



mission catalyst



Resources for Ministers from the BMS General Director

www.bmsworldmission.org/catalyst

May 2004

THIS ISSUE: SENDING PEOPLE FOR MISSION

Dear Minister/Leader

A few decades ago many believed national churches would soon be strong enough to take on all mission tasks for their own countries. Mission agencies didn't resent their anticipated redundancy. They saw it as a sign of the success of their work.

It was too optimistic. Some countries *have* grown strong in mission – Brazil, South Korea and Ukraine come to mind – but most still struggle. And the belief that cross-cultural mission would or should end was also inappropriate. Not because local churches shouldn't be strong, but because none are ever complete in all the gifts, knowledge, wisdom, experience and passion that God has given his church worldwide. Sharing, helping, resourcing is good. So, we still send mission personnel (and receive them here).

This Mission Catalyst takes up that theme. I've outlined information on need, and described people and opportunities to meet that need. Ministers are very influential as people develop a call to overseas mission, and we'd love the privilege of working in partnership with you.

I've one other request, but must ask for quick forgiveness if I don't express it well. We have a small number who come to us for short and long term mission with issues in their lives which make 'success' near impossible: struggling marriages, deep emotional or psychological vulnerability, low self-discipline, no real grasp of their faith, and so on. Not at all am I saying that only supermen/women can do mission. But some issues must be worked out in the security of a supportive group like the local church, and can't be on the front-line of mission. No-one is better placed to know when that's true than the local church, and usually the minister.

Mission today needs people. Send us your best! They won't be supersaints. They'll have a sense of call, probably some qualifications or experience (without which visas often won't be issued by governments), reasonable spiritual and emotional balance, willingness to face sacrifice, and a strong desire to make Jesus known. Some will leave these shores for only a few weeks; some will go for years. Whichever, they'll obey God's call, work for his glory, and rejoice to see themselves used for the kingdom. And no church which releases people for mission will have God as their debtor.

Yours sincerely

Alistair Brown

Quotes

“ God isn't looking for people of great faith, but for individuals ready to follow him. ”

– Hudson Taylor

“ Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God. ”

– William Carey



Sharing the love of Christ in India

“ Let my heart be broken with the things that break God's heart. ”

– Bob Pierce, World Vision founder

“ You can give without loving. But you cannot love without giving. ”

Amy Carmichael, missionary to India

“ We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God. ”

John Stott

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Matthew 28: 19**

Missionary supersaints...?

Ten myths about mission workers

- 1 They're always confident about sharing their faith.** No, they can be as nervous as anyone. Becoming a mission worker doesn't suddenly make someone an evangelist; those who never share their faith now won't suddenly start doing it then.
- 2 They pray ten times daily.** Not usually, though putting your faith on the line certainly stimulates prayer.
- 3 They never have any doubts.** If only. The stresses of mission life easily produce doubt, fear, anxiety and stress. A few have to come home for these reasons. All mission workers need good support and strong prayer to help.
- 4 They live on fresh air.** They don't. Nor do they enjoy poverty or think it good for their soul. And the Scriptures teach that those who serve God ought to be properly provided for.
- 5 They love speaking about their work in church meetings.** Some do, but for more than a few giving a sermon is hard work and not a strong gift. Many appreciate chances to meet supporters in other contexts than only church services. And travel on home

assignment visits and living in homes of strangers can be very demanding.

- 6 They rise by faith above all problems.** They're not super-spiritual, so no they don't. Mission personnel struggle with most of the same issues as everyone plus a few more caused by living outside their own culture. And they may not have a ready supply of people to turn to for support.
- 7 They have children by immaculate conception.** Neither possible nor desired. Mission folk have the same needs, passions, temptations and struggles as anyone.
- 8 They love everyone.** They mean to, but relationships in small communities can be trying, and their best friends may be thousands of miles away.
- 9 They eat anything.** Often they have to; it can be part of life in a different culture. But, when visiting in the UK, it would be a kindness to ask in advance what kind of food they like.
- 10 They like the things we're finished with** – clothes, calendars, books, even tea bags. Mission personnel are grateful for all acts of kindness, but giving them what we don't want isn't an act of kindness.



Reaching out: cross cultural mission in Nepal

Plenty to do

- One third of the world's population is officially classed as 'Christian' (around two billion people)
- An estimated 60 per cent (1.2 billion) of Christians are nominal and non-practising
- Around 21 per cent of Christians are classified as 'evangelical'



Doing something about it: medical work in Guinea

- Between 15 and 25 per cent of the world's population have not heard the gospel in a way that could reasonably lead them to respond to the offer of salvation
- Nearly 400 million people live in a culture where there is no witnessing church
- Only three per cent of mission personnel work in countries defined as unreached
- Over half the world's population suffers from poor nutrition
- In the UK five children in every 1,000 will die before reaching their fifth birthday. In Afghanistan 142 children will die
- In 1990 a child in sub-Saharan Africa was 18 times more likely to die than a child in a rich country. In 2001 it was 25 times more likely
- A child dies every 15 seconds as a result of inadequate water or sanitation facilities
- In the UK 99 per cent of children complete primary education. In Angola only 28 per cent do the same

(Main sources: Operation World, Unesco, World Bank, New Internationalist Jan/Feb 2004)

Bible reflection

The most significant fact about the Great Commission (Matt 28: 19-20) may be that it was given at all. Whether by mass revelation, heavenly announcement, angelic appearances or any other means, Jesus didn't need people to make the gospel known. But he chose to use people. They had weaknesses, and they'd often let him down. But he wanted people to be his hands, feet and mouthpiece to the world.

The work wasn't finished. Acts 1: 1 is intriguing: "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach..." Not everything was over, and this book, Acts, will describe what Jesus has gone on to do: preach, heal, deliver, help, all through his new body on earth.

Moving people across boundaries and cultures happened from early on, albeit initially unintentionally because of persecution in Jerusalem. (Acts 8: 1, 4-5; 11: 19-21) Soon it became a need (8: 14) and then a strategy (11: 22), bringing people with gifts and experience to strengthen the fledgling church.

The strategy soon became one of sending people to take the gospel where it wasn't known; people like Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 13: 1-3) Their call was not given to them individually but to the church, hence a real awareness that it was the church that sent them off. Sometimes these early mission workers earned

their keep as they went (18: 3); at other times they were grateful for financial support sent by churches. (Phil 4: 10-19)

They met many hard times and even felt like giving up, and weren't frightened to say that. (2 Cor 1: 8-9; 11: 23-29) But they relied on God and on the prayers of his people, and therefore pressed on. (2 Cor 1: 9-11; Eph 6: 19-20) And because they did – because mission workers were sent, supported and sustained – we have the gospel today.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.
John 15: 16

Ways of doing mission

There's a near inexhaustible list of ways of going abroad with a purpose of mission. Here are three:

- 1 Long-term mission** – what most think of when hearing the word 'missionary'. Almost always involves advance training followed by language learning and then upwards of three years overseas. With BMS, full financial support is provided. The criteria for selection are thorough.
- 2 Short-term mission** – there are many forms, almost all largely self-funding. Here's what BMS currently offers:
 - **Individual/Couple placements** – periods abroad vary from about six months to two years – work done is as varied as the people who do it
 - **Action Teams** – gap year programme for 18-25 year olds in teams: one month of training, six months abroad, over two months on tour telling their mission story
 - **Church Teams** – recent innovation: group going together from one church, often

for two/three weeks, usually to take on specific projects

- **Medical Teams** – well-qualified medics resourcing an overseas mission area with their time and skills, usually for a couple of weeks
- **Summer Teams** – increasingly popular: applicants placed in teams and taking on mission tasks for about three weeks in a centre of BMS activity

The recruitment processes and suitability criteria vary for these different opportunities.

- 3 Tent-making opportunities** – the 'tent-making' phrase is borrowed from Acts 18: 3 which describes Paul's work of tent-making by which, at least in part, he funded himself on his mission travels. Today's tent-makers earn their money from the overseas post they hold, almost certainly with a secular organisation, but they believe God has a mission purpose for them also in that location so they may look to a mission agency for encouragement, guidance and support.



Church work in Albania

BMS has people working as administrators, doctors, evangelists, teachers, solicitors, accountants, theological educators, pastors, nurses, agriculturalists, engineers, counsellors and many others. All mission personnel are witnesses to Jesus, even though only a few have the title of being an evangelist.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah 6: 8

Financing mission

The cost of supporting overseas workers can be very high. Some countries – including many in Africa – have a cost of living for a westerner equal to the UK.

Here's a list of the main elements:

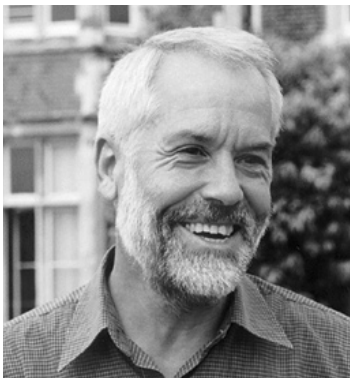
For all:

- Training costs before and during overseas work
- Money for general and personal expenses – food, clothes, travel, books, phone calls, holidays etc
- Housing – rent can be high, and is often pushed up for westerners. Special security measures may be needed in riskier locations
- Travel – to and from the country of service, inside that country, and back in the UK on home assignment. In some countries where there are difficult situations, holidays and other breaks must be taken outside the country, incurring higher costs
- Pensions – people have needs in retirement too



- Health – insurance costs and medical treatment charges abroad can be high, and returning home to the UK for NHS treatment can be another expense
 - Language – courses on first arrival can be expensive, and refresher courses are also needed sometimes
 - Ministry – materials and resources to enable mission work to be done
- For families:*
- Schooling – local schools are not always suitable, international schools are usually expensive, and home schooling takes a lot of time
 - Extra costs - for accommodation, furniture, clothing and travel etc

Case studies



Graham Sansom – BMS mission worker in Albania

“A local resident referring to a mission worker said, ‘When he came into this area God came to us.’ This sounded uncomfortably close to blasphemy but she did not mean it in that way. Rather, she was identifying an ambassador for Christ, someone with a mission, and witnessing to something of what mission was achieving.”

Janice – BMS volunteer working in South Central Asia

“I have lived in the same town, attended the same church and worked for the bank since leaving school. I contacted BMS convinced that as I wasn't a teacher or a medic they would be unable to send me. I have just returned from spending 14 months working for a development agency, making use of my skills in administration. This assignment has presented me with a rollercoaster of emotions, and I emerge a stronger



person, having matured both spiritually and emotionally; life will never be the same again!”

For enquiries about *long-term service with BMS* please contact Kathy Kavanagh, Mission Personnel Administrator, on 01235 517649 or e-mail longterm@bmsworldmission.org

For enquiries about *short-term individual opportunities* contact Ruth Robinson, Volunteer Programme Co-ordinator, on 01235 517654 or e-mail volunteers@bmsworldmission.org

For enquiries about *BMS Mission Teams* contact Jo Legg-Bagg, Mission Teams Administrator, on 01235 517647 or e-mail missionteams@bmsworldmission.org

See the BMS website for more information on what BMS has to offer: www.bmsworldmission.org/opportunities

For further information and contact details of other mission agencies, please consult the UK Christian Handbook published by Christian Research.

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