

## Structures and Strategy

One of the biggest problems we face in our churches in the UK today is the clash of cultures. Those born before 1964 (often called the Builders and the Boomers) like **structures**. They like things to be tied down, people to have their place, everyone to know their responsibilities and preferably to have it all in writing. They are the control freaks. They like doctrinal statements and policy statements and refer to them often.

Those born since about 1964 (Generations X and Y) regard structures as a necessary evil sometimes, but organise their lives on **relationships**. What is written down on a statement is not really important. It is relationships that matter.

Churches that are moving forward are well aware of this tension and are increasingly emphasising the importance of relationships as they look to the future and develop their programmes.

In the past many larger and active churches produced a world mission policy statement. One document states that it has the following advantages –

- It built confidence and cohesion in the total church ministry.
- It permits thoughtful evaluation of critical issues.
- It prevents decisions based on personality or monetary whims.
- It prevents confusion, inconsistency, misunderstanding and hurt.
- It defines the specific responsibilities of church, missionary and mission agency.
- It lets the congregation know what the leadership has in mind and builds trust.
- Everyone knows ahead of time what to expect. There are no surprises.
- Visitors and newcomers to the church can read the policy and fit in with it.

Many people reading this will warm to those points and agree with the approach. There was a time when that was valid, but it provides too much structure for the culture of today and tends to marginalise world mission.

At a Christian convention recently I was asked to lead a seminar entitled, "How to prepare a world mission strategy for your church". Although I spoke and answered questions for 30 minutes my basic response was DON'T.

I remember saying, "Don't prepare a world mission strategy for your church, prepare a strategy for your church that involves the world." The difference is significant. Your church operates in the context of an international framework.

I like the mission statement of a church in the Midlands, "To worship God, to love each other, to reach the world".

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Taken from the Administry Guide 'How to Encourage World Mission'. Available to order from <http://www.globalconnections.co.uk/educational.asp>