

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS
MEMBER CARE CONFERENCE: GROWING PEOPLE

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Strategic Member Care networks

By Marion Knell

Story:

“A married couple wanting to keep their home fires burning decided to install a woodstove in their home. They figured it didn't take a rocket scientist to install this basic bit of heating hardware, so instead of hiring a professional, they brought the stove home and installed it themselves. They even remembered to cut a hole through the ceiling for the chimney vent. Unfortunately they neglected to extend the chimney through the attic to the roof. Pleased with a job well done, they settled down to a cosy evening in front of the fire. And the inevitable happened. The heat and sparks built up in the attic and set their home ablaze, providing an unexpected source of warmth from above. Firemen extinguished the fire, and the couple returned to their home to console each other over their expensive loss. But the fire was not quite out. Firemen had failed to fully extinguish the fire, which started up again the next morning, burning the house to the ground. The husband and wife survived”.

‘Prevention is better than cure’ says the adage – one with which we would all agree. It is more cost-effective to put good caring strategies in place than to pick up the pieces when someone falls apart. Member care is not an optional extra – it is integral to kingdom values. Jesus commands us to love one another in John 15 and to serve one another in John 13. As Francis Schaeffer has said ‘Agape love is the final apologetic’. Indeed member care costs - in personal, spiritual and financial terms and we have to engage with those costs. Most of us realise that we can't do it on our own, whether we are a small or large mission agency, a sending or receiving church, a denomination – we need each other.

If we take a look at the career cycle of a missionary it might look like this.

Across it comes the personal life cycle.

It is increasingly unlikely that a missionary will stay in the same place with the same agency throughout his or her missionary career, however long that may be. And the trend is for that career to be shorter and shorter, determined more by the nature of the assignment than by a commitment to a particular agency. Generation X studies tell us that they are marked by

- Lack of long-term commitment
- Problems with authority – unwillingness to be pushed around
- More holistic approach to life (job satisfaction, care of the family, personal fulfilment)
- Demand to be served rather than desire solely to serve

Understanding generational perspectives is key to proper selection procedures. Member care begins at selection.

This perpetual movement and cross-fertilisation of ideas may mean that many different people are involved in the care of this person and it is easy for gaps to open up. The question is – who does what when?

If we accept Kelly's definition of member care as:

‘The ongoing investment of resources by mission agencies, sending churches and related mission organisations and individuals to nurture and develop missionary personnel’

Then the who may be any of the following:

The sending agency
 Individual supporters
 International agency
 Receiving/national church
 Local team
 Regional authority
 The individual

Each of these has:

- Expectations of their own roles
- Expectations of others' roles
- Responsibilities, defined and undefined
- Skills, knowledge, appropriate and inappropriate.

I believe there are three keys in making this who does what when and how work.

The first is communication. If we are going to network across the board to make sure people are properly cared for, then it is incumbent upon us to make the necessary effort to communicate within that paradigm.

- Communicate our expectations – agency to church, church to agency, individual to sender, sender to individual, sender to receiver, receiver to sender. How does the sending church know that their member will be taken good care of? Is membership of an agency any longer a viable modus operandi?
- Communicate our roles and responsibilities, our lines of accountability. Do they change when the missionary is on home assignment from when they are on the field? Has the sending church delegated responsibility to the agency and if so how and when and in what areas?
- Communicate the lines of communication – how do we keep each other within the loop?

The second is cooperation. We need to admit we can't do it alone. Even the bigger agencies will admit to their inability to totally fulfil all the requirements of member care in their organisation. It is impossible to have children and family specialists, debriefing specialists, orientation specialists, spiritual counsellors and directors for everyone.

Agencies are less into empire building than they used to be and in most parts of the world it is irrelevant which agency you are with – you cooperate with the people who are there. We need to recognise each other's strengths and buy into them – maybe literally. The time is coming for agencies to redesign themselves and think more about becoming consultancies who can offer their expertise to individuals and churches as the tendency for both churches and individuals to balk at the idea of becoming members of anything else. People commit and belong because of relationship not because of structure.

Churches are increasingly being recognised as having a valid contribution to make to the life of missions; they are offering their expertise in training their members in spiritual formation, theology, and cross-cultural communication. They are often bypassing the agencies and sending out in their own right, whilst recognising that they themselves may need the help of agencies with long-term experience.

How can churches and agencies cooperate and share resources more effectively? From my observation one of the most effective marketplaces for sharing ideas and resources is the GC/CMC Personnel Officers forum and I commend them for their work. But of course, if you're a church rep you don't get invited to the POF do you?

What we can do is develop a network whereby if you don't know the answer, in the words of the old AA ad 'I know a man (or more likely a woman) who can'!

Challenge of cooperation is to think outside the box. We have been used to doing things our way, in our time, as and when we have the people, the funds and the time. Let's dare to think differently.

Think of three areas where you don't feel you can do the job of member care as you would like and what sort of cooperation you would value. Discuss with the person next to you.

Here are my suggestions.

- We need to cooperate to share skills and people

2 challenges for you:

1. Debbie Lovell has already done several training seminars on debriefing. A point she makes is that while the agency may be able to handle the task element of a debrief, it is probably inappropriate for them to handle the personal debrief, given that for many missionaries their problems have arisen from within the agency itself. What if you can't afford to send them to Interhealth or Care for Mission? Debbie has challenged us to dare to think outside the box. Can we contemplate the idea of having a reciprocal arrangement with another agency of similar size and outlook to our own and debrief each other's members? Can we trust each other with what may be our dirty linen in the interests of providing a better standard of member care?
 2. The Comet forum of GC (children of missionaries education and training) has been doing this for a number of years in the area of training with annual day conferences. We're running the first MK re-entry seminars this summer – more later. We're also brainstorming how we might facilitate the preparation of children for life overseas. Most agencies put on an orientation programme for adults. Few put on anything for the children. They may provide child-care during the parents' orientation. Often this is because they have no-one with the skills to run a programme or they only have one family and it's not worth bringing someone in. What if we put on an orientation weekend for potential MKs, Fri. evening to Sun lunchtime/? It would be for school-age kids, we'd divide them into suitable age groups for a lot of the activity but stay together in an extended family for social times. Would you buy into that?
 3. Mobile member care teams. Pioneered in N Africa. Do we know of professional people who would be willing to give up 2-3 weeks a year to be part of a mobile care team to a particular group of people with whom they could develop an ongoing relationship? How do we evaluate the efficacy of short-term mobile teams? Mission Encouragement may be only two people but they have a network of people they serve with whom they stay in regular contact and whom they visit on a regular basis. Encourage International has a similar ministry.
- We need to cooperate to share training facilities

Challenges:

1. To make better use of existing facilities. For instance:
 - OM training courses at Rhyl – 3 weeks of pastoral courses
 - Bawtry hall courses. A few years ago I took part in a parenting and mission weekend, thoroughly valued by the parents who attended, most of whom had not heard about it through their mission.
 - Comet days – we've held these for about 12 years, ever since the European MK conference in 1992, but often they are poorly attended. Those who know they need to know, need help, come; others it's just not high enough on their list of priorities.

- Interhealth training sessions, Care for Mission weekends – bring together people with expertise for a short period of time to enable member care providers to do a better job.
2. To extend the scope of those being trained. Thinking outside the box, should we have a trained volunteer force, e.g. ex-missionaries, church reps trained in cross-cultural issues. Open our training facilities to a wider constituency and publicise them better.
 3. Think outside the box of Christian training facilities, e.g. People in Aid. Debbie's session? Email site: info@peopleinaid.org. Website: www.peopleinaid.org.
- We need to cooperate to share resources – what or who do we have that we might usefully share with others? What books do we know about? What tools do we have access to? For instance -

Challenge: Internationalisation

Increasingly we are sending people to, recruiting ,multi-national teams. Given that a lot of missionary stress comes from co-workers, how are we preparing people to cope in this multi-national environment? 'the question is not just there for agencies it is for member care providers. What are we doing for the missionaries from NSC that we are recruiting who have their own issues in relating back to their own cultures as well as relating to those of other cultures? How clued up are we on issues for Korean families for instance, education, roots etc? What are the dynamics of a cross-cultural team?

1. Team building tools. I met a guy from Scotland in Hungary last year who is trained to teach the Ken Williams series on handling conflict and wondered whether that could be made available to the missions community in UK. Well? Or Leanne Rombke who wrote the book 'Building multi-cultural teams'. She is based in Cyprus and runs courses there. Which is cheaper for each of us to send someone to Cyprus to go on a course or to bring Leanne over here and put on or own course – cooperation? Actually, it's probably cheaper for us all to take a Ryan air flight to Spain and do it there in much more congenial surroundings!

- We need to cooperate to share funding

As we've already said, often it just isn't cost-effective for us each to put on our own programmes for say orientation or debriefing. Already Bawtry Hall do a preparation for service overseas that you can send people on. Here comes my plug for MK holidays.

Challenge: to work together to fund projects from which we may not benefit each year but will benefit the whole missions community. You may not have any MKs coming home this year who need a re-entry programme – you may have next year. Your neighbour may have someone this year and then not for three years. We currently have \$7000 for this project this year. MKs are being asked to pay 100 (older), 25 (younger) We still need a further 4000GBP for the older programme and 1000 GBP for the younger to put on a really professional programme. The American funding will probably only last 3 years. I'm struggling to get trust funding. If each agency with families put in say 100 GBP each a year we would cover our costs. Would you miss 100 from your annual budget?

- We need to cooperate to share information

What are the needs of missionaries? Who is out there meeting them? Did you know about ministries like Encourage International, working with kingdom builders in Europe? Or Mission Encouragement working mainly with singles in Eastern Europe?

Challenge: Survey on missionary attrition.

Rob Hay is putting together a study on missionary attrition, working from talking directly to missionaries who have come home rather than asking agencies for their answers. He will require the cooperation of agencies to make it work. This could be a really effective tool in shaping our member care policies and practices in the future. I hope you will find time to cooperate with the survey.

Thirdly Costing it in. Yes, member care costs – it costs to send someone to interhealth for psychological screening before selection, it costs to send for debriefing, it costs to go to Bawtry Hall for orientation, it costs to send your MK on the GC MK re-entry holiday. Who is going to pay? As I enthused about the new debriefing session for families that Interhealth introduced some years ago, my husband, then CEO of an agency, famously said to me, ‘And who’s going to pay for it?’ And that’s the crunch question – where the rubber hits the road and all those clichés. We need to:

- Build a member care component into support packages

We have to build a member care component into our support package. We need to cost it out.

- Communicate need for care finance to supporters

Churches, individual supporters need to be told that part of the support raised will be used to ensure the long-term well-being and equipping of the missionary for life and service.

- Programme retreats, refreshment, children’s activities into HA

That money may need to be spent on retreats, developing life-skills, refreshment, children’s programmes, debriefing etc. When a missionary is back on Home Assignment (furlough) how about paying for them to go to a Bible week, preferably along with others from the church? Not as an alternative to a proper holiday of course. Or sending their children on a summer camp?

I heard this recently:

“Politicians plan with the next election in mind. Statesmen plan with the next generation in mind”

We want to move away from crisis care and coping mechanisms to strategic planning and effective networking.

So, back to our title – how do we go about creating strategic networks of member care which are cost-effective? I want to think about this in three areas: the UK, Europe, Internationally.

MEMBER CARE IN THE UK

Member care forum

GC is launching a member care forum to address just such issues as we have been talking about here and to facilitate the sharing of resources and expertise.

- It will have a web page – two papers are already on it. The papers from this conference will be added.
- It will have a resources list – books, a list of retreat centres, areas of special interest. We’ve had with us Peter Davey from Burrswood and heard of their new venture – what else is there?
- Training sessions – this is just the first. Previously a group called Member Care Associates met to resource each other. That is being opened up to a much wider group of people via the

forum. Two meetings are already planned. On June 18 from 12 to 3, Ted Lankester will address the question of 'The indispensable missionary'. Bring a packed lunch, book your apex ticket now to get a good deal! And on GC and Interhealth are jointly hosting a day's conference on cross cultural marriage entitled 'Love Across Latitudes',

- Bulletin Board – announcing activities as we come across them and giving you the opportunity to post notice of anything you may be doing which would be of interest or helpful to others. Activities of Interhealth, Care for Mission, Bawtry Hall, OM Rhyll, - you need to let us know what's on.
- A forum for sharing our skills – COMET already brings together those with expertise in the areas of missionary families. This year when we met we discovered there were groups interested in catering for MKs from 6 to 60. Already Xenos is operating out of ANCC, there are the 2 Comet MK holidays and plans are in hand to start some adult TCK seminars. Can we think about joint debriefing and orientation courses?
- What about those ministering in Britain from overseas – how are they cared for? Internationalisation means we are a receiving country. I know of American and Asian families who are really struggling with life in the UK and its implications for their families. Member care providers, what are you doing about that? Are you thinking about what is needed in that area?
- Representation at the GC conference. This year the skeleton of the conference are the fora of GC and the Member Care forum will be meeting as part of that conference. The theme is globalisation and we will be considering the internationalisation of missions and its impact on member care. So we will be looking at the dynamics of multi-cultural teams, meeting the needs of those from NSC and the needs of overseas mission personnel in the UK. Come and join us for that. I hope we will be able to have a joint session with the Personnel Officers group on practical ways of working that out. Dates:

To make this sort of thing work there needs to be someone from each body represented here who is designated the member care person, otherwise the information doesn't get through to the people who need it. CEOs have too much paper flying across their desks, Personnel Officers are usually sinking beneath the weight of paperwork generated by new employment legislation – who is going to take up the baton of member care? Is that in your staff budget? What about the use of the early retirees – the third-agers? Most of us in the member care field work for nothing. I am, I confess, in the main a 'kept woman'!

EUROPE

European Member Care network

This has existed for some years under the auspices mainly of Kelly. There have so far been three EMC consultations – opportunities for those involved to network together and receive some input. Deliberately not called conferences because much of the work is done at ground level between delegates. I now coordinate this network, but much of what happens till does so because of Kelly. We meet this May to discuss the next consultation

EMCC IV

This will take place in 2003, probably in Geneva and I would be interested to hear from anyone who has any ideas of what could take place. Last year as I said I met Eric who has trained to hold the conflict resolution seminars which are a great tool for team building. You can get linked up with the work of Le Rucher where Kelly works, Barnabas Zentrum in Austria, La Famille.... in France, the soon-to-be retreat centre in Sicily that Gary is opening. As yet he knows no-one else in the UK who is so trained. The member care networks in Holland and Germany are very effective and we have a

lot to learn from them. It is particularly valuable to meet with the emerging sending nations of Eastern Europe. Last year Rumania, Poland, Bulgaria, Czech Republic all sent delegates. They have very few missionaries as yet but wanted to get their member care systems in place first – doing it the right way round.

HOPE 21

APRIL 29=May sees the first? Pan-European congress for evangelicals in Budapest, run in tracks, one of which is a member care track. We will be facilitating that track, Marjory Foyle will be among the speakers. We'll be addressing issues like dealing with stress and burnout in missionaries, the needs of the new sending countries, educational and family needs, teaching people to care for themselves. The Dutch have pioneered a remarkable model of member care nationally and Arie Baak will be sharing that. Do you have folk based in Europe who would benefit from attending that?

Educational Summit

This happened for MK educators at the end of January and similar conventions have been held before, notably at BFA. SHARE international based in Budapest spearheads various conferences and initiatives for those serving in Europe in the area of missionary education. Phil billing, ex-head of Muree Christian School is currently in this country working towards going out to Budapest to work with Share, providing he can make adequate provision for his own children's education when he gets there.

INTERNATIONALLY

Member Care email forum

Operated by Harry Hoffman who lives in Chang Mai. Invaluable source of material on member care, submitted to by people all over the world with resources from all over the world.

PTM

The Pastors To missionaries conference in Charlotte each year at the beginning of December is remarkable. Over 150 people whose ministry is in member care. I was privileged to go Dec 2000 and it was incredible. It was there that I met Perry Bradford, their MK coordinator and shared my dream of sometime doing an MK re-entry holiday. I was invited to observe/take part in their programme last summer, sponsored by the Narramore foundation out of which has come our own programme, generously sponsored by Narramore to the tune of \$7000. We're still looking for GBP 4000 so if you know of any wealthy sponsors, let me know! PTM also has an e-mail forum which provides excellent resources. Details:

It was at the PTM conference too that I found out about Heartstream Resources, run by Larry and Lois Dodds, doctor and psychologist, ex missionaries in S America. They run a two-week retreat in the alps above Grenoble, with a full children's' programme for missionaries. It too is sponsored by the Narramore foundations and you pay \$450 for the two weeks all-in. It's not quite a retreat as we understand it with lots of quiet and solitude, it has a strong teaching element but there's space and relaxation time built in, you can come and go as you please and there are trained counsellors around to talk to. Details:

Link Care Centre

Represented here by Brent but also sends out an email care resource which I gratefully download from my computer, sent by Ken Royer. It always begins 'Dear Colleagues in Personnel'.

Global Member Care networks

Africa is meeting right now
SA handbook
Chang Mai set up and running
North Africa
The national churches

This means recognising that there are other ways of caring than our western models. Marjory has done some interesting research on the needs of NSC and how their agencies are meeting those needs, e.g. paying stipends to parents to fulfil filial obligations. We need to pay tribute here to Marjory who unfortunately couldn't be here. She has been the trailblazer for most of what we are doing here today – and she is still doing research and making bold suggestions, strong meat that some companies are finding it hard to swallow!

AS member care has become devolved down to the team level and fewer and fewer agencies have experts (indeed there are probably too few experts to go around), the need to train people to care for themselves and each other becomes paramount. It's no good devolving care down unless you provide the skills and resources to do the caring. Can I commend David Huggett's paper on the website " to you. Bible Colleges and local churches have an important role to play here. Rose Dowsett's booklets for OMF on 'Growing People' (and here I need to acknowledge the debt we owe to Rosemary for pinching her phrase as the title of this conference!) are excellent tools to be used at team level.

Communicating, cooperating, costing, at grass roots level, at national level, at continental level and at an international level, thinking and living outside the box – together we can make a difference.