the chance to

and to human experience before examining how God 'senses' us. Each chapter then asks what people who lack the particular sense have to tell us about faith. For example, how does a blind person get beyond all the 'light' and 'seeing' vocabulary in the



Shutterstock 498997 radial labyrinth – copyright Bruce Rolff

GMN hosts European Mission Council Leaders meeting

At the end of January GMN hosted the annual meeting of the European Mission Council Leaders.

Janice Price reports

15 representatives from Mission Councils, similar to GMN, gathered from Finland, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Holland and Estonia to share, worship and plan together. The growing importance of this meeting was shown through being joined by representatives from the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches for the 2-day meeting.

Sharing situations in the home countries occupied the representatives for the first day. Some key common themes emerged. First, the importance of inter-faith relationships, particularly Islam, emerged as high in the priorities of all nations represented. All the Mission Councils were working more closely with inter-faith colleagues as inter-faith relationships affect the way Christian mission is expressed. The key issue of the ways in which dominant faith communities provide space for minority faith communities and the issue of appropriate evangelistic ministry among those of other faiths were discussed. This was closely related to the issue of fundamentalism, in all its forms, and the need to understand its origins, various expressions, strengths and weaknesses.

Migration was another theme common to the countries contributing. All recognised that migration is about movements of peoples in varying directions – to and from our countries; that migration within Europe is extensive as well as to and from countries beyond the expanding borders of Europe. The debate concerning integration and identity addressed how far migrant peoples should integrate into host communities and maintain distinct identities. In Denmark the

term 'new Danes' is used to denote people who have migrated to the country. All nations represented reported that migrant churches are growing and, indeed, are among the only growing churches in several nations. It was reported that in Holland, Rotterdam alone had 95 migrant churches which had a strong missionary emphasis.

Several key issues were signalled out for in-depth discussion. Wout Van Laar from Holland led a discussion on the 'mission movement from South to North'. He outlined the position of the modern missionary movements and the changing paradigm with the energy and people for mission in the northern global regions coming from the south. The evangelised are now evangelising the cultures of their evangelisers. He described the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in Protestant Christianity where new churches and movements do not fit into the pattern of Western ecumenical life. The churches of the South focus on narrative rather than doctrine and celebration rather than structure. The Pentecostal churches now represent 80% of all Protestants in Latin America. Mission is being

carried out beyond the boundaries of organised religion and he suggested that the ecumenical movement is a project of modernity – of the belief in progress and rationality – which finds it difficult to embrace the new expressions of Christianity. See item on mission and migration on page 5 for more.

He called the churches of the global North to re-evaluate our ways of life based on the presuppositions of the Enlightenment.

In discussion this model of the new paradigm was challenged as being too simplistic. There is a need to see Christianity as a world of 'differing Christianities' rather than simply the south to north movement. How it is possible to identify the very broad categories of global south and north? The vital task for the ecumenical movement is to create space that embraces all styles and approaches to Christianity.

Bob Fyffe, General Secretary of CTBI, gave a presentation on CTBI and its place in the ecumenical space in the Four Nations. Much interest was expressed in the 'Churches Together' model of ecumenism because of its breadth in including the Roman Catholics,

the Orthodox and the New and Migrant churches.

Caroline Fielder and Laurence Braschi of the China Desk at GMN gave an introduction to Christianity in China. This was particularly welcomed by representatives as several are considering developing links with China. Caroline gave a paper on Christianity in the rural China.

Dr Daryl Balia Co-ordinator of Edinburgh 2010 spoke about progress towards the 2010 Conference entitled 'Witnessing to Christ Today'. Representatives then reported on the preparation process in their own nations. Most are engaged in study processes which will be brought to the 2010 Conference.

Representatives commented on the WCC document 'Nature and Mission of the Church'. There was some criticism of the lack of an integrated mission theology in the document but it was welcomed as an attempt to see the purpose of the church in its mission identity.

Apart from the working sessions representatives were taken to an English pub and shown the sights of London.

Speaking after the meeting of the GMN Executive Secretary, Janice Price commented,

'GMN was delighted to be invited to host the Mission Council Leaders from other European countries. While respecting our different identities we share an enormous number of common concerns and we can only be strengthened by meeting together. We look forward to the 2009 meeting in Hamburg.'





China's Bleak Winter

Pictures of hundreds of thousands of people stranded at Guangzhou (Canton) train station caught the attention of the world last month. Chinese workers were unable to return home to celebrate the arrival of the Chinese New Year owing to the worst snow storms seen in southern China in more than fifty years. Migrant workers were forced to wait and sleep outside in freezing temperatures, unable to afford inflated prices in hotels and hostels. Others were put up in university accommodation and schools, and regularly bussed to the station in the vain hope that trains would begin running again. Half of all roads in Hubei province were closed, and thousands of motorists abandoned their vehicles amid snow drifts. The city of Chenzhou, with 4.6 million inhabitants, endured two freezing weeks without electricity and water. In total sixty people are thought to have lost their lives to cold, accidents and houses collapsing.

Hard work by millions of soldiers, volunteers, transportation workers and electricians have largely restored China's infrastructure. Government and Party leaders have been touring the south, overseeing the recovery effort and attempting to assuage anger over claims of inadequate preparation.

The devastating affect on rural livelihoods is only beginning to be assessed.



Millions of rural farmers in China live in very marginal circumstances and the damage to crops and rural production will push many vulnerable families to the edge of subsistence.

A recent newspaper article highlighted the case of eleven year old Tan Yuke, a primary school student who normally helps supplement the family income during school holidays by working illegally in a makeshift fireworks factory near her home. The money she has earned every weekend and school holidays since the age of seven pays toward her school fees, but the factory closure due to the bad weather put her return to school in jeopardy.*

Her story is not unusual. Caught up in the recent snow storms Caroline Fielder met three children also trying to earn money for their school fees by collecting and then recycling empty water bottles at an airport. "Our parents have come to the city for work but they don't earn enough to pay for our school fees. Collecting bottles means that all of us

can go to school. We come here because it is warm and usually there is a lot of rubbish for us to take. The problem is that recently it is just too cold for anyone to drink water" said Xiao Xu, aged 10, "We only have a few bottles today and we had nothing yesterday. We won't earn anything this week".

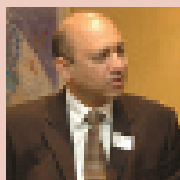
Chinese church-based charities are emerging as a means of focussing assistance to those most in need.

In addition to long-term programmes, the Catholic based Jinde Charities and the Protestant initiated Amity Foundation have both launched emergency appeals for temporary housing and for clothing, bedding and cooking oil for those hit by the recent snow storms.

Contributions are coming in from Chinese Christians and overseas supporters. Local priests and ministers who maintain large networks of contacts in rural areas are beginning to establish which communities have been worst affected. Together the agencies are attempting to collaborate more and to draw lessons from past disaster-relief efforts, and apply them to China's increasingly perilous environmental position. Bishop Xiao Zejiang of Guizhou province, also deeply affected by snow and ice reflected amidst the distress, 'This tragedy is proving to be a time of intense communion, faith, hope and charity.' ■

[* *South China Morning Post*, Feb. 18, 2008]





'Witnessing to Christ Today' is the theme for the Edinburgh 2010 Conference which is to take place from 2-6 June 2010. Dr Daryl Balia, International Director of the Edinburgh 2010 Conference, addressed 40 members of GMN, at the Network Meeting in November 2007.

Witnessing To Christ Today

The aim of Edinburgh 2010 is to develop a new paradigm for doing God's mission.

It is not just another conference! The 1200 delegates will come from all points of the globe and emphasis on the inclusion of women, young adults, indigenous peoples, disabled people and other minorities will be important. The style of ...

delegates from Africa took part. Those actively engaged in mission and those cultures being evangelised were viewed as case studies rather than having a full part in the conference process. The 1910 Conference was a 'how to' event in order to release new

... the conference will focus on worship and celebration as well as hearing new thinking from the global regions on the conference theme.

A large Fringe will work together with the main conference to share energy and insights beyond the official delegates.

An important aspect of the 2010 Conference is the inclusion of the Catholic, Orthodox and Pentecostal traditions bringing their distinctive understandings of mission and evangelism. This is in contrast to the profile of the Edinburgh 1910 Conference, which was a Protestant conference with no delegates from the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches.

At the 1910 conference there were 1216 delegates and of these 510 were British, 490 North American, 171 were European and only 17 were from the Non-Western world. 207 women and only two

creative energy for evangelisation in this generation. It did provide such energy. The mission and ecumenical movements we know today find their roots in Edinburgh 1910. However, its limitations are now clear.

The 1910 Conference worked within a philosophical context where a belief in progress and the superiority of Western civilisation were taken for granted. Knowledge was factual, value free and neutral. Belief is true if it equated to facts. There was an optimism at 1910 where the problem of unbelief could be solved and, it was anticipated, would be in the 20th century. All of this conceptual structure began to fall apart four years after the Conference with the onset of the First World War.

The 21st century context is vastly different. A belief in progress and the superiority of Western culture is unsustainable today. We understand all cultures as both agents and receivers of God's mission. We see mission as the activity of God the Holy Trinity – not the church.

Mission is now about partnership rather than conquest.

Today the majority of church growth is with the Pentecostal movement and takes place in the global south. Our electronic age offers vast opportunities for mission as well as constraints.

Preparation for 2010

In the run-up to the 2010 Conference, in various centres in the global regions groups in churches, study centres and university departments are considering the nine Study Themes. The scope of these study themes is comprehensive. They include mission among those of other faith traditions, mission and power, theological education and formation, mission and unity among others. The theme adopted by a threefold alliance of Global Mission Network, Global Connections and the British and Irish Association of Mission Studies, representing differing approaches to mission and co-ordinating the study process in the four nations, concerns Foundations for Mission. This

study theme covers 'how a Trinitarian understanding of God relates to the theory and practice of mission'. To explore these questions the group have designed a research project to discover the theological understanding, motivation and practice of mission in the churches and agencies of the four nations. This research will comprise three components. First will be a website search to see how agencies and churches express their theology, motivation and practice of mission in the public space of the Internet. Second agencies and churches will be invited to complete a questionnaire on approaches to mission and this will be followed up with interviews. This will be a significant contribution to gathering and building a snapshot of mission practice and motivation for the churches and agencies at national level. It is hoped that this research at national level will link into

similar research at local church level. Churches and agencies will be approached about taking part in the research in the next few months.

It is hoped that the results of the research will be presented in early 2009. All of this will be brought to the 2010 Conference when it can be assessed by the delegates alongside the contributions from the other study themes and global regions. Janice Price, GMN Executive Secretary, said of the plans for the research, 'We have taken time to get top level advice on the shape of this project. It has to be good research first and foremost. It will necessarily be limited in its scope to the four nations. We would have loved to do a much extended project involving the major global regions but time and cost were prohibitive. We are looking forward to the 2010 Conference to find a global critique from which we can learn in the four nations.'

For further information about Edinburgh 2010 visit www.edinburgh2010.org



Lawrence Braschi joined the GMN China Desk as an administrator in October 2007. Having grown up in East Asia, Lawrence spent two years teaching in China. After working at a publishing company, he has now nearly completed a Ph.D. in Chinese history at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He will be working with Caroline Fielder in facilitating the work of the China Desk and the China Forum of CTBI.

The China Desk and the Friends of the Church in China's joint conference this year is entitled **China—Changing Environments**. The keynote speaker will be Zhang Liwei, for several years head of the Amity Foundation's rural development programme, and now at Nanjing University. The conference will be held at Ushaw College, Durham from 20-22 June. For more details email lawrence.braschi@ctbi.org.uk.

Welcome to Michael King – new GMN Moderator



At the beginning of February Michael King took over from Stephen Lyon as Moderator of GMN. Michael is currently Team Leader for the World Church Relationships Team of the Methodist Church. A former teacher, he has worked in Sierra Leone as well as in schools in Hertfordshire and North London. He is a Methodist Local Preacher.



At the 2007 meeting of the Four Nations Evangelisation Forum in Dublin, the theme of mission, evangelism and migration was considered. Representatives from Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England brought their experience of mission and evangelisation with the migrant communities together and heard from two churches working in Ireland. The multi-cultural Pentecostal church, Solid Rock, and the Methodist Central Dublin Mission shared their experience of working in different ways with migrant congregations. For a full report of the meeting and a summary of what was learnt go to www.ctbi.org.uk.

Future Church Conference

The 2007 Future Church Conference explored the place of mission accompaniment in emerging and traditional church. Martyn Atkins, current President of the Methodist Conference, considered the nature of emerging church and the motivation and drivers for the development of new models of church. He described Seven Core Values of emerging church as:

- Mission-shaped community (Trinity)
- Creativity (God is creative)
- Culturally relevant (incarnation)
- Transformation (kingdom values of change)
- Discipleship (obedience to the Great Commandment)
- Sacrificial (following the example of Christ)
- Unity in diversity (differing patterns of church under one God)

Revd Martin Fair, Minister of St. Andrew's Church Arbroath, shared his experience of leading a traditional church in a changing context.

For more details of the presentation given by Martyn Atkins go to www.ctbi.org.uk and the mission accompaniment pages.



marvel in their beauty but also to challenge, provoke and disturb. Images of mouth-watering food are juxtaposed with creepy-crawlies; gorgeous lipsticks are followed by the painful needle of a collagen injection; smiling faces filled with praise and wonder contrast with a woman with a black eye, another huddled into herself in the depths of depression – and who are the people in the faded sepia photograph?

Each chapter's text also challenges the reader, from the lyrical and thought-provoking poem which heads each – written especially for the book by the Archbishop of Canterbury – to the various waystations throughout the text which suggest the reader stops and goes and *does* something – think, watch a bit

of a film, go for a walk, engage in a practical activity. Similarly, the group materials, gathered together with explicit guidance for group leaders at the end of the book, carry a range of activities from creative bible study to practical changes to enhance the mission potential of the congregation. The group materials can be used in sequential sessions, or the activities can be mixed and matched as appropriate to individual situation and preference. There is full preparation and guidance for group leaders, and the pages lay flat for photocopy.

Sense Making Faith also comes with a website www.spiritualjourneys.org.uk. It is designed to offer more journeys to supplement those in *Sense Making Faith* and to extend the book in

multiple ways. The Explore section carries extra material relating to each chapter in the book and web icons in the book tell you where to look for extra stuff which is always being added to and updated. The Look section on the website carries news of books and writings which may be of interest to spiritual seekers. The Do section carries more suggested activities. There is specific downloadable material for clergy as well as material for those wishing to share faith more effectively and for those searching and wondering about faith. The Dream section carries a whole range of imaginative resources from poems to film commentaries, reflections and images which can add to worship, to outreach or to personal spiritual searching. New material is constantly

being added and there is a feedback form in the Ask section if you visit the site without finding what you want.

Sense Making Faith is beautiful to look at and fun to explore. It makes a great present for anyone interested in exploring Christian tradition and learning about how to share faith. We had great fun putting the book together, researching, arguing, praying and playing together. We hope you will enjoy exploring it too.

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Future Church Conference 2008

The 2008 Future Church Conference will take place from 30-31 October at Woodbroke Quaker Study Centre, Selly Oak, Birmingham.

The theme for the conference is *Future Church and Missionary Diversity*. Following on from the 2007 conference it will explore the effect of context on new expressions of the gospel and explore tools for mission accompaniment working in different contexts. To make provisional booking contact Tessa Stawski on tessa.stawski@ctbi.org.uk