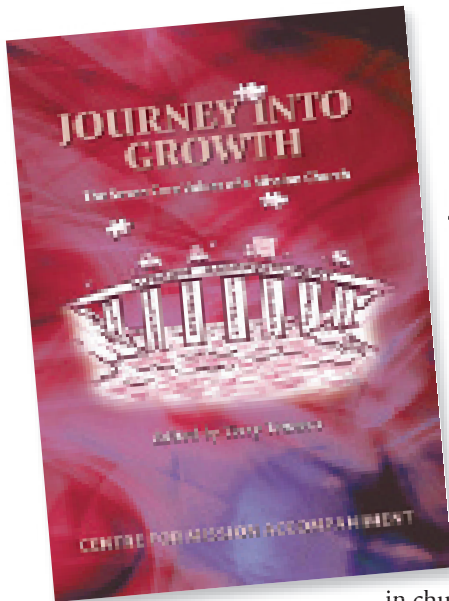




# Global Mission Network

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

## Journey Into Growth published



The GMN Network Meeting on May 9th featured the launch of the new publication *Journey Into Growth*. The result of Stages B and C of the Building Bridges of Hope project *Journey Into Growth* seeks to resource local churches in their journey of development and change as they grow and adapt to new cultural situations.

Speaking at the launch, Janice Price, GMN Executive Secretary said 'this publication is the result of many years' work on the part of all who were involved in Building Bridges of Hope Stages B and C. It is based on well-founded and tested research and therefore we can be confident that it is rooted in the experience of the local church.'

Terry Tennens, former Director of BBH Stage C, and editor of *Journey Into Growth*, also speaking at the launch, thanked all those who had been members of the Writing Group and outlined the fact that *Journey Into Growth* is a workbook for local churches. It is specifically designed to be used

in churches and worked through as church communities.

*Journey into Growth* is based on the Seven Core Values of a Mission Church. Formerly known as the Seven Learning Indicators, these seven points find their origin in the original research findings from Stage B of Building Bridges of Hope. They were identified from the annual snapshots taken from each of the 23 local places that took part. They were then tested and developed through Stage C and have emerged as the Seven Core Values of a Mission Church.

According to *Journey Into Growth* churches are more likely to be growing in mission that:

- Focus purpose, values and vision to discover God's unique pathway

- Build local partnerships and engage with their communities
- Share faith and values
- Nourish daily living
- Develop shared leadership
- Become communities of learning
- Open to hear from the skilful outsider

In the book these core values are explained with the use of local church examples and with suggestions for activities and questions for discussion. Each section includes suggestions for Bible study and reflection.

### ... mission accompaniment is vital for churches working through change

The central message of *Journey Into Growth* is that having the assistance of a mission companion is vital for churches and church organisations as they work through their change processes. As well as outlining the key skills of a mission companion – listening, questioning, reflecting, encouraging and facilitating – *Journey Into Growth* gives advice on

finding and setting up a relationship with a mission companion.

While many denominations provide mission enablers from within their own structures, *Journey Into Growth* stresses the value of ecumenical companions. These are people who accompany churches from a denomination other than that to which they belong. Using the experience of the Building Bridges of Hope project, churches found that they received encouragement from companions who were not part of their usual church tradition or stream

unencumbered with the politics of denominational structures. Also, they gained new perspectives from hearing from those from outside their denomination and the simple question 'why' asked in relation to church practices opened up new possibilities and directions.

The Centre for Mission Accompaniment, as part of the work of Global Mission Network, now exists to

continued on the back page

# 'Protestant content, Catholic Method and Pentecostal inspiration and energy'

## **The Alpha Phenomenon** Ed. Andrew Brookes

Love it or loathe it, the Alpha Course is a phenomenon. It is enormously successful. Its organisers claim over eight million people have now attended an Alpha course and more than 7000 churches in Britain and Ireland have signed up for the Alpha experience. Yet, it is controversial with critics saying it offers a comfortable, individualistic version of the Christian faith. *The Alpha Phenomenon*, edited by Andrew Brookes, is a serious consideration of an important movement in recent Christian history.

*The Alpha Phenomenon* is written from the perspective of a critical friend. Those who consider Alpha in the publication from different contexts are aware of its influence but believe that it should not be immune from serious critique. Contributors to the book write from perspectives as wide as the Pentecostal and Roman Catholic traditions, the Scottish Kirk, Baptist and Methodist churches.

### **Main conclusions**

First, Alpha is not as evangelistic as one might think. Courses start off with church going guests and as courses continue most attendees are already church-goers. Of those who do not attend most have had some experience of church at some point in their life. Only about 10% do not have any experience of church. Is this surprising? No not really. It shows that non-churched people are not flocking into Alpha courses but a certain

number do. Conversion rates are reported as between 15-25% half of whom were already churched before attending Alpha. The book claims that to bring long term results it is necessary to run Alpha as part of a total package which includes small groups, worship and ongoing nurture of believer and non-believer alike.

To understand the language and concepts of Alpha it is necessary to be relatively well versed in Christian belief. As the level of basic knowledge of Christianity declines in the general population Alpha's evangelistic impact is likely to decrease with time.

Whilst Alpha's content has been copyrighted by Alpha International (AI) its method has not. Hospitality is vital to Alpha and the effectiveness of the meal cannot be underestimated. Belonging before believing is frequently cited but its truth cannot be emphasised enough.



## **Launch of Changing Evangelisation**

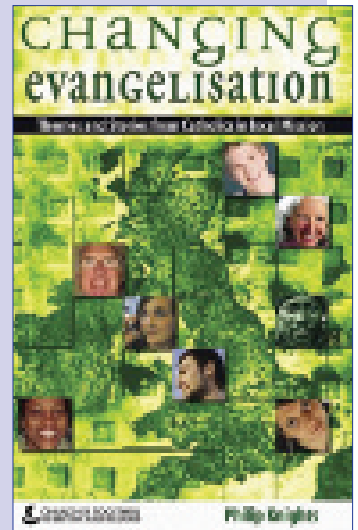
*Changing Evangelisation* was launched at the offices of CTBI on July 17th. Fr Philip Knights, speaking at the launch, described how the book had its roots in the Forum on Catholic evangelisation which took place in 2004 as part of the Building Bridges of Hope project. This was an ecumenical gathering where those involved in Catholic evangelisation offered their stories and experiences and listened to the insights of the accompaniers.

The picture that emerged of evangelisation in the Catholic tradition was, 'diversity in the circumstances in which each participant sought to be evangelising and diversity in the methods and modalities of evangelisation.'

The book features stories of the diversity of contemporary evangelisation. [www.life4seekers.co.uk](http://www.life4seekers.co.uk) launched in 2004 is an internet resource attracting up to 13,000 visitors monthly and offers a mixture of stories, lifestyle discussion and information about Christian faith.

CaFE (Catholic Faith Exploration) is a programme designed to encourage parish renewal and evangelisation. Following the format of the Alpha course, CaFE is about building faith in a welcoming atmosphere where relationships with God and the church can develop. It has been used extensively in parishes where the 'CaFE approach makes formation and evangelisation easier than ever before.'

Landings is a project which is concerned with welcoming returning Catholics. It is a lay led programme based on faith-sharing in a small group focused upon those who are thinking about returning to the Church. It is an attempt



to give space to returners to discuss issues before full return to the Church.

These are examples fully described within the book itself. The first part of the book outlines the wider theological themes in Catholic evangelisation and how understandings of evangelisation have changed. Time and time again readers are brought back to the momentous changes created by the Second Vatican Council and this provides the backdrop against which change and development has happened in the whole church. It was Pope John Paul II who called for the New Evangelisation. This emphasis on a new proclamation of the Gospel is at the heart of this book – proclamation for those who do not know Christ and in those places where Christian memory has declined.

*Changing Evangelisation, Themes and Stories from Catholics in local Mission* is about the telling of a story of remarkable change and development. It has a helpful balance between story and theology and is essential reading for all involved in mission and evangelism of any denomination.

Copies are available from Methodist Publishing House [www.mph.org.uk](http://www.mph.org.uk)



**Earlier this year Jia Qinglin, chair of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) affirmed that religious teachings could and should be used to help build social harmony, ethical living and unity in Chinese society. Coupled with the change in religious regulations a couple of years ago, especially the new provision for religious organisations to run social service programmes and organisations, increasing opportunities can be found for Christians to witness to their faith outside of the walls of the church.**

Caroline Fielder reports on current issues in China

# China News

An interesting array of faith based organisations are now emerging in China. Each is trying to respond in some way to the growing divide and spiritual void that they find themselves in, trying in some way to restore "harmony" to their local community. These organisations have a local flavour and address local needs but a pattern is emerging of different types of organisations. These have been broadly defined by Professor Fenggang Yang as follows:

- Faith based social service organisations
- Faith based social service organisations established by religiously motivated individuals
- Grassroots faith based organisations, and
- Informal associations

For many years we have worked alongside the Amity Foundation and Jinde Charities (formally called Beifangjinde). They are representative of a small but growing number of **Faith based social service organisations** who have a significant or growing nationwide footprint in China. These organisations include many older groups such as the YMCA and YWCA, which were present in China pre-Liberation. Interestingly most, if not all, of these organisations have a Christian heritage and are able to draw on the Christian churches history of social involvement, and as such are able to tap into intellectual and human

resources both at home and overseas. The international network that these organisations can tap into has helped ensure a solid funding base. In addition to their relative financial strength they also play a significant role in mobilizing believers, both Chinese and foreign, to participate in a variety of projects. The Amity Teachers' Programme is one such example. But the factors which have helped their success are also of concern to the government. The fear of foreign infiltration is always a concern. Cumbersome registration requirements including huge financial prerequisites, ensure that only a few organisations are granted permission to operate at this level as a not for profit organisation (NPO).

### **Faith based social service organisations established by religiously motivated individuals**

Many organisations struggle to gain registration as an NPO, and few are granted permission to work outside the provincial or local boundaries. Huge financial requirements and a lack of "guanxi" or contacts mean that many smaller

organisations opt for the less complex route of registering as a for-profit company, even though few of them have any intention of making a profit. Among the Christian initiatives which are finding themselves in this situation is the Zhimian Counselling Center, established five years ago in Nanjing. It had to register as a for-profit company, but the founder, Dr Zhang Xuefu, a Christian, said he had never intended to run the centre as a business model. In many cases these organisations are focused around single issues, such as HIV, fostering or autism. They work on a less secure footing than the larger faith based social service organisations but they are increasing in number and influence.

### **Grassroots faith based organisations**

These are widespread throughout China and tend to be centred around local places of worship – individual churches, temples or mosques. They exist in response to local needs and are usually well integrated into the local community. Their impact as a faith based organisation is sometimes overlooked as this category of organisation is often omitted from Ministry of Civil Affairs' statistics on non-governmental organisations, this despite the fact that in many ways they have the greatest impact at a local level. Projects are often run in conjunction with local Religious Affairs Bureaus and as such many initiatives, particularly those that are well run and are highlighted as good examples are then labeled as government run. Aware of their need both for registration and of support of their work by local government bodies, and often with little financial clout behind them many

such projects do not seek to challenge that perception. They simply want a space to do the work they see as needed. Projects run by these grassroots groups tend to be focused around clinics, old people's homes, kindergartens, orphanages and rehabilitation centres.

### **Informal associations**

These groups are the hardest to quantify as in many cases they are "invisible" although again their impact can be significant. These associations exist to provide support, fellowship and accountability to fellow believers in similar lines of work. They are not registered and as such do not "exist" on the institutional front but groups such as the Shangren Fellowship (the business people fellowship) have an increasing presence. If permitted to register Professor Yang argues that these groups could extend their influence beyond the local/provincial and play an important role in the moral reconstruction of China, helping to fill the spiritual void that the government has identified in recent years.

A recent report in the China Daily claimed that the number of people in China who consider themselves to be religious is triple the original figure that the government has traditionally used, taking it to 300 million. A separate internal Party document suggests that at least 1/3rd of all party members are now professing a religious faith. With new ways of expressing that faith and using it as a basis to serve society, there should indeed be a very significant place for religious believers to help build social harmony, ethical living and unity in Chinese society. ■

## Future Church Conference 2007

HOSTED BY MISSION ACCOMPANIMENT SCOTLAND NETWORK

### Mission Accompaniment in Emerging and Traditional Church

**Speakers:** Martyn Atkins, Principal of Cliff College and President of the Methodist Conference  
Martin Fair, Minister of St Andrew's Parish Church, Arbroath  
Worship led by Samantha Wernham, Pioneer Minister, Torridon

12-13th November 2007 · Macdonald Houston House Hotel, Edinburgh West · £120

Contact [tessa.stawski@ctbi.org.uk](mailto:tessa.stawski@ctbi.org.uk) for a booking form or <http://www.acts-scotland.org/events/index.shtml>

# New directions for CTBI



By Bob Fyffe

Since I came into the post of General Secretary of CTBI in June 2006 much has developed in the work of CTBI and all of the national ecumenical instruments. All parts of the ecumenical structures are working together in a new way and looking to serve the churches and agencies. I have been involved in many discussions on how that can happen and what are the distinctive contributions that each of the ecumenical instruments make to the whole church and what the contributions that the churches and agencies can make to each other through the ecumenical bodies. We are looking to work ever more effectively together in our common cause for Christian unity in these islands. It is a process where each needs the other.

From the beginning of 2007 staff have been working on a new vision for CTBI. We have agreed that the vision for CTBI is to ...

**... 'serve the churches of Britain and Ireland on our shared journey towards greater unity in Christ'.**

CTBI Trustees have taken the lead in agreeing and forwarding this vision. CTBI, acting as an agency of the Churches through the Four Nations, aims to

- Work in partnership with the four National Ecumenical Instruments
- Facilitate effective collaborative working
- Create appropriate ecumenical space

- Be an expression of the churches' shared commitment to four nations ecumenism
- Work with the widest range of partners, listening closely and responding to the shared needs and aspirations of the churches
- Resource the work of the churches, agencies, networks and bodies in association of CTBI
- Recognise and work with complexity
- Offer theological reflection across the shared areas of work

The core elements of this work is that as a four nations agency our task is to ...

**... be a focal point and resource for theological reflection and understanding of complexity.**

We live in complex and changing times in which God calls us to be the church. In

discussions with leaders of the churches it has become increasingly clear to me that these new and changing cultural contexts are the biggest challenge to us and our identities. The old certainties have gone and we are faced with daily challenges that cause us to rethink and re-evaluate where we are. It is in this that the churches are wanting to work together. To this end the

CTBI staff and Trustees have agreed a thematic approach to our work which is to be worked across the Networks. The three themes identified are:

- **Environment and climate change**
- **Migration and the movement of peoples**
- **Culture, identity and the public space**

There was remarkable agreement that these are the current areas that we should be addressing across the whole range of work that CTBI is engaged in. We are seeing the effects of environmental change more and more and this has global implications. Climate change

is a major cause of migration as more and more people find their basic needs unable to be met in certain world regions and areas. What is the place of the churches in cultures which value diversity of viewpoint and lifestyle rather than conformity and uniformity? What does the Christian gospel have to say to and to learn from such a cultural climate? What can each of the four nations learn from the perspectives and differing histories of the other nations? These are pressing questions that the churches are agreed need addressing together.

If these are our purposes then what are the right structures to fulfil such purpose?

One of the key changes in this area is the movement from Commissions to Networks. The Global Mission Network has paved the way in their change from Churches' Commission on Mission in 2006. Further changes are ahead with the current review of Forums. The other CTBI Commissions are moving ahead with similar changes in order to resource the churches, agencies and bodies in association. Each of the CTBI Networks will work more closely with each other as well as with the churches and agencies. On each of the key themes each has a different but linked contribution to make and perspective to communicate.

Central to these developments is a new communications strategy. This will comprise a new image, a new web site and e-based strategy and database. These are currently being developed and should be in place before the end of 2007.

Changes of this nature are demanding and I have been impressed by the commitment of the staff to the vision and the developments which are central to its implementation. We look to the future with our partners in the churches, agencies and bodies in association as we seek to be faithful to what God is calling us to in these nations at this time.



**In January 2007 the Conference of European Churches invited leaders in mission to a Consultation in Budapest to exchange views and insights into the changing face of mission in Europe. Janice Price represented GMN and CTBI. Here is the letter sent from the Consultation to the churches in Europe.**



**“Come Holy Spirit; heal and reconcile in Europe... illuminate the whole of humankind with the light of Christ.”**

### **A letter from Budapest to the churches in Europe**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ  
Greetings from Budapest, Hungary!

The Gospel is meant to be shared; faith is meant to be lived out. We sense that in Europe there is a new impulse to mission. There are many reasons for this, and we believe it comes from the Holy Spirit. We are inspired with a humble confidence in our faith in Jesus Christ and a sense of urgency to share it, both of which go back to the very roots of Christianity.

The gospel is meant to be shared; faith is meant to be lived out. We have been encouraged by hearing different examples of mission and evangelism, and stories of renewal. What we have learned from one another challenges us to rethink our theologies of mission in the light of new global realities, drawing on our different Christian traditions and the new perspectives coming from inside and outside Europe. In response, we recommit ourselves to working together in mission, seeing the many issues that face us not as threats but as opportunities to see the glory of God displayed.

We are participants attending the Mission Consultation of the Conference of European Churches from the 23rd to the 28th January 2007. This consultation has coincided with the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which is a reminder that mission and the ecumenical commitment of our different Churches are closely associated. We are from many Christian traditions; including Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Evangelical and Pentecostal, and from twenty-one countries of Europe. Forty percent of us are women.

The presence of a number of participants from the churches of the South and the Roma communities in Hungary is important to us. The discussions have also been enriched by contributions from younger scholars and practitioners of mission. Meeting in Central Europe, we have become more aware that Hungary interacts with both east and west. It has a long Christian heritage and a strong ecumenical commitment. We express our sincere thanks to our hosts for their generous hospitality, and for the opportunity to experience something of the riches of their faith, history and culture.

Our theme has two parts: “Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile in Europe”, which recalls the theme of the Conference of World Mission and Evangelism at Athens in 2005, and challenges us to explore the implications of that global gathering for our European context. The second part, “Illuminate the whole of humankind with the light of Christ” refers us forward to the theme of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly to be held in Sibiu,

Romania, in September 2007. On the way from Athens to Sibiu, we have been participating together in a programme of prayerful reading of the Bible (*lectio divina*), plenary presentations, a wide variety of workshops, discussions in plenary and in small groups, and worship according to several traditions. We have also interacted informally during breaks and over shared meals.

We are called to take our European context and the changing landscape of Christianity seriously. Globalisation is bringing changes in demography, increasing urbanisation, tensions in inter-religious relations and great economic realities. In Europe today we are aware of new lifestyles and ways of belief. There are many bitter memories to be healed. There are struggles for identity for nations, ethnic groups, and for Europe herself. In this time of transition, we are struggling to make sense of our faith anew amidst a plurality of worldviews.

New forms of mission are emerging. For example, there are different patterns of sending and receiving. The presence of migrant churches among us, their needs and gifts, has come very much to our attention, and it contributes to the new shape of the church in Europe.

In this situation, we invite you to join with us in a renewed commitment to mission and evangelism. During the consultation we have explored the particular importance of ministries of healing and reconciliation in our context; these expressions of mission, which were highlighted at Athens in 2005, are needed within and among our churches as well as outside them. Engaging in healing and reconciliation means adopting a pastoral orientation in mission as well as a messianic one, and fulfilling a mediatory as well as a prophetic role.

From one another we have learnt about many other ways of mission and evangelism, and raised questions and controversial issues to refer for further work by churches, other consultations and by the CEC-CCEE assembly at Sibiu later this year; these are recorded in more detail in the consultation report.

We thank God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who forgives our sins and invites us to be part of his mission. We look forward to doing mission and evangelism together, sharing the cost and also the joy. Recognising obstacles and opportunities in our present context, we are dependent on the Holy Spirit to guide us and to illuminate the whole of humankind with the light of Christ. Come, Holy Spirit!

*The participants of the Mission Consultation of the Conference of European Churches – Budapest, 27 January 2007*



# Mission, spirituality and evangelism

Kirsteen Kim reports on the meeting of the WCC Commission for World Mission and Evangelism / Geneva, 20-26 April 2007

Overlooking Lake Geneva in an unseasonably warm week in April, a group of Christians carefully composed of complementary denominations, mission agencies, nationalities, ethnicities, ages – and not forgetting genders –

Interacting together ecumenically, internationally, and so on, the Commission set several priorities for the period until the next Assembly in 2013. One aim was to further the link, which was made at the CWME

united witness. The linking of mission, unity and spirituality arises partly from a growing awareness that mission is inspired, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, who heals and reconciles, and that mission takes place in a world of many spirits; those of secularism and consumerism were very much to the fore in our discussions.

Another priority was evangelism – a concern raised at Athens by British and Irish delegates particularly. The decision by the IMC to join the WCC caused many Evangelical mission agencies to leave, believing that the proclamation of the gospel would be lost in the search for ecclesial unity and the social programmes of the WCC. The CWME is now composed of representatives of WCC member churches and a wider constituency of churches interested in mission, as well as mission agencies. The 50th anniversary of the merger in 2011 is the date chosen for the next CWME conference. As well as revisiting this decision, the conference will be considering how the gospel can be proclaimed in the context of plural societies, competing churches and inter-religious tensions – especially around conversion, and how this can lead to inclusive communities, particularly in view of migration and disability.

The Commission meets again in India in 2008.



gathered for a week of shared reflection on mission. The WCC's newly constituted Commission for World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) traces its origins to the International Missionary Council (IMC) established after the watershed conference at Edinburgh in 1910. It is now one of several consultative bodies which help to direct the work of WCC staff in the six programmes set up after the last Assembly in 2006. I am privileged to sit on the Commission as a representative of GMN.

conference in Athens in 2005, between mission, unity and spirituality. The old IMC was an independent organisation concerned especially with the work of 'missions' on the 'mission field', and issues of international affairs and 'civilization' – or later 'development'. Since it became part of the WCC in 1961, its concern has been for God's mission (rather than missions), as expressed through local churches (not just agencies) in every continent (not just on the 'mission field'), striving for

promote and develop the findings from Building Bridges of Hope Stages B and C. Its work is focused in three areas: the Network of Mission Accompaniment, the Future Church Conference and training for mission accompaniment.

The Network of Mission Accompaniment welcomes practitioners who are involved in a broad range of accompaniment or enabling roles within their Districts, Synods, Dioceses or other church organisations. As well as e-mail contact it is hoped that there will be regional as well as national meetings across the Four Nations. One of the main gatherings will be the annual Future Church Conference. A recent questionnaire to members of the Network showed that meetings and day conferences to share good practice were the most requested form of gathering.

Training mission companions as well as promoting the concept of mission accompaniment is one of the main priorities of the Centre for Mission Accompaniment. Much has been learned from the Foundation Course in Mission Accompaniment which has been run in association with Cliff College. It is clear that training that is geared to local contexts is required rather than a standard course. Whilst the principles of mission accompaniment remain constant, adaptation to different contexts is a key skill for the companion and which has to be reflected in training. Mission accompaniment is not only relevant to the local church. It is used in a variety of church settings and organisations. GMN would be interested to talk to anyone interested in training on mission accompaniment.

Copies of *Journey Into Growth* are available from [www.mph.org.uk](http://www.mph.org.uk) (Methodist Publishing House)

**Global Mission Network**  
(part of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland)

Bastille Court, 2 Paris Garden  
London SE1 8ND  
Tel: 0207 654 7230

For further information, contact:  
[janice.price@ctbi.org.uk](mailto:janice.price@ctbi.org.uk)

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