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## Global Connections National Conference 4-6 November 2009

### Mission and Migration Feedback

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#### A Scattering of the World – the Movements of People

##### ***Session 1: Migrants as Gospel Carriers: Historical review and contemporary overview***

Mark Oxbrow (Coordinator, Faith2Share Network)

##### **Historical Review:**

- Luke 23:26 – Simon of Cyrene, was a literal gospel carrier as he was asked to help carry Christ's cross.
- Acts 8:1,4 – first missionaries (gospel carriers) were those suffering from persecution and scattered around the known world.
- Some of first Christians were Nestorian businessmen (from Iraq?) who took the gospel to China.
- St.Nino, was a Christian slave from Cappadocia who brought gospel to Georgia (one of first established Christian nations after Armenia)
- Monks 'wandering for the love of God' brought the gospel to Ireland and Britain
- Spanish conquistadors taking the gospel with their conquest.
- 19<sup>th</sup> century explorers combined scientific discovery with the civilisation of natives' and the sharing of the gospel (David Livingstone).
- Many 20<sup>th</sup> century philanthropists inspired by Christian values and sharing gospel with their 'beneficiaries'.
- Many migrant types throughout history who have carried the gospel: Refugees, business people, slaves, wandering religions, conquering armies, adventurers, students and missionaries.

All these encounter issues involving vulnerability and power; cultural imperialism, mixed motives (e.g., civilisation or Christian faith, business or evangelism, conquest or conversion? CMS being involved during the Opium Wars)

Diaspora or cross-cultural mission? Does a Christian Nepali student in Britain seek to engage in mission with native British or British-based Nepalis?

190 million people (3% of the world's population) lived in a different country from the one in which they were born in 2005. (UN)

Significant exporters of Christian migrants: Mexico, Philippines, Sudan, Tanzania, Congo, India, China

Significant Christian importers of migrants: USA, Canada, Western Europe, Russia, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore



Are these some places where migrants can have a significant influence? Gulf States, Middle East, Eastern & Western Europe, Caribbean, Malaysia

- 35,000 Ethiopians living in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- 96% women under 40
- distributed Jesus film and Arabic New Testaments to 800 Arabs in 11 months

Overseas student returnees: Hundreds of thousands of Chinese students studying in Christian countries and making contribution to the 3<sup>rd</sup> church in China today.

### **Some issues for consideration:**

- Churches strengthened by migrant incomers
- Role of minority ethnic churches in the wider Christian community and/or in mission,
- serving refugees and asylum seekers
- ministry to international students and their impact 'back home'
- the role of the international business community in mission and church life
- people trafficking and how the church responds
- language issues
- is there something about the gospel which demands inter-ethnic participation in the Body of Christ?
- ministering to 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> generation ethnic church communities

### **Discussion:**

Majority of people's church experiences are mainly 'white', English who have little or no exposure or experience to other ethnic groups. In one area, a mosque has been built drawing 200 worshippers from surrounding areas and the church sees it as a threat. Need for more openness, understanding and integration towards other cultures, especially 2<sup>nd</sup> generation who feel more British.

### ***Session 2: Returnees – critical success factors...***

Carolyn Kemp (OMF European Director for Diaspora Ministry)

Works mainly with Chinese, Japanese, Philippines, Mongolia and Vietnamese students in the UK.

The reality for the returnees is that they may not have the support they need in their new faith once they return to their home country.

20% of Japanese who converted to Christians and return to Japan become active in a church there. The local Japanese Christians are not interested in their experiences abroad resulting in them drifting away from their faith.

For every, thousand Chinese returnees, 10% return as Christians, which present major opportunities. But, they still face cultural issues like upholding face/honour when dealing with family members and employees that can destroy their faith.

Invites questions of how they are being taught here in the UK so that they are more grounded. Therefore, UK churches/Christians need to look at:

- the impartation and acquisition of knowledge
- should primarily be about discipleship
- programmes are an essential tool, but they are not an end in and of themselves



The church needs to be more realistic with discipleship and break it down so returnees are prepared in the face of when  $A+B+C=F$  (sacrifice, persecution, etc.).

They face 4 critical questions:

- 1) Who (or what) is my Lord?
- 2) What is my life's objective?
- 3) Am I willing to sacrifice my life (job?) for Him?
- 4) From whom or from what will I derive my sense of value?

For Chinese and Asian students, value is derived from community. UK churches need to remember this when training them.

### **Critical success factors:**

- Need to start thinking from day one when person knows they are returning (how to deal with their parents, family, etc.)
- Need to disciple through modelling and example to help facilitate growth.
- What is our main critical subjects? Lordship of Christ and the 4 big question.
- Must prepare them for the costs of returning so they connect to a church back home (they won't be accepted when they return).

Major impact on non-Christians who want Christians to help them make decisions once they return (e.g., vice-mayor, professor of comparative literature, government officials for Religious Affairs department).

### **Q & A:**

Q: Returning home for a secular person is complicated enough, let alone for someone who has converted into Christianity. International churches seem to be best because they have experience of third cultural living. Are there any networks that we can help them plug into to find an international church?

A: Each experience is unique so even plugging into an international church is also difficult.

Q: Do we accept the third culture experience for returnees or do we help them work through it?

A: There isn't one model for everybody. There may not be enough capacity in their home-based country to help look after them so the onus should be to help train them whilst they're still in the UK.

Q: How can we expect the UK church to properly disciple them when they come from a mainly British context?

A1: OMF is working to help educate churches to understand the context for each culture, although their main focus is East Asia at the moment. There's a need for more education to work with the wave of international peoples so eager to learn about Christ.

A2: Opportunity to mobilise 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Christians to help with this education as they understand both sides of the coin.

A3 (from Mark): Equally, there are many British missionaries who have returned and feel de-skilled because no one seems interested in the culture where they have worked. They are also a possible, excellent source of cultural education to churches.

Comment to Mark: There is another element to migrants coming from the EU intending to come for economic purposes and often stay with fellow ethnic people for language reasons. For example, Croatians come over and start attending local Croatian churches so they are becoming evangelised, which is unique.

Mark agrees with this and sees it happening amongst the Japanese population in London who are starting to learn about Christianity as they learn English.

Q: Seems like today, there are more Muslim missionaries than Christian ones coming from abroad into the UK. What do you think about this?

A: Islam is also a mission-based faith that spreads. But, the distinction and vision is that Christianity is enriched by the interchange and fellowship of other cultures, which isn't shared in Islam.

Q to Mark: Do you have any thoughts on how to improve the relationship between ethnic minority/majority churches in Europe? How do we help ethnic majority churches integrate more with their secular social environment?

A: Many of us believe that the more contextualised theology, the better although it makes it harder to talk to anybody else. It's a conundrum that we must continue to wrestle with and must work through as being bounced against other cultures is enriching.

Mark believes that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation will be carrying forward the vision for mission because of their unique understanding and ability to bring in non-ethnic members. The minority church needs to gain more confidence and experience in a different culture before they can grow.

A (Martin): Chinese Church in London experiencing this with 2<sup>nd</sup> generation wanting to bring in their non-Chinese friends, yet the name has Chinese in it. Seems similar things happening with Chinese churches in Birmingham and other cities across the country.

### ***Session 3: Focus on Refugees***

#### **3.1 Welcoming Refugees**

Jeremy Thompson (Restore)

British cultural response to refugees and asylum seekers is very negative, treat them like the lepers of biblical times

#### **Who is a refugee?**

Person is a refugee who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, within their native country.

'Asylum seeker' is very much a Western concept because they must go through a process of proving to the Western government that they can legally claim asylum status.

Internationally displaced person: been forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly within their native country.

UNHCR: 20 million refugees and internally displaced people around the world (50/50 split).

Refugee Action produced a DVD called 'Forced to Flee: the voices behind the asylum myths'. Also check out [www.ecsr.org.uk](http://www.ecsr.org.uk) Enabling Christians in Serving Refugees for local projects.

Asylum seekers face trauma and fear (separation from their families, need for safety, etc.), they are very damaged and need our care (Matt 25:35, 36)

**Restore:** Birmingham Churches Supporting Refugees / established in 1999 / focus on relational via befriending and advocacy, most known for befriending.



- Befriending: every relationship is unique, non-prescriptive. Offer friendship, listening ear, helps with conversational English. Mainly by volunteers who use English as their first language. Excellent at providing the 'invisible things' like showing one around, being a friend, providing company and giving a feeling of 'normal life'.
- Also provide Summer Holiday Programme of day trips for refugee families to places they may never have the opportunity to visit.
- Run Men's Social Activities though main number of clientele is male and low male volunteers. Go to museums or local tourist attractions (e.g., Warwick Castle).
- Women's Social Activities very key as women face loneliness in different ways.
- Also work with other agencies and churches to provide English classes and practical issues of finding food and shelter, etc.
- Try to assist those whose asylum applications have failed...just because Home Office doesn't deem them an asylum, this doesn't remove their fear or needs.
- Also involved in bigger campaigns such as trying to give asylum seekers right or ability to work so they can provide for basics (e.g., no bus fare to get to supermarket).
- Restore has started voucher system to help give people extra bit of dignity by exchanging cash for vouchers for food, etc.
- Lots of pain involved in this environment as people have extreme stories (of loved ones murdered back home, nothing to feed their children). They carry huge burdens of fear, pain, etc. and Restore helps by showing God's love in practical ways.

#### **Q&A:**

Q: How are you funded?

A: Through grants and the lottery, although there are restrictions given their faith-based origins.

Q: How do you find out about refugee people to assist?

A: Through local referrals from GPs, churches, other services, etc. in the community.

Q: Who tells the story of successful immigration and those who have fully integrated, etc. when media mainly focuses on human tide of asylum seekers?

A: Unfortunately, media is not interested in the nice stories of refugees. Restore does have contacts with local press who are interested in interviewing both befrienders and asylum seekers and their stories. Nationally, it's very different because nobody is really championing the success stories.

Q: To what degree does Restore get involved with discussions with churches/politicians about the need for immigration given Britain's declining death and birth rate?

A: Mainly do awareness raising within churches about these issues, although some people are talking and doing studies to put forward these alternative views and positive.

Q: How does the fact you are Christian affect your work or funding?

A: Restore is not overtly presented as being Christian and faith-sharing, although they will supply needs when asked (e.g., supply Bibles when asked). Overall, they do not generally feel restricted about showing/sharing their faith or feel the need to be 'undercover' about it.

Q: How long does the asylum seeking process take?

A: There is a New Asylum Model by the Home Office that should hopefully reduce the length of time for new applications. But, reality is some cases can still take years (some applications from 2003 still not processed and are called legacy cases as may be people's second time applying or appealing).

Q: Are your volunteers mainly white, British or do you have some who have gone through the process?

A: Mainly are white, British because they don't feel current asylum seekers can adequately help, although there is a lot of informal support from the local community. They are very open with that

idea of help from someone who has been settled because they understand far more than white British do.

### **3.2 Hospitality and Pilgrimage: Priscilla and Aquila**

Emma Wildwood (Director of Henry Martin Centre, Cambridge)

Acts 18:1-3 Passage of how Paul left Athens and went to Corinth and took up tent-making and stayed with Priscilla and Aquilla

Priscilla and Aquilla were forced migrants from Rome who were open to change and open to others and able to support themselves. Gives visions and words of 'nomads', 'wandering' and giving displacement some meaning as a result of their faith. Creates a very important place where the tension of journey can take place.

Cross-cultural Christian communities: Rom 16:3, 1 Cor 16:19, 2 Tim 4:19

-they met in each other's homes / Paul works hard to overcome cultural differences between Jews and Gentiles and get a glimpse of how P & A helped with his, thus portraying early church's grapes of cross-cultural community.

Modern church needs to rediscover this and become a church that is mobile, grows and welcomes people from all backgrounds by overcoming natural, human group dynamics to meet with other people unlike themselves.

Significance of today's church learning from migrants as companions in mission and practicing hospitality as a way of life (not a strategy). How do we overcome the danger of the 'settled/native' population seeing migrants as different from themselves, especially when they have not had any experience of migration?

Discussion ensued.

### ***Session 4: European migration: a Christian response to integration***

Dr Darrel Jackson (Nova Research Centre, Redcliffe College, UK)

Shared his experiences of living and working in Hungary.

- Focus on EU policy on integration (currently being used and implemented by Norwegian government for their integration policies).
- Between 2007-2008, Turkey experienced a 6% decline in birthrate, disproving the general understanding that Muslims are outbreeding Europeans.
- Islam is a relatively recent phenomena so that elements like mosque attendance or observance of Ramadan declines the further you move away from Islamic main centres ('heartlands').
  - Turkey stats show 98+ committed.
  - Russia and Russian states show 60% committed.
  - UK and Norway show only 33% committed.
- Recent BBC survey work says that Muslims will define themselves as British before Muslim.
- Indicates one can read this data in various ways to interpret work amongst Muslim populations within Europe.
- Icon of Easy Jet, easily carries 37 million passengers a year around Europe. Migration within Europe is largely internal European migration. Only 37% of EU migrants in 2004 were non-EU nationals.
- Trends are that migration rate in the Euro area has slightly higher levels than the non-Euro countries.

- In the UK, 518.1 million inflow of migrants, but 310.4 million outflow. Important to realise the underlying realities that are often not reported.
- Daily Express headlines following 7/7 London bombings: BOMBERS ARE ALL SPONGEING ASYLUM SEEKERS
- Integration policy of the EU: 'Common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in the EU'
- 2 assumptions: no assimilation and no imposition or standardisation. Implies mutuality of change on the part of both receiving and entering communities.

How do we respond to this in a way that is both theological and missiological? How do we understand integration theologically (what informs our integration praxis and the *Missio Dei*)?

- When we look at God's action of creation, God brings all things into unity, which is the purpose of salvation. Any policy that strikes against this sense of unity is an affront to God.
- Christians should always be discovering more direction towards God's unity that recognises the differences within diversity.
- Integration is not just for the Christian community, but provides potential for a renewed and sustainable society (for its good) because it provides a vaster, wider range of resources available to us all.

EU is now at a point that can recognise more harmonised and integrated approaches to:

- external border controls
- asylum seekers & refugees
- access to labour markets

Successful integration: long-term and multi-dimensional process

This is significant for Christians as we are meant to be communities that dream dreams and hold wider visions. There are alternative futures we should be able to imagine for the increasing integration of our European community.

Christian vision is rooted in the theological vision of the inter-trinitarian nature of God where essential differences are neither obscured nor allowed to become the cause of division or exclusion... The ultimate human experience of integration is found in the offer of salvation, through which God calls together diverse people into the one common household of faith; a communion of churches bound together in one body through fellowship and mutual covenant.

### **Discussion (Response/Q&A):**

R: Difficulties of integration for migrants (language, etc.)  
Darrell: Key mechanisms for integration = language skills

Q: Huge drop in immigration curve in 1992, why was this?  
A: Good question, need to look into this.

Q: Good to get the full statistics of the trends out to the public eye. How do we get this accurate information out there so they will start thinking based on facts rather than media hype?  
A: Key issue is knowing how to access this and publish it. Research centre considering providing a briefing annually for churches/Christians to access. It's an uphill battle.

Q: Looking at the trends of inflow and outflow, there are still 200 million 'swamping us'.  
A: Must remember that they are not all 'black faces with fuzzy hair'. The word 'swamped' is very emotive and unhelpful.

R: There are large problems with policing large numbers of people. For example, Lithuanians here increasingly becoming victims of crime here in the UK, which British police must deal with. UK and Ireland received huge amounts of migrants that has benefited the economy, but there are major issues concerning large-scaled immigration.

A: Don't have a sense at the moment that this is a major movement. In fact, many Poles still return home for their health treatment because they trust their system better.

Q: Do you think experiences of immigration are different in bigger cities? Daughter is GP in major city where there are large language barriers. Glasgow has schools where only one English-speaking child in a classroom. So the pressure here is evident that people in the bigger cities are 'swamped' by immigrants. Hostilities occur from tensions caused as a result of this. Think what's needed is careful thinking happens in conferences like this that isn't 'pie in the sky' that can be presented to UK political parties so they can address these real issues sensibly. They don't have any ideas for any constructive policies. We have an election coming up in a few months, so who is voicing all this?

A (Mark): Must be careful to not just paint half the picture. Immigrants have come and filled spots like plumbing, etc. that were lacking. Also have brought rich diversity to his borough of London.

A (Darrell): This should be the starting point, although it's pie in the sky. Everyone has to begin somewhere such as a theological centre as this.

R: This is only third of the way, must continue building on this.

Q: Queries on number 3, 4 and 5 that is perhaps almost asking the impossible of many migrants because they come from a more collective culture, whereas, these represent our more individualistic culture. How can they 'participate fully' if their value structure is not easily blended with the Western view. When we have cultures that are very different, how do we help them draw towards us and does this apply to every member or only the leaders?

#### ***Session 4 (continued): Mission and Migration - The Christian Movement Today***

Emma Wildwood (Director of Henry Martin Centre, Cambridge)

What are we talking about when it comes to mission?

Looking at example of Sunday Adalaja, Pastor of the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations, Kiev. He has a very big vision and passion for the Kingdom of God, concern for social justice, transformed lives and concern for the 'dark continent' of Europe. Now leads this mega-church in Kiev.

Sunday was a guest/immigrant to Ukraine where he started to work and began to offer hospitality there in order to find out about the gospel in a new way. Migrants often attract others from their native communities. Sunday's church is 80% Ukranian as he began to act as a host within his new culture.

#### **Globalisation and Migration:**

- 1 out of every 35 people is an international migrant. Communication and travel make the world seem smaller. Many migrants are pursuing a fuller life. Large-scale migrations – changing ways of life for all.
- Tanzania is a country that has absorbed large-scaled numbers of migrants with far less resources than UK, yet has done it with much stability.
- On the same scale, there are many Britons permanently residing outside the UK that refuse to integrate or learn the language, yet still drain other countries' services. They have gone to find a fuller life (e.g., to Spain to retire in the sun).
- Today, Christian migrants often develop a missionary vocation to their own people and then to the wider society. When they do so, they bring a different set of values and expectations,

some of which will make us feel uncomfortable because they are so different from our own. Promotes interesting dialogue where we can learn from each other.

- Cross-cultural mission: 'Welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed you.' Rom 15:7
- What does the unity of Christ mean for Christians in an era of mass migration?

#### **Different models:**

- There is a model of ignorance or indifference for native, British churches (e.g., small, rural parish) because this is not part of their immediate reality.
- Another model of different churches sharing the same space (Chinese church hiring out the Anglican church because they want to worship in their mother tongue).
- Leadership of different churches meeting together or cross-cultural leadership within one local church.
- Different congregations (for different languages).
- One dominant, multi-ethnic congregation being aware of the minority members.

#### **Discussion (Response/Q&A):**

Emma's question: What does the unity of Christ mean if we are all worshipping separately?

Q & R: What does it mean to be intentional when living together, Catholic and Protestant discussions reveals huge lack of knowledge and confidence about each's own background so they are frightened to meet them. Prevents openness. Think churches should focus on where they are coming from first to give them confidence to welcome others.

A: Emma's church runs a course about different Christian traditions within their extremely mixed congregation that promotes good discussions and learning from different stories. Helps people to explore their own identities so they can deal with issues.

R: Long for believers to contribute to 2 main areas: relating to people pastorally amongst our different ethnicities; other is relating in evangelistic way to non-believers.

Would welcome a serious contribution to the European discussion about EU integration/migration on an evangelical level.

R: It's all good to deal with politicians, but should go back to actually just demonstrating love. The real issue of churches is the sub-conscious discrimination whether they would admit it or not. They do not know how to handle it and best to admit it so we can start dealing with it now. There is still a cultural bias against this. Very good starting point is the book by Bruce Milne.

#### ***Session 5: Small-group questions/discussion:***

##### **Global Christian Migration (Emma):**

- How does the national church tackle cultural ghetto-ism?
- What are the underlying values within a culture that helps it to cope better with migration?
- How does the church learn to integrate/welcome BMBs into their congregations?
- How do we engage with people who have gained an interest in mission as a result of migrating elsewhere originally for economic reasons?

##### **Mapping Migration (Darrell):**

- Can churches/organisations help to provide accurate facts and figures to balance the media information?

- How can we as churches/agencies take advantage of evangelism given the trend for migrants who move further away from their heartlands and tend to move away from their religious practices as they move from their heartland?
- How can we make the Trinity real in our churches by becoming unified communities that embrace diversity and thus more welcoming?
- The crucial question is how do we act/respond once we have all this information? How is this information disseminated to appropriate regions so that the experience of migration is more positive on a whole?

### **Hospitality/Pilgrimage (Emma)**

- International students hospitality scheme
- EAUK 'Strangers in our Midst' programme
- The migrant is honoured by offering 'us' hospitality
- How do Europeans (re)discover the practice of hospitality?
- Is spiritual/biblical 'hospitality' incompatible with 'cultural' hospitality (e.g., do we in the UK talk about it, but fail to deliver because we are in a materialistic' culture?)

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